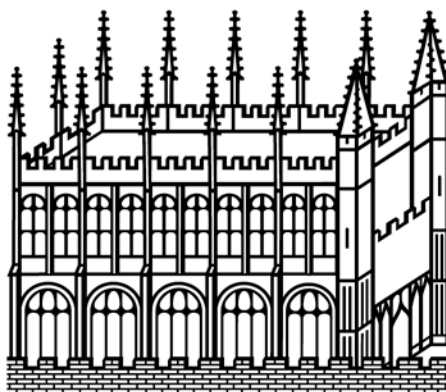




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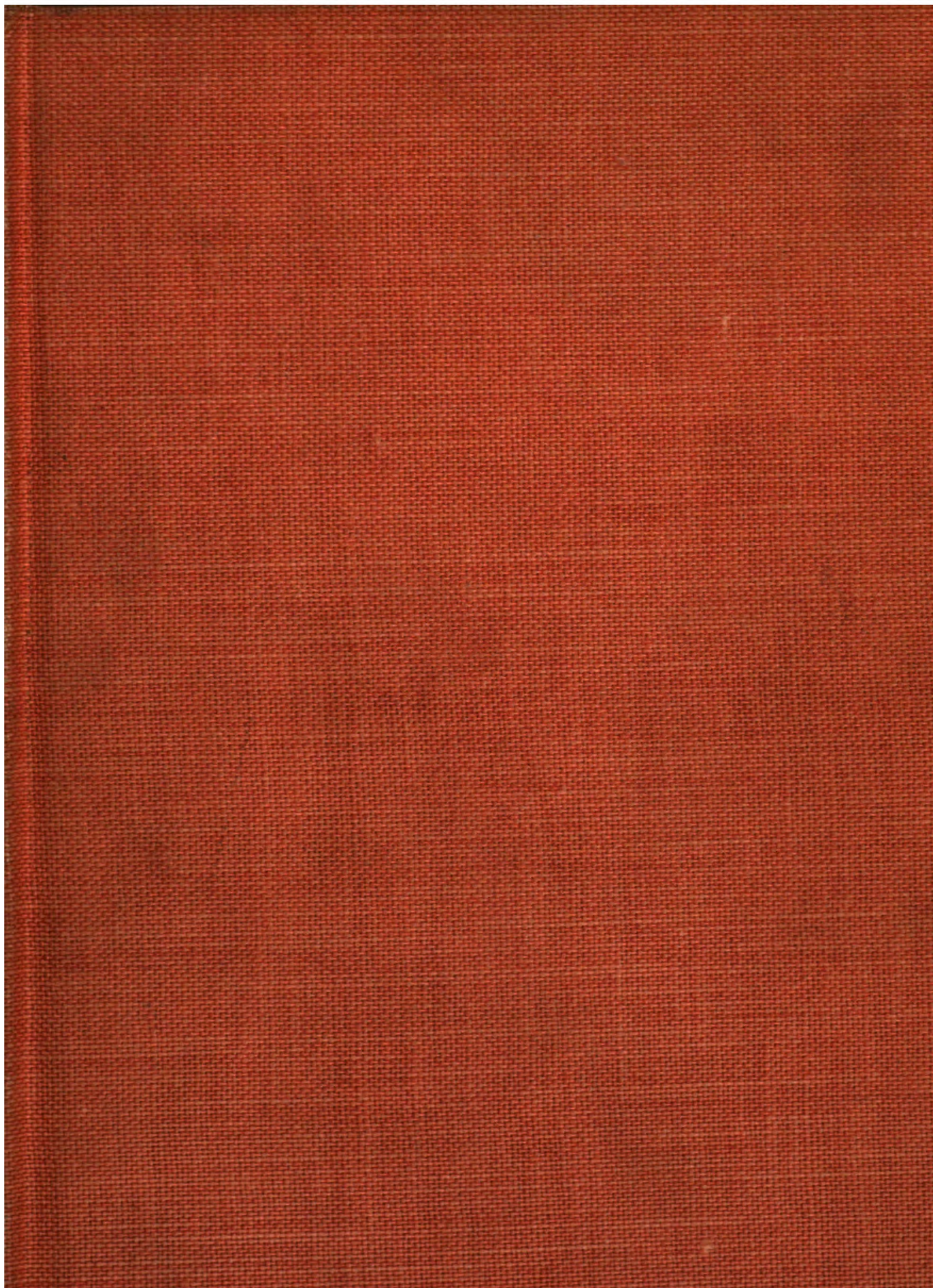
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*First Edition -*





**BIRDS, BEASTS  
AND FLOWERS**





# BIRDS, BEASTS AND FLOWERS

BY

D. H. LAWRENCE



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**BIRDS, BEASTS  
AND FLOWERS**



## FRUITS

### POMEGRANATE

You tell me I am wrong.  
Who are you, who is anybody to tell me I am wrong?  
I am not wrong.

In Syracuse, rock left bare by the viciousness of Greek  
women,  
No doubt you have forgotten the pomegranate trees  
in flower,  
Oh so red, and such a lot of them.

Whereas at Venice  
Abhorrent, green, slippery city  
Whose Doges were old, and had ancient eyes,  
In the dense foliage of the inner garden  
Pomegranates like bright green stone,  
And barbed, barbed with a crown.  
Oh, crown of spiked green metal  
Actually growing!

## FRUITS

Now, in Tuscany,  
Pomegranates to warm your hands at;  
And crowns, kingly, generous, tilting crowns  
Over the left eyebrow.

And, if you dare, the fissure!

Do you mean to tell me you will see no fissure?  
Do you prefer to look on the plain side?

For all that, the setting suns are open.  
The end cracks open with the beginning:  
Rosy, tender, glittering within the fissure.

Do you mean to tell me there should be no fissure?  
No glittering, compact drops of dawn?  
Do you mean it is wrong, the gold-filmed skin, integu-  
ment, shown ruptured?

For my part, I prefer my heart to be broken.  
It is so lovely, dawn-kaleidoscopic within the crack.

*San Gervasio in Tuscany*

## FRUITS

### PEACH

Would you like to throw a stone at me?  
Here, take all that's left of my peach.

Bloodred, deep;  
Heaven knows how it came to pass.  
Somebody's pound of flesh rendered up.

Wrinkled with secrets  
And hard with the intention to keep them.

Why, from silvery peach-bloom,  
From that shallow-silvery wine-glass on a short stem  
This rolling, dropping, heavy globule?

I am thinking, of course, of the peach before I ate it.

Why so velvety, why so voluptuous heavy?  
Why hanging with such inordinate weight?  
Why so indented?

Why the groove?  
Why the lovely, bivalve roundnesses?



## FRUITS

Why the ripple down the sphere?  
Why the suggestion of incision?

Why was not my peach round and finished like a  
billiard ball?

It would have been if man had made it.  
Though I've eaten it now.

But it wasn't round and finished like a billiard ball;  
And because I say so, you would like to throw  
something at me.

Here, you can have my peach stone.

*San Gervasio*

## FRUITS

### FIG

The proper way to eat a fig, in society,  
Is to split it in four, holding it by the stump,  
And open it, so that it is a glittering, rosy, moist, honied,  
heavy-petalled four-petalled flower.

Then you throw away the skin  
Which is just like a four-sepalled calyx,  
After you have taken off the blossom with your lips.

But the vulgar way  
Is just to put your mouth to the crack, and take out  
the flesh in one bite.

Every fruit has its secret.

The fig is a very secretive fruit.  
As you see it standing growing, you feel at once it is  
symbolic:  
And it seems male.  
But when you come to know it better, you agree with  
the Romans, it is female.

## FRUITS

The Italians vulgarly say, it stands for the female  
mystery, the fig-fruit:

Involved,  
Inturned,  
The flowering all inward and womb-fibrilled;  
And but one orifice.

The fig, the horse-shoe, the squash-blossom.  
Symbols.

There was a flower that flowered inward, womb-ward;  
Now there is a fruit like a ripe womb.

It was always a secret.  
That's how it should be, always be secret.

There never was any standing aloft and unfolded on a  
bough

Like other flowers, in a revelation of petals;  
Silver-pink peach, venetian green glass of medlars and  
sorb-apples,

Shallow wine-cups on short, bulging stems  
Openly pledging heaven:

*Here's to the thorn in flower! Here is to Utterance!*  
The brave, adventurous rosaceæ.

Folded upon itself, and secret unutterable,  
And milky-sapped, sap that curdles milk and makes  
*ricotta,*

## FRUITS

Sap that smells strange on your fingers, that even goats  
won't taste it;

Folded upon itself, enclosed like any Mohammedan  
woman,

Its nakedness all within-walls, its flowering forever  
unseen,

One small way of access only, and this close-curtained  
from the light;

Fig, fruit of the female mystery, covert and inward,  
Mediterranean fruit, with your covert nakedness,  
Where everything happens invisible, flowering and  
fertilisation, and fruiting

In the inwardness of your You, that eye will never see  
Till it's finished, and you're over-ripe, and you burst  
to give up your ghost.

Till the drop of ripeness exudes  
And the year is over.

And then the fig has kept her secret long enough.  
So it explodes, and you see through the fissure the  
scarlet.

And the fig is finished, the year is over.

That's how the fig dies, showing her crimson through  
the purple slit

Like a wound, the exposure of her secret, on the open  
day.

The bursten fig, making a show of her secret.

## FRUITS

The year is fallen over-ripe,  
The year of our women.  
The year of our women is fallen over-ripe.  
The secret is laid bare.  
The year of our women is fallen over-ripe.

When Eve once knew *in her mind* that she was naked  
She quickly sewed fig-leaves, and sewed the same for  
the man  
She'd been naked all her days before,  
But till then, till that apple of knowledge, she hadn't  
thought about it.

She got the fact on her mind, and quickly sewed fig-  
leaves.

And women have been sewing ever since.  
But now they stitch to adorn the bursten fig, not to  
cover it.

They have their nakedness more than ever on their  
mind,  
And they won't let us forget it.

Now, the secret  
Becomes an affirmation through moist, scarlet lips  
That laugh at the Lord's indignation.

*What then, good Lord! cry the women.*  
*We have kept our secret long enough.*  
*We are a ripe fig.*  
*Let us burst into affirmation.*

## FRUITS

They forget, ripe figs won't keep.  
Ripe figs won't keep.

Honey-white figs of the north, black figs with scarlet  
inside, of the South.  
Ripe figs won't keep, won't keep in any clime.  
What then, when women the world over have all  
bursten into affirmation ?  
And bursten figs won't keep?

*San Gervasio*

## FRUITS

### MEDLARS AND SORB-APPLES

I love you, rotten,  
Delicious rottenness.

I love to suck you out from your skins  
So brown and soft and coming suave,  
So morbid, as the Italians say.

What a rare, powerful, reminiscent flavour  
Comes out of your falling through the stages of decay:  
Stream within stream.

Something of the same flavour as Syracusan muscat  
wine  
Or vulgar Marsala.

Though even the word Marsala will smack of preciosity  
Soon in the pussy-foot West.

What is it?  
What is it, in the grape turning raisin,  
In the medlar, in the sorb-apple,  
Wineskins of brown morbidity,

## FRUITS

Autumnal excrementa;  
What is it that reminds us of white gods?

Gods nude as blanched nut-kernels,  
Strangely, half sinisterly flesh-fragrant  
As if with sweat,  
And drenched with mystery.

Sorb-apples, medlars with dead crowns.

I say, wonderful are the hellish experiences,  
Orphic, delicate  
Dionysos of the Underworld.

A kiss, and a spasm of farewell, a moment's orgasm  
of rupture  
Then along the damp road alone, till the next turning.  
And there, a new partner, a new parting, a new  
unfusing into twain,  
A new gasp of further isolation,  
A new intoxication of loneliness, among decaying,  
frost-cold leaves.

Going down the strange lanes of hell, more and more  
intensely alone,  
The fibres of the heart parting one after the other,  
And yet the soul continuing, naked-footed, ever more  
vividly embodied



## FRUITS

Like a flame blown whiter and whiter  
In a deeper and deeper darkness  
Ever more exquisite, distilled in separation.

So, in the strange retorts of medlars and sorb-apples  
The distilled essence of hell.  
The exquisite odour of leave-taking.

*Jamque vale!*

Orpheus, and the winding, leaf-clogged, silent lanes  
of hell.

Each soul departing with its own isolation,  
Strangest of all strange companions,  
And best.

Medlars, sorb-apples  
More than sweet  
Flux of autumn  
Sucked out of your empty bladders  
And sipped down, perhaps, with a sip of Marsala  
So that the rambling, sky-dropped grape can add its  
music to yours,  
Orphic farewell, and farewell, and farewell  
And the *ego sum* of Dionysos  
The *sono io* of perfect drunkenness  
Intoxication of final loneliness.

*San Gervasio*

## FRUITS

### GRAPES

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

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

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

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

But long ago, oh, long ago  
Before the rose began to smile supreme  
Before the rose of all roses, rose of all the world,  
                  was even in bud

## FRUITS

Before the glaciers were gathered up in a bunch out  
of the unsettled seas and winds  
Or else before they had been let down again, in Noah's  
flood,  
There was another world, a dusky, flowerless,  
tendrilled world  
And creatures webbed and marshy,  
And on the margin, men soft-footed and pristine  
Still, and sensitive, and active,  
Audile, tactile sensitiveness as of a tendril which  
orientates and reaches out,  
Reaching out and grasping by an instinct more delicate  
than the moon's as she feels for the  
tides.

Of which world, the vine was the invisible rose.  
Before petals spread, before colour made its disturbance,  
before eyes saw too much.  
In a green, muddy, web-foot, utterly songless  
world  
The vine was rose of all roses.  
There were no poppies or carnations  
Hardly a greenish lily, watery faint.  
Green, dim, invisible flourishing of vines  
Royally gesticulate.

Look now, even now, how it keeps its power of  
invisibility!

## FRUITS

Look how black, how blue-black, how gloved in  
Ethiopian darkness  
Dropping among his leaves, hangs the dark grape!  
See him there, the swart, so palpably invisible!  
Whom shall we ask about him?  
The negro might know a little.  
When the vine was rose, Gods were dark-skinned.  
Bacchus is a dream's dream.  
Once God was all negroid, as now he is fair.  
But it is so long ago, the ancient Bushman has for-  
gotten more utterly than we, who have never  
known.

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

## FRUITS

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

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

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

## San Gervasio

## THE REVOLUTIONARY

Look at them standing there in authority  
The pale-faces,  
As if it could have effect any more.

Pale-face authority  
Caryatids  
Pillars of white bronze standing rigid, lest the skies  
fall.

What a job they've got to keep it up.  
Their poor, idealist foreheads naked capitals  
To the entablature of clouded heaven.

When the skies are going to fall, fall they will  
In a great chute and rush of débâcle downwards.

Oh, and I wish the high and super-gothic heavens  
would come down now,  
The heavens above, that we yearn to and aspire to.

I do not yearn, nor aspire, for I am a blind Samson.  
And what is daylight to me that I should look skyward?

## THE REVOLUTIONARY

Only I grope among you, pale-faces, caryatids, as  
among a forest of pillars that hold up the  
dome of high ideal heaven

Which is my prison,

And all these human pillars of loftiness, going stiff,  
metallic-stunned with the weight of their  
responsibility

I stumble against them.

Stumbling-blocks, painful ones.

To keep on holding up this ideal civilisation

Must be excruciating: unless you stiffen into metal,  
when it is easier to stand stock rigid than to  
move.

This is why I tug at them, individually, with my arm  
round their waist

The human pillars.

They are not stronger than I am, blind Samson.

The house sways.

I shall be so glad when it comes down.

I am so tired of the limitations of their Infinite.

I am so sick of the pretensions of the Spirit.

I am so weary of pale-face importance.

Am I not blind, at the round-turning mill?

Then why should I fear their pale faces?

## THE REVOLUTIONARY

Or love the effulgence of their switched-on holy  
light?  
The glare of their righteousness?

To me, all faces are dark  
All lips are dusky and valved.

Save your lips, oh pale-faces!  
Which are slips of metal  
Slits in an automatic-machine, you columns of give-  
and-take.

To me, the earth rolls ponderously, superbly  
Coming my way without forethought or afterthought.  
To me, men's footfalls fall with a dull, soft rumble,  
ominous and lovely,  
Coming my way.

But not your foot-falls, pale-faces!  
They are a clicketing of bits of disjointed metal  
Working in motion.

To me, men are palpable, invisible nearnesses in the  
dark  
Sending out magnetic vibrations of warning, pitch-  
dark throbs of invitation.

But you, pale-faces,



## THE REVOLUTIONARY

You are painful, harsh-surfaced pillars that give off  
nothing except rigidity,  
And I jut against you if I try to move, for you are  
everywhere, and I am blind  
Sightless among all your visuality  
You staring Caryatids.

See if I don't bring you down, and all your high opinion  
And all your ponderous roofed-in erection of right and  
wrong,  
Your particular heavens,  
With a smash.

See if your skies aren't falling!  
And my head, at least, is thick enough to stand it, the  
smash.

See if I don't move under a dark and nude, vast heaven  
When your world is in ruins, under your fallen skies.  
Caryatids, pale-faces  
See if I am not Lord of the dark and moving hosts  
Before I die.

*Florence*

## THE EVENING LAND

Oh America  
The sun sets in you.  
Are you the grave of our day?

Shall I come to you, the open tomb of my race?

I would come, if I felt my hour had struck.  
I would rather you came to me.

For that matter  
Mahomet never went to any mountain  
Save it had first approached him and cajoled his soul.

You have cajoled the souls of millions of us  
America,  
Why won't you cajole my soul?  
I wish you would.

I confess I am afraid of you.

The catastrophe of your exaggerate love;  
You who never find yourself, in love,  
But only lose yourself further, decomposing.

## THE EVENING LAND

You who never recover from out of the orgasm of  
loving

Your pristine, isolate integrity, lost æons ago.  
Your singleness within the universe.

You who in loving break down  
And break further and further down  
Your bounds of isolation,  
But who never rise, resurrected, from this grave of  
mingling,  
In a new proud singleness, America.

Your more-than-European idealism  
Like a be-aureoled bleached skeleton hovering  
Its cage-ribs in the social heaven, beneficent.

And then your rapid resurrection  
Into machine-uprisen perfect man.

Even the winged skeleton of your bleached ideal  
Is not so frightening as that clean smooth  
Automaton of your uprisen self,  
Machine America.

Do you wonder that I am afraid to come  
And answer the first machine-cut question from the  
lips of your useful men?  
Put the first cents into hinged fingers of your officers

## THE EVENING LAND

And sit beside the steel-straight arms of your fair  
    women,  
American?

This may be a withering tree, this Europe,  
But here, even a customs-official is still vulnerable.

I am so terrified, America,  
Of the iron click of your human contact.  
And after this  
The winding-sheet of your self-less ideal love.  
Boundless love  
Like a poison gas.

Does no one realise that love should be particular,  
    individual,  
Not boundless.  
This boundless love is like the bad smell  
Of something gone wrong in the middle.  
All this philanthropy and benevolence on other people's  
    behalf  
Just a bad smell.

Yet, America, sometimes  
Your elvishness, elves wanton, elves wistful;  
Your New England uncanniness,  
Your western brutal faery quality.

My soul is half-cajoled, half-cajoled.

## THE EVENING LAND

Something in you which carries me beyond  
Yankee, Yankee,  
What we call human.  
Carries me where I want to be carried . . .

Or don't I?

What does it matter  
What we call human, and what we don't call human?  
The rose would smell as sweet.  
And to be limited by a mere word is to be less than a  
hopping flea, which hops over such an ob-  
struction at first jump.

Your horrible, skeleton, aureoled ideal  
Your weird bright motor-productive mechanism  
Two spectres.

But moreover  
A dark, unfathomed will, that is not unJewish;  
A set, stoic endurance, non-European;  
An ultimate desperateness, unAfrican;  
A deliberate generosity, non-Oriental.

The strange, unaccustomed geste of your demonish  
New World nature  
Glimpsed now and then.

Nobody knows you.  
You don't know yourself.

## THE EVENING LAND

And I, who am half in love with you,  
What am I in love with?  
My own imaginings?

Say it is not so.  
Say, through the branches  
America, America  
Of all your machines,  
Say, in the deep sockets of your idealistic skull,  
Dark, aboriginal eyes  
Stoic, able to wait through ages  
Glancing.

Say, in the sound of all your machines  
And white words, white-washed American,  
Deep pulsing of a strange heart  
New throb, like a stirring under the false dawn that  
precedes the real.

Nascent American  
Demonish, lurking among the undergrowth  
Of many-stemmed machines and chimneys that smoke  
like pine-trees.

Dark, elvish,  
Modern, unissued, uncanny America,  
Your nascent demon people  
Lurking among the deeps of your industrial thicket

## THE EVENING LAND

Allure me till I am beside myself,  
A nympholept.

"These States!" as Whitman said,  
Whatever he meant.

*Baden-Baden*

## PEACE

Peace is written on the doorstep  
In lava.

Peace, black peace congealed.  
My heart will know no peace  
Till the hill bursts.

Brilliant, intolerable lava  
Brilliant as a powerful burning-glass  
Walking like a royal snake down the mountain towards  
the sea.

Forests, cities, bridges  
Gone again in the bright trail of lava.  
Naxos thousands of feet below the olive-roots,  
And now the olive leaves thousands of feet below the  
lava fire.

Peace congealed in black lava on the doorstep.  
Within, white-hot lava, never at peace



## PEACE

Till it burst forth blinding, withering the earth;  
To set again into rock  
Grey-black rock.

Call it Peace?

*Taormina*

## TREES

### CYPRESSES

Tuscan cypresses  
What is it?

Folded in like a dark thought  
For which the language is lost,  
Tuscan cypresses,  
Is there a great secret?  
Are our words no good?

The undeliverable secret,  
Dead with a dead race and a dead speech, and yet  
Darkly monumental in you,  
Etruscan cypresses.

Ah, how I admire your fidelity,  
Dark cypresses.

Is it the secret of the long-nosed Etruscans?  
The long-nosed, sensitive-footed, subtly-smiling  
Etruscans  
Who made so little noise outside the cypress groves?

## T R E E S

Among the sinuous, flame-tall cypresses  
That swayed their length of darkness all around  
Etruscan-dusky, wavering men of old Etruria:  
Naked except for fanciful long shoes,  
Going with insidious, half-smiling quietness  
And some of Africa's imperturbable sang-froid  
About a forgotten business.

What business, then?  
Nay, tongues are dead, and words are hollow as hollow  
seed-pods,  
Having shed their sound and finished all their echoing  
Etruscan syllables,  
That had the telling.

Yet more I see you darkly concentrate  
Tuscan cypresses,  
On one old thought:  
On one old slim imperishable thought, while you  
remain  
Etruscan cypresses;  
Dusky, slim marrow-thought of slender, flickering  
men of Etruria,  
Whom Rome called vicious.

They say the fit survive;  
But I invoke the spirits of the lost.  
Those that have not survived, the darkly lost,

## T R E E S

To bring their meaning back into life again,  
Which they have taken away  
And wrapt inviolable in soft cypress trees,  
Etruscan cypresses.

Evil, what is evil?  
There is only one evil, to deny life  
As Rome denied Etruria  
And mechanical America Montezuma still.

*Fiesole*

## TREES

### BARE FIG-TREES

Fig-trees, weird fig-trees  
Made of thick smooth silver,  
Made of sweet, untarnished silver in the sea-southern  
air—

I say untarnished, but I mean opaque—  
Thick, smooth-fleshed silver, dull only as human limbs  
are dull

With the life-lustre,  
Nude with the dim light of full, healthy life  
That is always half-dark,  
And suave like passion-flower petals,  
Like passion-flowers,  
With the half-secret gleam of a passion-flower hanging  
from the rock,  
Great, complicated, nude fig-tree, stemless flower-  
mesh.

Flowerily naked in flesh, and giving off hues of life;  
Rather like an octopus, but strange and sweet-myriad-  
limbed octopus;  
Like a nude, like a rock-living, sweet-fleshed sea  
anemone

Flourishing from the rock in a mysterious arrogance.

## T R E E S

Let me sit down beneath the many-branching candela-  
brum  
That lives upon this rock  
And laugh at Time, and laugh at dull Eternity  
And make a joke of stale Infinity  
Within the flesh-scent of this wicked tree  
That has kept so many secrets up its sleeve  
And has been laughing through so many ages  
At man and his uncomfortablenesses,  
And his attempt to assure himself that what is so is  
not so,  
Up its sleeve.

Let me sit down beneath this many-branching candela-  
brum,  
The Jewish seven-branched, holy-stinking candlestick  
kicked over the cliff  
And all its stiff-necked righteousness got rid of,  
And let me notice it behave itself.

And watch it putting forth each time to heaven  
Each time straight to heaven.  
With marvellous naked assurance each single twig,  
Each one setting off straight to the sky  
As if it were the leader, the main-stem, the forerunner  
Intent to hold the candle of the sun upon its socket-tip,  
It alone.

## T R E E S

Every young twig  
No sooner issued sideways from the thigh of his  
predecessor  
Than off he starts without a qualm  
To hold the one and only lighted candle of the sun in  
his socket-tip.  
He casually gives birth to another young bud from  
his thigh,  
Which at once sets off to be the one and only  
And hold the lighted candle of the sun.

Oh many-branching candelabrum, oh strange up-  
starting fig-tree!  
Oh weird Demos, where every twig is the arch twig!  
Each imperiously over-equal to each, equality over-  
reaching itself  
Like the snakes on Medusa's head  
Oh naked fig-tree!

Still, no doubt every one of you can be the sun-socket  
as well as every other of you.  
Demos, Demos, Demos!  
Demon, too;  
Wicked fig-tree, equality puzzle, with your self-  
conscious secret fruits.

*Taormina*

## TREES

### BARE ALMOND TREES

Wet almond trees, in the rain  
Like iron sticking grimly out of earth;  
Black almond trunks, in the rain  
Like iron implements twisted, hideous, out of the earth,  
Out of the deep, soft fledge of Sicilian winter-green  
Earth-grass uneatable,  
Almond trunks curving blackly, iron-dark, climbing  
the slopes.

Almond tree, beneath the terrace rail,  
Black, rusted, iron trunk  
You have welded your thin stems finer,  
Like steel, like sensitive steel in the air;  
Grey, lavender, sensitive steel, curving thinly and  
brittly up in a parabola.

What are you doing in the December rain?  
Have you a strange electric sensitiveness in your steel  
tips?  
Do you feel the air for electric influences  
Like some strange magnetic apparatus?



## T R E E S

Do you take in messages, in some strange code,  
From heaven's wolfish, wandering electricity, that  
    prowls so constantly round Etna?  
Do you take the whisper of sulphur from the air?  
Do you hear the chemical accents of the sun?  
Do you telephone the roar of the waters-over-the-  
    earth?  
And from all this, do you make calculations?

Sicily, December's Sicily in a mass of rain  
With iron branching blackly, rusted like old, twisted  
    implements  
And brandishing and stooping over earth's wintry  
    fledge, climbing the slopes  
Of uneatable soft green!

*Taormina*

## TROPIC

Sun, dark sun  
Sun of black void heat  
Sun of the torrid mid-day's horrific darkness

Behold my hair twisting and going black.  
Behold my eyes turn tawny yellow  
Negroid;  
See the milk of northern spume  
Coagulating and going black in my veins  
Aromatic as frankincense.

Columns dark and soft  
Sunblack men  
Soft shafts, sunbreathing mouths  
Eyes of yellow, golden sand  
As frictional as perilous, explosive brimstone.

Rock, waves of dark heat;  
Waves of dark heat, rock, sway upwards  
Waver perpendicular.

What is the horizontal rolling of water  
Compared to the flood of black heat that rolls upward  
past my eyes.

*Taormina*

## SOUTHERN NIGHT

Come up, thou red thing.  
Come up, and be called a moon.

The mosquitoes are biting tonight  
Like memories.

Memories, northern memories,  
Bitter-stinging white world that bore us  
Subsiding into this night.

Call it moonrise  
This red anathema?

Rise, thou red thing!  
Unfold slowly upwards, blood-dark;  
Burst the night's membrane of tranquil stars  
Finally.

Maculate  
The red Macula.

*Taormina*

## FLOWERS

### ALMOND BLOSSOM

Even iron can put forth,  
Even iron.

This is the iron age,  
But let us take heart  
Seeing iron break and bud  
Seeing rusty iron puff with clouds of blossom.

The almond tree  
December's bare iron hooks sticking out of earth.

The almond tree  
That knows the deadliest poison, like a snake  
In supreme bitterness.

Upon the iron, and upon the steel,  
Odd flakes as if of snow, odd bits of snow,  
Odd crumbs of melting snow.

But you mistake, it is not from the sky;  
From out the iron, and from out the steel

## FLOWERS

Flying not down from heaven, but storming up  
Strange storming up from the dense under-earth  
Along the iron, to the living steel  
In rose-hot tips, and flakes of rose-pale snow  
Setting supreme annunciation to the world.

Nay, what a heart of delicate super-faith,  
Iron-breaking,  
The rusty swords of almond trees.

Trees suffer, like races, down the long ages.  
They wander and are exiled, they live in exile through  
    long ages  
Like drawn blades never sheathed, hacked and gone  
    black,  
The alien trees in alien lands: and yet  
The heart of blossom  
The unquenchable heart of blossom!

Look at the many-cicatrised frail vine, none more  
    scarred and frail;  
Yet see him fling himself abroad in fresh abandon  
From the small wound-stump.

Even the wilful, obstinate, gummy fig-tree  
Can't be kept down, but he'll burst like a polyp into  
    prolixity.

And the almond tree, in exile, in the iron age!

## FLOWERS

This is the ancient southern earth whence the vases  
were baked, amphoras, craters, cantharus,  
œnochœ and open-hearted cyclix,  
Bristling now with the iron of almond trees.

Iron, but unforgetting  
Iron, dawn-hearted  
Ever-beating dawn-heart, enveloped in iron against the  
exile, against the age.

See it come forth in blossom  
From the snow-remembering heart  
In long-nighted January,  
In the long dark nights of the evenstar, and Sirius,  
and the Etna snow-wind through the long  
night.

Sweating his drops of blood through the long-nighted  
Gethsemane  
Into blossom, into pride, into honey-triumph, into  
most exquisite splendour.  
Oh, give me the tree of life in blossom  
And the Cross sprouting its superb and fearless  
flowers!

Something must be reassuring to the almond, in the  
evening star, and the snow-wind, and the  
long, long nights,

## FLOWERS

Some memory of far, sun-gentler lands,  
So that the faith in his heart smiles again  
And his blood ripples with that untellable delight of  
    once-more-vindicated faith  
And the Gethsemane blood at the iron pores unfolds,  
    unfolds,  
Pearls itself into tenderness of bud  
And in a great and sacred forthcoming steps forth,  
    steps out in one stride  
A naked tree of blossom, like a bridegroom bathing in  
    dew, divested of cover  
Frail-naked, utterly uncovered  
To the green night-baying of the dog-star, Etna's  
    snow-edged wind  
And January's loud-seeming sun.

Think of it, from the iron fastness  
Suddenly to dare to come out naked, in perfection of  
    blossom, beyond the sword-rust.  
Think, to stand there in full-unfolded nudity, smiling  
With all the snow-wind, and the sun-glare, and the  
    dog-star baying epithalamion.

Oh, honey-bodied beautiful one  
Come forth from iron  
Red your heart is.  
Fragile-tender, fragile-tender life-body

## FLOWERS

More fearless than iron all the time  
And so much prouder, so disdainful of reluctances.

In the distance like hoar-frost, like silvery ghosts  
          communing on a green hill,  
Hoar-frost-like and mysterious.

In the garden raying out  
With a body like spray, dawn-tender, and looking about  
With such insuperable, subtly-smiling assurance  
Sword-blade-born.

Unpromised,  
No bounds being set.  
Flaked out and come unpromised,  
The tree being life-divine,  
Fearing nothing, life-blissful at the core  
Within iron and earth.

Knots of pink, fish-silvery  
In heaven, in blue, blue heaven,  
Soundless, blissful, wide-rayed, honey-bodied  
Red at the core  
Red at the core  
Knotted in heaven upon the fine light.

Open  
Open



## FLOWERS

Five times wide open  
Six times wide open  
And given, and perfect;  
And red at the core with the last sore-heartedness,  
Sore-hearted-looking.

*Fontana Vecchia*

## FLOWERS

### PURPLE ANEMONES

*Who gave us flowers?  
Heaven? The white God?*

Nonsense!  
Up out of hell  
From Hades;  
Infernal Dis!

*Jesus the god of flowers——?*  
Not he.  
*Or sun-bright Apollo, him so musical?*  
Him neither.

*Who then?*  
*Say who;*  
Say it—and it is Pluto,  
Dis  
The dark one  
Proserpine's master.

*Who contradicts——?*

## FLOWERS

When she broke forth from below,  
Flowers came, hell-hounds on her heels.  
Dis, the dark, the jealous god, the husband  
Flower-sumptuous-blooded.

*Go then*, he said.  
And in Sicily, on the meadows of Enna  
She thought she had left him;  
But opened around her purple anemones  
Caverns  
Little hells of color, caves of darkness,  
Hell, risen in pursuit of her; royal, sumptuous  
Pit-falls.

All at her feet  
Hell opening;  
At her white ankles  
Hell rearing its husband-splendid, serpent heads,  
Hell-purple, to get at her——  
*Why did he let her go?*  
So he could track her down again, white victim.

Ah mastery!  
Hell's husband-blossoms  
Out on earth again.

Look out, Persephone!

## FLOWERS

You, Madame Ceres, mind yourself, the enemy is  
upon you.

About your feet spontaneous aconite,

Hell-glamorous, and purple husband-tyranny  
Enveloping your late-enfranchised plains.  
You thought your daughter had escaped?  
No longer husband-hampered by the hell-lord, down  
in hell?  
But ah my dear!

Aha, the stripe-checked whelps, whippet-slim crocuses!  
*At 'em, boys, at 'em!*  
*Ho golden-spaniel, sweet alert narcissus,*  
*Smell 'em, smell 'em out!*  
Those two enfranchised women.

Somebody is coming!  
*Oho there!*

Dark blue anemones!  
Hell is up!  
Hell on earth, and Dis within the depths!

*Run, Persephone, he is after you already.*

*Why did he let her go?*

## FLOWERS

To track her down;  
All the sport of summer and spring, and flowers  
snapping at her ankles and catching her by  
the hair;  
Poor Persephone and her rights for women.

*Husband-snared hell-queen  
It is spring.*

It is spring  
And pomp of husband-strategy on earth.

*Ceres, kiss your girl, you think you've got her back.  
The bit of husband-tilth she is,  
Persephone!*

Poor mother-in-laws!  
They are always sold.

It is spring.

*Taormina.*

## FLOWERS

### SICILIAN CYCLAMENS

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

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

## FLOWERS

Beautiful  
Frost-filigreed  
Spumed with mud  
Snail-nacreous  
Low down.

The shaking aspect of the sea  
And man's defenceless bare face  
And cyclamens putting their ears back.

Long, pensive, slim-muzzled greyhound buds  
Dreamy, not yet present,  
Drawn out of earth  
At his toes.

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

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

## FLOWERS

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

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

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

Rose cyclamen, ecstatic fore-runner!  
Cyclamens, ruddy-muzzled cyclamens  
In little bunches like bunches of wild hares  
Muzzles together, ears-aprick  
Whispering witchcraft  
Like women at a well, the dawn-fountain.

Greece, and the world's morning  
While all the Parthenon marbles still fostered the  
roots of the cyclamen.

Violets  
Pagan, rosy-muzzled violets  
Autumnal  
Dawn-pink,  
Dawn-pale  
Among squat toad-leaves sprinkling the unborn  
Erechtheion marbles.

*Taormina*



## FLOWERS

### HIBISCUS AND SALVIA FLOWERS

*Hark! Hark!  
The dogs do bark!  
It's the socialists come to town,  
None in rags and none in tags,  
Swaggering up and down.*

Sunday morning,  
And from the Sicilian townlets skirting Etna  
The Socialists have gathered upon us, to look at us.

How shall we know them when we see them?  
How shall we know them now they've come?

Not by their rags and not by their tags  
Nor by any reproachful gown;  
The same unremarkable Sunday suit  
And hats cocked up and down.

Yet there they are, youths, loutishly  
Strolling in gangs and staring along the Corso  
With the gang-stare

## FLOWERS

And a half-threatening envy  
At every *forestiere*,  
Every lordly tuppenny foreigner from the hotels,  
fattening on the exchange.

*Hark! Hark!*  
*The dogs do bark!*  
*It's the socialists in the town.*

Sans rags, sans tags,  
Sans beards, sans bags,  
Sans any distinction at all except loutish commonness.

How do we know then, that they are they?  
Bolshevists.  
Leninists.  
Communists.  
Socialists.  
-Ists! -Ists!

Alas, salvia and hibiscus flowers.  
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.

Listen again.  
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.  
Is it not so?  
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.

## FLOWERS

*Hark! Hark!*  
*The dogs do bark!*  
Salvia and hibiscus flowers.

Who smeared their doors with blood?  
Who on their breasts  
Put salvias and hibiscus?

Rosy, rosy scarlet,  
And flame-rage, golden throated  
Bloom along the Corso on the living, perambulating  
bush.

Who said they might assume these blossoms?  
What god did they consult?

Rose-red, princess hibiscus, rolling her pointed  
Chinese petals!  
Azalea and camellia, single peony  
And pomegranate bloom and scarlet mallow-flower  
And all the eastern, exquisite royal plants  
That noble blood has brought us down the ages!  
Gently-nurtured, frail and splendid  
Hibiscus flower—  
Alas, the Sunday coats of Sicilian bolshevists!

Pure blood, and noble blood, in the fine and rose-red  
veins;

## FLOWERS

Small, interspersed with jewels of white gold  
Frail-filigreed among the rest;  
Rose of the oldest races of princesses, Polynesian  
hibiscus.

Eve, in her happy moments  
Put hibiscus in her hair,  
Before she took to knowledge, before she spoilt it all  
by knowing better.

Sicilian bolshevists  
With hibiscus flowers in the buttonholes of your  
Sunday suits,  
Come now, speaking of rights, what right have you  
to this flower?

The exquisite and ageless aristocracy  
Of a peerless soul!  
Blessed are the pure in heart and the fathomless in  
bright pride!  
The loveliness that knows *noblesse oblige*;  
The natural royalty of red hibiscus flowers;  
The exquisite assertions of pure life  
Risen from the roots:  
Have it this way, will you, red-decked socialists,  
Hibiscus-breasted?  
If it be so, I fly to join you,

## FLOWERS

And if it be not so, who are you, to pull down hibiscus  
flowers!

Or salvia!  
Or dragon-mouthed salvia with gold throat of wrath!  
Flame-flushed, enraged, splendid salvia,  
Cock-crested, crowing your orange scarlet like a tocsin  
Along the Corso all this Sunday morning.

Is your wrath red as salvias',  
You socialists?  
You with your grudging, envious, furtive rage,  
In Sunday suits and yellow boots along the Corso,  
Salvia flowers become you, I must say.

Warrior-like, dawn-cock's-comb flaring flower  
Shouting forth flame to set the world on fire,  
The dust-heap of man's filthy world on fire,  
And burn it down, the gluttoned, stuffy world,  
And feed the young new fields of life with ash  
With ash I say  
Bolshevists  
Your ashes even, my friends  
Among much other ash.

If there were salvia-savage bolshevists  
To burn the world back to manure-good ash,  
Wouldn't I stick the salvia in my coat!  
But these themselves must burn, these louts!

## FLOWERS

The dragon-faced  
The anger-reddened, furious-throated salvia  
With its long antennæ of rage put out  
Upon the frightened air.  
Ugh, how I love its fangs of perfect rage  
That gnash the air;  
The molten gold of its intolerable rage  
Hot in the throat.

I long to be a bolshevist  
And set the stinking rubbish-heap of this foul world  
Afire at a myriad scarlet points;  
A bolshevist, a salvia-face  
To lick the world with flame that licks it clean.

I long to see its chock-full crowdedness  
And gluttoned squirming populousness on fire  
Like a field of filthy weeds  
Burnt back to ash,  
And then to see the new, real souls sprout up.  
Not this vast rotting cabbage-patch we call the world;  
But from the ash-scarred fallow  
New wild souls.

Nettles, and a rose sprout,  
Hibiscus, and mere grass,  
Salvia still in a rage  
And almond honey-still,

## FLOWERS

And fig-wort stinking for the carrion wasp;  
All the lot of them, and let each hold his own.

Without a trace of foul equality  
None of them holding more than is his own.  
You need not clear the world like a cabbage-patch  
for me;  
Leave me my nettles,  
Let me fight the wicked, obstreperous weeds myself,  
and put them in their place, and keep them  
there;  
I don't at all want to annihilate them,  
I like the fight with them,  
But I won't be put on a cabbage-idealistic level of  
equality with them.

What rot, to see the cabbage and hibiscus tree  
As equals!  
What rot, to say the louts along the Corso  
In Sunday suits and yellow shoes  
Are my equals!  
I am their superior, saluting the hibiscus flower, not  
them.  
The same I say to the profiteers from the hotels, the  
money-fat-ones,  
Profiteers here being called dog-fish, stinking dog-fish,  
sharks.  
The same I say to the pale and elegant persons,

## FLOWERS

Pale-face authorities loitering tepidly:  
*That I salute the red hibiscus flowers*  
*And send mankind to its inferior blazes,*  
Mankind's inferior blazes,  
And these along with it, all the inferior lot—  
These bolshevists,  
These dog-fish,  
These precious and ideal ones,  
All rubbish ready for fire.

And I salute hibiscus and the salvia flower  
Upon the breasts of loutish bolshevists,  
Damned loutish bolshevists,  
Who perhaps will do the business after all,  
In the long run, in spite of themselves.

Meanwhile, alas  
For me no fellow-men,  
No salvia-frenzied comrades, antennæ  
Of yellow-red, outreaching, living wrath  
Upon the smouldering air,  
And throat of brimstone-molten angry gold.  
Red, angry men are a race extinct, alas!

Never  
To be a bolshevist  
With a hibiscus flower behind my ear  
In sign of life, of lovely, dangerous life



## FLOWERS

And passionate disquality of men;  
In sign of dauntless, silent violets,  
And impudent nettles grabbing the under-earth,  
And cabbages born to be cut and eat,  
And salvia fierce to crow and shout for fight,  
And rosy red hibiscus wincingly  
Unfolding all her coiled and lovely self  
In a doubtful world.

Never, bolshevistically  
To be able to stand for all these!  
Alas, alas, I have got to leave it all  
To the youths in Sunday suits and yellow shoes  
Who have pulled down the salvia flowers  
And rosy delicate hibiscus flowers  
And everything else to their disgusting level,  
Never, of course, to put anything up again.

But yet  
If they pull all the world down,  
The process will amount to the same in the end.  
Instead of flame and flame-clean ash  
Slow watery rotting back to level muck  
And final humus,  
Whence the re-start.

And still I cannot bear it  
That they take hibiscus and the salvia flower.

*Taormina*

# THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

## ST. MATTHEW

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

I, Matthew, am a man.

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

That is Jesus.  
But then Jesus was not quite a man.  
He was the Son of Man  
Filius Meus, O remorseless logic  
Out of His own mouth.

I, Matthew, being a man  
Cannot be lifted up, the Paraclete,  
To draw all men unto me,  
Seeing I am on a par with all men.

I, on the other hand  
Am drawn to the Uplifted, as all men are drawn

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

To the Son of Man  
*Filius Meus.*

*Wilt thou lift me up, Son of Man?*  
How my heart beats!  
I am man.

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

Yes, even during my uplifting.

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

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

So I will be lifted up, Saviour,  
But put me down again in time, Master,

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

Before my heart stops beating, and I become what I  
am not.

Put me down again on the earth, Jesus, on the brown  
soil

Where flowers sprout in the acrid humus, and fade  
into humus again.

Where beasts drop their unlicked young, and pasture,  
and drop their droppings among the turf.

Where the adder darts horizontal.

Down on the damp, unceasing ground, where my feet  
belong

And even my heart, Lord, forever, after all uplifting:  
The crumbling, damp, fresh land, life horizontal and  
ceaseless.

Matthew I am, the man.

And I take the wings of the morning, to Thee,  
Crucified, Glorified.

But while flowers club their petals at evening

And rabbits make pills among the short grass

And long snakes quickly glide into the dark hole in  
the wall, hearing man approach,

I must be put down, Lord, in the afternoon,

And at evening I must leave off my wings of the spirit

As I leave off my braces

And I must resume my nakedness like a fish, sinking  
down the dark reversion of night

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

Like a fish seeking the bottom, Jesus,  
ΙΧΘΥΣ

Face downwards

Veering slowly

Down between the steep slopes of darkness, fucus-dark,  
seaweed-fringed valleys of the waters under  
the sea

Over the edge of the soundless cataract

Into the fathomless, bottomless pit

Where my soul falls in the last throes of bottomless  
convulsion, and is fallen

Utterly beyond Thee, Dove of the Spirit;

Beyond everything, except itself.

Nay, Son of Man, I have been lifted up.

To Thee I rose like a rocket ending in mid-heaven.

But even Thou, Son of Man, canst not quaff out the  
dregs of terrestrial manhood!

They fall back from Thee.

They fall back, and like a dripping of quicksilver  
taking the downward track,

Break into drops, burn into drops of blood, and  
dropping, dropping take wing

Membraned, blood-veined wings.

On fans of unsuspected tissue, like bats

They thread and thrill and flicker ever downward

To the dark zenith of Thine antipodes

Jesus Uplifted.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

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

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

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

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

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

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

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

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

### ST. MARK

There was a lion in Judah  
Which whelped, and was Mark.

But winged.  
A lion with wings.  
At least at Venice.  
Even as late as Daniele Manin.

Why should he have wings?  
Is he to be a bird also?  
Or a spirit?  
Or a winged thought?  
Or a soaring consciousness?

Evidently he is all that  
The lion of the spirit.

Ah, Lamb of God  
Would a wingless lion lie down before Thee, as this  
winged lion lies?

The lion of the spirit.



## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

Once he lay in the mouth of a cave  
And sunned his whiskers,  
And lashed his tail slowly, slowly  
Thinking of voluptuousness  
Even of blood.

But later, in the sun of the afternoon  
Having tasted all there was to taste, and having slept  
his fill  
He fell to frowning, as he lay with his head on his  
paws  
And the sun coming in through the narrowest fibril  
of a slit in his eyes.

So, nine-tenths asleep, motionless, bored, and statically  
angry,  
He saw in a shaft of light a lamb on a pinnacle,  
balancing a flag on its paw,  
And he was thoroughly startled.

Going out to investigate  
He found the lamb beyond him, on the inaccessible  
pinnacle of light.  
So he put his paw to his nose, and pondered.

"Guard my sheep," came the silvery voice from the  
pinnacle,  
"And I will give thee the wings of the morning."  
So the lion of blood thought it was worth it.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

Hence he became a curly sheep-dog with dangerous  
propensities

As Carpaccio will tell you:

Ramping round, guarding the flock of mankind,  
Sharpening his teeth on the wolves,

Ramping up through the air like a kestrel  
And lashing his tail above the world  
And enjoying the sensation of heaven and righteous-  
ness and voluptuous wrath.

There is a new sweetness in his voluptuously licking  
his paw

Now that it is a weapon of heaven.

There is a new ecstasy in his roar of desirous love  
Now that it sounds self-conscious through the unlimited  
sky.

He is well aware of himself

And he cherishes voluptuous delights, and thinks about  
them

And ceases to be a blood-thirsty king of beasts

And becomes the faithful sheep-dog of the Shepherd,  
thinking of his voluptuous pleasures of chas-  
ing the sheep to the fold

And increasing the flock, and perhaps giving a real nip  
here and there, a real pinch, but always well  
meant.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

And somewhere there is a lioness  
The she-mate.  
Whelps play between the paws of the lion,  
The she-mate purrs  
Their castle is impregnable, their cave,  
The sun comes in their lair, they are well-off  
A well-to-do-family.

Then the proud lion stalks abroad, alone  
And roars to announce himself to the wolves  
And also to encourage the red-cross Lamb  
And chiefly to ensure a goodly increase in the world.

Look at him, with his paw on the world  
At Venice and elsewhere.  
Going blind at last.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

### ST. LUKE

A wall, a bastion,  
A living forehead with its slow whorl of hair  
And a bull's large, sombre, glancing eye  
And glistening, adhesive muzzle  
With cavernous nostrils where the winds run hot  
Snorting defiance,  
Or greedily snuffing behind the cows.

Horns  
The golden horns of power,  
Power to kill, power to create  
Such as Moses had, and God,  
Head-power.

Shall great wings flame from his shoulder sockets  
Assyrian-wise?  
It would be no wonder.

Knowing the thunder of his heart  
The massive thunder of his dew-lapped chest  
Deep and reverberating,

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

It would be no wonder if great wings, like flame,  
fanned out from the furnace-cracks of his  
shoulder-sockets.

Thud! Thud! Thud!  
And the roar of black bull's blood in the mighty  
passages of his chest.

Ah, the dewlap swings pendulous with excess.  
The great, roaring weight above  
Like a furnace dripping a molten drip.

The urge, the massive, burning ache  
Of the bull's breast.  
The open furnace-doors of his nostrils.

For what does he ache, and groan?

In his breast a wall?

Nay, once it was also a fortress wall, and the weight  
of a vast battery.

But now it is a burning hearthstone only,  
Massive old altar of his own burnt offering.

It was always an altar of burnt offering  
His own black blood poured out like a sheet of flame  
over his fecundating herd  
As he gave himself forth.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

But also it was a fiery fortress frowning shaggily on  
the world  
And announcing battle ready.

Since the Lamb bewitched him with that red-struck  
flag  
His fortress is dismantled  
His fires of wrath are banked down  
His horns turn away from the enemy.

He serves the Son of Man.

And hear him bellow, after many years, the bull that  
serves the Son of Man.  
Moaning, booing, roaring hollow  
Constrained to pour forth all his fire down the narrow  
sluice of procreation  
Through such narrow loins, too narrow.

Is he not over-charged by the dammed-up pressure  
of his own massive black blood  
Luke, the Bull, the father of substance, the Providence  
Bull, after two thousand years?  
Is he not overful of offering, a vast, vast offer of  
himself  
Which must be poured through so small a vent?

Too small a vent.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

Let him remember his horns, then.

Seal up his forehead once more to a bastion,

Let it know nothing.

Let him charge like a mighty catapult on the red-  
cross flag, let him roar out challenge on the  
world

And throwing himself upon it, throw off the madness  
of his blood.

Let it be war.

And so it is war.

The bull of the proletariat has got his head down.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

### ST. JOHN

John, Oh John,  
Thou honourable bird  
Sun-peering eagle.

Taking a bird's-eye view  
Even of Calvary and Resurrection,  
Not to speak of Babylon's whoredom.

High over the mild effulgence of the dove  
Hung all the time, did we but know it, the all-knowing  
shadow  
Of John's great gold-barred eagle.

John knew all about it  
Even the very beginning.

"In the beginning was the Word  
And the word was God  
And the Word was with God."

Having been to school  
John knew the whole proposition.



## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

As for innocent Jesus  
He was one of Nature's phenomena, no doubt.

Oh that mind-soaring eagle of an Evangelist  
Staring creation out of countenance  
And telling it off  
As an eagle staring down on the Sun!

The Logos, the Logos!  
"In the beginning was the Word."

Is there not a great Mind pre-ordaining?  
Does not a supreme Intellect ideally procreate the  
Universe?  
Is not each soul a vivid thought in the great conscious-  
ness-stream of God?

Put salt on his tail  
The sly bird of John.

Proud intellect, high-soaring Mind  
Like a king eagle, bird of the most High, sweeping  
the round of heaven  
And casting the cycles of creation  
On two wings, like a pair of compasses;  
Jesus' pale and lambent dove, cooing in the lower  
boughs  
On sufferance.

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

In the beginning was the Word, of course.  
And the word was the first offspring of the almighty  
Johannine mind,  
Chick of the intellectual eagle.

Yet put salt on the tail of the Johannine bird,  
Put salt on its tail  
John's eagle.

Shoo it down out of the empyrean  
Of the all-seeing, all-fore-ordaining ideal.  
Make it roost on bird-spattered, rocky Patmos  
And let it moult there, among the stones of the bitter  
sea.

For the almighty eagle of the fore-ordaining Mind  
Is looking rather shabby and island-bound these days:  
Moulting, and rather nak'd about the rump, and down  
in the beak,  
Rather dirty, on dung-whitened Patmos.

From which we are led to assume  
That the old bird is weary, and almost willing  
That a new chick should chip the extensive shell  
Of the mundane egg.

The poor old golden eagle of the creative spirit  
Moulting and moping and waiting, willing at last

## THE EVANGELISTIC BEASTS

For the fire to burn it up, feathers and all  
So that a new conception of the beginning and end  
Can rise from the ashes.

Ah Phœnix, Phœnix  
John's Eagle!  
You are only known to us now as the badge of an  
insurance Company.

Phœnix, Phœnix  
The nest is in flames  
Feathers are singeing,  
Ash flutters flocculent, like down on a blue, wan  
fledgeling.

*San Gervasio*

## CREATURES

### MOSQUITO

When did you start your tricks  
Monsieur?

What do you stand on such high legs for?  
Why this length of shredded shank  
You exaltation?

Is it so that you shall lift your centre of gravity  
                  upwards  
And weigh no more than air as you alight upon me,  
Stand upon me weightless, you phantom?

I heard a woman call you the Winged Victory  
In sluggish Venice.  
You turn your head towards your tail, and smile.

How can you put so much devilry  
Into that translucent phantom shred  
Of a frail corpus?

Queer, with your thin wings and your streaming legs  
How you sail like a heron, or a dull clot of air,  
A nothingness.

## CREATURES

Yet what an aura surrounds you;  
Your evil little aura, prowling, and casting a numbness  
on my mind.

That is your trick, your bit of filthy magic:  
Invisibility, and the anæsthetic power  
To deaden my attention in your direction.

But I know your game now, streaky sorcerer.

Queer, how you stalk and prowl the air  
In circles and evasions, enveloping me,  
Ghoul on wings  
Winged Victory.

Settle, and stand on long thin shanks  
Eyeing me sideways, and cunningly conscious that I  
am aware,  
You speck.  
I hate the way you lurch off sideways into air  
Having read my thoughts against you.

Come then, let us play at unawares  
And see who wins in this sly game of bluff,  
Man or mosquito.  
You don't know that I exist, and I don't know that  
you exist.

Now then!

## CREATURES

It is your trump.  
It is your hateful little trump  
You pointed fiend,  
Which shakes my sudden blood to hatred of you:  
It is your small, high, hateful bugle in my ear

Why do you do it?  
Surely it is bad policy.

They say you can't help it.

If that is so, then I believe a little in Providence  
protecting the innocent.

But it sounds so amazingly like a slogan,  
A yell of triumph as you snatch my scalp.

Blood, red blood  
Super-magical  
Forbidden liquor.

I behold you stand  
For a second enspasmed in oblivion,  
Obscenely ecstasied  
Sucking live blood,  
My blood.

Such silence, such suspended transport,  
Such gorging,  
Such obscenity of trespass.

## CREATURES

You stagger  
As well as you may.  
Only your accursed hairy frailty  
Your own imponderable weightlessness  
Saves you, wafts you away on the very draught my  
    anger makes in its snatching.

Away with a pæan of derision  
You winged blood-drop.

Can I not overtake you?  
Are you one too many for me  
Winged Victory?  
Am I not mosquito enough to out-mosquito you?

Queer, what a big stain my sucked blood makes  
Beside the infinitesimal faint smear of you!  
Queer, what a dim dark smudge you have disappeared  
    into!

*Siracusa*

## CREATURES

### FISH

Fish, oh Fish  
So little matters!

Whether the waters rise and cover the earth  
Or whether the waters wilt in the hollow places,  
All one to you.

Aqueous, subaqueous,  
Submerged  
And wave-thrilled.

As the waters roll  
Roll you.  
The waters wash,  
You wash in oneness  
And never emerge.

Never know,  
Never grasp.

Your life a sluice of sensation along your sides,  
A flush at the flails of your fins, down the whorl of your  
tail,



## CREATURES

And water wetly on fire in the grates of your gills;  
Fixed water-eyes.

Even snakes lie together.

But oh, fish, that rock in water,  
You lie only with the waters;  
One touch.

No fingers, no hands and feet, no lips;  
No tender muzzles,  
No wistful bellies,  
No loins of desire,  
None.

You and the naked element,  
Sway-wave.  
Curvetting bits of tin in the evening light.

Who is it ejects his sperm to the naked flood?  
In the wave-mother?  
Who swims enwombed?  
Who lies with the waters of his silent passion, womb-  
element?  
—Fish in the waters under the earth.

What price *his* bread upon the waters?

Himself all silvery himself  
In the element  
No more.

## CREATURES

Nothing more.

Himself,  
And the element.  
Food, of course!  
Water-eager eyes  
Mouth-gate open  
And strong spine urging, driving;  
And desirous belly gulping.

Fear also!  
He knows fear!  
Water-eyes craning,  
A rush that almost screams,  
Almost fish-voice  
As the pike comes. . . .  
Then gay fear, that turns the tail sprightly, from a  
shadow.

Food, and fear, and joie de vivre,  
Without love.

The other way about:  
Joie de vivre, and fear, and food,  
All without love.

Quelle joie de vivre  
Dans l'eau!

## CREATURES

Slowly to gape through the waters,  
Alone with the element;  
To sink, and rise, and go to sleep with the waters;  
To speak endless inaudible wavelets into the wave;  
To breathe from the flood at the gills,  
Fish-blood slowly running next to the flood, extracting  
fish-fire;  
To have the element under one, like a lover;  
And to spring away with a curvetting click in the air,  
Provocative.  
Dropping back with a slap on the face of the flood  
And merging oneself!

To be a fish!

So utterly without misgiving  
To be a fish  
In the waters.

Loveless, and so lively!  
Born before God was love,  
Or life knew loving.  
Beautifully beforehand with it all.

Admitted, they swarm in companies,  
Fishes.  
They drive in shoals.  
But soundless, and out of contact.

## CREATURES

They exchange no word, no spasm, not even anger.  
Not one touch.  
Many suspended together, forever apart,  
Each one alone with the waters, upon one wave with  
the rest.

A magnetism in the water between them only.

I saw a water-serpent swim across the Anapo,  
And I said to my heart, *look, look at him!*  
*With his head up, steering like a bird!*  
*He's a rare one, but he belongs. . . .*

But sitting in a boat on the Zeller lake  
And watching the fishes in the breathing waters  
Lift and swim and go their way—

I said to my heart, *who are these?*  
And my heart couldn't own them. . . .

A slim young pike, with smart fins  
And grey-striped suit, a young cub of a pike  
Slouching along away below, half out of sight,  
Like a lout on an obscure pavement. . . .

Aha, there's somebody in the know!

But watching closer  
That motionless deadly motion,

## CREATURES

That unnatural barrel body, that long ghoul nose . . .  
I left off hailing him.

I had made a mistake, I didn't know him,  
This grey, monotonous soul in the water,  
This intense individual in shadow,  
Fish-alive.

I didn't know his God,  
I didn't know his God.

Which is perhaps the last admission that life has to  
wring out of us.

I saw, dimly,  
Once a big pike rush,  
And small fish fly like splinters.  
And I said to my heart, *there are limits*  
*To you, my heart;*  
*And to the one God.*  
*Fish are beyond me.*

Other Gods  
Beyond my range . . . gods beyond my God. . . .

They are beyond me, are fishes.  
I stand at the pale of my being  
And look beyond, and see

## CREATURES

Fish, in the outerwards,  
As one stands on a bank and looks in.

I have waited with a long rod  
And suddenly pulled a gold-and-greenish, lucent fish  
from below,  
And had him fly like a halo round my head,  
Lunging in the air on the line.

Unhooked his gorping, water-horny mouth,  
And seen his horror-tilted eye,  
His red-gold, water-precious, mirror-flat bright eye;  
And felt him beat in my hand, with his mucous,  
leaping lifethrob.

And my heart accused itself  
Thinking: *I am not the measure of creation.*  
*This is beyond me, this fish.*  
*His God stands outside my God.*

And the gold-and-green pure lacquer-mucous comes  
off in my hand,  
And the red-gold mirror-eye stares and dies,  
And the water-suave contour dims.

But not before I have had to know  
He was born in front of my sunrise,  
Before my day.

## CREATURES

He outstarts me.  
And I, a many-fingered horror of daylight to him,  
Have made him die.

Fishes,  
With their gold, red eyes, and green-pure gleam, and  
under-gold,  
And their pre-world loneliness  
And more than lovelessness  
And white meat;  
They move in other circles.

Outsiders.  
Water-wayfarers.  
Things of one element.  
Aqueous,  
Each by itself.

Cats, and the Neapolitans,  
Sulphur sun-beasts,  
Thirst for fish as for more-than-water;  
Water-alive  
To quench their over-sulphureous lusts.

But I, I only wonder  
And don't know.  
I don't know fishes.

## CREATURES

In the beginning  
Jesus was called The Fish. . . .  
And in the end.

*Zell-am-See*



## CREATURES

### B A T

At evening, sitting on this terrace,  
When the sun from the west, beyond Pisa, beyond the  
    mountains of Carrara  
Departs, and the world is taken by surprise. . . .

When the tired flower of Florence is in gloom beneath  
    the glowing  
Brown hills surrounding. . . .

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

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

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

## CREATURES

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

Swallows?

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

Never swallows!  
*Bats!*  
The swallows are gone.

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

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

Pipistrello!  
Black piper on an infinitesimal pipe.  
Little lumps that fly in air and have voices indefinite,  
wildly vindictive;  
Wings like bits of umbrella.

## CREATURES

Bats!

Creatures that hang themselves up like an old rag, to  
sleep;  
And disgustingly upside down.

Hanging upside down like rows of disgusting old rags  
And grinning in their sleep.  
Bats!

Also for me!

*Florence*

## CREATURES

### MAN AND BAT

When I went into my room, at midmorning,  
Say ten o'clock . . .  
My room, a crash-box over that great stone rattle  
The Via de' Bardi . . .

When I went into my room at midmorning  
*Why? . . . a bird!*

A bird  
Flying round the room in insane circles.

In insane circles!  
. . . *A bat!*

A disgusting bat  
At midmorning! . . .

*Out! Go out!*

Round and round and round  
With a twitchy, nervous, intolerable flight  
And a neurasthenic lunge

## CREATURES

And an impure frenzy;  
A bat, big as a swallow!

*Out, out of my room!*

The Venetian shutters I push wide  
To the free, calm upper air;  
Loop back the curtains. . . .

*Now out, out from my room!*

So to drive him out, flicking with my white handker-  
chief: *Go!*  
But he will not.

Round and round and round  
In an impure haste  
Fumbling, a beast in air,  
And stumbling, lunging and touching the walls, the  
bell-wires  
About my room!

Always refusing to go out into the air  
Above that crash-gulf of the Via de' Bardi,  
Yet blind with frenzy, with cluttered fear.  
At last he swerved into the window bay,  
But blew back, as if an incoming wind blew him in  
again.

A strong intrushing wind.

## CREATURES

And round and round and round!  
Blundering more insane, and leaping, in throbs, to  
    clutch at a corner,  
At a wire, at a bell-rope:  
On and on, watched relentless by me, round and round  
    in my room,  
Round and round and dithering with tiredness and haste  
    and increasing delirium  
Flicker-splashing round my room.

I would not let him rest;  
Not one instant cleave, cling like a blot with his breast  
    to the wall  
In an obscure corner.  
Not an instant!

I flicked him on,  
Trying to drive him through the window.

Again he swerved into the window bay  
And I ran forward, to frighten him forth.  
But he rose, and from a terror worse than me he flew  
    past me  
Back into my room, and round, round, round in my  
    room  
Clutch, cleave, stagger,  
Dropping about the air  
Getting tired.

## CREATURES

Something seemed to blow him back from the window  
Every time he swerved at it;  
Back on a strange parabola, then round, round, dizzy  
in my room.

He *could* not go out;  
I also realised. . . .

It was the light of day which he could not enter,  
Any more than I could enter the white-hot door of a  
blast-furnace.

He could not plunge into the daylight that streamed  
at the window.

It was asking too much of his nature.

Worse even than the hideous terror of me with my  
handkerchief

Saying: *Out, go out!* . . .

Was the horror of white daylight in the window!

So I switched on the electric light, thinking: *Now*  
*The outside will seem brown.* . . .

But no.

The outside did not seem brown.

And he did not mind the yellow electric light.

Silent!

He was having a silent rest.

*But never!*

*Not in my room.*

## CREATURES

Round and round and round  
Near the ceiling as if in a web  
Staggering;  
Plunging, falling out of the web,  
Broken in heaviness,  
Lunging blindly,  
Heavier;  
And clutching, clutching for one second's pause,  
Always, as if for one drop of rest,  
One little drop.

And I!  
*Never*, I say. . . .  
*Go out!*

Flying slower,  
Seeming to stumble, to fall in air.  
Blind-weary.

Yet never able to pass the whiteness of light into  
freedom. . . .  
A bird would have dashed through, come what might.

Fall, sink, lurch, and round and round  
Flicker, flicker-heavy;  
Even wings heavy:  
And cleave in a high corner for a second, like a clot,  
also a prayer.



## CREATURES

*But no.*

*Out, you beast.*

Till he fell in a corner, palpitating, spent.  
And there, a clot, he squatted and looked at me.  
With sticking-out, bead-berry eyes, black,  
And improper derisive ears,  
And shut wings,  
And brown, furry body.



Brown, nut-brown, fine fur!  
But it might as well have been hair on a spider; thing  
With long, black-paper ears.

So, a dilemma!  
He squatted there like something unclean.

No, he must not squat, nor hang, obscene, in my room!  
Yet nothing on earth will give him courage to pass the  
sweet fire of day.

What then?  
Hit him and kill him and throw him away?

Nay,  
I didn't create him.  
Let the God that created him be responsible for his  
death. . . .  
Only, in the bright day, I will not have this clot in my  
room.

## CREATURES

Let the God who is maker of bats watch with them in  
their unclean corners. . . .

I admit a God in every crevice.  
But not bats in my room;  
Nor the God of bats, while the sun shines.

*So out, out you brute! . . .*  
And he lunged, flight-heavy, away from me, sideways,  
*a sghembo!*  
And round and round and round my room, a clot with  
wings  
Impure even in weariness.

Wings dark skinny and flapping the air,  
Lost their flicker.  
Spent.

He fell again with a little thud  
Near the curtain on the floor.  
And there lay.

Ah, death, death,  
You are no solution!  
Bats must be bats.

Only life has a way out.  
And the human soul is fated to wide-eyed responsibility  
In life.

## CREATURES

So I picked him up in a flannel jacket,  
Well covered, lest he should bite me.  
For I would have had to kill him if he'd bitten me, the  
    impure one. . . .  
And he hardly stirred in my hand, muffled up.

Hastily, I shook him out of the window.

And away he went!  
Fear craven in his tail.  
Great haste, and straight, almost bird-straight above  
    the Via de' Bardi.  
Above that crash-gulf of exploding whips,  
Towards the Borgo San Jacopo.

And now, at evening, as he flickers over the river,  
Dipping with petty triumphant flight, and tittering over  
    the sun's departure,  
I believe he chirps, pipistrello, seeing me here on this  
    terrace writing:  
*There he sits, the long loud one!*  
*But I am greater than he. . . .*  
*I escaped him. . . .*

*Florence*

## REPTILES

### SNAKE

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

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark  
carob tree

I came down the steps with my pitcher  
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was  
at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in  
the gloom

And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied  
down, over the edge of the stone trough

And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,  
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a  
small clearness,

He sipped with his straight mouth,  
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack  
long body,

Silently.

## REPTILES

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

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

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

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

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

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?  
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?

## REPTILES

Was it humility, to feel so honoured?  
I felt so honoured.

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

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

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

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,  
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,  
    and entered further,  
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his with-  
    drawing into that horrid black hole,

## REPTILES

Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly  
drawing himself after,  
Overcame me now his back was turned.

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

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

And immediately I regretted it.  
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!  
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed  
human education.

And I thought of the albatross,  
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

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

## REPTILES

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords  
Of life.

And I have something to expiate:

A pettiness.

*Taormina*



## BIRDS

### TURKEY - COCK

You ruffled black blossom,  
You glossy dark wind.

Your sort of gorgeousness.  
Dark and lustrous  
And skinny repulsive  
And poppy-glossy,  
Is the gorgeousness that evokes my most puzzled  
admiration.

Your aboriginality  
Deep, unexplained,  
Like a Red Indian darkly unfinished and aloof,  
Seems like the black and glossy seeds of countless  
centuries.

Your wattles are the colour of steel-slag which has  
been red hot  
And is going cold,  
Cooling to a powdery, pale-oxidised sky-blue.

## B I R D S

Why do you have wattles, and a naked, wattled head?  
Why do you arch your naked-set eye with a more-  
than-comprehensible arrogance!

The vulture is bald, so is the condor, obscenely,  
But only you have thrown this amazing mantilla of  
oxidised sky-blue  
And hot red over you.

This queer dross shawl of blue and vermilion,  
Whereas the peacock has a diadem.

I wonder why.

Perhaps it is a sort of uncanny decoration, a veil of  
loose skin.

Perhaps it is your assertion, in all this ostentation, of  
raw contradictoriness.

Your wattles drip down like a shawl to your breast  
And the point of your mantilla drops across your nose,  
unpleasantly.

Or perhaps it is something unfinished  
A bit of slag still adhering, after your firing in the  
furnace of creation.

Or perhaps there is something in your wattles of a  
bull's dew-lap  
Which slips down like a pendulum to balance the  
throbbing mass of a generous breast;

## B I R D S

The over-drip of a large life hanging in the balance.  
Only yours would be a raw, unsmelted life, that will  
not quite fuse into being.

You contract yourself  
You arch yourself as an archer's bow  
Which quivers indrawn as you clench your spine  
Until your veiled head almost touches backward  
To the root-rising of your erected tail.  
And one intense and backward-curving frisson  
Seizes you as you clench yourself together  
Like some fierce magnet bringing its poles together.

Burning, pale positive pole of your wattled head!  
And from the darkness of that opposite one  
The upstart of your round-barred, sun-round tail!

Whilst between the two, along the tense arch of your  
back  
Blows the magnetic current in fierce blasts,  
Ruffling black, shining feathers like lifted mail,  
Shuddering storm wind, or a water rushing through.

Your brittle, super-sensual arrogance  
Tosses the skinny crape across your brow and down  
your breast  
As you draw yourself upon yourself in insistence.

## B I R D S

It is a declaration of such tension in will  
As Time has not wished to avouch, nor eternity been  
    able to unbend  
Do what it may.  
A raw American will, that has never been tempered  
    by life;  
You brittle, will-tense bird with a foolish eye.

The peacock lifts his rods of bronze  
And struts blue-brilliant out of the far East.  
But watch a turkey prancing low on earth  
Drumming his vaulted wings, as savages drum  
Their rhythms on long-drawn, hollow, sinister drums.  
The ponderous, sombre sound of the great drum of  
    Huichilcbos  
In pyramid Mexico, during sacrifice.  
Drum, and the turkey onrush,  
Sudden, demonic dauntlessness, full abreast,  
All the bronze gloss of all his myriad petals  
Each one apart and instant.  
Delicate frail crescent of the gentle outline of white  
At each feather-tip  
So delicate;  
Yet the bronze wind-bell suddenly clashing  
And the eye over-weening into madness.

Turkey-cock, turkey-cock  
Are you the bird of the next dawn?

## B I R D S

Has the peacock had his day, does he call in vain,  
screecher, for the sun to rise?

The eagle, the dove, and the barnyard rooster, do they  
call in vain, trying to wake the morrow?

And do you await us, wattled father, Westward?  
Will your yell do it?

Take up the trail of the vanished American  
Where it disappeared at the foot of the crucifix?  
Take up the primordial Indian obstinacy,  
The more than human, dense insistence of will,  
And disdain, and blankness, and onrush, and prise open  
the new day with them?

The East a dead letter, and Europe moribund. . . . Is  
that so?

And those sombre, dead, feather-lustrous Aztecs,  
Amerindians,  
In all the sinister splendour of their red blood-sacrifices,  
Do they stand under the dawn, half-godly, half-demon,  
awaiting the cry of the turkey-cock?

Or must you go through the fire once more, till you're  
smelted pure,  
Slag-wattled turkey-cock,  
Dross-jabot?

*Fiesole*

## B I R D S

### H U M M I N G - B I R D

I can imagine, in some other world  
Primeval-dumb, far back  
In that most awful stillness, that only gasped and  
                  hummed,  
Humming-birds raced down the avenues.

Before anything had a soul,  
While life was a heave of Matter, half inanimate,  
This little bit chipped off in brilliance  
And went whizzing through the slow, vast, succulent  
                  stems.

I believe there were no flowers, then,  
In the world where the humming-bird flashed ahead  
                  of creation.  
I believe he pierced the slow vegetable veins with his  
                  long beak.

Probably he was big  
As mosses, and little lizards, they say were once big.  
Probably he was a jabbing, terrifying monster.

## B I R D S

We look at him through the wrong end of the long  
telescope of Time,  
Luckily for us.

*Española*

## BIRDS

### EAGLE IN NEW MEXICO

Towards the sun, towards the south-west  
A scorched breast.  
A scorched breast, breasting the sun like an answer,  
Like a retort

An eagle at the top of a low cedar-bush  
On the sage-ash desert  
Reflecting the scorch of the sun from his breast;  
Eagle, with the sickle dripping darkly above.

Erect, scorched-pallid out of the hair of the cedar,  
Erect, with the god-thrust entering him from below,  
Eagle gloved in feathers  
In scorched white feathers  
In burnt dark feathers  
In feathers still fire-rusted;  
Sickle-overswept, sickle dripping over and above.

Sun-breaster,  
Staring two ways at once, to right and left;  
Masked-one  
Dark-visaged



## B I R D S

Sickle-masked  
With iron between your two eyes;  
You feather-gloved  
To the feet;  
Foot-fierce;  
Erect one;  
The god-thrust entering you steadily from below.

You never look at the sun with your two eyes.  
Only the inner eye of your scorched broad breast  
Looks straight at the sun.

You are dark  
Except scorch-pale-breasted;  
And dark cleaves down and weapon-hard downward  
                  curving  
At your scorched breast,  
Like a sword of Damocles  
Beaked eagle.

You've dipped it in blood so many times  
That dark face-weapon, to temper it well,  
Blood-thirsty bird.

Why do you front the sun so obstinately,  
American eagle?  
As if you owed him an old, old grudge, great sun: or  
                  an old, old allegiance.

## B I R D S

When you pick the red smoky heart from a rabbit or  
a light-blooded bird  
Do you lift it to the sun, as the Aztec priests used to  
lift red hearts of men?

Does the sun need steam of blood, do you think  
In America, still,  
Old eagle?

Does the sun in New Mexico sail like a fiery bird of  
prey in the sky  
Hovering?  
Does he shriek for blood?  
Does he fan great wings above the prairie, like a  
hovering, blood-thirsty bird?

And are you his priest, big eagle  
Whom the Indians aspire to?  
Is there a bond of bloodshed between you?

Is your continent cold from the ice-age still, that the  
sun is so angry?  
Is the blood of your continent somewhat reptilian still,  
That the sun should be greedy for it?

I don't yield to you, big, jowl-faced eagle.  
Nor you nor your blood-thirsty sun  
That sucks up blood  
Leaving a nervous people.

## B I R D S

Fly off, big bird with a big black back,  
Fly slowly away, with a rust of fire in your tail,  
Dark as you are on your dark side, eagle of heaven.

Even the sun in heaven can be curbed and chastened  
at last

By the life in the hearts of men.

And you, great bird, sun-starrer, your heavy black beak  
Can be put out of office as sacrifice bringer.

*Taos*

## BIRDS

### THE BLUE JAY

The blue jay with a crest on his head  
Comes round the cabin in the snow.  
He runs in the snow like a bit of blue metal  
Turning his back on everything.

From the pine-tree that towers like a pillar of shaggy  
    smoke  
Immense above the cabin  
Comes a strident laugh as we approach, this little black  
    dog and I;  
So halts the little black bitch on four spread paws in  
    the snow  
And looks up inquiringly into the pillar of cloud,  
With a tinge of misgiving.  
*Ca-a-a!* comes the scrape of ridicule out of the tree.

*What voice of the Lord is that, from the tree of smoke?*

Oh Bibbles, little black bitch in the snow,  
With a pinch of snow in the groove of your silly snub  
    nose,  
What do you look at *me* for?  
What do you look at me for, with such misgiving?

## B I R D S

It's the blue jay laughing at us.  
It's the blue jay jeering at us, Bibs.

Every day since the snow is here  
The blue jay paces round the cabin, very busy, picking  
up bits,  
Turning his back on us all,  
And bobbing his thick dark crest about the snow, as  
if darkly saying:  
*I ignore those folk who look out.*

You acid-blue metallic bird,  
You thick bird with a strong crest  
Who are you?  
Whose boss are you, with all your bully way?  
You copper-sulphate blue bird!

*Lobo*

## ANIMALS

### THE ASS

The long-drawn bray of the ass  
In the Sicilian twilight—

*All mares are dead!*  
*All mares are dead!*  
*Oh-h!*  
*Oh-h-h!*  
*Oh-h-h-h-h—h!!*  
*I can't bear it, I can't bear it,*  
*I can't!*  
*Oh, I can't!*  
*Oh—*  
*There's one left!*  
*There's one left!*  
*One!*  
*There's one. . . . left. . . .*

So ending on a grunt of agonised relief.

## ANIMALS

This is the authentic Arabic interpretation of the braying of the ass.  
And Arabs should know.

And yet, as his brass-resonant howling yell resounds  
through the Sicilian twilight  
I am not sure—

His big, furry head,  
His big, regretful eyes,  
His diminished, drooping hindquarters,  
His small toes.

Such a dear!  
Such an ass!  
With such a knot inside him!  
He regrets something that he remembers.  
That's obvious.

The Steppes of Tartary,  
And the wind in his teeth for a bit,  
And *noli me tangere*

Ah then, when he tore the wind with his teeth  
And trod wolves underfoot,  
And over-rode his mares as if he were savagely leaping  
an obstacle, to set his teeth in the sun. . . .

## ANIMALS

Somehow, alas, he fell in love  
And was sold into slavery.

He fell into the rut of love,  
Poor ass, like man, always in rut,  
The pair of them alike in that.

All his soul in his gallant member  
And his head gone heavy with the knowledge of desire  
And humiliation.

The ass was the first of all animals to fall finally into  
love,  
From obstacle-leaping pride,  
Mare obstacle,  
Into love, mare-goal, and the knowledge of love.

Hence Jesus rode him in the Triumphant Entry.  
Hence his beautiful eyes.  
Hence his ponderous head, brooding over desire, and  
downfall, Jesus, and a pack-saddle;  
Hence he uncovers his big ass-teeth and howls in that  
agony that half is insatiable desire and half  
unquenchable humiliation.  
Hence the black cross on his shoulders.

The Arabs were only half right, though they hinted  
the whole:  
Everlasting lament in everlasting desire.



## ANIMALS

See him standing with his head down, near the Porta  
Cappucini.

Asinello

Somaro;

With the half-veiled, beautiful eyes, and the pensive  
face not asleep,

Motionless, like a bit of rock.

Has he seen the Gorgon's head, and turned to stone?  
Alas, Love did it.

Now he's a jackass, a pack-ass, a donkey, somaro, burro,  
with a boss piling loads on his back.

Tied by the nose at the Porta Cappucini

And tied in a knot, inside, deadlocked between two  
desires:

To overleap like a male all mares as obstacles

In a leap at the sun;

And to leap in one last heart-bursting leap like a male  
at the goal of a mare,

And there end.

Well, you can't have it both roads.

*Hee! Hee! Ehee! Ehow! Ehaw!! Oh! Oh!*  
*Oh-h-h!!*

The wave of agony bursts in the stone that he was,  
Bares his long ass's teeth, flattens his long ass's ears,  
straightens his donkey neck,

And howls his pandemonium on the indignant air.

## ANIMALS

Yes, it's a quandary.  
Jesus rode on him, the first burden on the first beast  
of burden.  
Love on a submissive ass.  
So the tale began.

But the ass never forgets.

The horse, being nothing but a nag, will forget.  
And men, being mostly geldings and knacker-boned  
hacks, have almost all forgot.  
But the ass is a primal creature, and never forgets.

The Steppes of Tartary,  
And Jesus on a meek ass-colt: mares: Mary escaping  
to Egypt: Joseph's cudgel.

*Hee! Hee! Ehee! Ehow-ow!-ow!-aw!-aw!-aw!*  
*All mares are dead!*  
*Or else I am dead!*  
*One of us, or the pair of us,*  
*I don't know-ow!-ow!*  
*Which!*  
*Not sure-ure-ure*  
*Quite which!*  
*Which!*

*Taormina*

## ANIMALS

### HE - GOAT

See his black nose snubbed back, pressed over like a  
    whale's blow-holes,  
As if his nostrils were going to curve back to the root  
    of his tail.

As he charges slow among the herd  
And rows among the females like a ship pertinaciously,  
Heavy with a rancid cargo, through the lesser ships—  
Old father  
Sniffing forever ahead of him, at the rear of the goats,  
    that they lift the little door;  
And rowing on, unarrived, no matter how often he  
    enter:  
Like a big ship pushing her bow-sprit over the little  
    ships  
Then swerving and steering afresh  
And never, never arriving at journey's end, at the rear  
    of the female ships.

Yellow eyes incomprehensible with thin slits  
To round-eyed us.

Yet if you had whorled horns of bronze in a frontal  
    dark wall

## ANIMALS

At the end of a back-bone ridge, like a straight sierra  
roqueña,  
And nerves urging forward to the wall, you'd have eyes  
like his,  
Especially if, being given a needle's eye of egress else-  
where  
You tried to look back to it, and couldn't.

Sometimes he turns with a start, to fight, to challenge,  
to suddenly butt.  
And then you see the God that he is, in a cloud of black  
hair  
And storm-lightning-slitted eye.  
Splendidly planting his feet, one rocky foot striking  
the ground with a sudden rock-hammer  
announcement:

*I am here!*  
And suddenly lowering his head, the whorls of bone  
and of horn  
Slowly revolving towards unexploded explosion,  
As from the stem of his bristling, lightning-conductor  
tail  
In a rush up the shrieking duct of his vertebral way  
Runs a rage drawn in from the ether divinely through  
him  
Towards a shock and a crash and a smiting of horns  
ahead.

## ANIMALS

That is a grand old lust of his, to gather the great  
Rage of the sullen-stagnating atmosphere of goats  
And bring it hurtling to a head, with crash of horns  
                    against the horns

Of the opposite enemy goat,  
Thus hammering the mettle of goats into proof, and  
                    smiting out

The godhead of goats from the shock.

Things of iron are beaten on the anvil,

And he-goat is anvil to he-goat, and hammer to he-goat  
In the business of beating the mettle of goats to a god-  
                    head.

But they've taken his enemy from him

And left him only his libidinousness,

His nostrils turning back, to sniff at even himself

And his slitted eyes seeking the needle's eye,

His own, unthreaded forever.

So it is, when they take the enemy from us,  
And we can't fight.

He is not fatherly, like the bull, massive Providence  
                    of hot blood;

The goat is an egoist, aware of himself, devilish aware  
                    of himself,

And full of malice prepense, and overweening, deter-  
                    mined to stand on the highest peak

Like the devil, and look on the world as his own.

## ANIMALS

And as for love:

With a needle of long red flint he stabs in the dark  
At the living rock he is up against;

While she with her goaty mouth stands smiling the  
while as he strikes, since sure

He will never *quite* strike home, on the target-quick,  
for her quick

Is just beyond the range of the arrow he shoots  
From his leap at the zenith in her, so it falls just short  
of the mark, far enough.

It is over before it is finished.

She, smiling with goaty munch-mouth, Mona Lisa,  
arranges it so.

Orgasm after orgasm after orgasm

And he smells so rank, and his nose goes back,

And never an enemy brow-metalled to thresh it out  
with in the open field;

Never a mountain peak, to be king of the castle.

Only those eternal females to overleap and surpass,  
and never succeed.

The involved voluptuousness of the soft-footed cat

Who is like a fur folding a fur,

The cat who laps blood, and knows

The soft welling of blood invincible even beyond bone  
or metal of bone.

## ANIMALS

The soft, the secret, the unfathomable blood  
The cat has lapped  
And known it subtler than frisson-shaken nerves,  
Stronger than multiplicity of bone on bone  
And darker than even the arrows of violentest will  
Can pierce, for that is where will gives out, like a  
sinking stone that can sink no further.

But he-goat,  
Black procreant male of the egoistic will and libidinous  
desire,  
God in black cloud with curving horns of bronze,  
Find an enemy, egoist, and clash the cymbals in face-  
to-face defiance,  
And let the lightning out of your smothered dusk.

Forget the female herd for a bit,  
And fight for your egoist's will;  
Fight, old Satan with a selfish will, fight for your  
selfish will:  
Fight to be the devil on the tip of the peak  
Overlooking the world for his own.

But bah, how can he, poor domesticated beast!

*Taormina*

## ANIMALS

### SHE - GOAT

Goats go past the back of the house like dry leaves in  
the dawn,  
And up the hill like a river, if you watch.

At dusk they patter back like a bough being dragged  
on the ground,  
Raising dust and acidity of goats, and bleating.

Our old goat we tie up at night in the shed at the back  
of the broken Greek tomb in the garden,  
And when the herd goes by at dawn she begins to bleat  
for me to come down and untie her.

*Merr-err-err! Merr-er-errr! Mer! Mé!*  
Wait, wait a bit, I'll come when I've lit the fire.  
*Merrrr!*  
Exactly.  
*Mé! Mer! Merrrrrrrr!!!*  
Tace, tu, crapa, bestia!  
*Merr-ererrr-ererrrr! Merrrr!*



## ANIMALS

She is such an alert listener, with her ears wide, to  
know am I coming!  
Such a canny listener, from a distance, looking upwards,  
lending first one ear, then another.

There she is, perched on her manger, looking over the  
boards into the day  
Like a belle at her window.  
And immediately she sees me she blinks, stares, doesn't  
know me, turns her head and ignores me  
vulgarly, with a wooden blank on her face.

What do I care for her, the ugly female, standing  
up there with her long tangled sides like  
old rugs thrown over a fence.  
But she puts her nose down shrewdly enough when  
the knot is untied,  
And jumps staccato to earth, a sharp, dry jump, still  
ignoring me,  
Pretending to look round the stall.

Come on, you crap! I'm not your servant!

She turns her head away with an obtuse, female sort  
of deafness, bête.  
And then invariably she crouches her rear and makes  
water.

## ANIMALS

That being her way of answer, if I speak to her.—  
Self-conscious!  
*Le bestie non parlano, poverine!*

She was bought at Giardini fair, on the sands, for six  
hundred lire.

An obstinate old witch, almost jerking the rope from  
my hands to eat the acanthus, or bite at the  
almond buds, and make me wait.  
Yet the moment I hate her she trips mild and smug  
like a woman going to mass.  
The moment I really detest her.

Queer it is, suddenly, in the garden  
To catch sight of her standing like some huge, ghoulish  
grey bird in the air, on the bough of the  
leaning almond tree,  
Straight as a board on the bough, looking down like  
some hairy horrid God the Father in a  
William Blake imagination.

Come down, crapa, out of that almond tree!

Instead of which she strangely rears on her perch in  
the air, vast beast,  
And strangely paws the air, delicate,

## ANIMALS

And reaches her black-striped face up like a snake,  
far up,  
Subtly, to the twigs overhead, far up, vast beast,  
And snaps them sharp, with a little twist of her  
anaconda head;  
All her great hairy-shaggy belly open against the  
morning.

At seasons she curls back her tail like a green leaf in  
the fire,  
Or like a lifted hand, hailing at her wrong end.  
And having exposed the pink place of her nakedness,  
fixedly,  
She trots on blithe toes,  
And if you look at her, she looks back with a cold,  
sardonic stare.  
Sardonic, sardonyx, rock of cold fire.  
*See me?* she says, *That's me!*

That's her.

Then she leaps the rocks like a quick rock,  
Her back-bone sharp as a rock,  
Sheer will.  
Along which ridge of libidinous magnetism  
Defiant, curling the leaf of her tail as if she were  
curling her lip behind her at all life,  
Libidinous desire runs back and forth, asserting itself  
in that little lifted bare hand.

## ANIMALS

Yet she has such adorable spurty kids, like spurts of  
black ink.

And in a month again is as if she had never had them.

And when the billy goat mounts her

She is brittle as brimstone.

While his slitted eyes squint back to the roots of his  
ears.

*Taormina*

## ANIMALS

### ELEPHANT

You go down shade to the river, where naked men sit  
on flat brown rocks, to watch the ferry, in  
the sun;  
And you cross the ferry with the naked people, go  
up the tropical lane  
Through the palm-trees and past hollow paddy-fields  
where naked men are threshing rice  
And the monolithic water-buffaloes, like old, muddy  
stones with hair on them, are being idle;  
And through the shadow of bread-fruit trees, with their  
dark green, glossy, fanged leaves  
Very handsome, and some pure yellow fanged leaves;  
Out into the open, where the path runs on the top of  
a dyke between paddy-fields:  
And there, of course, you meet a huge and mud-grey  
elephant advancing his frontal bone, his  
trunk curled round a log of wood:  
So you step down the bank, to make way.  
Shuffle, shuffle, and his little wicked eye has seen you  
as he advances above you,  
The slow beast curiously spreading his round feet for  
the dust.

## ANIMALS

And the slim naked man slips down, and the beast  
deposits the lump of wood, carefully.

The keeper hooks the vast knee, the creature salaams.

White man, you are saluted.

Pay a few cents.

But the best is the Pera-hera, at midnight, under the  
tropical stars,

With a pale little wisp of a Prince of Wales, diffident,  
up in a small pagoda on the temple side

And white people in evening dress buzzing and crowd-  
ing the stand upon the grass below and  
opposite:

And at last the Pera-hera procession, flambeaux aloft  
in the tropical night, of blazing cocoanut,

Naked dark men beneath,

And the huge frontal of three great elephants stepping  
forth to the tom-tom's beat, in the torch-light,

Slowly sailing in gorgeous apparel through the flame-  
light, in front of a towering, grimacing white  
image of wood.

The elephant bells striking slow, tong-tong, tong-tong,  
To music and queer chanting:

Enormous shadow-processions filing on in the flare of  
fire

In the fume of cocoa-nut oil, in the sweating tropical  
night,

## ANIMALS

In the noise of the tom-toms and singers;  
Elephants after elephants curl their trunks, vast  
    shadows, and some cry out  
As they approach and salaam, under the dripping fire  
    of the torches  
That pale fragment of a Prince up there, whose motto  
    is *Ich dien*.

Pale, dispirited Prince, with his chin on his hands,  
    his nerves tired out,  
Watching and hardly seeing the trunk-curl approach  
    and clumsy, knee-lifting salaam  
Of the hugest, oldest of beasts, in the night and the  
    fire-flare below.

He is white men's royalty, pale and dejected fragment  
    up aloft.  
And down below huge homage of shadowy beasts,  
    bare-foot and trunk-lipped in the night.

Chieftains, three of them abreast, on foot  
Strut like peg-tops, wound around with hundreds of  
    yards of fine linen.  
They glimmer with tissue of gold, and golden threads  
    on a jacket of velvet,  
And their faces are dark, and fat, and important.  
They are different royalty, dark-faced royalty, showing  
    the conscious whites of their eyes



## ANIMALS

And stepping in homage, stubborn, to that nervous pale  
lad up there.

More elephants, tong, tong-tong, loom up,  
Huge, more tassels swinging, more dripping fire of  
new cocoanut cressets  
High, high flambeaux, smoking of the east;  
And scarlet hot embers of torches knocked out of the  
sockets among bare feet of elephants and men  
on the path in the dark.  
And devil dancers, luminous with sweat, dancing on  
to the shudder of drums,  
Tom-toms, weird music of the devil, voices of men  
from the jungle singing;  
Endless, under the Prince.

Towards the tail of the everlasting procession  
In the long hot night, mere dancers from insignificant  
villages,  
And smaller, more frightened elephants.

Men-peasants from jungle villages dancing and run-  
ning with sweat and laughing,  
Naked dark men with ornaments on, on their naked  
arms and their naked breasts, the grooved  
loins  
Gleaming like metal with running sweat as they  
suddenly turn, feet apart,



## ANIMALS

And dance and dance, forever dance, with breath half  
sobbing in dark, sweat-shining breasts,  
And lustrous great tropical eyes unveiled now, gleaming  
a kind of laugh,  
A naked, gleaming dark laugh, like a secret out in the  
dark,  
And flare of a tropical energy, tireless, afire in the  
dark, slim limbs and breasts;  
Perpetual, fire-laughing motion, among the slow  
shuffle  
Of elephants,  
The hot dark blood of itself a-laughing, wet, half-  
devilish, men all motion  
Approaching under that small pavilion, and tropical  
eyes dilated turn up  
Inevitably looking up  
To the Prince,  
To that tired remnant of white royalty up there  
Whose motto is *Ich dien*.

As if the homage of the kindled blood of the east  
Went up in wavelets to him, from the breasts and eyes  
of jungle torch-men.  
And he couldn't take it.

What would they do, those jungle men running with  
sweat, with the strange dark laugh in their  
eyes, glancing up,

## ANIMALS

And the sparse-haired elephants slowly following,  
If they knew that his motto was *Ich dien?*  
And that he meant it.

They begin to understand,  
The rickshaw boys begin to understand;  
And then the devil comes into their faces,  
But a different sort, a cold, rebellious, jeering devil.

In elephants and the east are two devils, in all men  
maybe.

The mystery of the dark mountain of blood, reeking  
in homage, in lust, in rage,  
And passive with everlasting patience;  
Then the little, cunning pig-devil of the elephant's  
lurking eyes, the unbeliever.

We dodged, when the Pera-hera was finished, under  
the hanging, hairy pig's tails  
And the flat, flaccid mountains of the elephants' standing  
haunches,  
Vast-blooded beasts,  
Myself so little dodging rather scared against the  
eternal wrinkled pillars of their legs, as they  
were being dismantled;  
Then I knew they were dejected, having come to hear  
the repeated  
Royal summons: *Dient Ihr!*  
*Serve!*

## ANIMALS

*Serve, vast mountainous blood, in submission and  
splendour, serve royalty.*

Instead of which, the silent, fatal emission from that  
nervous pale boy up there:

*Ich dien.*

That's why the night fell in frustration.

That's why, as the elephants ponderously, with un-  
seeming swiftness galloped uphill in the night,  
going back to the jungle villages,

As the elephant bells sounded tong-tong-tong, bell of  
the temple of blood, in the night, swift-  
striking,

And the crowd like a field of rice in the dark gave  
way like liquid to the dark

Looming gallop of the beasts,

It was as if the great bare bulks of elephants in the  
festive night went over the hill-brow swiftly,  
with their tails between their legs, in haste  
to get away,

Their bells sounding frustrate and sinister.

And all the dark-faced, cotton-wrapped people, more  
numerous and whispering than grains of rice  
in a rice-field at night,

All the dark-faced, cotton-wrapped people, a countless  
host on the shores of the lake, like thick wild  
rice by the water's edge,

## ANIMALS

Waiting for the fireworks of the after-show;  
As the rockets went up, and the glare passed over  
    countless faces, dark as black rice growing,  
Showing a glint of teeth, and glancing tropical eyes  
    aroused in the night,  
There was the faintest twist of mockery in every face,  
    across the hiss of wonders as the rocket burst  
High, high up, in flakes, shimmering flakes of blue  
    fire, above the palm trees of the islet in the  
    lake.  
Oh, faces upturned to the glare, oh, tropical wonder,  
    wonder, a miracle in heaven!  
And the shadow of a jeer, of underneath disappoint-  
    ment, as the rocket-coruscation died, and  
    shadow was the same as before.  
  
They were foiled, the myriad whispering dark-faced  
    cotton-wrapped people.  
They had come to see royalty,  
To bow before royalty, in the land of elephants, bow  
    deep, bow deep.  
Bow deep, for it's good as a draught of cool water to  
    bow very, very low to the royal.  
  
And all there was to bow to, an alien, diffident boy  
    whose motto is *Ich dien*.  
*I serve! I serve!* in all the weary irony of his mien—  
    'Tis *I who serve!*  
Drudge to the public.

## ANIMALS

I wish some dark-faced man could have taken the  
feathers three  
And fearless gone up the pavilion, in that pepper-box  
aloft and alone  
Held the three feathers out on the night, with a dark,  
fierce hand above the host,  
Saying softly: *Dient Ihr! Dient!*  
*Omnes, vos omnes, servite.*  
*Serve me, I am meet to be served.*  
*Being royal of the gods.*

*I with the feathers.*  
*I with the flower-de-luce.*  
*I with the scarab-wings.*  
*I from the marshes of blood,*  
*Am back again.*

And to the elephants:  
*First great beasts of the earth*  
*A prince has come back to you,*  
*Blood-mountains.*  
*Crook the knee and be glad.*

*Kandy*

## ANIMALS

### KANGAROO

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

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

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

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

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

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

## ANIMALS

Delicate mother Kangaroo  
Sitting up there rabbit-wise, but huge, plumb-weighted,  
And lifting her beautiful slender face oh! so much more  
    gently and finely-lined than a rabbit's, or than  
    a hare's,  
Lifting her face to nibble at a round white peppermint  
    drop, which she loves, sensitive mother  
    Kangaroo.

Her sensitive, long, pure-bred face.  
Her full antipodal eyes, so dark,  
So big and quiet and remote, having watched so many  
    empty dawns in silent Australia.

Her little loose hands, and drooping Victorian  
    shoulders.  
And then her great weight below the waist, her vast  
    pale belly  
With a thin young yellow little paw hanging out, and  
    straggle of a long thin ear, like ribbon,  
Like a funny trimming to the middle of her belly, thin  
    little dangle of an immature paw, and one  
    thin ear.

Her belly, her big haunches  
And in addition, the great muscular python-stretch of  
    her tail.



## ANIMALS

There, she shan't have any more peppermint drops.  
So she wistfully, sensitively sniffs the air, and then  
                    turns, goes off in slow sad leaps  
On the long flat skis of her legs,  
Steered and propelled by that steel-strong snake of a  
                    tail.

Stops again, half turns, inquisitive to look back.  
While something stirs quickly in her belly, and a lean  
                    little face comes out, as from a window,  
Peaked and a bit dismayed,  
Only to disappear again quickly away from the sight  
                    of the world, to snuggle down in the warmth,  
Leaving the trail of a different paw hanging out.

Still she watches with eternal, cocked wistfulness!  
How full her eyes are, like the full, fathomless, shining  
                    eyes of an Australian black-boy  
Who has been lost so many centuries on the margins  
                    of existence!

She watches with insatiable wistfulness.  
Untold centuries of watching for something to come,  
For a new signal from life, in that silent lost land of  
                    the South.

Where nothing bites but insects and snakes and the sun,  
                    small life.



## ANIMALS

Where no bull roared, no cow ever lowed, no stag cried,  
no leopard screeched, no lion coughed, no dog  
barked,  
But all was silent save for parrots occasionally, in the  
haunted blue bush.

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

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

*Sydney*

## ANIMALS

### BIBBLES

Bibbles

Little black dog in New Mexico,  
Little black snub-nosed bitch with a shoved-out jaw  
And a wrinkled reproachful look;  
Little black female pup, sort of French bull, they say,  
With bits of brindle coming through, like rust, to show  
                    you're not pure;  
Not pure, Bibbles,  
Bibsey, bat-eared dog;  
Not black enough!

First live thing I've "owned" since the lop-eared rabbits  
                    when I was a lad,  
And those over-prolific white mice, and Adolf, and Rex  
                    whom I didn't own.  
And even now, Bibbles, little Ma'am, it's you who ap-  
                    propriated me, not I you.  
As Benjamin Franklin appropriating Providence to  
                    his purposes.

Oh Bibbles, black little bitch  
I'd never have let you appropriate me, had I known.

## ANIMALS

I never dreamed, till now, of the awful time the Lord  
must have, "owning" humanity,  
Especially democratic live-by-love humanity.

Oh Bibbles, oh Pips, oh Pipsey  
You little black love-bird!  
*Don't* you love *everybody!!!*  
Just everybody.  
You love 'em all.  
Believe in the One Identity, don't you,  
You little Walt-Whitmanesque bitch?

First time I lost you in Taos plaza  
And found you after endless chasing,  
Came upon you prancing round the corner in exuberant,  
bibbling affection  
After the black-green skirts of a yellow-green old  
Mexican woman  
Who hated you, and kept looking round at you and  
cursing you in a mutter,  
While you pranced and bounced with love of her, you  
indiscriminating animal,  
All you wrinkled *miserere* Chinese black little face  
beaming  
And your black little body bouncing and wriggling  
With indiscriminate love, Bibbles;  
I had a moment's pure detestation of you.

## ANIMALS

As I rushed like an idiot round the corner after you  
Yelling: *Pips! Pips! Bibbles!*

I've had moments of hatred of you since,  
Loving everybody!  
"To you, whoever you are, with endless embrace!"—  
That's you, Pipsey,  
With your imbecile bit of a tail in a love-flutter.  
You omnipip.

Not that you're merely a softy, oh dear me no,  
You know which side your bread is buttered.  
You don't care a rap for anybody.  
But you love lying warm between warm human thighs,  
                    indiscriminate,  
And you love to make somebody love you, indis-  
                    criminate,  
You love to lap up affection, to wallow in it,  
And then turn tail to the next comer, for a new dollop.

And start prancing and licking and cuddling again,  
                    indiscriminate.

Oh, yes, I know your little game.

Yet you're so nice,  
So quick, like a little black dragon.  
So fierce, when the coyotes howl, barking back like a  
                    whole little lion, and rumbling,

## ANIMALS

And starting forward in the dusk, with your little black  
fur all bristling like plush  
Against those coyotes, who would swallow you like an  
oyster.

And in the morning, when the bedroom door is opened,  
Rushing in like a little black whirlwind, leaping  
straight as an arrow on the bed at the pillow  
And turning the day suddenly into a black tornado of  
*joie de vivre*, Chinese dragon.

So funny  
Lobbing wildly through deep snow like a rabbit,  
Hurtling like a black ball through the snow,  
Champing it, tossing a mouthful,  
Little black spot in the landscape!

So absurd  
Pelting behind on the dusty trail when the horse sets  
off home at a gallop:  
Left in the dust behind like a dust-ball tearing along  
Coming up on fierce little legs, tearing fast to catch up,  
a real little dust-pig, ears almost blown away,  
And black eyes bulging bright in a dust-mask  
Chinese-dragon-wrinkled, with a pink mouth grinning,  
under jaw shoved out  
And white teeth showing in your dragon-grin as you  
race, you split-face,

## ANIMALS

Like a trundling projectile swiftly whirling up,  
Cocking your eyes at me as you come alongside, to see  
    if I'm I on the horse,  
And panting with that split grin,  
All your game little body dust-smooth like a little pig,  
    poor Pips.

Plenty of game old spirit in you, Bibbles.  
Plenty of game old spunk, little bitch.

How you hate being brushed with the boot-brush, to  
    brush all that dust out of your wrinkled face,  
Don't you?  
How you hate being made to look undignified, Ma'am;  
How you hate being laughed at, Miss Superb!

Blackberry face!

Plenty of conceit in you.  
Unblemished belief in your own perfection  
And utter lovable-ness, you ugly-mug;  
Chinese puzzle-face,  
Wrinkled underhung physog that looks as if it had  
    finished with everything,  
Through with everything.

Instead of which you sit there and roll your head like  
    a canary

## ANIMALS

And show a tiny bunch of white teeth in your under-  
hung blackness,  
Self-conscious little bitch,  
Aiming again at being loved.

Let the merest scallywag come to the door and you leap  
your very dearest love at him,  
As if now, at last, here was the one you *finally* loved,  
Finally loved;  
And even the dirtiest scallywag is taken in,  
Thinking: *This dog sure has taken a fancy to me.*

You miserable little bitch of love-tricks,  
I know your game.

Me or the Mexican who comes to chop wood  
All the same,  
All humanity is jam to you.

Everybody so dear, and yourself so ultra-beloved  
That you have to run out at last and eat filth,  
Gobble up filth, you horror, swallow utter abomination  
and fresh-dropped dung.

You worse than a carrion-crow.  
Reeking dung-mouth.  
You love-bird.

*Reject nothing*, sings Walt Whitman.  
So you, you go out at last and eat the unmentionable,  
In your appetite for affection.

## ANIMALS

And then you run in to vomit it in my house!  
I get my love back.  
And I have to clean up after you, filth which even  
    blind Nature rejects  
From the pit of your stomach;  
But you, you snout-face, you reject nothing, you merge  
    so much in love  
You must eat even that.

Then when I skelp you a bit with a juniper twig  
You run straight away to live with somebody else,  
Fawn before them, and love them as if they were the  
    ones you had *really* loved all along.  
And they're taken in.  
They feel quite tender over you, till you play the same  
    trick on them, dirty bitch.

Fidelity! Loyalty! Attachment!  
Oh, these are abstractions to your nasty little belly.  
You must always be a-waggle with LOVE.  
Such a waggle of love you can hardly distinguish one  
    human from another.  
You love one after another, on one condition, that each  
    one loves *you* most.  
Democratic little bull-bitch, dirt-eating little swine.

But now, my lass, you've got your Nemesis on your  
    track,



## ANIMALS

Now you've come sex-alive, and the great ranch dogs  
are all after you.

They're after what they can get, and don't you turn tail!  
You loved 'em all so much before, didn't you, loved 'em  
indiscriminate?

You don't love 'em now.

They want something of you, so you squeak and come  
pelting indoors.

Come pelting to me, now the other folk have found  
you out, and the dogs are after you.

Oh yes, you're found out. I heard them kick you out  
of the ranch house:

*Get out, you little, soft, fool!!*

And didn't you turn your eyes up at me then?

And didn't you cringe on the floor like any inkspot!

And crawl away like a black snail!

And doesn't everybody loathe you then!

And aren't your feelings violated, you high-bred little  
love-bitch!

For you're sensitive,

In many ways very finely bred.

But bred in conceit that the world is all for love

Of you, my bitch: till you get so far you eat filth.

Fool, in spite of your pretty ways, and quaint, know-all,  
wrinkled old aunty's face.

## ANIMALS

So now, what with great airedale dogs,  
And a kick or two,  
And a few vomiting bouts,  
And a juniper switch,  
You look at me for discrimination, don't you?  
Look up at me with misgiving in your bulging eyes,  
And fear in the smoky whites of your eyes, you nigger;  
And you're puzzled,  
You think you'd better mind your P's and Q's for a bit,  
Your sensitive love-pride being all hurt.

All right, my little bitch.  
You learn loyalty rather than loving,  
And I'll protect you.

*Lobo*

## ANIMALS

### MOUNTAIN LION

Climbing through the January snow, into the Lobo  
canyon

Dark grow the spruce trees, blue is the balsam, water  
sounds still unfrozen, and the trail is still  
evident.

Men!

Two men!

Men! The only animal in the world to fear!

They hesitate.

We hesitate.

They have a gun.

We have no gun.

Then we all advance, to meet.

Two Mexicans, strangers, emerging out of the dark  
and snow and inwardness of the Lobo valley.

What are they doing here on this vanishing trail?

What is he carrying?

Something yellow.

A deer?

## ANIMALS

*Qué tiene, amigo?—*

*León—*

He smiles, foolishly, as if he were caught doing wrong.  
And we smile, foolishly, as if we didn't know.  
He is quite gentle and dark-faced.

It is a mountain lion,  
A long, slim cat, yellow like a lioness.  
Dead.

He trapped her this morning, he says, smiling foolishly.

Lift up her face,  
Her round, bright face, bright as frost.  
Her round, fine-fashioned head, with two dead ears:  
And stripes on the brilliant frost of her face, sharp,  
                    fine dark rays,  
Dark, keen, fine rays in the brilliant frost of her face.  
Beautiful dead eyes.

*Hermoso es!*

They go out towards the open;  
We go on into the gloom of Lobo.

And above the trees I found her lair,  
A hole in the blood-orange brilliant rocks that stick  
                    up, a little cave.

## ANIMALS

And bones, and twigs, and a perilous ascent.  
So, she will never leap up that way again, with the  
    yellow flash of a mountain lion's long shoot!  
And her bright striped frost-face will never watch any  
    more, out of the shadow of the cave in the  
    blood-orange rock,  
Above the trees of the Lobo dark valley-mouth!

Instead, I look out.  
And out to the dim of the desert, like a dream, never  
    real;  
To the snow of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, the  
    ice of the mountains of Picoris,  
And near across at the opposite steep of snow, green  
    trees motionless standing in snow, like a  
    Christmas toy.

And I think in this empty world there was room for  
    me and a mountain lion.  
And I think in the world beyond, how easily we might  
    spare a million or two of humans  
And never miss them.  
Yet what a gap in the world, the missing white-frost  
    face of that slim yellow mountain lion!

*Lobo*

## ANIMALS

### THE RED WOLF

Over the heart of the west, the Taos desert  
Circles an eagle,  
And it's dark between me and him.

The sun, as he waits a moment, huge and liquid  
Standing without feet on the rim of the far-off mesa  
Says: *Look for a last long time then! Look! Look well!*  
*I am going.*  
So he pauses and is beholden, and straightway is gone.

And the Indian, in a white sheet  
Wrapped to the eyes, the sheet bound close on his  
brows,  
Stands saying: *See, I'm invisible!*  
*Behold how you can't behold me!*  
*The invisible in its shroud!*

Now that the sun has gone, and the aspen leaves  
And the cotton-wood leaves are fallen, as good as fallen,  
And the ponies are in corral,  
And it's night:

## ANIMALS

Why, more has gone than all these;  
And something has come.  
A red wolf stands on the shadow's dark red rim.

Day has gone to dust on the sage-grey desert  
Like a white Christus fallen to dust from a cross;  
To dust, to ash, on the twilit floor of the desert.  
And a black crucifix like a dead tree spreading wings;  
Maybe a black eagle with its wings out  
Left lonely in the night  
In a sort of worship.

And coming down upon us, out of the dark concave  
Of the eagle's wings,  
And the coffin-like slit where the Indian's eyes are,  
And the absence of cotton-wood leaves, or of aspen,  
Even the absence of dark-crossed donkeys:  
Come tall old demons, smiling  
The Indian smile,  
Saying: *How do you do, you pale-face?*

I am very well, old demon.  
How are you?

*Call me Harry if you will,  
Call me Old Harry, says he.  
Or the abbreviation of Nicolas,  
Nick, Old Nick, maybe.*

## ANIMALS

Well, you're a dark old demon,  
And I'm a pale-face like a homeless dog  
That has followed the sun from the dawn through the  
    east  
Trotting east and east and east till the sun himself went  
    home,  
And left me homeless here in the dark at your door.  
How do you think we'll get on,  
Old demon, you and I?

*You and I, you pale-face  
Pale-face you and I  
Don't get on.*

Mightn't we try?

*Where's your God, you white one?  
Where's your white God?*

He fell to dust as the twilight fell,  
Was fume as I trod  
The last step out of the east.

*Then you're a lost white dog of a pale-face,  
And the day's now dead . . .*

Touch me carefully, old father,  
My beard is red.



## ANIMALS

*Thin red wolf of a pale-face,  
Thin red wolf, go home.*

I have no home, old father.  
That's why I come.

*We take no hungry stray from the pale-face . . .*

Father, you are not asked.  
I am come. I am here. The red-dawn-wolf  
Sniffs round your place.  
Lifts up his voice and howls to the walls of the pueblo,  
Announcing he's here.

*The dogs of the dark pueblo  
Have long fangs . . .*

Has the red wolf trotted east and east and east,  
From the far, far other end of the day  
To fear a few fangs?

Across the pueblo river  
That dark old demon and I  
Thus say a few words to each other.

And wolf, he calls me, and red.  
I call him no names.

## ANIMALS

He says, however, he is Star-Road.  
I say, he can go back the same gait.

As for me . . .  
Since I trotted at the tail of the sun as far as ever the  
    creature went east,  
And lost him here,  
I'm going to sit down on my tail right here  
And wait for him to come back with a new story.  
I'm the red wolf, says the dark old father.  
All right, the red dawn wolf I am.

*Taos*

# GHOSTS

## MEN IN NEW MEXICO

Mountains blanket-wrapped  
Round a white hearth of desert—

While the sun goes round  
And round and round the desert,  
The mountains never get up and walk about.  
They can't, they can't wake.

They camped and went sleep  
In the last twilight  
Of Indian gods;  
And they can't wake.

Indians dance and run and stamp—  
No good.  
White men make gold-mines and the mountains unmake  
                  them  
In their sleep.

The Indians laugh in their sleep  
From fear,

## GHOSTS

Like a man when he sleeps and his sleep is over, and  
    he can't wake up,  
And he lies like a log and screams and his scream is  
    silent  
Because his body can't wake up;  
So he laughs from fear, pure fear, in the grip of the  
    sleep.

A dark membrane over the will, holding a man down  
Even when the mind has flickered awake;  
A membrane of sleep, like a black blanket.

We walk in our sleep, in this land,  
Somnambulist-wide-eyed afraid.

We scream for someone to wake us  
And our scream is soundless in the paralysis of sleep,  
And we know it.

The Penitentes lash themselves till they run with blood  
In their efforts to come awake for one moment;  
To tear the membrane of this sleep . . .  
No good.

The Indians thought the white man would awake  
    them . . .  
And instead, the white men scramble asleep in the  
    mountains,

## GHOSTS

And ride on horseback asleep forever through the  
desert,  
And shoot one another, amazed and mad with som-  
nambulism,  
Thinking death will awaken something . . .  
No good.

Born with a caul,  
A black membrane over the face,  
And unable to tear it  
Though the mind is awake.

Mountains blanket-wrapped  
Round the ash-white hearth of the desert;  
And though the sun leaps like a thing unleashed in the  
sky  
They can't get up, they are under the blanket.

*Taos*

## GHOSTS

### AUTUMN AT TAOS

Over the rounded sides of the Rockies, the aspens of  
autumn,  
The aspens of autumn  
Like yellow hair of a tigress brindled with pine.

Down on my hearth-rug of desert, sage of the mesa,  
An ash-grey pelt  
Of wolf all hairy and level, a wolf's wild pelt.

Trot-trot to the mottled foot-hills, cedar-mottled and  
piñon:  
Did you ever see an otter?  
Silvery-sided, fish-fanged, fierce-faced whiskered,  
mottled.

When I trot my little pony through the aspen trees of  
the canyon,  
Behold me trotting at ease betwixt the slopes of the  
golden  
Great and glistening-feathered legs of the hawk of  
Horus;

## GHOSTS

The golden hawk of Horus  
Astride above me.

But under the pines  
I go slowly  
As under the hairy belly of a great black bear.

Glad to emerge and look back  
On the yellow, pointed aspen-trees laid one on another  
like feathers,  
Feather over feather on the breast of the great and  
golden  
Hawk as I say of Horus.

Pleased to be out in the sage and the pine fish-dotted  
foot-hills,  
Past the otter's whiskers,  
On to the fur of the wolf-pelt that strews the plain.

And then to look back to the rounded sides of the  
squatting Rockies,  
Tigress-brindled with aspen,  
Jaguar-splashed, puma-yellow, leopard-livid slopes of  
America.

Make big eyes, little pony  
At all these skins of wild beasts;  
They won't hurt you.

## GHOSTS

Fangs and claws and talons and beaks and hawk-eyes  
Are nerveless just now.  
So be easy.

*Taos*



## GHOSTS

### SPIRITS SUMMONED WEST

England seems full of graves to me,  
Full of graves.

Women I loved and cherished, like my mother;  
Yet I had to tell them to die.

England seems covered with graves to me,  
Women's graves.

Women who were gentle  
And who loved me  
And whom I loved  
And told to die.

Women with the beautiful eyes of the old days,  
Belief in love, and sorrow of such belief.  
*"Hush, my love, then, hush.  
Hush, and die, my dear!"*

Women of the older generation, who knew  
The full doom of loving and not being able to take  
back.

Who understood at last what it was to be told to die.

## GHOSTS

Now that the graves are made, and covered;  
Now that in England pansies and such-like grow on the  
    graves of women;  
Now that in England is silence, where before was a  
    moving of soft-skirted women,  
Women with eyes that were gentle in olden belief in  
    love;  
Now then that all their yearning is hushed, and covered  
    over with earth:

England seems like one grave to me.

And I, I sit on this high American desert  
With dark-wrapped Rocky Mountains motionless  
    squatting around in a ring,  
Remembering I told them to die, to sink in the grave  
    in England,  
The gentle-kneed women.

So now I whisper: *Come away,*  
*Come away from the place of graves, come west,*  
*Women,*  
*Women whom I loved and told to die.*

*Come back to me now,*  
*Now the divided yearning is over;*  
*Now you are husbandless indeed, no more husband to*  
    *cherish like a child*

## GHOSTS

*And wrestle with for the prize of perfect love.  
No more children to launch in a world you mistrust.  
Now you need know in part  
No longer, nor carry the burden of a man on your  
heart,  
Nor the burden of Man writ large.*

*Now you are disburdened of Man and a man  
Come back to me.  
Now you are free of the toils of a would-be-perfect  
love  
Come to me and be still.*

Come back then, you who were wives and mothers  
And always virgins  
Overlooked.

Come back then, mother, my love, whom I told to die.  
It was only I who saw the virgin you  
That had no home.

The overlooked virgin,  
My love.

You overlooked her too.

Now that the grave is made of mother and wife,  
Now that the grave is made and lidded over with turf:

## GHOSTS

*Come, delicate, overlooked virgin, come back to me  
And be still,  
Be glad.*

I didn't tell you to die, for nothing.  
I wanted the virgin you to be home at last  
In my heart.

Inside my innermost heart,  
Where the virgin in woman comes home to a man.

The homeless virgin  
Who never in all her life could find the way home  
To that difficult innermost place in a man.

*Now come west, come home,  
Women I've loved for gentleness,  
For the virginal you.  
Find the way now that you never could find in life,  
So I told you to die.*

Virginal first and last  
Is woman.  
*Now at this last, my love, my many a love,  
You who I loved for gentleness,  
Come home to me.*

There are many, and I loved them, shall always love  
                  them,  
And they know it,

## GHOSTS

The virgins.  
And my heart is glad to have them at last.

Now that the wife and mother and mistress is buried  
in earth,  
In English earth,  
*Come home to me, my love, my loves, my many loves,*  
*Come west to me.*

For virgins are not exclusive of virgins  
As wives are of wives;  
And motherhood is jealous,  
But in virginity jealousy does not enter.

*Taos*

## THE AMERICAN EAGLE

The Dove of Liberty sat on an egg  
And hatched another eagle.

But didn't disown the bird.

*Down with all eagles!* cooed the Dove.  
And down all eagles began to flutter, reeling from their  
perches:  
Eagles with two heads, Eagles with one, presently  
Eagles with none  
Fell from the hooks and were dead.

Till the American Eagle was the only eagle left in  
the world.

Then it began to fidget, shifting from one leg to the  
other,  
Trying to look like a pelican,  
And plucking out of its plumage a few loose feathers  
to feather the nests of all  
The new naked little republics come into the world.

## THE AMERICAN EAGLE

But the feathers were, comparatively, a mere flea-bite.  
And the bub-eagle that Liberty had hatched was grow-  
ing a startling big bird

On the roof of the world;

A bit awkward, and with a funny squawk in his voice,  
His mother Liberty trying always to teach him to coo  
And him always ending with a yawp

*Coo! Coo! Coo! Coo-ark! Coo-ark!*

*Quark!! Quark!!*

YAWP!!!

So he clears his throat, the young Cock-eagle!

Now if the lilies of France lick Solomon in all his  
glory;

And the leopard cannot change his spots;

Nor the British lion his appetite;

Neither can a young Cock-eagle sit everlastingly  
With an olive-sprig in his mouth.

It's not his nature.

The big bird of the Amerindian being the eagle,  
Red Men still stick themselves over with bits of his  
fluff,

And feel absolutely IT.

So better make up your mind, American Eagle,  
Whether you're a sucking dove, *Roo—ooo—ooo!*  
*Quark! Yawp!!*

## THE AMERICAN EAGLE

Or a pelican  
Handing out a few loose golden breast-feathers, at  
moulting time;  
Or a sort of prosperity-fowl  
Fathering endless ten-dollar golden eggs.

Or whether it actually is an eagle you are,  
With a Roman nose  
And claws not made to shake hands with,  
And a Me-Almighty eye.

The new full-fledged Republic  
Chained to the perch of prosperity.  
Overweening bird, full of screams of life, command-  
ing a lucrative obedience.  
Eagle of the Rockies, bird of men that are greedy,  
Flapping your wings from your perch and command-  
ing the greedy millions  
Burrowing below you.  
Opening great wings in the face of the sheep-faced ewe  
of the world  
Who is losing her lamb;  
Drinking a little blood, then spitting it out, young  
eagle, in distaste;  
What bird are you, in the end?

What are you, American Eagle?



## THE AMERICAN EAGLE

Will you feed for ever on the cold meat of prosperity?  
Was your mother really a pelican, are you a strange  
cross?

Can you stay forever a tame half-breed cock on a  
golden perch?

Young eagle? Pelican-boy?

You're such a huge fowl!  
And such a puzzler!

*Santa Fe*



THE END





