



THE  
VERSE  
OF  
CHRISTOPHER  
BRENNAN

Edited by  
A. R. Chisholm and J. J. Quinn  
*With a Biographical Introduction by*  
*A. R. Chisholm*



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## PREFACE

THIS edition was undertaken some years ago by the late J. J. Quinn and myself, both of us old friends of C. J. Brennan. For some years the work proceeded slowly but steadily. It was far from easy, especially in the case of the uncollected poetry, for Brennan had been generous in the distribution of his manuscripts and had, moreover, sometimes written new verses in copies of *Poems 1913* that he gave to friends, students, and acquaintances.

Various unavoidable delays interrupted the progress of the work; and then, in October 1954, J. J. Quinn died after a short illness, before the completion of the manuscript. But, thanks to the work he had done, to the numerous documents that he had collected, and to others that I also had collected over the years, the present edition has been made possible.

Since October 1954, when the last part of the editing devolved upon me, I have rewritten the biography; determined as logically as possible the order in which the hitherto uncollected poems should appear; added a few texts to the latter; written the editorial notes; checked the variants where possible, and renumbered certain pieces in *Poems 1913* which had been placed in a wrong numerical order in the original edition (1914). And, of course, I take all responsibility for any imperfections or omissions that may be discovered in this edition of Brennan's works.

Two omissions that may cause some surprise at first are really deliberate. Firstly, the verse translations from Baudelaire, Heredia, and others, which were made by Brennan to illustrate prose articles, are not included in the verse volume: they will be found in the articles to which they belong in the prose volume (where they are indexed). Secondly, pieces in *XXI Poems* (1897) that were not reprinted in *Poems 1913* have been relegated to Appendix A: for they could not truly be classed among "Poems Hitherto Uncollected".

Among the many to whom I am indebted for their willing help I must mention especially the former Fisher Librarian (Mr E. V. Steel) in the University of Sydney; Miss Phyllis Mander Jones, formerly Mitchel

Librarian, and her staff; Mr H. M. Green; my old friend and teacher, Dr George Mackaness; Mr R. Innes Kay; the Misses M. M. and K. E. Quinn, sisters of the late J. J. Quinn; my colleague R. G. Howarth, now Professor of English in the University of Cape Town; Mr T. Inglis Moore; Miss R. M. Edmunds; Miss M. E. Lugton, of the Melbourne University Library staff; and last but not least Mr H. S. Temby, former Secretary of the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

There are several others to whom I have made due acknowledgment in the notes. In a few cases, they may be surprised to find their names there, for their information has been conveyed to me, probably without their knowledge, by mutual friends.

*London,  
September 1959.*

A.R.C.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION



## BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

BRENNAN's father was a bordersman of three Irish counties, whom we can best pin down to Kildare. He had married Mary Carroll, of Coolrus, near Cashel, in Tipperary. He came out to Sydney, and found employment at the Castlemaine Brewery, where he afterwards became the brewer.

The Brennans' eldest son received the name of Christopher, after his father, and to this was added the name of Mrs Brennan's father, John, which had also been passed on to her brother.

Christopher John was the first of a numerous family, of which only he and four others survived. The latter were, in order of birth, Agnes Ellen (later Mrs Burke); Teresa Mary (Mrs Conlon); Philip Benedict, who served in the Second Australian Machine-Gun Battalion as a sergeant during the first world war, and to whom the poet's *A Chant of Doom* was dedicated; and John Felix, named after Dean Sheridan.

Brennan, a few years before his death, was induced by some friends (notably R. Innes Kay) to write a short *Curriculum vitae*, which runs to twenty-three foolscap pages of double-spaced typescript, and which we shall hereinafter call, for convenience, the *Curriculum*. In it he gives the date and place of his birth as follows:

Born, November 1, 1870, in Harbour Street off Hay Street as one turns down from the old Haymarket. My father was brewer at the Castlemaine Brewery in Hay Street and built his house where he could be near his work: he had at critical moments to visit it at night . . . While the house was building we lived in Quay Street just behind and beneath the brewery.

G. B. Philip, in *Sixty Years' Reminiscences*, published in Sydney in 1939, wrongly gives No. 2 Quay Street as the birthplace of the poet. The same writer varies the order of schools given in the present notice, which adheres to the order in the *Curriculum*.

Christopher's earliest associations were with the Haymarket (of which little now remains except the name), with Paddy's (officially Belmore) Markets, and with the old parish church of St Francis de

Sales, afterwards transferred to a new site in Albion Street. (Where it once stood, the embankment of the Central Railway Station now faces the Tivoli Theatre.)

The Brennan household was Roman Catholic, and the father took his religion very seriously, presiding over family prayers every night. This did not, however, prevent his enjoying a game of cards, a horse-race, a pipe, or a drop of spirits.

When Chris was in his fifth year and the family was living in Quay Street, "behind and beneath the brewery", the latter caught fire (24th September 1875, at night, as recorded in the *Sydney Morning Herald*). The boy was hastily wrapped in a blanket and carried to the house of some friends in Hay Street. In the *Curriculum* he says: "The sparks were showering, and I asked if the stars were falling. When I was put to bed I was too excited to sleep and got the ebony elephants from the clock to play with."

The *Curriculum* records his passage through three dame-schools to parochial schools where

. . . there were few capable lay teachers and these were in great demand, parish competing with parish to get them. Thus I was sent, miles out of bounds as it seemed to me, to St John's in Kent Street (now defunct), where I was one of the few who wore foot covering, and did not go to my own parish school until it managed to bag the headmaster of St John's—you see my parents were anxious from the start that I should get the best.

He was at St John's from 1877 to 1878. In 1879 he started at his own parish school of St Francis, but stayed there for only a year.

With the beginning of 1880 I was shifted to the Convent of the Good Samaritan. Like so many other places of importance in my life this is gone. Until O'Sullivan built his "folly",<sup>1</sup> Belmore Park cut off the Haymarket and St Francis from the enormous block that ran from Belmore Road to Devonshire Street. Facing the park in Belmore Road stood the Mounted Police Barracks. Many a morning I have watched the men at sword drill. In Pitt Street came the Convent.

The Good Samaritan (formerly Good Shepherd) order of nuns

<sup>1</sup> Central Railway Station.

that had charge of this convent, he adds, “now runs St Scholastica’s, Glebe Point”.

The convent was “in Pitt Street, opposite Christ Church St Laurence”. The nuns “had room for one small select boys’ class—which was carefully parked off in the infants’ school”. The Sydney street directory for 1880 vouches for the accuracy of his memory. So also does the directory for 1876, when the two are compared; for the earlier issue refers to two buildings, a Roman Catholic school and a House of the Good Shepherd, whereas the issue of 1880 mentions only one building; and Brennan’s description implies that school and convent were within the same precinct when he began there.

The directories testify to the exactness of his memory in other respects also. For example, he speaks in the *Curriculum* of the Moclairs to whose house he was taken on the night of the fire, “a childless couple as also another in the neighbourhood, the McCaffereys”; and the 1876 directory gives both these families as living near by, in Harbour and Quay streets respectively. Further, issues of the directory prior to 1880 give M. Fitzgerald as headmaster of St John’s, Kent Street. The issue for 1880 indicates Fitzgerald’s transfer to St Francis’s, thus corroborating Brennan’s remark that he did not attend his own parish school till 1879, when it had “bagged” the headmaster of St John’s.

The family attended the church of St Francis, at which Chris became an acolyte (not earlier than the age of seven: “St Francis does not count for more than the years 7-9 in my recollections, the school only for the last year”). It left a deep impression on his mind.

The Church fascinated me from the beginning with its chancel, lower and narrower than the rest, and deep enough to allow, between altar and end window,<sup>2</sup> a space that served as sacristy. On Sunday evenings in summer during Vespers, as the light waned, I used to watch the colours fade out of the window, until the body of the Crucified turned livid grey, then for a while the leads stood out in a thicker black on the gathering dark.

He continues:

Next, the blaze of candles lit for Benediction and the placing of the burse. The burse is of no use during the service; it has,

<sup>2</sup> He says in a note to this section of the *Curriculum* that this was the south window: “Our churches here are not orientated.”

of course, the same colours as the cope. These were, for the groundwork, a dull light absorbing gold, for the cross of the burse and the cape of the cope a deep ruby. I could never gaze on them enough; so the thrill when the burse was set up.

Despite the fascination that St Francis's had for him when he was young, it would be wrong to assume that the childhood memories and nostalgias found in certain poems refer always to this church. For example, he has in mind not St Francis's, but St Benedict's (where he had been baptized) when he writes in the second epilogue of *Poems 1913*:

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

The gin-shop in question was the Australian Hotel kept by John Woods, J.P. Its name and the name of the owner were painted on dull apricot-coloured glass; and this apricot colour, along with the gaslight seen through the doorway, provided the "ochrous flare". Old St Benedict's, on the opposite corner, had then (1908) a row of dusty trees outside its "lancet-windows" on the George Street front, and through the foliage the tram traveller could perceive the stained glass faintly illuminated by the "ruddy glow" of the "lamp of adoration" (the sanctuary light in its crimson bowl). Of the old church only the tower survived when George Street was widened: the façade was set back, a loftier structure replaced the "obtruncate chancel", and the footpath was built where the trees used to grow.

The memories of his acolyte days at St Francis's were not all so poetic as those quoted above. He recalls, for instance, "how vilely

our ugly old-fashioned black cassocks and surplices smelt from being shut up in one press with the tapers used for lighting the altar candles". And in another passage of the *Curriculum* he compares the very different conditions at the Convent of the Good Samaritan, where he served in 1880:

This chapel, I fancy, must have meant more to me than even my particular detailed memories can show, no matter how much paper I should give them. (1) I was taken out of the rather rough company of the St Francis "altar boys" and set apart as single in my kind. (2) I had no contact with a mixed and profane congregation but was surrounded by dedicated women except thus far. When a nun was received and her friends and relations were present I was sent out, fully dressed up, to stand at the top of the stairs and show them the way into the outer chapel. Now hither came the Magdalens as well and, as they came past, they would pat my cheek and say "Ain't he a little love!"—or words to that effect. Even so, it was a feminine touch. (What this feminine milieu meant as influence I cannot myself sufficiently discriminate.) (3) Through my surroundings and the special ceremonies at which I attended, I early gained perceptions of delicate ritual beauty. Thus, every child likes dressing up: what a change it was from the black soutanes and snuffy taper-smelling surplices of St Francis to a red soutane, lace cotta, watered silk sash, blue cord and tassel, and buckled shoes.

Then the privilege of sharing one sacristy with the celebrant, and watching him during his vesting. The chapel, if it existed, I might now think pretty, but there was no harm in that, if it were only so: a child of nine will seldom distinguish the pretty from the beautiful.

To come back to the question of Brennan's schooling: he was at the Good Samaritan Convent from 1880 to 1881. His next move was to the school of St Kilda, in Woolloomooloo Street (now Cathedral Street). It was a Jesuit college, later removed to Bourke Street and renamed St Aloysius. It had been opened, he says in the *Curriculum*, in the latter part of 1879, but the distance from Harbour Street to this school was at first too great "for an unguarded boy of nine".

Until he went to this college, his education had been limited to English, geography, arithmetic and little else. English consisted of

grammar, with copious doses of parsing and analysis. Brennan maintained that the modern onslaught on these latter was unjustifiable:

I never could understand or sympathize with the furious attack on these disciplines. Certainly they involved some mental work and a bad teacher could make them dull. But are you training jelly-fish or shall not the mind have spine and sinews as well as the body? All over the world the assault on grammar goes on and the minds of men grow flabbier—and the dull teachers are still dull. [*Curriculum.*]

There had been little history. No outside reading was available beyond works of devotion and, by accident, a Byron discovered in an unlocked bookcase at home. He had already devoured "Heaven and Earth", "Cain", "Manfred", "The Giaour", "The Corsair", "Lara" and some other not very devout morsels before Father Cassidy discovered what was happening and stopped it. To this literary baggage was added by the age of eleven some knowledge of Scott and Cowper; and there were also the contents of his mother's set of excellent Irish National School Readers.

At the convent he had learnt to play the piano and had had some instruction in pencil and crayon drawing. Apparently his piano playing did not reach a very advanced stage, but he was always deeply interested in music. He went on with his drawing (unwillingly) for several years.

In 1881 there were four children in the family, and life at home seems to have been cheerful.

Though there was an outer kitchen it was seldom used: in patriarchal style we usually cooked and ate in one large room, which made an excellent living-room on winter nights. To this old Irish tradition my mother was faithful to the end of her days, and so did I live with Vie at 10 Glen Street.<sup>3</sup> We were an early rising household; I have already given my own case. And there was no going out after dark, except to church and together. The old Sydney, with its dim gas lamps, must have been a pretty dangerous place for innocence. I can remember only, from those days, Saturday night on Brickfield Hill. . . . In the season we used to spend the Sunday at Manly, then the end of the world:

<sup>3</sup> Years later, just before he left the University. *Vide ult.*

boats ran once an hour. Bush and beach were undisturbed; you boiled the billy with sweet water from the stream in Fairy Bower and carried home handkerchiefs full of shells. [*Curriculum*.]

His period of study at St Kilda's began when he was eleven. The rector was Father P. Clancy. Other teachers included the rather eccentric Father William Kelly, who taught chemistry and physics and whose clothes were usually stained with chemicals and streaked with chalk, and Father Thomas Keating, "a saintly soul", with "the face of a gentle Moltke, crowned with full soft silver hair". Brennan's form (IV Grammar) was ruled by a lay teacher named McGillicuddy, who liked the new boy.

Latin, which was to mean so much to Brennan, was studied from Smith's *Principia*. He remarks in the *Curriculum* that he must have learnt it well, and adds: "But I was prepared to do so, for, as a child, I had asked myself what was the purpose and meaning of those sounding terminations *orum arum ibus abus isti* etc." He became a singularly good Latinist, and later, when he lectured at the University (though he had to teach French and German rather than Latin) he could translate in various styles with marvellous ease, turning the Mona Lisa passage in Pater's *Renaissance*, for example, into Latin prose after the manner of Apuleius. He had a good command of Ciceronian diction. He was quite at home in Church Latin also; and while he was at the Public Library he composed in that expressive tongue a long petition for a brother in one of the teaching groups who wished to prepare for orders and was appealing to Rome against his Superior's adverse decision.

To the *Principia* was added that dreadful yet informative old manual of French, the *Grammaire des Grammaires*. It was anything but inspiring, and Brennan was probably right, therefore, when he asserted in later days that his real knowledge of French was self-acquired and dated from his stay in Berlin. Yet it is characteristic that he passed all the prescribed examinations in this language at St Kilda's; and in fifth form he even read La Fontaine for pleasure.

The elements of German were taught at the school by a visiting master. He could not remember having studied Greek at this period. English he took by storm, and none in the school could keep pace with him. "I took at once to Milton—*Samson* at that; and the disgust which I felt at being turned the next year on to the vulgarity of *Henry V* is as deep as ever."

In 1882 he sat for the Civil Service examination, which entailed a visit—his first—to the University. The old horse-buses were housed near by, and the bus wheels were washed in the University pond. He mentions this, also the dead dogs floating in the water, in the *Curriculum*. Other things that imprinted themselves on his memory at the time included a glimpse of Charles Badham, “for whom I anxiously looked out”. Badham was then universally known, nor was admiration for him confined to classical scholars. He was a great public figure. His portrait—that noble head—was as well known as that of politicians like Parkes or Sir John Robertson.

Unexpectedly, Brennan did well in chemistry at St Kilda’s and received the form prize for it at Christmas in 1882. There was no piano instruction, as there had been at the convent, but Hugo Alpen—well known in Sydney schools till a good while after 1900—taught singing. Brennan was under his guidance for nine years. Alpen was an extraordinary man, with a German accent and an amazing capacity for extracting music from even the dullest and most unwilling classes.

In June 1883 the school moved, as already stated, to Bourke Street and took the name of St Aloysius. Its quarters were in the former residence of Sir Saul Samuel, who had just gone to London as Agent-General for New South Wales. The house later became St Margaret’s Hospital.

In fifth form Brennan began working for what was known in his time (and till much later) as the Junior Public, roughly the equivalent of the modern Intermediate examination. Among other things he wrote out his own rendering of the *Gallic War* (Book III), having decided to take Latin seriously. He scored five As and two Bs, finishing his school year with acknowledged supremacy in languages and history and some knowledge of science. His mathematics were weak, possibly, as he said, because the method of teaching them was defective. Under Father O’Connell he later did well in this discipline at the Senior Public examination.

From St Aloysius’ a scholarship founded by Cardinal Moran took him to Riverview College with a fellow-scholar, Stephen Burke. It was intended that both boys, when they had finished their course at Riverview, should go to Rome with the Cardinal and study for the priesthood. Brennan changed his mind at the last moment, but Burke duly went to Rome and afterwards joined the teaching staff of the Manly Seminary as professor of Thomist philosophy. He died comparatively young.

Brennan in the *Curriculum* tells how the Riverview scholarship was awarded.

I had no hope of getting to Riverview without assistance: Dean Sheridan thought I ought to go, and persuaded the Cardinal. I was summoned to the Cathedral presbytery and stood up to be examined at the foot of a long table; at its head was the Cardinal, and along the sides the superior clergy of the Archdiocese, in synod assembled. I got a passage in the Breviary (ending *Habebit thesaurum non deficientem in caelo*) which I was asked to read aloud and translate at sight. When I had finished, one of the clergy said: "You've seen that before." I hadn't, and told him so; he still shook his head.

The Cardinal did not take it ill of Brennan that he later abandoned the idea of persevering in his vocation; and he remained on friendly terms with him during his (the Cardinal's) lifetime. Brennan received a most kindly letter from his former patron as late as 1909.

The rector at Riverview was the Reverend Father Dalton, who lived with his staff in a cottage overlooking the river (the college is considerably larger nowadays).

Chris was happy there. He had always loved the Lane Cove River, and memories of his first stay there at the age of ten were the source of inspiration for those simple, charming verses of his mid-period:

*O friendly shades, where anciently I grew!*

He had had typhoid fever when he was six, and was still somewhat sickly. But in this new environment he began to grow.

I had had no games as a child [he says in the *Curriculum*], but I took like a glutton to swimming and rowing and learnt a tidy game at handball. . . . Then there was the freedom from the rigid puritanism of home, where I had to steal a fearful delight if I would extravagate outside the set books for class and church. Thus, the position of St Kilda allowed me (on special half holidays carefully concealed from the authorities) to explore our primitive Art Gallery and venture into the Public Library in quest of Cary's *Dante*. But at Riverview there was foison of profane literature—I still remember the rapture with which I read *She* in the *Graphic*.

It was a liberation for him, although the discipline was strict. "To be up at 6 in summer, 6.30 in winter, to hear mass and do an hour's study before breakfast was no new thing to me who had been at it since I was seven. I will not stir memories of the strap, save to remark that it was a carriage trace."

Some of the teachers at Riverview had quaint methods. Father O'Malley, for instance, "with his bug for mnemonics" (fairly much used in New South Wales schools in the eighties and nineties). He would even fall back on such primitive aids as "William *doize* of a fall from his *hoize*" to imprint on the memory the manner in which William the Conqueror met his death at Mantes.

The same Father O'Malley "looked after" history, geography, English and Christian doctrine, and gave Brennan private lessons in Italian. (It began as an evening class, but one by one the others dropped out.) "But," says Brennan, "it was dull reading the *Storia generale della Chiesa* from the French of the Abbé Rohebacher."

Father Charles O'Connell ". . . taught mathematics, and taught them well. He played the 'cello in private, for which reason he was quartered in the infirmary, a half-mile from the rest of the college." A resident lay master named Desjardins gave music lessons, while drawing was taught by a visiting master, Broinowski, who had had Brennan at St Aloysius' and who insisted that he should not be allowed to drop the subject. Father Gartlan instructed the future disciple of Mallarmé in French, apparently without great enthusiasm; for Brennan remarks that "he used this hour every day to make up leeway on his breviary". The "Drill Sergeant and Argus of the study hall" was "the mighty Mick Hagney, in whose figure I was soon to recognize and embody Terence Mulvany".

Classics were taught by Father "Pat" Keating, twenty years younger than his brother Thomas, whom we have met at St Kilda's. Brennan took kindly to him, and expresses his admiration in an interesting passage of the *Curriculum*:

The rest of the school did (and do still) give their cheers to Tommy Gartlan; they never took to Father Pat, not because he did nasty things, he never did—nor gave himself airs—nor that neither; but he could say things deservedly severe (and felt as such), yet beyond their captus, and there their genius was rebuked. "The simple common herd of humanity" (as Euripides sings so

sweetly through the mouth of Gilbert Murray) must, in such cases, feel the dull gentle anger of sheep. I, on the contrary, fell under his charm, though, as has been my case most regularly, not without a struggle against it; so that he had to take me apart and tell me that I was going out of my way to be personally offensive to him: I was won. He was the first accomplished man whom I was to meet, and I don't know that it has been my chance to meet many since. He was well gifted and had acquired much.

. . . Father Pat, though not a Goliath like Father Cassidy (we saw them at Riverview side by side), was six feet tall and beautifully built, with handsome features and a finely moulded brow, strikingly divided by a deep but not narrow central cleft. His manners were exquisite, his address that of a perfect man of the world. . . . As a scholar I was to outgrow him; but I could not have outgrown a lesser man.

When Father Keating died, Brennan published an article on him in the college magazine, *Our Alma Mater*. In the same magazine appeared some Greek verses by Brennan, with the dedication: *Piae memoriae praceptoris dilectissimi R. P. Keating S. I. discipulus maerens.*

In sixth form, where Stephen Burke was still Brennan's class-fellow and friendly rival, preparations began for the Senior Public examination in 1886, and Father Keating introduced the boys to the writing of Greek and Latin verse. Brennan took up English verse-writing of his own accord, and two of his metrical plays went the rounds of the school in manuscript. In Latin that year the second book of *The Aeneid* was his passion, but he detested Horace's *Odes* (Book I), while Livy apparently left him indifferent.

As for Greek, he says in the *Curriculum*: "Parasanged it with Xenophon, then got his *Oeconomicus* (still liked) and Homer, which was a new world."

At the Senior he was runner-up to Curlewis (afterwards a judge) for first place in Latin, but spoilt his Greek paper by making what he called a "mash" of the verse unseen (*Phoenissae*, 1440-1452). He remarked to himself that this was a shame, not to have as much Greek as Latin at least. He "went out after it", he says, and got it.

His last year at Riverview, 1887, was a milestone in the progress of his scholarship. In the matriculation class he and Stephen Burke were the only pupils, and they were encouraged to read widely,

having the freedom of the Fathers' library. "This taught me how to use a library."

From an early period he had begun to build up a small library of his own, and by the age of seventeen had acquired a Dante, Lachmann's *Lucretius* and, what he specially prized, Gottfried Hermann's *Aeschylus* of 1842. "*Che mai di me non fia diviso*,"<sup>4</sup> he wrote of this precious volume in the *Curriculum*. It afterwards went to the library of St John's College at the University.

This was a worthy beginning for the line of critical *Aeschylus* editions—Wecklein, Wellauer, Porson, back through the elders, Victorius, Canter, Robortello and the Aldine, to the Medicean facsimile—which he acquired over the years. Though a man without guile, he had devised a stratagem for buying second-hand books. He would offer a number of readily saleable school texts and a few shillings, in exchange for a pile of the older scholarly editions of the classics. As a rule the bookseller with careless hand would sweep off a few volumes from the top, leaving him the more desirable books that he had put at the bottom.

The beginning of the academic year 1888 found him enrolled in Arts in the University of Sydney. There were two hundred students enrolled altogether. In his first year it was necessary to pass in Latin, another foreign language, English, three branches of mathematics, and three sciences (presumably one term of each). From second year onward he took nothing but classics and some philosophy. He was disappointed in Professor Walter Scott's classics lectures, though he admitted later that he "may have been a bit bumptious", having had practically no competition at school in his own line.

He remarks in the *Curriculum* that religion began to worry him in his nineteenth year. "It seemed to me that I lacked fervour, that I was mechanically repeating a dull exercise. I seem now to have been searching, like any mere Protestant, for a 'religious experience'—which wouldn't come."

He set out in his second year to follow Francis Anderson's course in philosophy when Anderson came to the University as professor. "The next Christmas I experienced a sudden collapse of all the barriers and entered the philosophy class in March, 1890"—his third year—"as a ripe agnostic, already beginning to elaborate a special epistemology

\* "Let us twain never be parted" (Dante, *Inferno* V, 135). Either Brennan or his typist has slipped a little here. The quotation should be "Che mai da me non fia diviso".

of the Unknowable, which was the Absolute.” He spent that year in open conflict with the professor. “Andy” was always ready to admit and even invite argument; consequently this conflict can hardly have been personal; and Brennan says in the *Curriculum* that Anderson was the only teacher with whom he made any contact, adding that Scott was the only other professor under whom he studied after his first year.

For Lent Term, 1890, during Scott’s absence, Thomas Butler, afterwards professor of Latin, came to fill a gap and read the *Agamemnon* with the class. It was the beginning of a life-long friendship. “Tommy” Butler, a favourite student of Badham’s (whose Australian speeches and lectures he edited), was a voracious reader in several languages, and his friendship must have been singularly stimulating for the younger man.

There was at the University a musical society which Brennan joined. As there were not enough women students to furnish the female voices (even many years later they occupied only the two front rows at most Arts lectures), the introduction of members’ relatives was permitted; and Brennan was thus brought into contact with a good cross-section of ladies, including members of the Summerbell family, with whom another life-long friendship was begun. This was all to the good, for he was a somewhat raw youth still, too strictly brought up and lacking social suppleness. He shunned the other University societies, however, though for a time he edited the University magazine *Hermes*.

His third year drew to a close, and in December 1890 he sat for the last of his pass examinations. The system then, and for long after, was such that you sat for a pass in December, being listed in order of merit but not classed; and then sat for honours in the following March.

In December he came fourth in philosophy, and was disgusted. He said: “It’s no go”, and went off to teach in Goulburn, without bothering about the March examination. But for his own pleasure he “went through Green’s *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, with A. J. Balfour’s criticism, in *Mind*”. And then, after all, he sat for philosophy honours in March, and was placed first in the first class.

In classics he was not so successful. “Scott cut me down to second class,” he writes in the *Curriculum*, the ostensible reason being his scandalous neglect of the set books. “His real reason,” adds Brennan,

"was my contemptuous way of writing about Plato. Plato has had to suffer a lot in my mind ever since, because of the Oxford method of teaching the *Republic*."

In 1892 he gained his master's degree with honours in philosophy; but according to the University calendar this degree was not conferred until 1897.

On the whole, his stay at the University had not been unhappy.

I enjoyed the time, [he tells us in the *Curriculum*] and loafed through it in my own way, gaining, even then, a lot of bad marks with the authorities. It seems to me, at times, as if Sydney University and a Prussian wife have been two mistakes in my life, enjoyable as the good time was in both cases. In each the book is closed: accounts balance exactly. . . . As Sydney was the only University accessible, it was better to go there than to none. I will still leave so much on its credit side. If I am indebted for monetary aid, that goes to the credit of the benefactors: if the authorities granted it, they must have found me deserving.

The teaching post (secured for him by Butler) that he took in Goulburn in 1891 was at St Patrick's College. His duties left him time to start a clandestine love affair and to indulge his taste for music. Of the love affair and its vicissitudes, and a new love affair and its musical background, he writes as follows in the *Curriculum*:

It was a sweet initiation and a happy little secret affair—while it lasted. For what must I do but forsake it for a virtuous affection! This was for a well known Catholic girl of the town, who was simply amusing herself with me in the absence of something better. . . . Now mark, it was music that brought us together—I couldn't resist music in those days; and, though I thought she had laid my life waste (v. Swinburne's *Triumph of Time*, then my favourite poem—and the biographical facts behind it), yet, in a few months, music had done the same thing over again. Result: when I left Sydney in June, 1892, I was pledged, though she wasn't (this second lady will appear again). Six months had not passed and, music once more aiding, I found myself deeper in than ever.

The rather cryptic last lines of the above quotation call for a little elucidation. Apparently, when Brennan left for Germany, he was

still in love—or thought he was in love—with the “well known Catholic girl” in Goulburn. This “second lady” does *not* appear again in the *Curriculum*. The third affair, in which he found himself “deeper in than ever”, was obviously with Fräulein Werth, whom he met in Berlin and afterwards married. Her sister was an ardent musician.

During one of his visits to Sydney (from Goulburn) he was brought into contact, thanks to Professor Butler, with A. B. Piddington, then a lecturer in English at the University. Piddington afterwards became a judge, subsequently returned to the Bar and figured in quite a number of *causes célèbres*.

Whenever Brennan came to Sydney that year, he enjoyed the daily hospitality of these two friends, and rounded off his social education in their company. He needed this polish, for he was still an unsophisticated youth, and he confesses that the first time he dined with Butler at the Athenaeum Club he wanted to return the first round of drinks. “Here was another part of my education: cookery, wines, and good company. Here I met Edmund Barton, who was always kind to me; the very last time we met, as guests of W. R. Beaver (Clerk of the Peace), we lunched in our shirt sleeves. It was after the Armistice, just a year before Barton’s death.”

Less than a year from when he had started teaching in Goulburn he left for Germany, after “doing a bit of teaching” at Riverview. But before following him to Berlin it will be useful to look at some of the information on his Goulburn period that we find in his letters to Piddington.

What appears to be the first of these letters (1891) is respectfully addressed to “My dear Mr Piddington”; and there is a certain boyishness in its mock-pedantic extravagances: “I hope that the plexus of sensations and state of consciousness which, metaphysically considered, compose your material organism, have been of late so ordered that the concomitant feelings are of such a nature that you desire to retain them in consciousness—in other words, I hope you are well.”

Intellectually, he was not idle at Goulburn, despite his protestations of boredom, for in this first letter he writes:

The Oedipus Rex is on my hands and of course I must read it, but the first chorus is rather sick; for what is the ὄ Διὸς ἀδυέπες φάτι and the list of gods that are besought compared to

the strength and fire of the δέκατον μὲν ἔτος? I have been making use of your Dante and admire the poet more than ever: every line, nay every word, pure muscle, nothing superfluous. In philosophy my work has been confined to Herbert Spencer's Psychology and some magazine articles. But, as I go for my M.A. next year, I must soon arise, gird up my loins, and with the sword of Truth (?) smite the Andersonians hip and thigh.

He kept his word, winning his master's degree with honours in 1892, as already stated.

The same letter contains "a late production of my own", a sonnet, "which is no doubt an echo, tho' I am conscious of no other direct debt than the translation in line 9 of Aeschylus' magnificent phrase κυναγοι . . . κατ' ἵχνος πλατᾶν ἀφαντον".

Unfortunately, the letter bears no other date than "Thursday night, 1891", so that we cannot fix the time at which this early sonnet was written. The text, without separation of either the quatrains or the tercets, is as follows:

*Farewell, the pleasant harbourage of Faith,  
The calm repose 'neath sunny skies and bright  
—Or was it darkness, vainly thought the light,  
And all we worshipp'd, but a fleeting wraith?  
Me from that haven, with vexation fraught,  
Doubt drives to wander: in adventurous bark  
I follow e'er, 'neath low'ring skies and dark,  
O'er gulfs of gloom and mighty seas of thought  
Upon their oarblades' vanish't track, who sped  
To greet the rising sun, if sun there be:  
Yet never unto them that light was shown:  
Nor ever, since these mingled with the dead,  
Hath sun arisen on that shoreless sea  
Nor man won way into the vast Unknown.*

Deprecatingly, Brennan writes (*ibid.*):

This I am afraid can only be call'd a "sonnet" by courtesy. The ordinary sonnet with no more than two rhymes in the first eight lines is a perfect bed of Procrustes; but sooner than hobble my Pegasus, whose gait is slow enough already, I have

boldly admitted two new rhymes in the fifth to the eighth lines,  
tho' I vainly sought a precedent.<sup>5</sup>

Towards the end of May 1891, he drops the Mr, at Piddington's invitation, adding in parentheses: "There, I've done it. And I feel as if I had stepped up to the great W.S. (of the Uni), nudged him in the ribs, and said 'Well, Scott, old boy, how d'ye do?' or called the great T.B. by his Christian name, or addressed Patrick Francis Card. Moran etc. as 'Paddy' or anything you will. Only that you request it I should have never dreamt of such a thing."

The spiritual doubts expressed in the sonnet were apparently no mere poetic fancy, for he says in this May letter:

A certain priest here—a rather cute man in his way—noticing the abundance of Herbert Spencer's works on my shelves—they form a "solidum agmen" of fourteen tall volumes—immediately jumped to conclusions, which are far from wrong. He therefore presented me with a Catholic "General Metaphysics", as an antidote . . . I have one grievance against it: it's written in a popular style . . . I have just dipped into it, and even you, who do not profess to be a metaphysician, will understand the sweet absurdity of dividing Being into actual and potential.

Another (undated) letter to Piddington refers to Brennan's close attention to Swinburne, Whitman, Ibsen and Shakespeare; while in a letter (also undated) written in hexameters he gives a partial catalogue of his reading:

*Damn'd dull is metaphysic, and still more damnably ethics:  
Psychology is a fraud: nor have I my maximum opus,  
That T.B.<sup>6</sup> possesseth, and vainly I long for it daily.  
Therefore my time I consume in reading Whitman and Swinburne,  
Shakespeare and Ibsen (a collocation unsweet to thy hearing),  
Meredith's "Shaving of Shagpat" and "Richard Feverel's Ordeal",  
"John Ward, Preacher" and works severial and useless.*

As we mentioned earlier, Brennan returned to Sydney and spent a brief period teaching at Riverview before leaving for Germany. Mr William Beattie, a musician who had taken a post at the college,

<sup>5</sup> The sonnet was later published in *Hermes*, 6th November 1891.

<sup>6</sup> To scan the line, read: "Tommy Butler".

gives us an interesting impression of the poet as he then looked (the two were on very good terms, because in Brennan, says Mr Beattie, "music was a passion, though few knew it"):

In person in those youthful days Chris Brennan was square-built and well set-up; his height, its effect being dwarfed by an aquiline head and breadth of shoulders, not seeming then to be what his appearance in after years proved that it must have been. A high colour; black,<sup>7</sup> sleek hair—rather suggestive of the head plumage of a bird—inclined to lengthiness, drawn back from a great forehead; a mobile, stern though whimsical mouth; cold, blue eyes that were rather staring and that never softened; a rich, ringing voice, clear and cutting, capable of much modulation and that gave his speech an indefinable charm in conversation, were his chief characteristics. There is extant a portrait head of Joseph (?) Napoleon with his little son that is so like the Christopher Brennan of those days that I borrowed at a figure an oily copy of it so that I should have it to look at in lieu of my hero during the holidays. Does not that speak for the mesmeric charm of the youthful Christopher?

Having been awarded the James King of Irrawang travelling scholarship, Brennan left Sydney for Germany on the small Norddeutscher Lloyd steamer *Habsburg* in June 1892.

He says in the *Curriculum* that he was still unable to speak German when he left; but that he worked at it on the ship. He made for Berlin, to which he was attracted by the University's reputation for classical studies.

He boarded with his future mother-in-law, Frau Werth, who with her family had come from East Prussia, near the then Russian border. She lived opposite the State Opera House, which Brennan used to visit with an American student—a musician who had the score before him during performances. In later years Brennan used to recall the crowd waiting at the door to see the little, dark Jew who played the title role in *Don Giovanni*. He thought Australian conductors took Wagner at a much more rapid tempo than the Germans.

He seems to have made few friends, and these not Germans. He disliked most of the Germans he met; and in a long letter to Piddington 1892 or early 1893) he writes:

<sup>7</sup> It was dark brown.

As for this country, I am perfectly astonished that you are such a *Deutscher Schwärmer*. The people is to me a type of all that is vulgar. Is there another nation on God's earth that does its love-making in the restaurant, over a glass of beer? You'll see a fat German, with a double chin forming a sort of fringe round his countenance, holding his Geliebte by the hand, and endeavouring with all his might to look at her tenderly, then after a while he lets go her hand and takes a pull at his beer, after which, as if he had got second wind, he returns to his love-making.

A remark which, in the same letter, he makes on his own appearance is interesting:

But as to my Jesuitism, tell me, O tell me, is there anything so ecclesiastical in my appearance that the Berliners should nudge each other as I go by, and remark, "*Sieh du, da geht ein Theolog*" (I heard a fellow the other night say, "*Sieh bloss, da ist ein Lyrischer Dichter*"!!!)? but above all, *ich beschwöre Euch mit Thränen*, tell me, is there anything so jesuitical in my appearance that not only you and Larry Hartnett<sup>8</sup> (give the dear old boy my love) should make merry thereover, but even an acquaintance of my landlady, on seeing me for the first time, should in answer to her remark, "*Die Männer taugen nichts*," say out of my hearing, "*Ja, die Männer taugen nichts, aber der Junge da, er taugt überhaupt gar nichts!*"<sup>9</sup> Shall the True and Good and Gentle be always misunderstood?

Though he subscribed to the *Lokal-Anzeiger* (and remained a subscriber for many years), he held little communication with Germans except through books and through his courtship of Frau Werth's daughter, Anna Elisabeth. His German in later years was remarkably good, though his accent remained imperfect. He was greatly pleased when an old German, who spoke to him at a Berlin theatre, thought he came from Hanover (a tribute to his fluency rather than to his accent, unless you accept the *English* myth that the best German is spoken in Hanover). His vocabulary was incredibly vast, and he could write in various styles: Middle High German (even in verse), German

<sup>8</sup> Sergeant-at-Arms, N.S.W. Legislative Assembly.

<sup>9</sup> "Yes, men are no good, but that young fellow is *no good at all!*"

of the eighteenth century, modern German. His wife was once heard to complain that she could not follow him when he got on to literary subjects—he used so many words that she did not know!

Like Heine before him, he hated the flat German capital. But he had an eye and a memory for things that were peculiar to Berlin: the householder's duty of sweeping away the snow from the footpath in front of the door; the selling of live fish, which used to be brought to the fishmonger's in a barrel and let out through a trap-door into a tub; the food and the beer. And he was particularly delighted by the magic of spring, when the trees burst so suddenly into leaf. He also liked walking in the winter, when the frosty ground crackled under his feet; and the return, after his walk, to a café where he could order beer and what he called "a real German sandwich"—a large slice of rye bread and a thick cut of roast veal. Five years after his return, he wrote to Brereton: "You know I once confessed that I would watch for European breaths in the spring and you went on to praise its Australianity. Well, the seasons I live in are secreted in my fibres and [I] like but the outer world when it chimes with them—then results rhyme."

In Berlin he read Flaubert. Then he came across some articles dealing with the Symbolists, and some poems by Mallarmé, including the sonnet: "*Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui*"; "*Une dentelle s'abolit*"; "*Prose (pour des Esseintes)*".

He was won. Mallarmé had cast on him a spell that undoubtedly influenced a large part of his work. And on 13th September 1893, he bought from a bookseller in Berlin a copy of Mallarmé's *Vers et Prose* (Perrin, 3rd edition, 1893). He had this volume interleaved and copied into it all the other poems by Mallarmé that he could trace; and even before buying the facsimile edition and the Edition Deman he had practically all the poems that matter.

What of Frau Werth's daughter? Singularly little is known of Brennan's courtship, though it is certain that he put into it all the rich imagination with which he was endowed; and it is one of the main inspirations of the poems in *Towards the Source*, the original pieces of which were written in Sydney while he waited for his fiancée to follow him across "the sundering silence of the seas". According to a few people who remembered her as she was when she landed in Sydney, Anna Elisabeth was at that time radiantly beautiful.

Of the University of Berlin he spoke rarely. The teaching of

classical method was done there in those days by close study of the text of a single author. Zeller, then an old man, whose lectures he attended, was the only teacher he ever mentioned. The amusements of German students—who loved to be able to exhibit *Schmissen*, that is duelling scars, on their faces—were, as Brennan saw them, heavy and rather dreary. They included a colossal consumption of beer, and he used to speak of certain cafés frequented by students which were provided with a vomitorium—a large basin, with handles on each side to steady the sagging boby while it got itself ready for refilling.

It was hard to believe in the years when Brennan used to hold forth at the weekly luncheons of *Les Compliqués* (at Paris House, in Phillip Street), where French was always spoken, that he had never been in France; and Frenchmen were sometimes incredulous. But it was a fact. He had gained his mastery of the language in Berlin and Sydney. He spoke it with a slow, deliberative accent, and his intonation was strange. But his vocabulary was amazing. He intoned French poetry in a way that was all wrong, and was yet very convincing. The magical quality of his voice made one forget such things as the hammering out of the final “e” sounds, which might otherwise have been slightly comical to a French ear.

What did he do in Germany? Probably he did not take the University very seriously; but it is also probable that he completed in Berlin the notes that he later contributed to the *Journal of Philology* on the manuscripts of Aeschylus. However that may be, he came back to Sydney without any new academic titles.

His return, in August 1894, coincided with the depth of the depression that followed the banking crisis of the previous year. The only relief for unemployment was sand-shifting at Centennial Park, later varied by prospecting and painting the railings of city parks. For many months, therefore, Brennan was idle, until the intervention of his friend A. B. Piddington (then member for Tamworth) secured him temporary work in the public service. This was followed, in September 1895, by a permanent position in the Public Library.

Prior to his appointment, an interview had been arranged with the Premier, George (later Sir George) Reid. Brennan used to recall how there was a few minutes' delay after the previous interviewer's departure, and how, when he himself was introduced, he found the Premier placidly sleeping. An instant later, on being addressed, Reid

was completely awake and alert. He had the faculty, ascribed to Napoleon, of snatching a brief sleep at will.

Brennan's temporary employment in the public service was at the Treasury. It was during the winter of 1895, officially described as the "severest and most trying for a long time"; and it is probably to this period that allusion is made in the lines:

*Under a sky of uncreated mud  
or sunk beneath the accursed streets, my life  
is added up of cupboard-musty weeks  
and ring'd about with walls of ugliness:*

At the Library he was engaged for several years on the index to the main collection 1869-95, the Librarian, H. C. Anderson, having introduced a more modern system of indexing in place of the earlier class indexes. From 1906 he was in charge of the current catalogue (5000 accessions a year), much of which was his individual work. A glance at the catalogue for the period 1896-1908 indicates another sphere of his service: the choice of classical editions, the filling of gaps in the philosophical section and the modern French collection were due to his suggestions.

While he was at the Library he had a characteristic habit, retained in later years. Being sensitive to cold he had a heavy overcoat in the winter, wearing it across his shoulders with the sleeves hanging loose while he worked: and he did not bother to put his arms into the sleeves when he went out. He also retained the habit of carrying books under his arm, beneath the overcoat, so that he often looked like a huge black bird.

His bride arrived late in 1897, and their marriage was celebrated at St Mary's in the December of that year. They lived at first in Flinders Street, Moore Park; then at 229 Glenmore Road. About June 1899 they moved to 77 Cambridge Street, Paddington, an address attested in this note from Brennan's friend J. le Gay Brereton:

*To-morrow night expect me where the cows  
Of rural Paddington serenely browse  
Where Cambridge Street o'erlooks the placid chows.*

Mrs Brennan's mother arrived two and a half years after the marriage, accompanied by another daughter, who was mentally deranged by overstudy of music. Frau Werth and this daughter lived

with the young couple, and this circumstance no doubt strengthened Brennan's command of German, which was always spoken in the house.

About 1901 the whole family moved to a house which was to be their home for many years, at 68 Wolseley Road, Mosman, facing towards Manly and overlooking Balmoral Beach. Apparently Frau Werth had this house built, for in a letter<sup>10</sup> (Easter, 1901) to F. S. Delmer, an Australian who was then lecturing in English in the University of Koenigsberg, and who afterwards for many years held a high academic post in Berlin, Brennan writes:

Next July we settle at Mosman where Mrs Werth is having a house built that looks across the entrance to Middle Harbour and Manly to the ocean beyond. It's not as beautiful as Cremorne, but there are some nice hills to the north, folded flatly behind one another, which promise nice effects with the weather and just down below, in Balmoral, there's the loveliest bit of wooded valley I ever saw here: tall black trunks, rising clear of any scrub, soft vivid grass underfoot.

It was here that most of those who knew Brennan in the days of his University lecturing visited him—that is to say, those who were given this privilege; for his favourite forgathering places were hotels and restaurants, possibly because he read so assiduously at home. His library occupied all available space on the walls of his study, except where a few pictures hung; and some shelves were double-banked. The pictures included the Nadar portrait of Mallarmé with a folded shawl on his shoulders; a reproduction of Puvis de Chavannes's *Doux Pays*; a small oil by Tom Roberts (a breaking wave). There was also a plaster cast of a (German?) mask of Comedy. The only furniture in the room, in addition to the bookcases, was a heavy carved desk and a few chairs. He liked to have a landscape with figures near him, generally at eye-level. In his room at the University hung the Aldini print of Piero di Cosimo's "Death of Procris", and his friend Lionel Lindsay's etching, "The Edge of the World". At Newport (to be discussed later) were pinned or stuck on the side of bookcases, near his chair, reproductions of drawings by Rossetti and Blake ("I Want, I Want"; "The Traveller Hasteneth in the Evening"; and some of the woodcuts for Thornton's Virgil).

<sup>10</sup> Kindly communicated by Miss Delmer, now living in Sydney.

At Mosman, Brennan had differences with neighbours, and there is reason to suppose that there were even one or two appearances in court. He used to say that some of the neighbours egged their children on to jeer at him because he was a poet. He disliked the Mosman people ("upper class Civil Servants"), and invited few of them into his house. Exceptions were Brereton and Hugh Wright; the latter was second Assistant-Librarian at the Public Library. After a time A. W. Jose, the historian, moved across the way. He was then correspondent for the London *Times*; he received many papers and magazines, and possessed a fair library. He had had a classical training, and Brennan found him congenial. Sir William Cullen (sometime Chief Justice of New South Wales and Chancellor of the University), who lived at the end of Wolseley Road, was very kind to Brennan, and used to give him a lift in his car. But we are running ahead too rapidly.

The Brennans had four children, the first, Ann, being born in 1898. The others, in order of birth, were Chris, Elsie, and Rudolf.

Mrs Brennan was not a bookish woman. She was very fond of outdoor life; and Brennan was no doubt urged on by her when, about 1903, he purchased four acres of land at Newport, on a slope overlooking the beaches and headlands that extend to Barrenjoey. The "estate" was thickly timbered, the approach to it being by a bush track (now the road to Bungan Head) fringed with tall gums. In summer the air vibrated with the sound of cicadas. In the early years of his proprietorship Brennan used to chop wood and "belt the ground with a mattock". He spent his week-ends there, and afterwards—about 1917—made Newport his permanent home, staying in town for his lectures during the week and returning on Friday evening. He loved the place, and would sit on the veranda glancing up from his book at the landscape changing as the mist thickened or cleared, or the clouds topped the headland or were dispersed by the north-easter. His wife kept a horse and "trap".

Most of the poetry written in the eighteen-nineties and the early years of the present century were included in *Poems 1913*. But there is one small poetic work (fifteen poems) which did not go into this volume, though it was issued in a manuscript "edition" in 1903. This was *The Burden of Tyre*, of which two poems appeared in *Art in Australia* during the poet's lifetime; but the complete text was published for the first time by Mr Chaplin in 1953. It is often supposed that Brennan (who may have been responsible for this supposition) made

twelve handwritten copies of *The Burden*. But according to the late J. J. Quinn only two of the copies were in Brennan's writing, namely the two that were given to Quinn and Brereton. Miss Fitzhardinge's copy was written by Quinn.<sup>11</sup> In 1897 had appeared a slim volume of *XXI Poems*, afterwards partly incorporated in "Towards the Source" (*Poems 1913*).

Early in 1908 Norman Gough, evening lecturer in French at the University, died in tragic circumstances; and Brennan took over his position temporarily, while retaining his post at the Public Library. It was not the first time he had lectured at the University: he had done some part-time work there late in the nineties. He made an excellent impression on the evening students, who petitioned the Dean, Professor Mungo MacCallum, in favour of his permanent appointment.

He stayed on, and in 1909 began lecturing to the day students also. In a short time he had become one of the most conspicuous figures about the place. Unfortunately a large proportion of his work in French was devoted to the translation of prescribed texts, a task which did not give much scope to his imagination. His commentaries, though extraordinarily erudite, were wasted on the general run of day students. Yet there were some who appreciated his scholarship, and all were fascinated by his voice and his personality.

Brennan at that time had the appearance that is familiar to all those who knew him, personally or by sight, in his later years. There was an impressive bigness about him, though he probably looked bigger than he really was. His heavy clothing may have had something to do with it. Another thing that possibly increased the impression of bulk was a peculiar bending of the knees as he walked. He almost seemed to be retaining his balance by moving forward; yet his step was firm.

His face was large, his nose big, fleshy, arched; and he had the long upper lip often noticeable in the Celt. His thick dark-brown hair—it remained dark to the end of his life—was brushed back from the forehead and over the crown of his head, adding to its massiveness. His eyes were blue, rather prominent, heavy-lidded; and his sight was excellent. His line of vision was so high that he frequently missed acquaintances in the street. His hands were plump, like those of a baby, and dimpled at the knuckles; his fingers were tapering, his

<sup>11</sup> Attested in a letter from J. J. Quinn to A. R. Chisholm, 23rd March 1942.

nails closely bitten, and on his ring finger he wore a gold wedding-ring. His teeth were large and strong, deeply stained with tobacco; for he was a heavy smoker, and his pipe was famous. It was Peterson's largest size, curved, so that he might smoke and read with "the bowl out of consciousness", as he said. Later, he smoked a straight stem of the same make, brought from Dublin by a colleague. He carried a large hairpin, polished by much use, for loosening the tobacco.

Even at the University he was better known as a talker than as a lecturer, though when he lectured on German romanticism he fascinated the more intelligent students. He was a remarkable conversationalist, and part of his capacity for charming his hearers came from the fact that he credited them with as much knowledge as himself, and took it for granted that they would be interested.

A curious thing about Brennan in those quieter days of his academic career was his approach to the inescapable *corvée* of correcting examination papers. He was frequently—sometimes exasperatingly—late with his returns; and yet he did this work very well. Even in the public examinations he noted every mistake, and automatically memorized it if it was a howler. His return sheets were models of tidiness, with all the details punctiliously entered in his neat writing.

December 1914 was a great literary date in his life. It saw the publication of his first large collection of poems. This is the volume generally known as *Poems 1913*; and it was indeed prepared for publication that year, his own bibliographical appendix being dated "22. xii. 1913", though immediately under it appears his signature and the date 1914, both date and signature in facsimile. It was a subscription edition, containing the names of the ninety-three subscribers, headed by that of Lord Northcote, Governor of New South Wales. The list was not closed till 31st October 1914. Although considerably more than ninety-three copies were printed, this handsome book, published in Sydney by George B. Philip and Son, with a title page designed by Lionel Lindsay, is now un procurable.

When *Poems 1913* appeared, the Great War of 1914-18 had already broken out. Brennan reacted to it with all the strength of his being: it haunted him day and night. His patriotism overflowed even into the daily press in the form of poetry and letters.

Obviously he could never, for physical reasons, have undertaken military service; and the thought of being "out of it" tormented him,

as will be seen in the following extract from a letter to Miss Esmé Hadley, dated 15th November 1914:

... this awful war (and yet great chance of settling the world's bully) broke out: and the beastly Germans kept up their whirlwind advance on Paris right to the time when I was just getting back to harness—the victory on the Marne was announced only the Sunday of the first week of term—and I couldn't even work in Vac: tho' at Newport, I spent my days studying the papers (whose arrival I watched) and checking the scraps of news by the map: still less could I write to you—and I should be unworthy to read Aeschylus, were not all my soul—poor old body!—on the battlefields of France and Belgium.

In an early work, *The Burden of Tyre*, he had condemned the English for making war on the Boers; but this time he was uncompromisingly pro-English. As an Australian-born Irishman he had unbounded contempt for those who in Australia backed the Sinn Fein rising while Britain was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Germany. In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (7th December 1917) he said:

I have written on this subject purely as an Australian, who desires no other abiding city than the city of his birth. But among other things, I was an obscure and undistinguished pro-Boer, as the term was, a convinced and unrepentant one, say of the type of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts. Now, when a man comes along and tells me that those times are back on us again I can only stare at him in amaze. . . . While writing as an Australian, I cannot forget that I am Irish in blood and bone. My belief in Home Rule has survived even the great betrayal of 1891. The Sinn Fein I have judged entirely from their own statements and those of their apologists, and have condemned them only for their alliance with Germany. This is their crime, their sin.

This righteous anger of an Irish Australian who could see beyond the veil of old political passions had expressed itself lyrically more than a year before, in the same newspaper (27th April 1916), in the poem "Irish to English", which was afterwards reprinted in *A Chant of Doom*.

The latter, which in addition to several other pieces sent to the

daily press and to some reviews, in addition also to an eloquent tribute to France, contains a violent indictment of Germany, was published by Angus and Robertson in 1918. It is dedicated "To my brother Philip, 5304 Sgt 2nd Aust. Machine-Gun Battn". Mr Philip Brennan sailed with reinforcements of the 20th Battalion, but was transferred to the 2nd Machine-Gun Battalion, where he served until the end of the war as orderly-room sergeant.

Dr Randolph Hughes, in his essay on Brennan,<sup>12</sup> remarks, "Poetry, and the religion that derives from it, was the one thing that he would have put above even such an event as the Great War." It is certain that his preoccupation with the war did not in any way diminish his main intellectual interests, or interfere with his academic activities. Thus, he delivered a notable series of public lectures early in 1915, when the men of the A.I.F. were being trained for the landing in Gallipoli. The Modern Language Association of New South Wales had organized a conference for the summer vacation, and he had consented to speak on German romanticism. Although given in German, these lectures attracted a comparatively large audience; indeed, they aroused so much favourable discussion that he was requested to deliver the last of the series in English. This he did, and on that occasion the large classics lecture-room on the first floor of the Arts building was full. The subject was Nietzsche (whom Brennan thus attached to the romantic lineage), and it was one on which he was always eloquent—particularly during the war, when there was a stupid tendency to make Nietzsche responsible, as it were, for the German lust for power.

There is not much published evidence, it is true, of his literary activity during the Great War, apart from the publication of *Poems 1913* (which falls in that period by accident), and *A Chant of Doom* (which is directly inspired by the conflict and thus lies outside his ordinary poetic scope). But his conversation left no doubt as to what was his fundamental preoccupation; and at least one poem written during this period ("Time shall bring thee nought<sup>13</sup> of truth") has little direct connection with the war.

It was towards the end of the war that the lunching club known as

<sup>12</sup> C. J. Brennan: *An Essay in Values*, Sydney, P. R. Stephensen and Co., 1934.

<sup>13</sup> It is curious that Brennan is not consistent in his spelling of this word, when he is using it in the sense of "nothing". As will be seen in the texts that follow, he sometimes writes "naught" and sometimes "nought".

Les Compliqués was founded at Paris House, in Phillip Street, where it met every Friday. The conversation was always in French, and quite a lot if it consisted of long monologues by Brennan on a variety of subjects. He also frequently attended another informal table club, the Casuals, which was founded before Les Compliqués and lasted for many years, and at which he and J. Le Gay Brereton were two of the best-known literary figures. The harmony of the Casuals was disturbed during (and after) the war by an estrangement between these two men, which Brennan used to explain by accusing Brereton of pacifism.

It was largely at the Compliqués lunches that plans were laid, during the latter part of 1919, for the publication of a review under the auspices of the Modern Language Association. Brennan was enthusiastic and promised to contribute. But as the time approached for the first issue of the *Modern Language Review of New South Wales* (editor A. R. Chisholm), it became increasingly difficult to extract from him an article which he had promised for this number. At the last moment (the first number appeared in January 1920) he apologetically offered a monograph on German romanticism, written some years earlier; and this was inserted without alteration.

After that he wrote fairly often in the *Review* during its brief existence: it faded out after living precariously for little more than a year.

Though Brennan was by this time comparatively prosperous, or at any rate could have been so if he had only kept a bank account (he was appointed to an associate professorship in German and Comparative Literature towards the end of 1920), he was far from happy. About 1920 his relations with his wife had become worse. They had not been good for some years, and the couple had occupied separate quarters at Newport: that is to say, Mrs Brennan lived with the children in a more recently erected set of rooms apart from the bedroom and the bookroom in the older building which her husband occupied. During term he used to come to town on Monday or Tuesday, stay at Bateman's Hotel during the days when he was lecturing at the University, and return to Newport after the Compliqués' lunch on Friday.

There was also some bickering about money. At Newport he and his wife kept separate budgets, and he "did" for himself from about 1918 onwards. His money troubles are attested in a letter to Dowell

O'Reilly (11th August 1920), who had lent or offered to lend him an unspecified amount. He writes that there is "internecine strife" at home, and adds: "It is peace of mind you are procuring me—you know why I am trying to hold out until the coming year" (referring to the associate professorship, the salary for which would not begin till January 1921).

There had also been difficulties, since 1917, with his elder daughter, Ann (or Anne), a pretty girl who afterwards grew into a very handsome woman. After some proceedings at the Children's Court she left home and wandered round the cafés in Sydney. Brennan said that as he could not get her into a reformatory, he objected to her return, fearing her influence on her younger sister, a quieter girl, who was also pretty, though in a less striking way. (Both are dead long since: Elsie married young and died in childbirth; Ann married, also, lost her husband in a surfing tragedy, and afterwards died of tuberculosis.)

Despite her waywardness, Brennan was very fond of Ann, who was unusually intelligent, and occasionally in 1920 he brought her to meetings of the Modern Language Association. This fondness no doubt explains her return to Newport in 1921; but she soon ran away again. He tracked her to a small café near the Central Police Court; and he himself seems to have stayed at this café for some time in 1922, forsaking Bateman's Hotel.

And then came Brennan's own revolt. He was unhappy, and sought happiness elsewhere. In a letter to Brereton, dated 12th December 1922, he said that he was accepting a certain lady's offer. The offer was of the kind that an ageing man sometimes accepts rather readily, if only out of sheer loneliness, and the woman who made it was a divorcee of about thirty-four (Brennan was then just over fifty-two), slim, rather retiring, and genuine in her admiration for his work. It is best to call her, as Brennan did, "Vie" (sometimes written Vi), omitting the surname for reasons of discretion.

Vie certainly improved Brennan's appearance after they took a flat in Paddington, at 10 Glen Street. (For a time also they stayed at Mittagong, and they even made a brief visit to New Zealand.) She induced him to discard the black shirts which he had worn for some time past (he used to point out that he adopted them *before* Mussolini's march on Rome, which is quite true). Brennan and his Angelica, as he sometimes called her, after the lady of that name in Ariosto, seemed

quite like young lovers; and this tragic idyll undoubtedly renewed his lyrical powers—in fact Vie inspired some of his most moving poetry.

The idyll was tragic in more ways than one. At midnight on 8th March 1925, Vie was killed by a Narrabeen tram as she was returning from a visit to some friends. Her death almost shattered Brennan, who seemed to grow old overnight. He looked decrepit and lost his firm, plodding gait. He almost shuffled. It took him many weeks to recover.

In the Sydney press of 2nd and 3rd June 1925 appeared reports about the suit for judicial separation which Mrs Brennan had brought against her husband. Shortly afterwards, at a meeting of the University Senate, it was decided by a large majority (though a few defended him) to expel Brennan from his post.

From some time in June 1925 he lodged at the Hotel Hampden, at Pennant Hills. He was still in funds then, for his salary went on till the end of the year; and he appears to have remained at this hotel till his resources ran out.

He was a broken man. But he had not lost his literary interests, and for a long time he continued to attend the Compliqués' lunches, where he occasionally spoke of a collection of popular essays, with translations of Greek lyric (and possibly dramatic) poets, which he was preparing. Of this work no trace can be found; but there is evidence that he approached a publisher, Frank Johnson, about the verse.

In the period from 1920 to 1925 there had been a considerable re-flowering of his creative activity. Articles published in these years include several studies of Mallarmé in the *Modern Language Review of New South Wales* and quite a number of contributions to the *Bulletin*. These latter he called "pot-boilers that boiled a merry pot". And during the brief idyll with Vie his lyrical powers, as we have seen, had been renewed.

Being worried over money matters some years before the disasters of 1925, he had asked a friend (in 1921 or 1922: personal memories are the only guide here) for a valuation of his books and was told that they were worth about £500. He gave a bill of sale over them to a creditor, at first without possession; but as the debt increased, possession was given. Some years later—after 1925—a friend (Dr Herbert Moran, known better perhaps as Paddy Moran) paid off the creditor, handed back a certain amount to Brennan, and took over

the library. He gave the classical section of it to St John's College at the University, where Brennan had access to it, but kept the modern section. It has not been possible to discover the whereabouts of this latter.

How wretched his circumstances were, after he had left the University, was not suspected by most of his friends. The truth was realized only in September 1928, when two of his old students called a meeting of his friends and proposed the establishment of a fund to provide sustenance for six months by way of trial. The experiment was a success. After eleven months the committee, in appealing for more money, pointed out that the funds intended for six months' sustenance had covered five more months. Brennan himself had helped by paying in any coaching fees that he earned. It was, incidentally, at the instigation of one member of this committee, who succeeded admirably in handling him by a mixture of cajolery, friendly bullying, and humouring, that Brennan wrote the *Curriculum Vitae* quoted in these notes.

His interest in literature became more lively. He began to talk again of the "uncollected verses" and "essays on Greek poets"; and in a letter to Richard Pennington (16th June 1930) he refers to these plans: "Verse in hand? Yes, some, but not in a fit state to send forth. . . . Translations? I have not collected them myself and that marks my disapproval of them, as they stand: every one needs searching revision: I suppose if . . . R. I. K. gets to hear of this he'll drive me to it." The initials refer to Mr R. Innes Kay.

Of his reading in those last years there is no very definite record. He was almost certainly working on a recension of Aeschylus. He borrowed books, but usually old ones. He took little interest now in modern French works, though he continued to read the *Mercure de France* and the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. The latter could not fail to give him some insight into what was doing in contemporary poetry; he had come into contact with Valéry's work and borrowed his *Jeune Parque* from a friend.

It was after he left the Hotel Hampden in 1926 that his darkest days began. Little is known of the hell through which he went from then to the time when his friends discovered his misery; but there are echoes enough to make it clear that he sounded the most appalling depths. He had probably gone first to 126 Crown Street in Sydney; a notice from the taxation department has been found, addressed to

him there in December 1927; and the last—the terrible, the moving—stanza of “Midnight” is subscribed, “Written in the black of Crown Street 1927”. Afterwards he moved to 20 Manning Street, Potts Point; then to 38 Macleay Street, in the same district. At 20 Manning Street he had as neighbours Dr and Madame Barbier, the former a “lecteur” in French at the University. Both were very good friends of his. Dr Barbier was at the hospital on the day of his death, and afterwards broadcast an address on his work.

His last few years were not financially desperate. There had been no need for the sustenance fund after the second appeal in July 1929; and in 1930 he was granted a small Commonwealth pension: only £50 a year, but in 1930 a pound was still a pound, or nearly. He also earned some not altogether negligible fees for coaching (fifty of his pupils from St Vincent’s Convent attended his funeral), and was able to live in modest comfort.

Some months after a first bout of illness, he suffered, about August 1932, severe attacks of internal pain, and twice collapsed—to find, on regaining his senses, that he had lost much blood by effusion from the mouth. In a letter to Miss Esmé Hadley, written about a week after Brennan’s death, Brereton says:

He was taken to St Vincent’s Hospital, where I found him, expecting gradually to recover, and lying there patient and grateful. It was supposed then that he was suffering from cirrhosis. However, the doctors proposed to make further investigation by means of a tube inserted down the throat. He regarded this as a mere experiment and refused to submit to it. Then, on the ground that a hospital patient who refused to obey orders had no right to further ministrations, he left the place and returned to his lodgings, resuming his work . . . and his usual round of visits—gradually he lost strength. A medical man . . . decided that he had only a month to live, but nobody would tell him so. The Principal of St Vincent’s College told me he was dying. I found him at his lodgings, pale and wasted and complaining of internal obstructions, but convinced that there was nothing that could not be soon removed.

Brennan thought he might be able to attend the presentation, at the University Women’s College, of the *Mask* which he had written years before for that institution in collaboration with Brereton.

The latter arranged with the Principal, Miss Williams, to have a car sent for him. But "Dr Moran rang up on the 4th of October," Brereton's letter goes on, "to say he had been moved to Lewisham [Hospital] and had only two or three days before the end. Next morning duty held me at the University, but his friends the Barbiers were at Lewisham and witnessed his passing. I understand that it was cancer that killed him. The end was peaceful and swift—no struggling."

It was on 5th October 1932 that Brennan died. He had not been dismayed when death started knocking at the door. To a friend who visited him at St Vincent's Hospital after his first attack he remarked that he had expected someone to say: "Who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him?"

There has been considerable controversy as to whether he returned to his Church before his death, or *in extremis*. It is certain that he died a Roman Catholic; and one of the few people present on that Wednesday in October when he fell asleep affirms that he heard him "uttering in clear and fervent tones the responses to the priest's prayers".

Moreover, it appears to have been something more than a death-bed conversion or reconversion. As this question is sure to remain controversial, the following attestations are here interpolated in purely objective fashion (the writer of this brief biography is not a Catholic), to serve as documents for any future assessment.

i. Extracts from a letter from a prominent Sydney ecclesiastic and scholar to A. R. Chisholm (19th February 1946) concerning certain statements in the latter's book, *Christopher Brennan: the Man and his Poetry*:

You remark on pp. 3 and 18 about Chris' lapse from his religion, and I think you state the fact fairly. But from 1928 to 1931 I saw much of Chris. Did you ever know Rev. Dr Maurice O'Reilly, Rector of St John's (Univ.) College? Maurice liked to be known as a man of letters and liked to have such around him. Hence, and because Chris was then submerged socially, he arranged that Chris should dine at High Table at John's nearly every week. I used to meet him there, on Tuesdays I think, prior to my lectures . . . Chris' conversation was of course brilliant, but heavier than that of the Paris House period. . . . Though, I believe, Chris was not then attending his Church (being in his

Potts Point lodging and shabby), he not only talked about but read deeply in Catholic literature. We ecclesiastics have text books in many morocco bound volumes, and in Latin, as you know is our custom; O'Reilly would mention that a new such work had appeared—say dogmatic theology on the Eucharist or “de ecclesia”; and Chris would borrow the new work, 2 or 3 vols of it, and, to my amazement, would return the vols in a week's time, having read them and knowing the matter sufficiently well to discuss it. This fact bears out your suggestion of his having a sort of ecclesiastical appearance and disposition (cf. p. 3 your lecture); it, however, dispels any suggestion that his return to the Church was a near death-bed conversion (p. 19). But you are just, perhaps, in your phrase “a little earlier”. There is no doubt about his having had all the sacraments while conscious. Maurice O'Reilly attended him. Chris' religious faith, I think, was never dulled—it was part of his make-up; compare his poem, quoted by you on p. 35: that is the religious side of Chris; he never lost any particle of faith or creed: he became negligent in its practice.

2. Letter from a priest at Canisius College, Pymble, to A. R. C., dated 7th June 1947:

At the time when Chris Brennan returned to the practice of his faith Father Maurice O'Reilly was Rector of St John's College . . . Father John Thompson was Vice-Rector. After Fr O'Reilly's death Father Thompson was elected Rector. Knowing how well he was acquainted with Brennan I wrote to him on the matter of your letter. He has authorized me to send his reply to you. I quote the relevant portion.

“I remember quite well what happened at the time of Chris Brennan's so-called re-conversion. I say so-called, because there was . . . no question of loss of faith, but, at most, what you theologians call *obnubilatio*, and, of course, the everlasting question of squaring practice with belief.

“As you know, Chris frequently came here to dinner with Father O'Reilly and had a yarn about this and that. Long before his illness Father O'Reilly told me that Chris had often promised to set his house in order. When, therefore, more than twelve months before his death, Chris became unwell Father O'Reilly went to St Vincent's and Chris received all the Sacraments

at his hands. Chris recovered and thought that it was his duty to repair scandal by making, in some public way, a profession of his return to practice. So he proposed to attend the annual University Communion of the Newman Society and to be present at the breakfast after the Mass. But Father O'Reilly thought that, as the breakfast would begin rather late, it would be unwise for Chris, in his weakened state, to fast so long.

"There was no question at any time of a weakness of intellect. I had myself many conversations and arguments with him, both before and after his illness, and I can testify that unless he had a few in, as happened at times before his illness, his mind was as clear as ever. It was about a year after that illness that he succumbed, *sacramentis Ecclesiae munitus*. As Father O'Reilly was himself not too good at the time, I volunteered to say the Requiem Mass and Fr O'Reilly contented himself with reciting the prayers at the graveside."

The above evidence of Fr Thompson could hardly be amplified; but I have communicated with a couple of others who were associated with Chris at the end and I shall send on anything that comes to hand.

Several further communications followed as promised, corroborating the foregoing.

3. This passage from Brennan's lectures on Symbolism (see prose volume), delivered quite a long while after his farewell to "the pleasant harbourage of Faith", is interesting in the present context:

As for the facts of religion they must be like any other facts. A fact is that of which I have direct personal experience and personal immortality is for me a fact when I find myself surviving the cessation of my bodily life. Until then it may be what is perhaps more interesting than a fact—a passionate belief either because I put trust in the word of somebody or because I have drawn inferences from certain facts of life. I may say, in order to guard myself against a possible suspicion of wishing to shock your beliefs—though I may, on the other hand, shock your non-beliefs or suspense of judgment—that the belief in personal immortality is one which I share, though it is one which does not interest me passionately, as in these matters, I hold by Spinoza's dictum, *Homo liber [de nulla re minus quam de morte cogitat]*.

Those who remember Brennan as he was in his heyday at the University would have noticed considerable changes in his appearance in that last year of his mortal existence. He had grown much thinner and less florid—in fact, rather pale; but there was an air of serenity about him, as if he had at last found content. His old interests remained. Some seven or eight months before his death he spent an afternoon and evening at Mosman with John Quinn, who describes the occasion thus (letter to A. R. Chisholm, 18th July 1944):

I had him and Carl Kaeppele down here. . . . We lunched at a table that looks on the Harbour which washes the rocks 20 feet below and he held his glass seaward and cried, "This wine was made for the sunlight." (It was a little subacid South Australian hock of Hardy's.) We walked down to the site of the old camp in Mandalong Rd [which had belonged to Quinn] and exchanged memories of it and then listened to gramophone records for hours, mostly Mozart which he wanted. He seemed to remember the librettos and music without effort and could quote words and melody as he did verse: I mean for the Mozart operas. There was a lot of talk of music—he must have heard an enormous amount in his years in Berlin for I don't recall his going frequently to concerts in Sydney—and he expressed his preference for Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven to the mid-period, tho' he liked one of the later quartets in B flat (op. 130, I think).

His body lies in the Northern Suburbs General Cemetery, where he was buried on the day following his death. The Rev. Dr J. M. O'Reilly recited the prayers, and Brereton delivered an address.

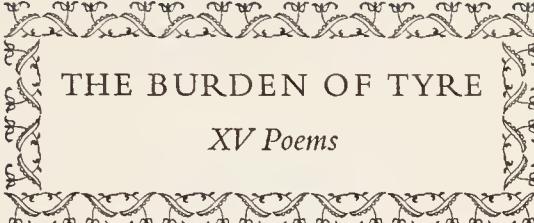
Mrs Brennan died nearly eleven years later, on 18th June 1943, at the age of seventy-four. Both Brennan's daughters had predeceased him. Of his two sons, only the younger is living. The other, Chris, died in 1942 as the result of privations endured when escaping from Edie Creek, in New Guinea: he had a timber business and was driven out by the advance of the Japanese.

This is not the place to assess Brennan's successes and failures as a man, or the value of his work. An attempt to do so has been made elsewhere by the present writer, and by several others—most eloquently of all by Randolph Hughes; and many more evaluations will inevitably be undertaken.

It is preferable (but without hesitating to express the belief that

Brennan was one of the world's greatest scholars and a poet whose reputation has been largely confined within the bounds of his native country only by the lack of a complete edition) to limit these notes to the biographical data, as far as it has been possible to ascertain them from memory and from documents.

Such as they are, their main purpose is to serve as a modest inscription for the monument now at last unveiled: the works of Christopher Brennan.



THE BURDEN OF TYRE

*XV Poems*

"Ἐστησε γὰρ ὁ Ψυστος ὅρια ἐθνῶν κατὰ ἀριθμὸν ἀγγέλων Θεοῦ.

—S. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA.

1903

*To J. Le Gay Brereton*



PROLOGUE

I If by decay from God (we ask'd)  
and sovranty still more forgot  
or as a fire and burning mask'd  
in time, and time perceiv'd it not,

this world arose, or Edom yet  
warring thro' all the ages long  
for Him, the truce and Sabbath set:  
this was our business. We were wrong.—

Our sloth, our sloth alone hath bound  
in reason'd links the worlds that glance  
and vanish, as new dreams abound  
each moment in the eternal trance;

the dreams who are we, ages of men,  
and the thought wherein we thrive or ail,  
and, passing out thro' us again,  
this world, our fair demesne or gaol.

Yet, since each moment's dream for us  
unfolds to an age of tardy earth  
and time enspheres it, fabulous,  
in bubble-glints and tales of birth;

and none will chide whiche'er we assume,  
for none is false and none is true,  
and that first thought which was our doom  
is broken into their shifting hue:

therefore, lest Eden suffer shame,  
the thought gladdens me that our world  
(so plain the spirit's oblivion) came  
of senseless dust conflicting whirl'd

or clinging, not thro' love, but just  
thro' that which later was in man  
a greed to clutch the paltry dust  
and grasp the tribes in iron ban

—since that was fable, how these hordes  
of paynim slaves that rage and chafe  
were number'd by the angel-swords.—  
Dream then of Eden: she is safe.

*Eternity is in love with the productions of Time.  
    . . . lest we forget*

- II They said, For us the deeps were stirr'd  
in the first, and us the groping mood  
went forth to seek, the intended Word,  
whom Edens, ineffectual, woo'd.

—whereof all time bears the plain proof!  
for is not earth our own to hold?  
before our shod and mailed hoof  
have all not fall'n, however bold?

A lord of war, our God on high  
sits thron'd, and other none beside:  
and evermore beneath His eye  
greater we wax, His stay and pride.

His tent is spread about the suns,  
and all the hoary abysses around  
(if grace was theirs to bear such sons)  
they are empty of God, they lie discrown'd.

If thence a threat to gulf us break,  
we reck not: death is ever vain:  
new-waked, they travail for our sake,  
and His, the God's whom we maintain;

Whose heart within Him swells or pines  
as homeward driven or foeward set  
He views our wide-flung battle-lines  
—for He must pass, if we forget!

III The tyrant of the days and years,  
who bound man's soul with sin and law,  
who mock'd the old night with aimless spheres  
and bade look up to them with awe,

he once, winning a dazing glimpse  
of Eden, whole in myriad joy,  
summon'd his gnomes and spectre imps,  
the tribes that, labouring, destroy.

Seven forges, anvils, clanking mills,  
much sweating, groaning—so they wrought,  
compacting random bulks of ills,  
to body forth his famous thought,

which was, to outdo the eternal work  
in wondrous unity and raise  
a rival beauty from the murk  
with added months and weeks and days.

Behold his children, how they run  
hither and thither thro' their times  
and seek all lands beneath the sun  
and force their faith on softer climes

and slay, and pile the stone, nor rest—  
else they must think upon their grave;  
for dream hath made the world unblest  
and sick: and they alone shall save.

IV Beyond the deeps what silence broke?  
the hour returns to whence it came:  
and gods of a departing folk  
fill all the west with stormy flame.

Their day was hot with war and lust:  
their wars were base with hate and greed:  
them-seem'd their sordid realm of dust  
was all the stainless gulfs might breed.

Therefore the silence bids them home:  
yet once, or e'er their kingdom cease,  
their rage is slaked in bloody foam  
and still'd in broad and golden peace.

Thou Tyre, shall such an end be thine?  
or shall thy gods in swinish sleep  
belch forth no soul and, undivine,  
leave nothing to the ancient deep?

*By war and stratagem to win the labour of the husbandman.*

V It is the coming of the night:  
they gather to their homes; they light  
the scanty flame and draw the chair  
closer, and warmth enchants their care.

Another day is dead and they  
have lived it not: such price they pay,  
daily, to fend the hunger-dread,  
that death may find them in safe bed.

Pale wretches! yet this hour at least  
they spend, when yon dark hive releas'd,  
in dreams that soar beyond the night  
and cheer the heart to front the light:

for lo: each steadfast window-fire:  
would you not say, tho' stars may tire  
and the heavens age, man yet maintains  
his watchfires o'er the homeless plains:

close worlds of love and hope that glow  
more golden-soft, for that they know  
that one undying fire in all  
burns, and the march harks to one call.

—Nay, the poor hearts of dust are proud:  
O wonderful! our might allow'd  
of God; and lo! His empire come:  
and night is vast above them, dumb.

VI They hunger? give them men to slay:  
they lack for light and air? then room  
is free, yonder, and chance of play  
where the hill-scarring cannons boom.

The house is rotting? flags will mask,  
and trophies best, where damps intrude:  
lift lights and song, and none will ask  
(being fools) if this be to their good.

And they who fall will vex us not,  
and those who stay shall feed full meal  
of glory: while their pride is hot  
no need to whistle them to heel.

These be your gods, O Israel!  
—And who am I to blame their law?—  
Nay, an they will not learn, 'tis well  
that fools should chew the husks and straw.

VII —Not this, not this my word to you!

O you, to whom our hope is bound  
and love, whoever brood anew,  
each age, on the dread lot you found,

seeing you, in the dark of time  
forever that dumb battlefield,  
piteous, ignored, trampled, sublime,  
where God and Night struggle nor yield

till there be won that glorious birth  
that weds them, slain, embraced, and fused  
in man, the arisen soul of Earth  
—how many a time have ye refused!

Was this your faith to them whose trust  
urged within your flesh, your bone,  
compulsive, moulding—which ye must  
obey, or madden, all unknown—

to them that in the rearward dark  
bow'd them above the clod and fed  
the brooding earth with dream, with stark  
sweat, and with sorrow of their dead;

and laid them in her lap, content  
to pass, if so her sacred morn  
might show some time the grave-clothes rent  
around the Saviour, Easter-born!

and that high sorrow of the stars,  
long-sunder'd, suff'ring, shall it help  
nothing against the hate that mars?  
and this, your street-long bloodhound-yelp,

shall this be all the note our earth  
sends outward to the night, to greet  
her sisters, bound in mutual dearth?  
Is Eden nought but the loud street?

THE PROPHETS

*They do not consider the meaning of things.*

—ONE OF THEIR OWN POETS

*praising their plan*

*“to make the people wise”*

*Keep the faith your fathers kept . . . . .*

*Whoring not with visions*

—THE SAME

*admonishingly*

VIII Because ye sicken of thought (if e'er  
indeed ye have dared to affront the waste  
that stares within your heart), to dare  
all else and cross the world with haste

and haste backwards again, and daze  
your soul with doing—why, this had been  
honestly to live out your ways,  
considering not what things may mean.

But, because Eden lives by strife  
of loving powers, that all may reach  
the plenitude of beauty and life,  
single, distinct, and whole in each;

and since the nations' frontiers stand  
sunder'd, that so each voice might chime  
pure in the perfect concert plann'd  
to unfold the divine image in time;

to prate and cant that we, the more  
we hate and slay, the more are we  
law-doers, were this not to whore  
with vision, most abominably?

*The Will must not be bended but in the day of Divine Power.*

IX Let them devour and be devour'd!  
so spake my anger yesternight  
and watch'd where the loud city tower'd,  
black, reddening all the western night,

because their men of war had done  
some little deed of blood and fame;  
my anger watch'd till night was run  
and lit a sombre answering flame.

For I was fall'n into their mood  
and slew my peace with wrathful lips:  
Ah, when the East shall come in blood,  
I triumph'd, and the howling ships!

I spoke, who knew that every morn  
against our sunken sloth arrays  
a radiant and maiden scorn  
and the heroic love that slays,

straightway, with stainless eyes that pierce  
the heart of hate that lurks and dies:  
whose wrath forgot that mine own fierce  
torn heart should pray, Let no sun rise!

For this was heralded in gold  
and orient pearl: Eden increas'd:  
I crept to slumber, sick and cold:  
there was no red in all that East.

X Ere quite the westward shadow fade  
and the steep noon drink up the dew  
that lingers on in the brief shade  
and holds the enleaguer'd morning new,

I will sit down and watch the shine  
steep all the halcyon height and steep  
the cup of air in yellow wine  
and earth in Sabbath, heaven-deep.

'Tis ten days now since I could dare  
thus to rejoice in the calm sun  
because somewhere—I know not where—  
men fell, knowing injustice done.

In sooth, I had flung my peace away,  
foolish, and changed for the dull woe  
that numbs and the rage that can but slay  
inwardly, that recurrent throe.

This little mirth of day may keep  
the shining veil of azure drawn  
o'er the outer night, where many a deep  
shudders with the last horrible dawn.

XI Why are these streets afflare?—Today  
we are born a folk.—What love begot?—  
Our mother's need.—Whither?—To slay:  
see now wherewith our hand is hot.—

The old harlotry of right and wrong!  
one thrives whereby another ails:  
the little jealous gods are strong;  
the Divine Image fades and pales.

Then count not me of yours: I stand  
alone, save for whose gaze I meet  
like mine in yearning for that land  
that ne'er may rest our questing feet:

or had I here to choose a kin,  
I think, tho' scant my hardihead,  
I would not stand with you that win;  
rather with them, the sore bested,

whose land is where they carry still  
stout heart and sorrow and ready hand  
and their indomitable will  
to live and die as men who stand,

and for all warmth at heart and light  
thought of the hearth they last saw burn  
that eve they rode to war, nor might  
rekindle, even if they return;

with them in heart at least, since here  
I sicken, seeing the driven herd  
run with dropt eye and craven ear—  
O people, and was this thy word?

*There are so many dawns that have not yet shone.*

—RIG-VEDA

XII Night: and I lean where the sea sings.—

There shall be nought of all these things  
that vex my rest nor seem to tire  
tho' my winds buffet in their wings  
and waves spurn them with lips of ire

(When will they howl, the ships of Tyre?)

There shall be nought of all these lands  
nor shall their insolence endure:  
surely I waste them with no hands  
and change to something secret, pure.

(When will the world be sea, and pure?)

There shall be nought but my dim glass  
that dreams at peace till time be o'er  
and the dread nuptial lightning pass  
once, and there shall be sea no more.

(O when will there be sea no more?)

XIII The herded waves are drifting, dark  
and dolent, towards no shoreward mark:  
the cope of night is dense; and hard  
in bronze the eastern gate is barr'd.

Their clamour dwindled long ago  
to a hoarse murmur: yet they go  
(Tho' there be now no wind that drives)  
sullen, a witless doom of lives.

They have no hope of any light  
save that red glare within the night  
that tells the ending of despair:  
look! thins not yon the dismal air?

XIV When all the ways the worlds have trod  
are gather'd up in Brahm, who goes  
homeward to silence, nor with God  
the star-pierced night is faint nor throes,

then all this coil shall fall and sleep:  
but then, when seven eternities  
are lifted from the awaking deep,  
shall then the ways be just as these?

—Wavewise the world is driven for aye,  
each gulf the old renewing night,  
and evermore each crest (they say)  
flings dayward our unwearied might.

So: time should mumble, uninspired,  
a crone's burthen, and the divine  
triumph on other ways, untired:  
that were the world's shame and not mine . . .

nor anyone's: for none should come  
again nor see what he had seen:  
to have lived and treasured not the sum.  
in chemic mind is not to have been.

—A jest!—the world was never more  
than one attempt if time should yield  
some fruit of gold to the great store  
or dung to enrich some happier field:

and this shall end and none regret:  
hope still: the tranced abyssms imprison  
so many names unutter'd yet,  
so many dawns that have not risen.

EPILOGUE

XV O life, O radiance, love, delight,  
O nuptial rose and valley of bliss  
renew'd in maiden bloom and bright  
with morn each time thou stoop'st to kiss;

Eden, whence only life is whole  
and healing, when thy angel-flowers  
sigh the dew's silence into our soul  
what hast thou with these wars of ours?

We slay and die: thou art not scarr'd  
nor dimm'd with battle-smoke; the din  
stirs thee as little as when the hard  
God spake the foolish word of sin

o'er foolish souls of men that fear'd,  
but thou didst shine in changeless glee  
and joy of fruitful strife, endear'd  
—and yet our wars are all from thee.

Thou torturing, when thy love invades,  
this body of death and hate and greed  
gibbers and writhes and frantic raids  
break over it and the nations bleed:

and I, who love thee, how oft have I  
dream'd of that foolish spirit of ire  
riding the mass'd prophetic sky  
that breaks in sleet and hail of fire

above the hated citadels,  
or done the holy abyssms this wrong  
to array their ghost, the voids and hells,  
against the turrets of the strong:

nor minded me that thou, when spite  
and hate have won all they may win,  
changing thy shape to Death and Night  
(for these and thou are subtle kin),

resumest all our waste and new  
conceiving, bring'st to better birth  
in thy glad lap where fire and dew  
wed in the war that brightens earth.

Thee with whose name in bitter jest  
these songs began, to thee at the end  
I turn, that all their hate confess'd  
as worthless, yet if thou befriend

some note of love, crying in pangs  
of wrath and grief, may echo higher  
than the derided bow that twangs  
against the spectre-walls of Tyre.





POEMS

1913



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Dim breaths in the dim shade  
of the romantic glade  
told of the timid pain  
that hearken'd, fain,*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1897

## I

## TOWARDS THE SOURCE

1894-7

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

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

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

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

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

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

1894

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

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

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

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

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

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

sweet silence after bells.

[1913]

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

1894

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

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

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

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

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

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

1894

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

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

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

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

1894

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

1895

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

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

*My days of azure have forgotten me.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Psyche! our feet are set towards the eastern star,  
our eyes upon the spaces of the morning air;  
what tho' the garden goal shine o'er sad seas afar,  
tho' young hope guide us not, our soul shall not despair.

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

### III

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

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

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

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

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

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

1895

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

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

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

1897

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1895

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

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

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

1895

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

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

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

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

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

1895

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

1895

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

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

Not here—in some long-gone world . . .

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

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

1896

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

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

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

1896

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

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

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

1896

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

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

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

1897

24 Spring-ripple of green along the way,  
keenplash of airy waves that play,  
and in my heart  
thy dreamy smart, O distant day!

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

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

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

1897

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

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

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

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

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

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

1897

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

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

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

1897

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

draw near, ye heavens, and be our chamber-bars  
and thou, maternal heart of holy night,  
close watch, what hush'd and sacramental tide  
a soul goes forth wide-eyed,  
to meet the archangel-sword of loneliest delight.

1897

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

1898

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

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

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

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

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

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

1900

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

II

THE FOREST OF NIGHT

1898-1902

D.M.

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

DEAD IN VALVINS

9th September 1898

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then, then we twain will seek each farthest way,  
mingled in radiance over cloud and lea,  
our joy shall swell the exultant heart of day,  
our love shall tinge the rose of sky and sea.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

unto a nameless fall in distant fight  
(such only freedom from the daily mesh  
spun by the crafty lord of wrong and right);  
the pride and splendour of rebellious flesh,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## THE TWILIGHT OF DISQUIETUDE

- 33 *Scant majesty of stars prevails  
across the uncreated night,  
and fate is in the wind that wails  
or clamours on the lonely height.*
- 34 The years that go to make me man  
this day are told a score and six  
that should have set me magician  
o'er my half-souls that struggle and mix.

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

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

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

*1st November 1896*

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

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

wherein, perchance, from near and far  
shall mingle boons right glad to wed,  
the mild ray of the distant star  
and the mild oil earth's patience bred.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The flame that feeds upon my heart  
fades or flares, by wild winds controll'd:  
my heart still walks a thing apart,  
my heart is restless as of old.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

O wandering soul upon this darkling surge,  
does it not pain thee for the days now done,  
the narrow days ere some dark god did urge  
to seek some isle where life is whole and one!

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

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

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

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

INTERLUDE:

THE HEARTH AND THE WINDOW

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

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

# THE QUEST OF SILENCE

SECRETA SILVARUM:

PRELUDE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the while on half-veil'd eyes to feel  
the yellow sunshafts broken dim,  
and seldom waftures moth-like steal  
and settle, on the bare-flung limb:

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

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

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

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

I

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

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

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

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

II

- 50 O friendly shades, where anciently I grew!  
me entering at dawn a child ye knew,  
all little welcoming leaves, and jealous wove  
your roof of lucid emerald above,  
that scarce therethro' the envious sun might stray,  
save smiling dusk or, lure for idle play,  
such glancing finger your chance whim allows,  
all that long forenoon of the tuneful boughs;  
which growing on, the myriad small noise  
and flitting of the wood-life's busy joys,  
thro' tenuous weft of sound, had left, divined,  
the impending threat of silence, clear, behind:  
and, noon now past, that hush descended large  
in the wood's heart, and caught me in its marge  
of luminous foreboding widely flung;

III

so hourlong I have stray'd, and tho' among  
the glimpsing lures of all green aisles delays  
that revelation of its wondrous gaze,  
yet am I glad to wander, glad to seek  
and find not, so the gather'd tufts bespeak,  
naked, reclined, its friendly neighbourhood—  
as in this hollow of the rarer wood  
where, listening, in the cool glen-shade, with me,  
white-bloom'd and quiet, stands a single tree;  
rich spilth of gold is on the eastward rise;  
westward the violet gloom eludes mine eyes.  
This is the house of Pan, not whom blind craze  
and babbling wood-wits tell, where bare flints blaze,  
noon-tide terrific with the single shout,  
but whom behind each bole sly-peering out  
the traveller knows, but turning, disappear'd  
with chuckle of laughter in his thicket-beard,  
and rustle of scurrying faun-feet where the ground  
each autumn deeper feels its yellow mound.  
Onward: and lo, at length, the secret glade,  
soft-gleaming grey, what time the grey trunks fade  
in the white vapours o'er its further rim.  
'Tis no more time to linger: now more dim  
the woods are throng'd to ward the haunted spot  
where, as I turn my homeward face, I wot  
the nymphs of twilight have resumed, unheard,  
their glimmering dance upon the glimmering sward.

### III

- 51 The point of noon is past, outside: light is asleep;  
brooding upon its perfect hour: the woods are deep  
and solemn, fill'd with unseen presences of light  
that glint, allure, and hide them; ever yet more bright

(it seems) the turn of a path will show them: nay, but rest;  
seek not, and think not; dream, and know not; this is best:  
the hour is full; be lost: whispering, the woods are bent,  
*This is the only revelation; be content.*

### III

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

around a maiden thought of Quietude,  
the savage realm begins, of lonely dread,  
black branches from the fetid marish bred  
that lurks to trap the loyal careless foot,  
and gaping trunks protrude a snaky root  
o'er slinking paths that centre, where beneath  
a sudden rock on the short blasted heath,  
bare-set, a cavern lurks and holds within  
its womb, obscene with some corroding sin,  
coil'd on itself and stirring, a squat shade;  
before the entrance rusts a broken blade.

The forest hides its horrors, as the sea.

## V

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So, shadowing forth their dim-felt prayer,  
the dædal glass compell'd to grace  
the outer day's indifferent stare,

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

save this pale absence of the rose.

- 57 Breaking the desert's tawny level ring  
three columns, an oasis; but no shade  
falls from the curl'd acanthus-leaves; no spring  
bubbles soft laughter for its leaning maid.

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

- 58 Before she pass'd behind the glacier wall  
that hides her white eternal sorceries  
the northern witch, in clinging ermine pall,  
cast one last look along the shallow seas,  
  
a look that held them in its numbing thrall  
and melted onward to the sandy leas  
where our lorn city lives its lingering fall  
and wistful summer shrinks in scant-clad trees.  
  
Hence came one greyness over grass and stone:  
the silent-lapping waters fade and tone  
into the air and into them the land;  
  
and all along our stagnant waterways  
a drown'd and dusky gleaming sleeps, unbann'd  
the lurking twilight of her vanish'd gaze.
- 59 Out of no quarter of the charted sky  
flung in the bitter wind intolerably,  
abrupt, the trump that sings behind the end  
exults alone. Here grass is none to bend:  
the stony plain blackens with rapid night  
that best reveals the land's inflicted blight  
since in the smitten hero-hand the sword  
broke, and the hope the long-dumb folk adored,  
and over all the north a tragic flare  
told Valhall perish'd and the void's despair  
to dwell as erst, all disinhabited,  
a vault above the heart its hungering led.  
The strident clangour cuts; but space is whole,  
inert, absorb'd in dead regret. Here, sole,  
on the bare upland, stands, vast thro' the gloom  
staring, to mark an irretrievable doom,  
the stranger stone, sphinx-couchant, thunder-hurl'd  
from red star-ruin o'er the elder world.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 62 One! an iron core, shock'd and dispers'd  
in throbs of sound that ebb across the bay:  
I shudder: the one clang smites disarray  
thro' all my sense, that starts awake, inhears'd  
  
in the whole lifeless world: and some accrû'd  
miasma steals, resumed from all decay,  
where the dead tide lies flat round the green quay,  
hinting what self-fordone despairs it nurs'd.

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

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

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

INTERLUDE:

THE WINDOW AND THE HEARTH

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

65 Chimaera writhes beside the tragic flame  
of the old hearth: her starting jaws proclaim,  
a silent cry, the craven world's attaint.  
Her vans that beat against a hard constraint  
leap, as the coals jet in a moment-spasm:  
yet their taut ribs hurt not the serpent chasm  
of shade, that slips swift to its absent den,  
to settle, grimlier, at her throat again.  
And, starward were their prison-roof increas'd,  
no sun that bathes him for a dewy east  
would light her mail, above the tainted air  
a meteor-dazzling gem, but the red flare  
kindle disastrous on our burning eyes  
from where the sullen embers agonize,  
once the heart's rose-flusht dream of living gold.  
Therefore her croup, thro' many a lapsing fold,  
is bound into the iron's night, to check  
the frenzy that contorts her charging neck:  
her life is flitting with the fitful red  
splashing her flank as 'twere her courage bled  
to curdle with the void, whose metal-cold  
shall seal her gone, a block no art shall mould.  
And now the shining tongues that sprang to lick  
the obscene blackness in are tarnisht thick:  
insidiously thro' each blank pane the dark  
invades from space, vast cemetery: one spark  
flies up, the lessen'd ghost of flame: her flight  
stiffens, and is a settled piece of night.

THE SHADOW OF LILITH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

in times before our time, when Paradise  
shone once, the dew-gem in her heart, and base  
betrayal gave her to the malefice

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

O bleeding rose, alone! O heart of night!

## LILITH

### ARGUMENT

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

THE WATCH AT MIDNIGHT

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

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

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

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

Rest—and a new abyss  
suddenly yawns, of this  
the moment sole, and yet the counterpart:  
and thou must house it, thou,  
within thy fleshly Now,  
thyself the abyss that shrinks, the unbounded hermit-heart:  
  
the mightier heart untold  
whose paining depths enfold  
all loneliness, all height, all vision'd shores;  
and the abyss uncrown'd,  
blank failure thro' each bound  
from the consummate point thy broken hope implores.

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

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

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

- (vii) They said, because their parcel-thought  
might nor her shadowy vast embrace,  
nor be refurl'd within that nought  
which is the hid heart of all place,

they said: She is not anywhere!  
have we not sought her and not seen?  
nor is there found in earth or air  
a sign to tell if she hath been!

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

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

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

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

(ix) O thou that akest, pulse o' the unwed vast,  
now in the distant centre of my brain  
dizzily narrow'd, now beyond the last  
calm circle widening of the starry plain,  
where, on the scatter'd edge of my surmise,  
the twilit dreams fail off and rule is spent  
vainly on vagrant bands the gulfs invite  
to break away to the dark: they, backward sent,  
tho' dumb, with dire infection in their eyes,  
startle the central seat:—O pulse of night,  
passing the hard throb of sun-smitten blood  
when the noon-world is fused in fire and blent  
with my then unattained hero-mood;  
what will with me the imperious instinct  
that hounds the gulfs together on that place  
vanishing utterly out of mortal trace,  
the citadel where I would seem distinct—  
if not thou ween'st a vanity, my deep  
unlighted still, the which thy refluent sweep  
intolerably dilates, a tide that draws  
with lunatic desire, distraught and fond,  
to some dark moon of vastness, hung beyond  
our little limits of familiar cause,  
as tho' the tense and tortured voids should dash  
ruining amorously together, a clash  
portentous with some rose of thinnest flame,  
secret, exhaled in the annul'd abyss,  
that, with this soul, passes in that fell kiss  
and to the soft-sprung flush all sanctity  
surrenders, centring in the blossom'd Name,  
as the dark wings of silence lovingly  
hover above the adventurous song that fares  
forth to the void and finds no lip that shares  
its rapture, just the great wings spreading wide.

O mother thou or sister or my bride,  
inevitable, whom this hour in me declares,  
were thine of old such rhythmic pangs that bore  
my shivering soul, wind-waif upon the shore  
that is a wavering twilight, thence astray  
beneath the empty plainness of the day?  
me thy first want conceived to some dim end,  
that my unwelcom'd love might henceward tend  
to the dumb home that draws it in thy breast  
and the veil'd couch of some divine incest,  
where thou didst wait some hour of sharp delight  
to wither up in splendour the stark night  
and haggard shame that ceremented thy dearth,  
with purest diamond-blaze, some overbirth  
of the dark fire thy foresight did enmesh  
within this hither and thither harried flesh?

Ay, yet obscurely stirs, a monstrous worm  
in the rear cavern of my dazzled thought,  
a memory that wavers, formless form  
of superhuman nuptials, clasp'd and caught  
unto the breast that is our loathed tomb:  
then, issuing from the violated womb,  
tremendous birth of dreadful prodigies  
begotten on the apocalyptic skies:  
one moment's hope, one thrill alone was given  
of pinions beating up the parting heaven;  
but straight thereon the spectral mirk was riven  
by shapes of snaky horror, grisly jaw,  
cold fear, and scaly fold, and endless maw.  
What terror clutch'd me, even as ecstasy  
smote dire across transfigured mystery?  
and whose the sin that doom'd thee to disgrace,  
to haunt the shapeless dark, a burning face,  
eyes that would cling to mine and lips that seek  
some baffled kiss, some word they may not speak,  
condemn'd to yearn where the worn foam is hoar  
and vain against the unshaken nightly shore.

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

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

(x) *Thick sleep, with error of the tangled wood,  
and vapour from the evening marsh of sense,  
and smoothness of the glide of Lethe, would  
inaugurate his dullard innocence,  
cool'd of his calenture, elaborate brute:  
but, all deceitful of his craven hope,  
the devious and covert ways of dream  
shall lead him out upon no temper'd beam  
or thick-grass'd ease, where herbs of soothing shoot  
in asphodel, but on the shuddering scope  
and the chill touch of endless distances  
still thronging on the wingless soul that flees  
along the self-pursuing path, to find  
the naked night before it and behind.*

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

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

Lo now, beneath the watch of knitted boughs  
he lies, close-folded to his newer spouse,  
creature of morn, that hath ordain'd its fresh  
dew and cool glimmer in her crystal flesh  
sweetly be mix'd, with quicken'd breath of leaves  
and the still charm the spotless dawning weaves.

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

I am his bride and was and shall be still,  
tho' infamous as devil's dam, a fear  
to wives that watch the cradle-side and hear  
how I devour the newling flesh, and none  
shall void my claim upon his latest son,  
because the father fell beneath my harm,

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

Last, since a pinch of dust may quench the eyes  
that took the azure curve of stainless skies  
and still the fiercest heart, he seeks to whelm  
infinite yearning with a little realm,  
beating together with ungentle hands,  
enslaved, the trembling spawn of generous lands,  
whom he shall force, a busy swarm, to raise,  
last bulwarks of his whelming discontent,  
heaven-threatening Babels, iron Ninevehs  
square-thought with rigid will, a monument  
of stony rage in high defiant stones  
eternized with blasphemous intent,  
and carve the mountain-cone to hide his bones,  
a wonder to blank tribes of shrunken days:  
but in that cave before his upstart gates  
where elder night endures unshaken, waits  
that foe of settled peace, the smiling sphinx,  
or foul Echidna's mass'd insidious links,  
reminding him that all is vanities;  
and when, at last, o'er his nine roods he lies,  
stretch'd in the sarcophagus wherever grief  
makes way before one huge gust of relief,  
not the wing-blast of his vain shade shall drive  
his wizen'd captives from their dungeon-hive,  
and make a solitude about his bed;  
nor the chill thought petrific his low head  
exudes in rays of darkness, that beyond  
this perturb'd sphere congeal, an orb of dread:  
I, Lilith, on his tomb immensely throned,  
with viewless face and viewless vans outspread;  
in the wide waste of his unhallow'd work,  
calm coils of fear, my serpent-brood shall lurk;  
and I shall muse above the little dust  
that was the flesh that held my word in trust.

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

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

(xi) Thus in her hour of wrath, o'er Adam's head  
Lilith, then first reveal'd, a name of dread,  
thus in her hour of sorrow: and the rage,  
that drove the giant-hunters in that age  
since whelm'd beneath the weltering cataclysm,  
was the mad flight from her instant abyss  
and iron sadness and unsatisfied  
despair of kings that by Euphrates' side  
rein the wing'd steer or grasp the stony mane  
of lions dared, if so they might obtain  
surcease of lingering unnamed distress.  
And if she kept the word forgetfulness  
absorb'd, sole ear of sunken sleep, it is  
to them that wander thro' Persepolis,  
Ekhatan, or where else o'er arrow'd bricks  
her snakes make the dry noise of trodden sticks,  
known and well-known how that revolt was dash'd  
and cruel keeps with lustral silence wash'd.  
A name of dread reveal'd: and tho' forgot  
in strenuous times to whom the lyre was not,  
yet, when her hour awoke, the peoples heard  
her coming and the winds no more deferr'd  
that sweep along the expected day of wrath,  
and rear'd the soaring aisles along her path  
to house the massive gloom where she might dwell,  
conjectured, hovering, impenetrable,  
while o'er the mortal terror crouch'd beneath  
the shuddering organ pour'd black wave of death;  
when man withheld his hand from life, in fear  
to find her, temptress, in the flesh most dear  
or on the lowliest ways of simple peace—  
vain-weening he that thus their feud might cease:  
ay, and the cynic days that thought them blest  
to know this earth a plunder-ground confest  
and calm within them of the glutted beast  
knew her, the emptiness that, when the feast  
hath quench'd its lamps, makes, in the invaded hall,  
stray'd steps, reverberated from the wall,

*sound on the ear like some portentous stride,  
companion's fixt, to mock our tread, beside,  
nor near and show his apprehended guise  
familiar, ease to our intended eyes.*

*Lilith, a name of dread: yet was her pain  
and loving to her chosen ones not vain  
hinted, who know what weight of gelid tears  
afflicts the widow'd uplands of the spheres,  
and whence the enrapturing breaths are sent that bring  
a perfume of the secular flowering  
of the far-bleeding rose of Paradise,  
that mortal hearts in censer-fume arise  
unto the heart that were an ardent peace,  
and whence the sibyl-hints of song, that cease  
in pale and thrilling silence, lest they wrong  
her beauty, whose love bade live their fleeting throng,  
even hers, who is the silence of our throught,  
as he that sleeps in hush'd Valvins hath taught.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1898-9

## LILITH

*EXPLICIT*

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

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

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

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

INTERLUDE:

THE CASEMENT

- 70 Once, when the sun-burst flew  
its banner above broad seas and eastern hills,  
my casement knew  
that morning in her wondrous isle of youth distils  
*perpetual balm, and tidings trumpeted  
of Eden air*  
winsome and quick, round many a wilding grace, unwed,  
clad only in glad hair,  
*bade fancy soar  
far and aloft along that limitless ecstasy  
of crystal, towards some shore  
where life were crown'd amidst a halcyon sea.*  
Now—desolate, despairful (*lamentable retreat!*  
*wreck'd wheels and spars!*!),  
streaming from irresistible defeat  
the broken field of stars:  
*and all our hope they bore, the appointed word  
and that unbroken song  
that should resolve our suffering dark in peace, deferr'd  
—how long?*

- 71 *The window is wide and lo! beyond its bars  
dim fields of fading stars  
and cavern tracts, whence the great store of tears  
that Beauty all the years  
hath wept in wanderings of the eyeless dark,  
remembering the long cark  
whereunder we, her care, are silent bow'd,  
invades with numbing shroud  
this divindling realm of listless avatars.*  
*Dim fields of fading stars,  
and shall yet ye with amaranth rapture burn  
and maiden grace return  
sprung soft and sudden on the fainting night,  
rose passioning to white;  
or must our task remain and hopeless art  
that sickeneth the heart  
from yon dull embers to evoke the ghost  
of the first garden lost,  
sad necromancers we? Then let the blast,  
that waked you ancient, cast  
into the deeps your useless lagging dearth,  
O blazon'd shame of Earth,  
who then might hail the last oblivion,  
knowing you doomward blown  
before the advance of night's relentless cars,  
dim fields of fading stars!*

## THE LABOUR OF NIGHT

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

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

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

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

## I

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

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

A ruby of harden'd flame, an ice-bound woe,  
burns in their crystal breast whose wizard brow  
was gemm'd with name of Soliman long before  
him shaped that pluck'd the golden apple low:  
they royal with this only magic now  
that, dying, they die not for evermore.

## II

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

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

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

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

### III

- 75 Because he felt against his hundred years  
the beating of the wings of Azrael,  
the Master, he that watch'd o'er Afrit fears  
building the Temple incorruptible,

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

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

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

### III

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

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

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

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

## I

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

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

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

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

## II

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

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

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

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

### III

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

### IV

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

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

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

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

V

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

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

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

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

VI

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

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

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

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

VII

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

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

Stars that with all our glory laden shift  
aimless, what term is set unto this drift?  
All dawns are split along the hopeless way,

and far the white hour when our darkling prayer  
must be consumed and wrathful love shall slay:  
—Ye are but jewels in her scatter'd hair.

## I

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

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

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

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

## II

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

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

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

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

### III

## THE WANDERER

1902—

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

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

- 87 Each day I see the long ships coming into port  
and the people crowding to their rail, glad of the shore:  
because to have been alone with the sea and not to have known  
of anything happening in any crowded way,  
and to have heard no other voice than the crooning sea's  
has charmed away the old rancours, and the great winds  
have search'd and swept their hearts of the old irksome thoughts:  
so, to their freshen'd gaze, each land smiles a good home.  
Why envy I, seeing them made gay to greet the shore?  
Surely I do not foolishly desire to go  
hither and thither upon the earth and grow weary  
with seeing many lands and peoples and the sea:  
but if I might, some day, landing I reck not where  
have heart to find a welcome and perchance a rest,  
I would spread the sail to any wandering wind of the air  
this night, when waves are hard and rain blots out the land.
- 88 I am driven everywhere from a clinging home,  
O autumn eves! and I ween'd that you would yet  
have made, when your smouldering dwindled to odorous fume,  
close room for my heart, where I might crouch and dream  
of days and ways I had trod, and look with regret  
on the darkening homes of men and the window-gleam,  
and forget the morrows that threat and the unknown way.  
But a bitter wind came out of the yellow-pale west  
and my heart is shaken and fill'd with its triumphing cry:  
You shall find neither home nor rest: for ever you roam  
with stars as they drift and wilful fates of the sky!

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

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

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

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

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

- 91 How old is my heart, how old, how old is my heart,  
and did I ever go forth with song when the morn was new?  
I seem to have trod on many ways: I seem to have left  
I know not how many homes; and to leave each  
was still to leave a portion of mine own heart,  
of my old heart whose life I had spent to make that home  
and all I had was regret, and a memory.  
So I sit and muse in this wayside harbour and wait  
till I hear the gathering cry of the ancient winds and again  
I must up and out and leave the embers of the hearth  
to crumble silently into white ash and dust,  
and see the road stretch bare and pale before me: again  
my garment and my home shall be the enveloping winds  
and my heart be fill'd wholly with their old pitiless cry.
- 92 I sorrow for youth—ah, not for its wildness (would that were dead!)  
but for those soft nests of time that enticed the maiden bloom  
of delight and tenderness to break in delicate air  
—O her eyes in the rosy face that bent over our first babe!  
but all that was, and is gone, and shall be all forgotten;  
it fades and wanes even now: and who is there cares but I?  
and I grieve for my heart that is old and cannot cease from regret.  
Ay, might our harms be haven'd in some deathless heart:  
but where have I felt its over-brooding luminous tent  
save in those eyes of delight (and ah! that they must change)  
and of yore in her eyes to whom we ran with our childish joy?  
O brother! if such there were and each of us might lead each  
to lean above the little pools where all our heart  
lies spilt and clear and shining along the dusky way,  
and dream of one that could save it all and salve our ache!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### III

#### PAUCA MEA

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

*January 1905*

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

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

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

*1906*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1908

## EPILOGUES

1897

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But, past the gin-shop's ochrous flare,  
 sudden, a gap of quiet air  
 and gather'd dark, where, set a pace  
 beyond the pavement's coiling race  
 and mask'd by bulk of sober leaves,  
 the plain obtruncate chancel heaves,

whose lancet-windows faintly show  
suffusion of a ruddy glow,  
the lamp of adoration, dim  
and rich with unction kept for Him  
whom Bethlehem's manger first made warm,  
the sweetest god in human form,  
love's prisoner in the Eucharist,  
man's pleading, patient amorist:  
and there the sacring laver stands  
where I was brought in pious hands,  
a chrisom-child, that I might be  
accepted of that company  
who, thro' their journeying, behold  
beyond the apparent heavens, controll'd  
to likeness of a candid rose,  
ascending where the gold heart glows,  
cirque within cirque, the blessed host,  
their kin, their comfort, and their boast.

With them I walk'd in love and awe  
till I was ware of that grim maw  
and lazar-pit that reek'd beneath:  
what outcast howlings these? what teeth  
gnashing in vain? and was that bliss  
whose counter-hemisphere was this?  
and could it be, when times fulfill'd  
had made the tally of either guild,  
that this mid-world, dredg'd clean in both,  
should no more bar their gruesome troth?  
So from beneath that choiring tent  
I stepp'd, and tho' my spirit's bent  
was dark to me as yet, I sought  
a sphere appeas'd and undistraught;  
and found viaticum and goal  
in that hard atom of the soul,  
that final grain of deathless mind,  
which Satan's watch-fiends shall not find

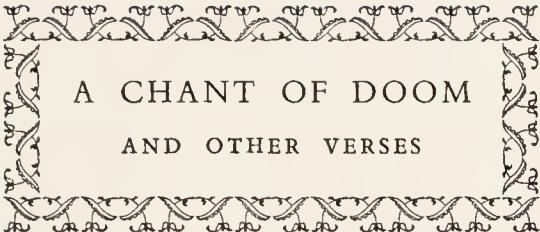
nor the seven mills of darkness bruise,  
for all permission to abuse;  
stubborn, yet, if one seek aright,  
translucent all within and bright  
with sheen that hath no paradigm,  
not where our proud Golcondas brim,  
tho' sky and sea and leaf and flower,  
in each rare mood of virtual power,  
sleep in their geins' excepted day:  
and so, nor long, the guarded ray  
broke on my eagerness, who brought  
the lucid diamond-probe of thought  
and, driving it behind, the extreme  
blind vehemence of travailing dream  
against the inhibitory shell:  
and found, no grim eternal cell  
and presence of the shrouded Norn,  
but Eden, clad in nuptial morn,  
young, fair, and radiant with delight  
remorse nor sickness shall requite.

Yes, Eden was my own, my bride;  
whatever malices denied,  
faithful and found again, nor long  
absent from aura of wooing song:  
but promis'd only, while the sun  
must travel yet thro' times undone;  
and life must guard the prize of youth,  
and thought must steward into truth  
the mines of magian ore divined  
in rich Cipangos of the mind:  
and I, that made my high attempt  
no bliss whence any were exempt,  
their fellow-pilgrim, I must greet  
these listless captives of the street,  
these fragments of an orphan'd drift  
whose dower was our mother's thrift,

and, tho' they know it not, have care  
of what would be their loving prayer  
if skill bestow'd might help them heed  
their craving for the simple meed  
to be together in the light  
when loneliness and dark incite:  
long is the way till we are met  
where Eden pays her hoarded debt  
and we are orb'd in her, and she  
hath still'd her hungering to be,  
with plentitude beyond impeach,  
single, distinct, and whole in each:  
and many an evening hour shall bring  
the dark crowd's dreary loitering  
to me who pass and see the tale  
of all my striving, bliss or bale,  
dated from either spire that strives  
clear of the shoal of shiftless lives,  
and promise, in all years' despite,  
fidelity to old delight.

*EXPLICIT*

*15th December 1913*



A CHANT OF DOOM  
AND OTHER VERSES

TO MY BROTHER

PHILIP

5304 SGT 2nd AUST. MACHINE-GUN BATTN



## SONNETS AND STANZAS

QUIS PRO DOMINO?

### I

Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay—  
Ay, verily: and by ministry of such men  
As did His will upon the Saracen:  
And Christendom owns not that man to-day  
Who deems it not the holiest task to slay,  
So utterly, that they rise not again,  
Yon blatant heathenrie, past human ken  
Outlaw'd to Death, its raving spawn and prey.

And thou hast lit one flame of love and wrath,  
Who all unterrified, didst take thy stand,  
And tear the Beast, and baulk him of his spring,  
O noble Belgium, lion in the path;  
An inch of sword holding a foot of land;  
A folk of men, showing a man for King.

*5th May*

II

The metaphysic Death-in-Death that lurks  
Within our world, and from its grisly haunt  
With breath of chill misgiving seeks to daunt,  
In vain, the immortal mind its challenge irks,  
Incarnate for this time of power, murks  
Our human heaven, whereo'er its banners flaunt  
Annihilation, while its legions vaunt  
Destruction. As heir creed is, so their works.

And even so be their doom, themselves have thought,  
Who, past the living, warr'd upon those dead  
Who, being dead, yet spake thro' that they wrought—  
So fierce their hate against the soul they dread!  
Even so their doom: that Death's dead spawn may cram  
Her maw, and, there corrupting, slay their dam.

*11th May*

(*Sydney Morning Herald*,  
13th May 1915, for Belgian Day)

“LOOKERS-ON”

*Stadium, 31st July 1915*

What shame is this, that foemen mock  
And brothers doubt our birth?  
The groundlings' noisome benches rock  
Impatient for their mirth.

Their hirelings fight: who dubs it vice  
To batten on the view?  
Sweet friends, and whence so high your price  
That men should die for you?

Nay, street-bred minds and poster-souls,  
Ye need not be adread;  
Their race is run to other goals:  
Ye profit by these dead.

The garbage-bucket's brood is free  
To buzz in summer air:  
They give their all for Liberty,  
And you shall have your share.

*2nd August 1915*

*26th April 1916*

I am not of your blood;  
I never loved your ways:  
If e'er your deed was good  
I yet was slow to praise.

Irish and rebel both,  
And both unto the end—  
And here I pledge you troth,  
And here I stand your friend.

This scum that blights our fame,  
This mildew on our land—  
The murrain on their name:  
My spittle on their hand.

The gates of Hell assail:  
Look on yon stricken trench—  
There dies the loyal Gael:  
Let not your talkers blench.

(*Sydney Morning Herald*,  
27th April 1916)

Lions of war, our noblest and our best,  
Who won the desperate beach and death-lash'd crest  
And look'd on Fate's most awful face unhid,  
Poorly our praise may match the thing you did,  
Who, from these ultimate isles and warless seas,  
Bade Hellespont and golden Chersonese  
Wake from their dream of perish'd glory and thrill  
To know the heart of valour flaming still:—  
We, irk'd and shamed to sit only and hear  
In homes your wild devotion makes more dear,  
Whether ye sleep upon your fiery height  
Or fortune, maiming, bar you from the fight  
Or, gracious and consenting, so befriend  
To stride the road of victory to the end  
And smite to hell yon ravening bulk of sin—  
Humble and proud, we greet and claim you kin.

*(Anzac Memorial)*

A cold and choking death in tumbling seas,  
Track'd down by enemies' eyes towards bitter night,  
With few white stars to watch his last lone fight—  
This was his end, whose life forswore all ease:  
Witness, ye Orient sands and burning breeze,  
That train'd his patient manhood to the might  
Ye mourn with us, whelm'd now by Fortune's spite  
Where the great surge sets past the Orcades.

England, he forged thy sword: take thou and smite  
As he would bid, nor, till victorious right,  
Hold thou with yonder sly and murderous beast  
Or truce or parley; that, of all our slain,  
Even from this greatest down unto the least  
Nor he, nor any, shall have died in vain.

*10th June*

(*Sydney Morning Herald*,  
17th June 1916)

THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF WAR

Two years, since heaven was blotted from our sight  
In swirling storm; two years, that forced the cry  
Of pain, to watch our friend and kinsman die;  
And doubt, and dread, and rumour of the night—  
And patience in our goddess, angry-bright,  
Erect and sure against that weltering sky,  
Till the collected lightning of her eye  
Leap forth and slay the banded foes of right.

For hers our cause is, hers, whose voice the Greek  
First heard, the call that hallow'd man to wreak  
God's doom upon the wrong that earth abhors:  
Whence yet the freeman hath prerogative,  
And faith, and strength, and victory:—"Whoso wars  
On Justice, to deny her, must not live."

*31st July*

(*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4th August 1916:  
Read in Great Hall, University of Sydney,  
same date)

“. . . still wars and lechery!”

*Troilus and Cressida*

They whined their scannel warning to the young:  
“Lo, all your dream of glory, how it lies!  
Was this its promise then, the dust and dung,  
The stench of blood, and cloud of sexton flies?”

Even such we knew, some worm o’ the cesspit stung,  
Who rail’d on fair love’s arrogant emprise  
Because no breath from heaven made broad their lung  
And mire of flesh dwelt in their abject eyes.

But how could glory be, save that she must  
Stoop from her sphere to quicken sordid dust  
Turning to rapture our inflicted need?

Poor souls! to have never known the immortal will  
That bends to no defeat, the heroic deed  
Whose doing is its only glory still.

1917

(Sent, by request, to the *Australian Soldiers’ Gift Book*, but rejected by V.W.A.)

## FRANCE

TO MADEMOISELLE A. SOUBEIRAN

*To you, that have the blessed right  
To love your France, even to tears,  
From one, who saw her sacred light  
Shine steadfast thro' the storm of fears,  
These, which her worshipp'd soul endears,  
Since they found favour in your sight.*

Scant the battle's breathing-space:  
Scant (ah, sorrowful) for her  
Station'd in the direful place,  
Where the smoky legions whir  
Boiling upward from the pit,  
Wings that drip and maws that spit,  
Craving to defile her grace.  
Hush! Your pity does her wrong:  
For she asketh not "How long?"  
For her spirit shall not grieve  
Tho' till dim and doubtful morn  
Fires of bale, with no reprieve,  
Make the murk about her heave.  
What! Would you bewail her case,  
Risk her glance of radiant scorn?  
Lift your eyes to see her stand,  
Smiling with immortal face,  
Wielding in unwearied hand  
Storm and levin of her brand,  
Crushing there to sordid dust  
Crest and mail of reptile lust,  
Woman-soul and goddess-fire,  
Shining love and blasting ire,  
Bride of all the soul's desire,  
France, a star to every land.

Love and worship be your gift,  
Humbly brought: and look you keep  
With your utterance pious thrift;  
Tho' your hearts be high uplift,  
Be your silence reverent deep.  
Song she needs not, who can turn  
From the deed of dreadful fire  
Where her joyful children burn,  
To the vast and splendid lyre  
Where our secret chords conspire.

She, that makes her music now  
On the smitten dragon's brow,  
From his broken heads shall give  
Streams of song whereby we live.  
Love would hymn her? Let it be:  
Love must rest rebuked, for she  
Little needs our minstrelsy.

Must we stay content to bring  
Ne'er a word of thanksgiving  
Irk'd with silence, bosom-bound?  
Once, when men that knew dismay  
Rose from out the bitter clay,  
Thus, of old, the word was found:  
“*Nisi quia Dominus*  
(Even now let Israel say)  
Save the Lord had been with us  
When our foes were gather'd thick,  
They had sure devour'd us quick,  
Or the waters whelm'd our soul.”  
Even so let freemen say,  
Whom her chivalry kept whole:  
“*Nisi quia Domina!*”  
Save for her we had been scourged,  
Stripp'd and spoil'd and broken quite:  
Home and freedom, love and light—  
These the gold she brought us, purged  
In that crucible of fight.  
Lady of Deliverance,  
Mistress of our spirit's sight,  
Thus we humbly thank thee, France!

(*Daily Telegraph,*  
14th July 1916)

Worn, but not wasted, mournful, yet with crest  
Still unsubdued;  
She holds the perilous gate, her lance in rest  
'Gainst that fell brood  
She knows of old, that mark'd her long ago,  
In evil glee,  
An easy prey, and on her overthrow  
Saw Liberty  
A smoking victim and the world its grave:  
So plann'd and will'd  
The powers that dream no servant but the slave  
And cannot build.

Always their hate pursued her and their lust  
Her beauty irk'd  
The sluggish nerve beneath their saurian crust  
Where envy lurk'd;  
Always her grace and laughing ease reproved  
Their Orson ways;  
Careless, they saw her, free, yet all-beloved;  
Their thirst for praise  
Grew, maddening to a monstrous calenture,  
And malice stung,  
What jaw might rend not, to defile past cure  
With slavering tongue.

She hath been terrible in bygone times,  
So burning red,  
None knew, if dawn from heaven, or with her crimes,  
A Mænad head;  
Yet, even in her madness, we divined  
And half adored  
A splendid harsh archangel of the mind,  
With flaming sword  
Waved towards some Eden where the souls of men  
Might draw free air,  
And hate and tyranny desert our ken,  
And life be fair.

Therefore, in this her hour of martyrdom—  
Prolong'd, renew'd!—  
Where English speech makes music, there is dumb  
The ancient feud;  
And clear her light in all their hearts who sing  
O'er sundering foam,  
Knowing she makes her battle but to bring  
Her children home;  
Only to gather them in fold beneath  
Her wings of peace;  
Only to reap that field of dragon's teeth  
That hate may cease.

By her long suffering and hope deferr'd,  
When friends betray;  
By all that hope of youth that sleeps interr'd  
Deep in her clay;  
By those our sons that stand with hers and strive,  
By those that fell,  
Her sons and ours, to keep our souls alive,  
And found it well:  
Give of your store, and let your giving be  
Or great or small,  
What matter, be it joyous, loving, free—  
She hath given all.

*8th July*

(*Sydney Morning Herald*,  
13th July 1917)

## A CHANT OF DOOM

*For of them that shed much blood the gods  
are not unregardful: such an one, though he  
thrive without righteousness, yet in time the  
dark Hounds of Hell, with luck-reversing  
brunt of life, wear him to a shade; and there  
is no strength of him left, for his end is  
among the things that are seen not.—  
AESCHYLUS, Agamemnon.*

*Ha, the doom begins, begins!  
Ay, the hour is well begun  
When the Babel of his sins  
Topples on the evil one:  
Malediction, crime, and sword—  
These his harvest, bride, and hoard;  
These to gladden, hous'd and stored,  
His eternal bed and board!*

Ah, the waiting, since the stroke  
Of his foul, conceiving broke  
Thro' the crystal dome of sky  
Where our Quiet hover'd shy!  
Here I sat and even here,  
From my casement, saw the dear,  
Hesitating, virgin Spring,  
Bridal-gauzy, visiting  
Waters silken with delight,  
Little happy beaches, white  
Where her argent footprint fell—  
And the world drove fast on hell.

Follow'd then the month of dread:  
Spring might woo in vain; we read  
How the hosts of darkness burst,  
Ravishing, thro' Belgium first,  
Then with gather'd wrath amain  
Sweeping on the storied Seine,  
Sworn to wreck and ravin, drove  
On that city of our love,  
Queen of arms, and Queen of light,  
Queen of delicate delight,  
Queen of venturous art and song,  
Unavenged of the foul wrong  
Done her twice in hundred years  
When she saw, thro' wrathful tears,

How the fathers of these swine  
Nuzzled in her glorious wine.  
Darkness settled round the spring:  
Narrower we felt the ring  
Whence from earth and sky and sea  
Breath was drawn to keep man free:  
Where might Freedom dwell secure  
If that city must endure  
One shame more, the worst and last?—

But the time of terror pass'd:  
Ended was the month of dread  
When the Marne and Aisne ran red:  
Hope was ended for our foes  
When the muddy Yser rose,  
Swoln with corpses, swirling thick:  
Ah, but heart and hope grew sick  
As the moon, changed times a score,  
Still beheld the evil sore  
All unlanced and German bale  
Lording it o'er hill and vale  
Of the pleasant land of France—  
Let the flags of doom advance.

*Yser, noble, faithful ditch,  
Yser, name of Teuton dread,  
Tho' Skamander boast it rich  
With its silt of golden dead,  
More shall Yser be renown'd,  
Where the German hope was drown'd.*

VENGEANCE finds him, late but full:  
Man shall thrust and hell shall pull  
Till the pit has claim'd its own.  
Flanders shall forget her moan  
Underneath that bestial hoof,  
Rheims rebuild its haughty roof:  
Where of late the tocsin knell'd  
And the reeling spires beheld  
Monstrous rout of order'd sin,  
Let the carillons begin.  
Bruges, ring the tale to Ghent,  
Shatter'd Ypres, make concert:  
Let the glad and clashing peal  
Reach the towers of captive Lille;  
All ye martyr'd steeples, sing,  
All ye bells of freedom, ring—  
Ring the Belgian lion, dour,  
Ranging on the carrion spoor  
Of the evil bird that came  
Northward, for Germania's shame,  
Dastard, prowling with the fox  
Since it left the Suabian rocks—  
Ring the English leopards, gaunt,  
Anger'd at the Prussian vaunt  
O'er the fields of war they know  
Hallow'd by a nobler foe—  
Ring the shining soul of France,  
Steel and pennon on the lance  
Levell'd in the Maiden's hand  
Riding yet to save her land—  
Ring the stubborn Muscovite  
Lock'd in truceless weltering fight,  
Serb and Tchernagoran sworn  
By their sorrows nobly borne  
Yet to turn and rend the breast  
Of their black two-headed pest—  
Ring the sunrise colours flown  
O'er the Alpine winter's throne

Where Italia's sons redeem  
All her ancient lingering dream—  
Ring the cross that comes again  
To the Holy Wisdom's fane  
From the skies that Dante saw,  
Where the sons of freedom's law  
Do the last crusaders' work  
On the bastard Teuton-Turk—

*Ring the victory, ring the rout,  
Ring the night of evil out—  
Ring deliverance, ring the doom  
(Cannon, cannon, cannon, boom)!*

DOOM we utter, doom we will;  
Head shall judge, and hand must kill  
—Whom? Behold him: eye in eye  
Mark him, ere we bid him die.

Yon self-righteous bulk, 'tis he,  
The world's giant Pharisee;  
Prophet, scribe, Emmanuel  
Of the evangel he must tell  
How his virtue should make whole  
All the world's phrenetic soul,  
Honesty, to slake its drouth,  
Flowing from that well-wiped mouth:  
Truth: it was his very thought,  
Justice, whatsoe'er he wrought,  
Never yet on earth dispens'd  
Save in homes his arms had fenced.  
Honour—'twas his look and word.  
Heedless, many a year we heard,  
Fools and blind, we heard and laugh'd:  
This was Hamlet, wisdom-dافت,  
This the school's jack-pudding, sent  
For our easy merriment  
As we watch'd him, heavy-shod,  
Cumbrous-tortuous, writhe and plod  
To and from his primal lie:  
“Truth and right and love am I:  
Human virtue hath no worth  
Save it own a German birth:  
German virtue stands alone,  
Incommunicable, unknown”—  
Vain the long-drawn litany,  
Still uncrook'd our stubborn knee;  
So the homily turn'd grave:  
“I with all the world to save,  
I whose pure unselfish might  
Gives the earth a newer right,  
If these Gentiles will not yield  
To God's will in me reveal'd,

Threaten'd in my highest good,  
Dare I heed (and if I would)  
Parchment bonds that vex and irk,  
Hampering the appointed work?"

Hark! the ruffian guns of Liége  
Bark refusal: holy rage  
Seizes on the baffled priest—  
And the world beholds the Beast.  
Liége is loud on German truth;  
Flanders cries on German ruth;  
Rheims and Senlis swell the tale  
Of the wilful German bale:  
Nay, what boots it to prolong  
All the sickening list of wrong?  
Pharisee, thou whitened tomb,  
Mankind hath decreed thy doom.

*Chime his fame and chime his name;  
Rhyme his title, rhyme his shame:  
German faith and German trust;  
German hate and German lust:  
—Bring the Beast unto the dust.*

AY, but this has been of old.  
Earth remembers in its mould  
All her motherhood defiled  
By the frenzy of her child.  
Man has match'd with beast and won.  
Was there aught till now undone  
Of the crimes ye make his charge,  
Aught that bids us not enlarge  
This one criminal, the worst  
—If ye will—but not the first?

—This has been: 'tis written deep.  
Nerve and bone of mankind keep  
Chronicle of shame that still  
Bids our flesh and fibre thrill  
With the fear that lurks behind  
All the reptiles of the mind.  
Treason, sacrilege and rape,  
Murder in its foulest shape,  
When the beast ran loose in man  
These have been:—but give them plan,  
Bid the brute and angel kiss  
Sworn and pledg'd in brutehood—this,  
This is he that will'd the Beast,  
Will'd the world to be its feast;  
All its valour, worth and will,  
All its hoard of ventured skill,  
Ay, and generous youth, unwrought,  
With its wealth of ardent thought,  
Dreams, and native heroism,  
Warp'd unto his warlock-schism,  
All a Moloch-sacrifice  
To the devil-brain of ice  
Plotting hell to gain the world:  
Lo, his flag of doom unfurl'd!  
Rend the veil: he stands unscreen'd,  
Monster-birth of man and fiend,  
Where of human we descry  
Only this—that he can die.

*“Die, and die, and die, and die!”  
Shot and shell and steel reply:  
Hoarser yet the cannon cry  
“He hath sinn’d and he must die!”*

FOR his sins the man must die.  
Sick, convuls'd to bear him, Earth  
Rends the charter of his birth:  
She, enduring in the right,  
Shudders from the demon-blight:  
She, the patient and the kind,  
Loyal in her darkling mind  
To the law that bids her yield  
Foison from the wounded field:  
She, corrupted in her womb,  
Urged the primal slayer's doom  
With the voice that cried on Cain  
—Here is more than Abel slain.  
Yet with her even Cain hath found  
That last hostel of the mound:  
In her lap her child may rot  
—Even Cain: but this may not.

Exile of the human grave!  
Earth resumes but what she gave.  
Shall the pit receive him? Nay:  
Hell hath yet its word to say.  
Hell, and were it seven times seven  
Heated, yet is kin to heaven:  
Eden-bliss and Hinnom-fire  
Are but man's produced desire,  
Holy or unholy, still  
Lit by his immortal will;  
So in Hell the soul that sins  
Neither dies, nor yet begins  
Penal fasts, but wantons free  
In its evil revelry:  
Save by the enduring soul  
Neither Hell nor Heaven is whole.

—But the monster that we judge—  
Hell might harbour not such grudge,  
Deep, inexpiable, immane,  
Nor the serpent breed such bane  
As the man's saturnine will,  
Bitter, bleak, morose, to kill  
Even the soul, suborn'd and won  
To its self-sworn malison.  
Think ye Hell shall rise for him,  
Stirring from their seats the dim  
Majesties of surceas'd wrong?  
Shall not Malebolge throng,  
Huddled close in human dread,  
From his vast appalling tread?  
And Giudecca's lord shall fold  
His eternal vans of cold,  
Crouching fearful lest they ply,  
Till the horror passes by.

*Quicklime for the felon's pit,  
Pledge of fires his forfeit lit!  
Earth nor Hell yields this no grace:  
Where shall be his resting-place?*

FAR beyond the northern cold,  
Where the Muspell-lords of old,  
Bedded in their lasting state,  
Sleep upon their glutted hate  
Of the life whereon they warr'd,  
Gray, vindictive bulks abhor'd  
—Odin's spear no more shall wake  
Fenris-wolf or Midgard-snake—:  
Farther, where the roots of night  
Plunge in wells beyond all sight:  
Where the execrate caverns are,  
Sunk beneath the last dim star  
And its sisters' quickening breath;  
There the hag-wife Death-in-Death  
In her rigid sinful womb,  
Self-accurst, hath made him room.  
Let the Evil lie by her  
Straiten'd in that sepulchre,  
Where the evil round him craves  
Utter death to fill its graves,  
Doomed to feed, by its own law,  
On the ravening of its maw.  
As he goes to that long home  
Where no wakening shall come,  
Silence falling, vast and dread,  
Be his pomp of martial tread;  
Silence whelming, tense and lone,  
All his pomp of music blown;  
And, for corpse-flares round his bier  
Passing up the aisle of fear,  
Writhing cores of densest gloom  
See the vampire to his tomb,  
There to live, seal'd fast and stark,  
One with all the unhallow'd dark.

*Cast the carrion to the dark  
With its sin for shrouding-sark;  
Raze his name and raze his birth:  
Give the spring-time back to Earth!*

1915

(*The Lone Hand*  
1st August 1916)

DEAD night, unholy quiet, doom, and weird  
 Are heavy on its roof,  
 The palace-keep that prosperous Evil rear'd  
 Defiant, heaven-proof.

Founded in fraud, mortar'd with blood, and clamp'd  
 With clutching iron hands,  
 It frown'd down Right, its flaunted scutcheon ramp'd  
 Above the abject lands.

And now, the sentinel deserts that gate  
 Nor bar protects, nor pin,  
 But high and wide the portal yawns, till Fate  
 And Judgment enter in.

A groaning trembles thro' the massive vaults,  
 A muttering down the halls,  
 As closer still the impending thunder halts  
 Nor yet the levin falls.

A panic whisper round the galleries  
 Runs twittering: then the hush,  
 And in the dimmest nooks divining eyes  
 See blackness throng and crush.

Palsied, with fix'd and writhen face, high Sin  
 Stares from the shrouded throne  
 With glassy eyes whose gaze is turn'd within  
 —Where at the last are known

Atē and Ruin, each Erinys-shape  
 Dire, ineluctable,  
 From whom nor death nor madness brings escape  
 —And least, the House of Hell.



This is their doom, deserv'd, complete and due,  
That they themselves must know  
Whose witless hand it was that overthrew  
With self-inflicted blow

Their monstrous dream; to know their own the sword  
That smote them from the skies,  
That stretch'd in dust the Dagon they adored,  
And shatter'd their emprise;

Their own the skill that most industrious built  
This pit of their despair  
Star-high, smooth-rounded, baffling, where their guilt  
Must find eternal lair.

The enginery they wrought, whose maw they fed  
With fume and fire of hate,  
To break his house above their neighbour's head,  
Hath left theirs desolate.

And Evil knows at last, all overtoil'd,  
The law whereby it must,  
By self stupidity and dullness foil'd,  
Still labour for the Just.

This is their punishment: there is no worse;  
What have they left to dread?  
What reck they of the living orphan's curse,  
The slow wrath of the dead?

★      ★      ★

Tho' for a while, lest from the festering lie  
Our air drink poison-shade,  
The scavengers of Justice yet must ply  
Their stern and simple trade,

(For sword and rope are hungry, axe and block  
Demand their grim repast,  
Whereof who would defraud them, shakes the rock  
On which his house stands fast)

Our vengeance now is full: what else must fall  
Can add no best, no worst;  
The cup is brimm'd whence they have drunken gall,  
Where we have slaked our thirst.

Our vengeance is complete, deserv'd, and won,  
And sevenfold seventyfold  
The retribution on the guilty one  
Is levied, summ'd, and told.

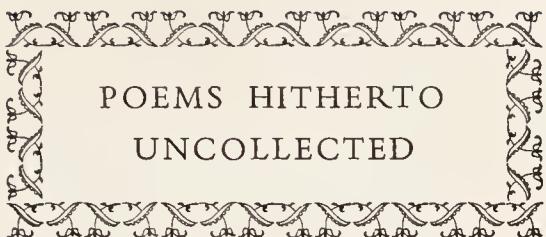
We that have suffer'd with the suffering Right—  
For all our doubts and fears,  
For all our anguish in the muttering night,  
For all our blood and tears,

For dread and for dismay, and that foul rape  
Man's spirit but scarce withstood  
When from the Pit, in our usurped shape,  
The Abominable was spew'd—

Lo, their cold agony and icy sweat,  
Their self-damnation known!  
Let justice come: what need we vengeance yet?  
Its wreaking was their own.

*3rd-4th November*

(*Sydney Morning Herald*,  
9th November 1918)



POEMS HITHERTO  
UNCOLLECTED



## FIRST PERIOD

Nos (1)—(23)

### (1) NURSERY RHYMES IN LATIN VERSE (1887)

#### *The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe*

*Vixit anus quaedam, fecit quam copia prolis  
Distractam; sedis calceus instar erat.  
Jus sine pane dedit pueris; tunc usa flagello,  
“Ad lectum,” ait eis, “currite quisque suum.”*

#### *Three Blind Mice*

*Tres oculis capti mures! en, quomodo currunt!  
Agricolae currunt conjugis usque pedes.  
Illa autem properat caudas praecidere cultro  
Muribus, heu! caecis talia fata tribus!*

(2) PROSE (MARINE)

Perversity! that will not stay  
as merely guest within my brain  
arise from memory or display  
if any trace of thee remain

tho' but as streaks of various hue  
cast from what drugs whose curious dyes  
for comprehension of the few  
poison the equatorial skies

far other than beneath whose roof  
that never took the tinge of blood  
my fever'd spirit stood aloof  
to reach at Heaven from out the mud

Where flowers in a hot-house grew  
(a nipping and an eager air  
might charge them with no proper dew)  
was enter'd—I was unaware

yet found delight in every bloom  
that pois'd upon exotic stalk  
scattered a radiance thro' the gloom  
that else had overcast our walk

and haunted by the lucid one  
mine eyes forgot the others' soil  
saw but the children of the sun  
not of the loveless nights of toil

My heart exulted to behold  
those blossoms in that endless aisle  
mark'd but the glory and the gold  
deluded by the senses' wile

But she that hitherto had seemed  
not any of those flowers to see  
(of others not so rare she dream'd)  
lifted her lids and looked on me

The hot-house vanish'd with its flowers  
and as before the breath of spring  
the fever of the winter cowers  
I sat beside her listening

Let those who prate of treason know  
that as we walk our farther way  
buds of far other colour glow  
in this my spirit's second May

and not as agonizing day  
flares o'er the equatorial sea  
in strangeness that has power to stay  
the phantom thus recall'd to me

and if I seem to shirk the strife  
and forth on stooping wing to fare  
content to lead another's life  
beneath the ardent height of air

I still behold that lucid flower  
that rising from the endless sea  
beneath what skies e'er laugh or lower  
points upward to infinity

and from perversity afar  
beneath the open heaven's roll  
absolute silent as a star  
interprets nature to the soul

*On the Equator*  
*June 1894*

(3) [EUCALYPTI]

SOMETHING AUSTRALIAN, PATRIOTIC, for O'REILLY, M.P., the *Bulletin*  
and the PUBLIC generally.

not, Goethe, here the pines of old  
that round the imperial Hermann's-stone  
brood o'er the sunken sun or hold  
the night with wail for glories gone

but straight the solitary seed  
shoots skyward in untaught disdain  
first in the blue bursting to heed  
naught but these elders sky and main

Whose Brocken-shade the empires are  
still comes the puppet of thy thought  
now by the clear Pacific bar  
to clearer contemplation brought

That vast receives his newer cry  
still utter'd from his being's dearth  
*O strong-born anchoret! so I*  
*deep-living in the living earth*

*would push my soul for larger breath*  
*and ponder with unwavering eye*  
*where on the hither side of death*  
*the dreaming sea-line climbs the sky*

EXPLICIT  
(very)

(4) Cor Christiani quid facit  
laetum, quid aerumnas fugat?  
quid? gloriosa vox tua  
aeternitatis filia!

audire cui non contigit  
nos iste non intelliget:  
quod si increpare desinit  
volente me non concinet

fidelis ore callido  
carmen fovebat arduum:  
juxta canente tympano  
bene et sonante cymbalo.

Verbum renuntias enim,  
et regna fulgurantia  
mortalibus quae gaudia  
severa castitas parat.

Amore mortis ebrii  
vitam geremus arduam

planctum nec intermittimus  
audire nocturni maris

nec auscultare mittimus  
planctum tenebrosi maris  
qua solis ardor aequora  
primo

[*Unfinished*]

(5) Our lives are sunder'd as the spheres  
are parted by eternal scheme  
yours warmth  
mine but the solitary dream

yet but your treachery laid waste  
the heaven of my long desire  
dismantled by the lightning's haste  
and charr'd by passion's nether fire

No vengeance on your flushing head  
shall light from me in this  
but when you lie amongst the dead  
then strikes the hour of my

[*Unfinished*]

(6) When either side your narrow bed  
waking you feel, and on your face  
pressing, and stretched beneath your head  
the horror of unlitten space,

then will I steal to you and low  
upon your heart-strings for a lute  
sing you the secret songs I know  
the songs that in this world are mute

Strange songs and  
where Death is wed to Memory  
the hollow fall of centuries  
their sole eternal harmony

[*Unfinished*]

- (7) The empires band against my peace  
the empires' heart of lust that war  
in Albion should never cease  
spits venom on me from afar

My peace rebukes their bloody thirst  
my silence awes their subject land  
with Hohenzollern the accurst  
see recreant McKinley stand.

They took the naked woman's flesh  
shaped only for Jerusalem  
and bound it blind within a mesh  
of silk and linen, gold and gem

If on the outer works of sleep  
rages the gnome or flies the elf  
far in the else unvisited keep  
I lock the door upon myself

- (8) She listens by the sources  
where olden quiet lies  
unto the silent forces  
where the bound depths are wise.

They tell her of their knowing—  
And knows she what they tell?  
the lithe ways of her going  
dumbly declare it well.

We deem her child whose bliss is  
to weave a winsome wile:  
we give her tears and kisses—  
O, strange, that she should smile!

(9) SIMPLE LITTLE SYMBOL

*(After the manner of M. Maeterlinck)*

They stole the children in their sleep  
they locked the maiden in the keep  
and sold the prince to citizens

They set him in the filthy street  
they drew the lines about his feet

In dreams he heard the princess weep  
he burst the magic of his feet  
And left behind the city's dens

By day and night she calls to me  
the captive of the inner keep—  
What years ere I shall find the key?

(10) THE COUNTESS EVE

It is a world as Whistler paints  
in far-off chords of green and grey  
where thro' soft leaves the daylight faints  
and all life's rumours die away

and soften'd now the old grey stones  
The gardens shrinking from an eye  
scarce hint their joy in undertones  
fountains rise voiceless to the sky

Shaped by the clear light's tender stroke  
out of clear air to fade again  
half-blithe, half sad a gracious folk  
move lightly to an unheard strain

(II) VARIATION ON AN OLD THEME

II

When I defied the stars' derision  
and threw the cloak of Hamlet down  
forth stept ah not the king of vision  
with golden trumpets round him blown

nor mail'd in silver Lohengrin  
nor the lance-bearer Parsifal  
bringing deliverance from sin  
nor Axël wild and virginal

nor the nude beast in rage divine  
loos'd on the earth with morning light  
naught but a worm to writhe and twine  
and shudder 'neath the vasty night

III

Impotent to release myself  
from the weak Spirit of the age  
must I or chink my fancy's pelf  
or mock myself in futile rage

caught in the net of right and wrong  
vex my faint heart with foolish din  
without or soul to lift in song  
or courage to accept my sin

For Youth and Life are swift in flight  
Tell me dark Sibyl if I must  
drag my half-souls until the night  
thro' years that go to make me dust

O let me wither like the leaf  
that reddens on the bough;  
for dream alas! is all too brief  
and Life is but a cow

O leave me like the leaves that lie  
and moulder where they fell;  
my soul shall be, when I shall die  
a damp and mouldy smell

O tuck me in my little bed  
(I mean my little grave)  
for all I want is to be dead  
and buried in a cave.

I

The tender mystery of the dawn  
has vanish'd where the seas have run  
to greet upheav'd and far withdrawn  
    the orgulous sun  
who shakes the mist from out his hair  
and sets his eye of naked greed  
upon the virgin conquest fair  
    by him decreed

II

Conceive me if you can  
one of no julian clan  
who calls him Hamlet-kind  
    kick'd hard behind  
when pride and spirit had fail'd  
ridiculously assail'd  
and driven ass upon  
    his Rubicon

III

When the cables break  
the ship must go  
this trip you must make  
if you will or no

be roll'd or tost  
without your will  
when your stay is lost  
there's no staying still

The faces grow dim  
and the well-known quay  
then hey! for fresh whim  
and the changing sea

(14) [*Why not pull down the blind?*]

'The little fire will not warm the lonely room:  
grey dusk stares thro' the pane and the threat of rain  
lends it a baleful eye; from the pallid gloom  
and the searching damp I woo a refuge in vain.

I crouch o'er the little flame, but the room is made  
wide as the desolate world where never a lamp  
speaks of cheer, and the damp and the waste invade:  
and I know there is none that knows me in all the world.

Majestically  
trailing enormous shade and massive doom,  
and coroneted with strange ice, the hours sweep,  
with resolute tread and still deliberate breath  
unhurriedly,  
o'er the set altar of the upper deep  
unto their catafalque of marble gloom  
high-rais'd in the apparent realm of death,  
to lie  
stately in Egyptian immobility,  
eternally.

Slowly the sombre depths of thought expand,  
a blossom of the darkness, wooing  
into its heart the chill dew of the stars—

Then, suddenly,  
by iron mace of midnight smitten, start,  
dispers'd to soundless gulfs unrumorously,  
the order'd pageant of the hours apart  
and lists of time, set for the tragic play;  
and aeons, curtaining, together roll  
and open lay  
the ancient feat, eternally renew'd,  
the shaping mood,  
the single moment of the unfolding soul:—

IN THE BEGINNING of years and mortal things  
the deep was God and Nought,  
and Night as yet unmade, and all our days.

Shaking the night from its creative wings  
floats out the phantom butterfly of Thought,  
floats out the soul—

dim-vision'd Psyche in a brooding gaze  
upon lost ways  
waving vain vans towards a mystic goal—  
Whate'er the muttering heart may rede of dread,  
O Night, in thy vast continent,  
not knowing the gladness of thy veil'd consent,  
thy deep is as a bosom, offering home  
to futile spirits that roam  
in the winds that blow beyond the bounds of lowly dear  
content.

SILENCE expects the event:  
No whisper alert in the whole void is heard;  
No starry word  
jewels the pall that drapes a nuptial bed,  
the wings that fold a soul with mystery wed—

Only the eyes of Death, each livid moon  
a ghastly symbol of our dream-dissent,  
which Life compels its winged flower to wear  
beneath the glaring mockery of noon—

As lightning, but without the lightning's flare  
or thunder's clang,  
as Death itself or Heart-of-Life laid bare,  
one nuptial pang—

THEN, sketch'd in stars that struggle alive to space  
agonizing in dumb birth  
before the stony gaze of the helpless face—

O chords of the pain'd earths  
throbbing with the world's dearth!  
Sketch'd only, O never attaining in all time  
the point of peace sublime,  
that tells its diamond glory and world defied,  
beginning still, deferr'd  
until this moment takes the eternal tide—  
**THE WORD.**

## I

Not long now shalt thou thirst!  
O parched heart!  
a promise is in the air,  
a breath from unknown mouths hath blown upon me,  
the great coolness comes. . .

My sun stood hot above me in the noon-tide:  
my greeting, ye that come,  
ye sudden breezes,  
cool spirits of the afternoon!

The air moves purely, strangely.  
Does not the night with sidelong tempting look  
glance towards me?  
Stay steadfast, my stout heart!  
nor question: why?

## II

Day of my life!  
The sun is sinking.  
Already stands the smooth wave  
all made golden.  
The rock breathes warmth:  
is it that happiness  
here held its noon-tide slumber?  
up from the brown abyss  
in greenish lights its playful presence glances.

Day of my life!  
the evening comes!  
Now glows thine eye  
    half-agonizing,  
and tear-drops of thy dew  
    are now forth-oozing,  
now silently is spread across white seas  
    the purple of thy love,  
thy last and lingering beatitude.

### III

Blitheness, thou golden one, come!  
thou, most secret  
sweetest fore-taste of death!  
    Ran I too fast on my road?  
Now only, when the foot is weary,  
    hath thy glance found me  
    thy *happiness* found me.

Round me the playing of waves.  
    All that was burdensome  
is sunk in azure oblivion,—  
idly stands now my boat.  
Storm and voyage—O how is it all forgotten!  
    Hope and desire are drown'd,  
    soul and sea lie smooth.

*Sevenfold* loneliness!  
    Ne'er did I feel  
sweet certitude nearer to me,  
warmer the glance of the sun.  
—Does the ice of my summits yet glow?  
    Silverly, lightly, a fish,  
    my boat swims away.

So to die,  
as him I once saw die,  
the friend, who cast the lightnings of his eye  
god-like into the darkness of my youth:

—with deep courageous soul,  
a dancer in the battle—,  
blithest among all warriors,  
gloomiest of all conquerors,  
standing with Fate's own foot on his own fate,  
hard, thinking before and after—:

trembling, *for that* he conquer'd,  
exulting, for that in death alone he conquer'd:

commanding, as he died,  
—and his command was, that we should *destroy* . . .

So to die,  
as him I once saw die:  
conquering, *destroying* . . . .

O is the light at heaven's hest  
 shed or from earth exhaled on high  
 or from the sea a fainting breast  
 heaved to the bridal kiss of sky?

A wondrous heart of opal holds  
 in clear suspense some subtle dew  
 and stills the crystal whites and golds  
 whose flaws would hem the limpid view

No tide stirs on the pale sea  
 no word thrills in the pensive place  
 lark-like the gaze wings wide and free  
 to pierce the viewless wall of space

In shyest colour on each hand

the light condenses

And we

with swiftness in our resting feet

and in our veins the light is sweet

and fills the flesh come past hard ways  
 to the far strand in space withdrawn  
 and far beyond night's broken blaze  
 beneath an ever-breaking dawn

- (19) In algebra, if algebra be ours,  
 $x$  &  $x^2$  can ne'er be equal powers,  
unless  $x = 1$ , or none at all.

It is the little error in the sum,  
that by and by will make the answer come  
to something queer, or else not come at all.

The little error in the easy sum,  
the little slit across the kettle-drum  
that makes the instrument not play at all.

It is not worth correcting: let it go:  
but shall I? answer, Prudence, answer no,  
and bid me do it right or not at all.

(20) My heart was sick with woes unsung  
the mortal passion of the west  
flamed up thro' all my deeps and flung  
death's purple pride around my breast

Divine I rode upon my madness  
when scarce beheld a wayside leaf  
straight hurl'd my heart to gulfs of sadness  
older than any mortal grief

O what dread thing in us await  
to make our inmost striving vain  
thus in the trifles of our fate  
seeks a tremendous joy or pain

and by what dark magician thrown  
into the fading sun or leaf  
a life more  
thus robs us of our dearest grief

or our most lonely joy to pour  
thro' the hid valleys of our soul  
an ancient being from

O that dread life within our life  
and sunk beneath our deepest dream  
what dwells there peace  
what dim sea what eternal stream

what old accumulated night  
or a night of diviner stars  
in that                    whereo'er our sight  
bends anguish'd towards what avatars

Dark power lurking in my life  
be thou my glory or my shame  
come thou with flowers or with the knife  
O smite my life to subtle flame

[*Unfinished*]

## FUNERAL TOAST

O emblem of our hap whom fate design'd!

Think not that towards some magic hope divined  
 In the dim corridor distraught I hold  
 Wreath'd with a monster's suffering in gold  
 My empty cup, libation of white fear!  
 Nor deem me answer'd if thy shade appear,  
 Whom in a place of porphyry I hears'd  
 And crush'd the torch-flame piously revers'd  
 Where the dense gates with iron clangor daunt.  
 We know, whom this our festival, to chaunt  
 Simply the poet's absence, chose, not fond,  
 That all of thee lies there pavilion'd:  
 Save that the flame of art, thy tended trust  
 Unto the base and common hour of dust,  
 Now thro' this pane the west is proud to imblaze  
 Is mingled with the passing godhead's rays.

Magnificent, in lone totality,  
 Exhaled as thine, their pride were plain a lie,  
 Yon haggard crowd's! by its own din betray'd  
 Dim wretchedness that death will thin to shade.  
 But, the walls' blankness thro' their draping clear,  
 I scorn'd the lucid horror of a tear  
 Did one of these that pass unvocal, proud  
 Of blind immurement in a wandering shroud,  
 Unanguish'd by my sacred verse, assume  
 The hero-maid that fronts his after doom.  
 Hark, in the gathering mirk vindictive, pour'd  
 On eager wind of words that he ignored  
 The void to him that was a man of old  
 Roars like some fear o' the dark: "Tell, if thou hold  
 Remembrance of horizons, what is Earth?"  
 Then rings from hall to hall of space its mirth  
 Echoing the dwindling cry: "I cannot tell!"

But he, our Master, with clear gaze could quell  
Along his path the troubled Eden-lures  
Whose swooning thrill in his sole voice conjures,  
Mysterious named, the Lily and the Rose.  
Shall nought of him be left that haunts our shows?  
All ye, forget that rude and dark belief.  
No ghost of genius lingers, begging grief.  
I, heedful of your pious care, would see  
Surviving him, that yestern tranquilly  
Evanish'd in that sacerdotal fire  
The gardens of our tarrying-place inspire,  
A sacramental stir upon the air  
Of words, rapt purple and great chalice bare  
Which the pellucid gaze dispers'd in shower  
Of diamond yet on each unfading flower  
High-isolates amid the dying ray!  
For there, in sooth, all our true boskets stay  
And each true poet, humble, with wide-flung arm  
Forbids them when the rash dream threatens harm:  
That on the morning of his great repose  
When ancient death bids him like Gautier close  
Eternally the sacred eyes nor sing  
Some vista's term may tributary bring  
The sepulchre seal'd fast on mortal blight,  
Tenacious silence built, and massive night.

(22) The vampire-witch of marshes, gorged with blood,  
stirs from the slime a million mouths to drain  
limpidity of spirit—springs that fain  
would mirror her in beauty, loving, nude.

Or in the stinging ardour of the wood  
the coils her womb endow'd with tortuous brain  
mimic the vine's embracing, to detain  
who presses towards his realm of solitude.

O new Odysseus, almost Tiresias,  
for you she bade forbearance—not that (as  
blown Boanerges saith) a beefy song

alone stills her inflicted ravening—  
but you that tramp and I that tarry long,  
brooding, are one beneath her sheltering wing.

(23) Beneath the midnight's low'ring murk  
a sleepy rhymer tramped and curst  
from Redfern O the weary work  
and up the hill of Darlinghurst

and shadowless beneath no star  
his brain mechanic whirl'd this thought  
O had I found in some bazaar  
what he who sold his shadow bought

but that my pain be not unshared  
upon O'Reilly be this curse  
who in his climbing well hath fared  
to loose this tightened knot of verse.

## MIDDLE PERIOD

Nos (24)—(30)

### (24) ERICLES' VAIN, A TYRANT'S VAIN

“Or call up him, that left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold.”

By God alive  
Will I down dive,  
And rend and rive  
    With thunder-fit  
The howling hive  
Where Furies thrive,  
And strongly strive  
    To make all split:

The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
    Of prison gates,  
And Phibus' car  
Shall shine from far  
And make or mar  
    The foolish fates;

And Pluto fell  
Shall huddle hell  
In womby well  
    Of niddering night,  
What time I flog  
The dingy dog  
Of Acheron's bog  
    With main and might.

For thew shall throw  
His grisly jaw  
And mangy maw  
That niggard note  
Henceforth shall greet  
His shivering meat  
Convoyed full fleet  
In Charon's boat.

Εἰ τιν' ἐπιχθονίων χρῆν μὲν τραφέντ' ἐν  
παντοδαπαῖς ἀρεταῖς  
Μοισᾶν θ' ἀπαλαῖς βοτάναις ἐσλοῖς ὅπο  
τερπνᾶι νεότατος ἐν ὥραι προσπελα-  
σθέντ' ἀγλαίαις ἀταλαῖς  
ὕμων χάριν σπένδειν γλυκεῖαν μὴ κακὰν  
τιμὰν ἐπ' ἀποιχομένοις εὐεργέταις  
ἀμφαδὸν δείξαντ' ἀφ' οἴων ἐξέβλαστεν·

τῶι καὶ ἐγὼ σέ, πάτερ, ψυχᾶι τὸ θεῖόν  
μοι καταθέντα ποτέ<sup>1</sup>  
θρηνεῖν ἐθέλων ὑπὲρ ὥραν αἴρομαι  
μὴ δὴ δακρύων ἔτι λοιβάν προφρόνως  
αἶνον δὲ ταφαῖς ἐρατὸν  
κρατῆρος ἀφνειᾶν ἀοιδᾶν ἐκχέαντ-  
α ξυνὰ φιλοφροσυνᾶν εὐηράτων  
τᾶν πάρος μναμεῖα θέσθαι καλλίνικα

εὐσεβής, θαητὸν εἶδος  
καὶ φρέν' ἀκοινοτέραν  
ἥπιον τ' ἀρχῆς τρόπον ἀμμι πιφαύσκων  
ἐξ ὁσίων ἡθέων,  
οὐ θάνατος σὲ δαμᾶι·  
μνήμην τε γάρ ἐγκατέλειψας φιλτάταν  
στήθεσιν ἡθέων,  
ἔργοις δ' ἐνίκησας τ' ἀρεταῖς τε τεαῖς  
τὸν βροτῶν πάγκοινον αἰπὺν δέκτορ' "Αἰδαν.

(26) Time shall bring thee nought of truth  
—pearl of peace and sea of war!—  
Save what the shy heart of youth  
dimly dreams and fevers for:

Look not life will show thee ruth  
—Gold of dream and steel of war!—  
Simple sooth  
Sings the monitor—

Heart and love and dreams of youth  
won and will'd worth fighting for,  
gold of dream and pearl of truth  
shrine their peace in shining war  
still'd to winsome ruth.

The winter dusk came fast: 'twixt home and home  
I hastened, and the wistful sickle waned.  
Within my heart the evening ceas'd to roam,  
her guestship deign'd;  
and fret, a while, forwent its sorry feast.  
Behind the stubborn foreland's crouching nape  
with the white road I climb,  
and issuing where from cape to jutted cape  
the windycombe  
forbade the huddling dunes their wan escape,  
I stood and look'd, and there was no more sea:  
but, down the sullen East,  
the tatter'd streamers of the galaxy  
went out above a brume, and the stars ceas'd  
sparse in the thickening air that, quickening still  
world-deep, avail'd to fill  
the shapeless realm of emptiness outroll'd  
beyond the apparent edges of the world,  
and, far below me, hurl'd  
on the dream-stricken ramparts of our fold  
a soundless and inexplicable foam,  
rimming with phantom white  
that nether eve of void unbeacon'd damp.  
But sudden, round the cape, a steady lamp:  
there moved, with courage and cheer, upon the night,  
man's risk'd and wandering home.

(28) TO RANDOLPH HUGHES

LEAVING AUSTRALIA

Εύχηται μὲν τὸ πρῶτον ἔθηκ' εὔπλοιαν ίόντι,  
εἶτα παρ' οὐρανίων εύτυχίην καθαράν,  
Μουσῶν καὶ τὸ χάρισμα μένειν ἔτι σύμφυτον ὑμῖν  
Ἐλλάδος, ἀσκοῦσιν μὴ τὸ λαθησίφιλον.

---

'Ανδρὶ φίλωι τόδ' ἔδωκε φίλος καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῶι.

---

(29) REFLECTIONS OF A RETIRED SYMBOLIST POET 1916

I dwelt with my unpublished screed  
Among the untrodden ways  
A bard whom there were few to read  
And fewer still to praise.

A fungus by a mossy oak  
Deep hidden in the grass;  
Clear as a star, when turpid smoke  
Obscures the optic glass.

Remote I lived, and few could know  
If e'er I wrote or how;  
But William made his war, and oh!  
I'm in the papers now.

(30) God is with Roland, wheresoe'er he lies;  
and Roland lies so deep  
that not his own horn's blast might breach his sleep;  
and Durlindana swims the ensanguin'd wave  
on Michael's day alone, while years shall come;  
and Roland ever dies  
that Day in Roncisvalle, and none to save,  
for Christendom forgets its high emprise;  
and Islam on the Holy Wisdom's dome  
still holds its crescent in the usurped place,  
and puny voices dare to hymn God's grace  
and bless His holy work;  
God is with Roland, and we have the Turk.

FROM 1923 TO 1932

Nos (31)—(37)

(31) IT IS SO LONG AGO!

It is so long ago!  
How shall the man I now am know  
the man I was before you came?

I have forgot his name  
It was so long ago—  
How shall I know?

It is so long ago  
the time when life was faint and low  
the time that was not love you came,  
And call'd me by my name:  
It is so long ago—  
A month or so!

*February 1923*

If questioning could make us wise  
no eyes would ever gaze in eyes;  
if all our tale were told in speech  
no mouths would wander each to each.

Were spirits free from mortal mesh  
and love not bound in hearts of flesh  
no aching breasts would yearn to meet  
and find their ecstasy complete.

For who is there that lives and knows  
the secret powers by which he grows?  
Were knowledge all, what were our need  
to thrill and faint and sweetly bleed?

Then seek not, sweet, the *If* and *Why*  
I love you now until I die:  
For I must love because I live  
And life in me is what you give.

*15th February 1923*

*Vante l'ore et li raim crollent:  
ki s'antraiment soweif dorment.*

XII Century Refrain.

*Storm blows, and branches strain:  
Sweet sleep lovers twain.*

Quiet and watchful, in the bright  
soft dark of plenilunar night,  
pale in its radiance, they stand  
about our heads, on either hand;  
or darker, blurr'd, yet quiet still  
when from their grateful leaves they spill  
the tinkle of the tender rain;  
or heaving huge, when the hard strain  
and grapple of the clutching wind  
sets the great boughs to creak and grind:  
so, on our chamber-walls, the trees  
make shadows for our tapestries—  
save when, more sweet, our fire, burn'd low  
by winter midnight, keeps a glow  
of watchful kindness thro' the room,  
or, spurting, sets the quiet gloom  
to dance and flicker at its will—  
but let them play, and we lie still.

*Storm blows, and branches strain:  
Sweet sleep lovers twain.*

The last God bless you said, the last  
soft touch exchanged, and you sleep fast:  
So fast you sleep, I scarce can hear  
your breathing presence, tho' so near  
I wait my while and brood above  
this little mystery of love

that brought us twain, who wander'd wide,  
at last obedient, side by side:  
and while I wait and watch I know  
that all that enginery of woe,  
men call their world, a while must cease  
to leave our angel guard our peace,  
and all that hate and wish us harm  
must slumber too, and no alarm  
these nine hours yet can penetrate  
our quiet. So let foolish hate  
sleep out its time: the night is ours  
to drain glad morning thro' its hours:  
the night is ours, the night is love  
and folds us in her wings, the dove.

*Storm blows, and branches strain:  
Sweet sleep lovers twain.*

High lords, that on the great assize  
temper the doom to mortal eyes,  
to mortal eye and nerve and brain—  
that yearn to spare the burning pain  
our mortal millions yet must know,  
for he shall visit, arm'd with throe,  
that god of terrible aspect;  
O strong to pity and protect  
who cry you from the bitter vale  
where love and hope and that one grail  
Love shows us all (not this alone)  
are lost and dimm'd and stumble on  
in wretchedness because they miss  
each other, but their woe is bliss;  
yet that have heard so oft of old,  
have heard, and yearn'd above your fold,  
that heard me too, so long time past,  
this is the prayer I make at last:

O Powers of Sleep and Dream, if now  
ye find me tardy in my vow,  
forgive: it is her blessed grace  
as you too know, and this her place  
where sleep falls light and lingers sweet  
and dream can bring me nought to greet  
with gladness such as that her eyes  
bring mine with morning's glad surprise.

*Storm blows, and branches strain:  
Sweet sleep lovers twain.*

(34) OH, THAT 'TWERE POSSIBLE!

And could it be, past utter harms  
and all this time of pain  
that I should feel your tender arms  
about my neck again,

and you should say Forgive me, Chris,  
that I have stay'd away  
and put your dear face up to kiss  
and smile the ancient way

—oh, well is me it may not be:  
for all its mortal ache  
this heart well knows its bounden throes—  
but then 'twould surely break.

*October 1925*

- (35) You, the one woman that could have me all  
because you would, because it multiplied,  
all that I was and did, your joy and pride  
to have and hold me; you, Love's gladsome thrall  
and hence exactress, that you must forestall  
nor yet remit to all the world beside  
love of that lover whom your love defied  
to rate himself less than itself should call:

Death, that is dire to all, most dreadful here  
to you the smitten and this stricken man  
you made and call'd your own, let him have done  
that thing he can, the one, no more to fear,  
since late or soon himself undoes, nor can  
that thing you made, the only, be undone.

*November 1925*

(36) If fairy tales were true  
and all the world were mine  
there would be nought so fine  
as you

If all the world were mine  
I'd fling it all away  
and go my gallant way  
with wine

and even if God were mine  
I'd let Him go his way  
as long as I could stray  
on Mine.

(37) A JINGLE OR DROWSY CHIME

I am so deep in day  
the antient woe may sleep  
and not a cark or care can creep  
where I am sunk in day  
So sunk and drown'd in day  
the antient woe may sleep  
nor hint of harm nor hate may seep  
where I am lost in day  
And yet 'tis good to know  
tho' I be lost in day  
the antient woe may wake and keep  
its watch so far away.



## NOTES

Abbreviations in the following notes:

R.G.H.—Professor R. G. Howarth.

J. J. Q.—The late J. J. Quinn.

A.R.C.—A. R. Chisholm.

D.O.R.—Dowell O'Reilly.

FL. 1  
FL. 2  
FL. 3 } For explanation see Appendix A.



## THE BURDEN OF TYRE

THE text used is that of holograph No. 2, that is the copy made by Brennan for J. J. Quinn (No. 1, used in Mr Chaplin's edition, was made for Brereton).

No. 2 is reproduced exactly, except that in stanza 2, line 3 of "Ere quite the westward shadow fade" the ms. reading, "the air that slumbering smiles, divine," is replaced by that given in *Art in Australia*, June 1924; for the latter expresses Brennan's latest intention.

Only two holographs were made by Brennan, though twelve have been ascribed to him. True, there were 12 copies in the 1903 "edition", but 10 of them were written out by other people—one at least by J.J.Q. After the text Brennan wrote in No. 2: "Twelve copies were made in this form (two being bound) in books prepared by J. Le Gay Brereton. This is number two, written June 12-14, 1903, and belongs to John J. Quinn." Just above this he wrote (almost as in No. 1): "These pieces were conceived and, in the main, written between September 1900 and May 1901; the exception being number xiii which was composed recently. The revision was completed on Monday the eight of June, 1903." (In No. 1, instead of "revision" he wrote: "revision and copying".)

The phrases and quotations used by Brennan as epigraphs for some of these fifteen poems have been italicized in the present edition, so that they may stand out more clearly from the text.

Among the J.J.Q. papers are some notes by J.J.Q. on *The Burden of Tyre*. "The quotation from S. Dionysius Areopagita is similar to the reading of Deut. XXXII, 8 in the Vatican Septuagint." Quinn quotes the relevant passage in Greek, from the *Veterum Testamentum Graecum* edited by Jager, Paris, 1839; adding that Jager translates it thus: "*Quando dividebat Altissimus gentes . . . constituit terminos gentium secundum numerum angelorum Dei.*" (The literal translation of Brennan's epigraph is: "The Most High established the boundaries of nations according to the number of God's angels." The Vulgate, Quinn points out, has "*juxta numerum filiorum Israel*").

Quinn's notes on the other epigraphs are as follows:

*Eternity is in love . . . Blake, Proverbs of Hell, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

*By war and stratagem . . . Id. Jerusalem, I, 9.*

*The Will must not be bended . . . Ib. II, 44.*

Three of the fifteen poems were published before Mr Chaplin's edition (1953) of the whole, namely: "Ere quite the westward shadow fade" (*Arts*

*Journal*, University of Sydney, Michaelmas Term, 1919; reprinted in *Art in Australia*, June 1924); “Night: and I lean where the sea sings” (*Art in Australia*, February 1923); and the Epilogue (*Southerly*, Number 4 of 1949).

In FL. 2 (see Appendix A), which is dated 19th February 1896 (but that is only the date on which Brennan started using it), there are several early drafts of poems belonging to the *Burden*. There is also a characteristically neat “definitive” version of poems I-X, with part of XI. No epigraphs are given in this version.

Below are given the most substantial variants found in these drafts (referred to as D) and in this “definitive” version (V).

### I. Prologue

In D, stanza 4 has been inadvertently omitted, and Brennan has inserted the first line in red ink, to remind himself of the omission; stanza 6 is similarly omitted, and the omission noted.

- Line 7: “for him the Sabbath-goal unmet” (D)  
20: “in bubble-mirages of birth” (V)  
21-4: “and that first thought which was our doom  
baffles us, broken into gleams  
that flit upon the . . . .” (D)  
28: “from senseless lumps conflicting whirl’d” (D)  
34: “caitiff” for “paynim” (V)

Beneath the draft of this piece Brennan has written:

“Time is no lord: we are each the lord  
or thrall of a world his own, unless  
he stupid . . . .”

### II. “They said, For us the deeps were stirr’d” No epigraph in D or V.

- Line 4: “whom all the sorrowing aeons woo’d” (D)  
17-20: “or let them gulf us! when they wake  
they wake for us: all death is vain  
new cycles travail for our sake  
and his, the god’s whom we maintain” (D)

### III. “The tyrant of the days and years”

- Line 6: “of one life’s Sabbath peace and joy (D)  
of the one life’s Sabbath peace and joy” (V)

IV. "Beyond the deeps what silence broke?"

Line 15: "belch forth their life and undivine" (D and V)

In FL. 2 there is a draft crossed out with a line, followed by a second draft.  
No epigraph in either.

V. "It is the coming of the night"

Lines 5-12: "Pale wretches, nearer to their grave  
by yet a day of life they gave  
to strive against cold hunger's dread  
that they might die at last in bed

Would you not think they spent this eve,  
what brief respite their toil may leave,  
in dreams that soar beyond the night  
and cheer the heart to front the light?" (first D)

13: "Look now, each twinkling window-fire" (first D)

17-20: "close worlds of love and peace that burn  
warmer, because from each great urn  
they know their weakling fire is nurs'd  
and dare the night to wreak the worst" (first D)

23: "of God: behold our kingdom come" (second D)

22-3: "all that would face one might are cowed  
soon shall our earthly kingdom come" (first D)

VI. "They hunger? give them men to slay"

Line 6: "(and trophies too) where damps intrude" (D)  
"(and trophies best) where damps intrude" (V)

VIII. "Because ye sicken of thought"

All the following variants are from the draft, which has no epigraph:

Line 11: "an ecstasy of beauty and life" (with our text in margin)

14: "number'd, that better all might chime"

19-20: blank.

IX. "Let them devour and be devoured"

The rough draft is dated 8-9th September 1900 and has no epigraph. It has, in its final form, only one substantial variant, in line 22: "dewy" for "orient". The stanza in which this occurs (lines 21-4) is written immediately after stanza 3.

X. "Ere quite the westward shadow fade"

Line 7: "the cup of air with golden wine" (D)  
"the cup of air in golden wine" (V)

## XI. "Why are these streets afare?"

On a page of FL. 2 where Brennan has sketched out a plan for *The Burden of Tyre*, with headings or first lines for the various poems, one first line is quoted as "Your festal loops and lines of light". Does this indicate another (lost) version of the passage we are now considering?

At the top of the draft of this poem, there is a quatrain:

"Save when thy power is of the soul  
bend not the will—nor war nor peace  
only be thou thyself that goal  
wherein the wars of time shall cease."

Brennan seems to have intended to use this as an epigraph. Having crossed it out, he has written in the margin: "By war and stratagem to win the labour of the husbandman", which subsequently became the epigraph not of this piece, but of "It is the coming of the night". He has also jotted down two other possible epigraphs: "They mock me now the words I chose" and "... as thou hast lov'd me". The latter became the epigraph of "Why are these streets afare?". In Quinn's copy there is "loved" for "lov'd"; and in the Chaplin edition "love'd", an apparent misprint.

## XII. "Night: and I lean where the sea sings"

The draft in FL. 2 is dated 24th March 1900. No title or epigraph.

The "definitive" version stops at line 13. The next draft in FL. 2 is:

## XIV. "When all the ways the worlds have trod"

The draft has an epigraph: "God is the anguish of man", which was not retained in the 1903 "edition".

Lines 9-12: written, after several earlier attempts, with different ink and a finer nib, in very small characters; the only variant being, in line 12, "upmost" for "dayward".

18: question mark instead of end-colon.

## XV. "O life, O radiance, love, delight" (Epilogue)

Draft only; the most important variants being:

Line 2: a first attempt (or alternative?): "O rosy bride and valley of bliss"; then the 1903 version written in top right corner of the page.

7: "Lay cool hands" (alternative: "breathe freshness") "on our throbbing soul"

14: "but thou didst shine unalter'd, free" (with 1903 version as an alternative)

32: "for thou and these are hidden kin" (with "subtle" as an alternative for "hidden")

## POEMS 1913

THE text given here follows exactly that of the original edition published in 1914, except in the following respects:

- (a) A few misprints and omissions have been rectified, as indicated below in the notes on individual poems.
- (b) The table of contents prepared by Brennan has been incorporated in the general table at the beginning of this volume (discrepancies in Brennan's table are discussed in the notes).
- (c) The ordinal numbers that Brennan assigned to the various poems were shown only in his table. For convenience they have been prefixed to the relevant texts as well.
- (d) The bibliographical notes which he placed immediately after his table have been reserved for these present notes. They are as follows:

One hundred and five pieces, printed in 1913, but only a dozen dated later than 1902: some explanation of the discrepancy is owing to the kind patience of the subscribers won by the indulgent enthusiasm of the "only begetter" of this belated edition, my friend Judge Edmunds: if no fit apology to him and them for tardiness to fulfil the promise given seven years since, it may serve other readers as a completion of the bibliography indicated in the preceding list. In 1897 appeared XXI POEMS TOWARDS THE SOURCE, 200 copies now dispersed, mainly by the author's gift: the sub-title here covers seventeen poems of the original edition (one re-written) and thirteen others, of which ten were ready before the end of 1897. The poem "*LILITH*", approached in 1897, begun in 1898, served as a focus for the grouping of certain early pieces ("*The Twilight of Disquietude*") and for the generation of others; so grew the plan of The Book of "*LILITH*", now "*THE FOREST OF NIGHT*", a plan communicated in full to friends before the beginning of the century. Eight pieces of "*THE WANDERER*" appeared in 1902. Nothing, then, seemed to prevent the early completion of a book containing at least ninety-three of these pieces. There intervened what humanity is accustomed to call, with equal vagueness in either case, "life", or the "circumstances" which it likes to imagine as "beyond its control"; *pendebant opera interrupta*: the fault was the author's. Interest came back slowly: much had to be reduced, torn down, rebuilt, much completed, much written that had not been as much as begun—and some was written as late as last June: the original plan has been carried out.

Three-fifths of this book is new to print: what has already appeared, in howsoever hidden fashion, finds due acknowledgment of favour in the table of contents. But only by names of periodicals: this page would not have discharged all its debt without mention of the name of A. G. Stephens and the hospitality which the author's work found in the "Red Page" of the *Bulletin*, under his editorship.

22. xii. 1913.

- (e) In the long "Lilith" sequence, the various poems have in the present edition been numbered, for convenience, (i), (ii), (iii), and so on.

When Brennan says, in the notes quoted above, that under the sub-title "Towards the Source" are included seventeen poems of the original 1897 edition (that is *XXI Poems*), he is not quite right. There are only sixteen, indicated by asterisks in his original table of contents. The seventeenth is in "The Twilight of Disquietude", where it takes the form of number 37 ("My heart was wandering in the sands,"). Moreover, number 3, though marked with an asterisk, is not the piece that appeared in *XXI Poems*: it merely has the same title. (See relevant note below.)

No. 2. In *XXI Poems* (1897), and in FL. 1, this piece was entitled "Trees". The FL. 1 text is written, like that of *XXI Poems*, without punctuation. Minor variants in both these early texts. The most important variant is, for line 12:

"saw thro' their far tops the distance as the sea" (FL. 1 and *XXI Poems*.)

No. 3. Marked with an asterisk in Brennan's table, as having appeared in *XXI Poems*. But the text, in both FL. 1 and in *XXI Poems*, is entirely different, and is quoted in Appendix A. There is a draft of the *Poems 1913* text in FL. 3, with many rehandlings and erasures.

No. 4. Figures both in FL. 1 and in *XXI Poems*, under the title "Funera regum". Several minor variants.

No. 5. In FL. 1 and *XXI Poems*, under the title of "Thule", with some minor variants.

No. 6. In FL. 1 and *XXI Poems* the words "*Dies dominica*" are in italics in both the lines where they occur. Variants include, in both these texts, "infinity" for "eternity" (line 13). The title in *XXI Poems* is "Sicut incensum".

No. 7. Entitled, in FL. 1 and in *XXI Poems*, "Advesperascit". The last line in both these texts is:

"since, tho' joy die, Faith's song must ever rise"

No. 8. In Brennan's table the title "Epigraph" is given.

No. 9. In FL. 1, with the title "Rain and Spleen", but not in *XXI Poems*. Several minor variants in the FL. 1 text.

No. 10. First published in the *Bulletin*, 11th July 1896, under the title "Night-piece". Republished in *XXI Poems* with the title "Cities". The title in FL. 1 is "Cities", which covers also the text of what becomes number 11 in *Poems 1913*. Under this common title, the present number 11 precedes number 10 in FL. 1. Several minor variants appear in the earlier texts.

No. 11. The word "soul" in line 25 was misprinted as "soil" in *Poems 1913*. Published in *XXI Poems*, immediately after the present number 10, with the title "Soul-sickness", which was also given to it (in pencil and with a query mark) in FL. 1. The most important variants in the earlier texts are:

- Line 9: "but that accursed lust of knowledge drove us forth"  
(FL. 1, where the present reading is substituted later in pencil.)
- 10: "we wearied of the light, we mark'd the sweet control"  
(FL. 1, with present reading substituted in pencil.)
- 27: "hard eyes of whores, salt cheeks, lips that forget to sing"  
(FL. 1, with present reading then substituted in ink.)

In line 24 the text of *XXI Poems* has the spelling "spues".

No. 12. This piece is the third of the short group beginning with "Cities" in *XXI Poems*, where it has the title "Dawn". In FL. 1 it is called "Easter" (with "Dawn" added in pencil). Lines 21-2 had originally been, in FL. 1:

"So shall we walk, glad and untortured powers  
silent at last, to hear, like souls unborn"

but they were afterwards altered to the present reading, which is practically the same as that given in *XXI Poems*.

No. 13. Published in *XXI Poems* by itself at the end of the edition, under the title "Vision," and with a different last line:

"a majesty of fulgurant peace"

It was not in FL. 1, and its curious position in *XXI Poems* suggests that it may have been written shortly before the edition went to press. This is confirmed by the date, 1897, given in *Poems 1913*.

No. 14. Entitled "Epigraph" in Brennan's table.

No. 15. Already in the FL. 1 texts without title. (There is, in the table at the end of this ms., a title, "Imogen", for the piece that should have immediately preceded this one, but no text corresponding to the title.) Number 15 was first published in *An Anthology of Australian Verse*, edited by Bertram Stevens, in 1907, with the title "Poppies".

In the FL. 1 version there are some substantial variants:

Line 20: “waking” for “love-birth”, subsequently altered to latter form.

Final stanza:

“Fuller flowers have we met,  
happiness our only task  
still I ask  
—Dear, can the dear old days forget.”

This is afterwards altered to:

“Fuller blooms our gaze has met,  
that in silent rapture bask”

with the other two lines left intact, except that “old” is crossed out with a pencil. In pencil also, Brennan adds this note: “Too ultra-‘metaphysical’ for Dr Johnson—‘How can it be said of a day that it forgets? A day is more frequently itself consigned to oblivion’.”

No. 16. In FL. 1, with the title “Mists”, in pencil. Same title in *XXI Poems*, where the only variants are in punctuation.

No. 17. Title in *XXI Poems* is “Seas”, which is also written (in pencil) in the table at the end of FL. 1. The piece was published in the *Bulletin*, 8th August 1896. The major variants are:

Line 6: “when memories stay the hour and the gaze is wide to behold” (FL. 1).

8: “piteous” for “pitying” (FL. 1. and *XXI Poems*).

No. 18. Title is “Source” in *XXI Poems*, and “The Source” (but only in pencil) in FL. 1. In line 7, “cities” was at first “gutters” in FL. 1, then altered in pencil. The texts of *XXI Poems* and *Poems 1913* are practically identical.

No. 19. In *XXI Poems* and FL. 1 the piece has a title “Blue-flower”. It is wrongly placed in *Poems 1913*, as if it were number 23. Brennan’s table gives it as number 19.

No. 20. Wrongly placed, as if it were number 24, in *Poems 1913*; the table makes it number 20. The title in *XXI Poems* and in FL. 1 is “Romance”.

No. 21. The wrong placing of this in *Poems 1913* has been altered to conform with Brennan’s table. Published in the *Australian Magazine*, 30th May 1899, with the title “Rondel”.

No. 22. Though Brennan gives the date of composition as 1896, there is no draft in FL. 1. The first line, however, is written in pencil in FL. 3, in the top corner of a page where he has written a draft of number 30. Number 22 was wrongly placed in *Poems 1913*.

No. 23. Wrongly placed where number 19 should have been in *Poems 1913*.

No. 24. Wrongly placed in *Poems 1913*, as if it were number 20. First published in the *Australian Magazine*, 6th July 1899, with second and third stanzas interverted. A draft in FL. 2 has this substantial variant:

Line 8: "'neath diamond skies dew-glistening"

No. 25. Wrongly placed in *Poems 1913*. Published in the *Bulletin*, 10th December 1898, with the title "Spring-tides lost".

No. 26. Wrongly placed, as if it were number 22.

No. 27. With this piece, the disturbed order of several poems mentioned above is restored to normal. The upsetting was possibly the fault of the binder. Wherever this disorder appears farther on in *Poems 1913*, Brennan's table has been used for renumbering.

Number 27 first appeared in *XXI Poems* (1897) with the title "The loneliest Hour". The 1897 text has "flower" for "rose" in line 16, and "each other seeking hands" in line 34. Note that line 32 curiously anticipates the main theme of number 71.

No. 28. In texts prepared for A. G. Stephens by Brennan, about 1911, for a new edition of *XXI Poems*, there were the following additional lines (as copied, from an original now lost, by J.J.Q.):

"Suddenly come, no blithe fore-runner sent,  
once more the Summer's blaze!  
behind the enchanted lilac-and-golden haze  
softness and light and scent  
in the flower-heart of marriage softly blent—  
whose happy wayward breath hath left a drift  
high piled, and the wilfully-sprinkled single star  
of petals at hide-and-peep in the gemlike sheen  
of the translucent green,  
the draperies and brave banners high uplift  
by wizard hands before the gay advance  
of ever-young Romance  
flaunt, and swift rounded shapes—or is't a dream  
against the inner gleam  
diffused, that holds me yet half-bound in winter-trance,  
wooingly, winsomely waging a delicate war?  
—the shapes alluringly shift  
beckon and whisper at me that lag behind  
the season's natural change, that only  
joy in the spring that is a twelve-month dead:

as some poor painter-monk of old time, lonely,  
from the chimerically enamelled scroll  
lifting a patient head  
and seeing beside his sill some seed-stray blown  
knew it and loved and pined  
for meadows by his foot unvisited  
his starved sense divined,  
ay, and enjoyed their clear delight more whole  
than whom their haste in pleasure's chase leaves blind  
to the shy grace they merely trampled down."

For these lines were substituted (according to J.J.Q. in a note to A.R.C.), in *Poems 1913*, lines 1-11. Brennan had appended this note for Stephens: "Sicut . . . into shape." Is this a reference to number 37, the title of which in *XXI Poems* had been "*Ero sicut deus*"?

No. 30. First published in *The Heart of the Rose* No. 3, June 1908, along with number 101. In FL. 3 is a draft with numerous variants.

No. 31. Published in *Hermes*, Jubilee Number, 1902. In the carefully written draft of "Lilith" in FL. 1, this piece immediately precedes the present number 68 (i), with the heading: "To the memory of Stéphane Mallarmé dead in Valvins, September MDCCCXCVIII." The only substantial variant in this early version is "loos'd" for "induced" in line 2.

No. 32. Published in the *Bulletin*, 7th September 1901, with the title "The Year of the Soul". For the section beginning "See now the time (O eve of smoky brown)", there is a large number of variants in a draft in FL. 2; but many of these have been altered subsequently to the present form.

No. 33. The title is "Epigraph" in Brennan's table.

No. 36. Published in the *Bulletin*, 17th September 1898.

No. 37. Published in *XXI Poems* (1897), with the title "*Ero sicut deus*", and the second and third stanzas in italics (except for the words "I said").

No. 39. Published in *Our Alma Mater* (Riverview), June 1898, with the title "Joy's Disappointment".

No. 42. In FL. 2 there is a fragmentary draft, with line 6 missing, and only the phrase "What shall I be?" to represent the third stanza.

No. 44. Published in the *Australian Magazine*, 30th March 1899, under the title "Birds". A draft in FL. 2 with a few variants.

No. 46. Appeared in the souvenir book published on the occasion of Greth and Fair and Press Bazaar in aid of Queen Victoria Home for Consumptives. The book, edited by the Governor, Lord Beauchamp, was published in Sydney in 1899. The poem bore no title.

No. 48. Published in the *Bulletin*, 29th March 1902, with the title “*Secreta silvarum*”.

No. 49. Published in the *Australian Magazine*, 29th April 1899, along with number 53, under common title “*Secreta silvarum*”.

No. 50. Published in *Hermes*, 15th December 1904, along with number 52, both under the title “*Secreta silvarum*”. Number 50 was probably written in 1901 or 1902, J.J.Q. believed, as Brereton’s copy was on paper similar to that used for *The Burden of Tyre*. In FL. 2 there is a carefully written draft, undated, with the title “*Secreta silvarum*”, with several variants, notably:

Line 36: “soft-gleaming greyly when the grey trunks fade”

No. 51. A draft in FL. 2 has a few variants. Published in *Hermes*, 27th April, 1905, along with number 100, under common title “*Secreta silvarum*”.

No. 52. See note on number 50.

No. 53. See note on number 49.

No. 54. Published in *Our Alma Mater*, December 1899, under title “Noon”.

No. 55. Two drafts close together in FL. 2, and a third a little farther on. Draft 3, neatly written as if definitive, is the same as in *Poems 1913*, except that between lines 8 and 9 is this line:

“in a long reverie, unafraid”

Was this dropped inadvertently in *Poems 1913*?

No. 56. A draft in FL. 2 has several variants, and this note in the margin, after line 4: “from here to foot of page one evening’s work. Thursday June 12th 1903 7-10.45 p.m.”

No. 57. A much retouched draft in FL. 2, with several of the variants altered to the *Poems 1913* reading.

No. 58. A draft in FL. 3 with some variants, including:

Line 7: “where our lone city stands, the last of all”

No. 59. Published only in *Hermes*, according to Brennan’s table, but his memory seems to have been at fault. It was published in *Our Alma Mater*, December 1906, under the title “The Old Battlefield”.

No. 60. Published in *Hermes*, Jubilee Number, 1902.

No. 61. FL. 2 has an interesting draft that helps to show the workings of Brennan's mind as he worked on this piece. But the variants and erasures are too numerous to be discussed here.

No. 62. FL. 2 has a draft with many variants. Does the first date given at the foot of the *Poems 1913* text (1896) refer to this draft?

No. 63. J.J.Q.'s ms. copy had heading or title "The assault of shadow on my soul begins" with the date 1903. A draft in FL. 3 with many variants.

No. 64. Published in *Our Alma Mater*, December 1906, with title "Leaves at the Window".

No. 65. Published in *Hermes*, December 1910, with title "An Interlude".

No. 67. A draft in FL. 2 is so scored and over-written that it is impossible to discuss it here. A note in red ink says: "Transferr'd from other book: finish'd Friday June 13 1913." Which other book?

No. 68. "Lilith", Brennan's longest poem and perhaps his greatest, must some day be republished in a critical edition, for it has been worked over by him many times, and there is a vast number of variants.

There are two clearly and carefully written early texts, each apparently intended to be definitive, in FL. 1 and FL. 3 respectively. They are almost identical, so that one wonders why Brennan gave himself the trouble to make the second copy. Their only substantial difference is that the "Finale" in FL. 1 ("Because this curse is on the dawn to yield", which becomes number 85 in *Poems 1913*) is lacking in FL. 3.

The FL. 1 text is dated, at the beginning, 1898; but after the poem preceding the above "Finale" is the date 11th February 1899. On the other hand, 16th March 1899 is marked on the fly-leaf of FL. 3, indicating that Brennan began using this manuscript book *after* the February of that year. Thus the FL. 3 text is the more recent. It is, moreover, considerably amended and has a number of marginal annotations, whereas the other text is a clean copy. The text in FL. 3 is for this reason more useful than its twin for discovering how "Lilith" grew into its present form. In both texts Brennan calls "Lilith" "A Mystery".

(i). The opening line shows that Brennan has followed the rabbinical interpretation, which derives the name "Lilith" from the Hebrew word for "night" and which makes Lilith the Demon of Night. Some modern Semitic scholars derive it from a non-Hebrew word, and interpret the name as meaning the Demon of Destruction.

(ii). Among many other variants, FL. 3 has, in the margin, "traitor" as an alternative for "lurking" (line 8).

(iv). Line 2. FL. 3 has “playground for beams that chase the timorous shade”, with (in red ink) “bride-dust”, “melting”, “pierce” and “woo” in the margin. Several other variants. Between the present lines 6 and 8 one finds:

“and that right pride they rear'd against the sun  
dissolved in sombre expectation”

(subsequently crossed out with pencil).

(ix). FL. 3 has a title at top: “The voice of man”. There are, among many other variants, two different versions of lines 45-50.

(x). For lines 61-4 there are *seven* lines in FL. 3, with some later alterations. And a vast number of other variants. Some are so substantial that they have to be given here.

Lines 33-58 (“Terrible, if he will not have me else” down to “and know his hope, the impious, vain, unmade”). In place of this section there are in the older texts two long passages, with the heading “Lilith” written in Hebrew characters. They are (we quote from FL. 3):

“I am his bride and was and shall be. Nay:  
what mate were found for him in narrow day?  
this obscure flesh that fain of earth were born  
to boast it native with the blatant morn,  
so the poor cheat its wakeful ache hath woo'd  
scatter its immanent disquietude,  
is parcel of my pain and darkling stress  
that strove to speak out of old loneliness  
my loving essence hid, with shrinking grace  
hinted, palliating the public face  
of the loud day that blames its emptiness:  
and I that virgin-mother who, deceived  
ever of equal bride-delight, conceived  
by force of mine own want this wingless word  
lyreless, a breath that hangs, a homeless bird,  
this token of my vain magnificence,  
monotonously exalted impotence.  
—O dreary essence, woeful queenlihead  
that doom bemocks with choice or not to wed  
and reign by vacant mystery divine  
or from the uneloquent prestige decline  
contaminated with the common morn  
whom yet I dower with tenderness forlorn  
changing to Eos or pale Iole  
or Procris pearly-white: since birth alone  
may guard some grace, some perfectness unshown

just issuing from the holy womb that keeps  
occult, the immarcescible form whose deeps  
cherish unshamed a sure divinity  
above all suns that but are born and die.

The sun-god is the petty lord of noon  
and foolish in the blue pavilion wreaks  
full pleasure on the garden of pure sense;  
and the white witch of the imagin'd moon  
with sinuously impalpable pretence  
sways the enamour'd wave in farthest creeks:  
the scanty stars are hung with load of fate  
and hold dominion o'er Himalayan peaks  
silvery virgin in the clear intense.

I that am wing'd beyond the zenith-cloud  
dim-glimmering to Chaldaean watchers late,  
yet faint to warm me where the lowly heat  
and humble pulse of daily living beat,  
I that uphold, and cherish unavow'd,  
the hidden ghost in man, the haunting void,  
the central horror that his crime did show  
when with unhesitating wing he enjoy'd  
my terrible consent, incestuous so  
degraded, when the brood not to be slain  
of slimy scales burst from my desecrate

[a patched and deleted line higher up gave the rhyme “hate” for this line]  
and tortured side, and round my shrinking brow  
cluster'd the terror of Medusa's curls:  
for his fixt thought about that morning whirls  
and all his dancing hours towards a grave.”

The FL. 3 text then proceeds with the passage “Lo now, beneath the watch  
of knitted boughs” (line 59 of present text).

(xii). In the older texts this has a title “Litanies”.

Nos. 69 and 70. A draft of each in FL. 2, with several variants.

No. 71. Published in *Lilley's Magazine*, 1st August 1911, with title “Stars  
at the Casement”.

No. 72. In the first line, Brennan's table gave “gems'”, but the reading  
in the *Poems 1913* text was “gems”.

No. 73. Wrongly set in *Poems 1913* as the fourth piece of the “Wisdom”  
group, whereas the table gave it as the second.

No. 74. Wrongly placed as the first "Wisdom" piece. A draft in FL. 3 has many variants.

No. 75. Wrongly placed in *Poems 1913* as second of the "Wisdom" group. Published in *Our Alma Mater*, December 1899.

No. 76. Wrongly placed as third in "Wisdom". Draft in FL. 3 with many variants and alterations.

No. 77. Draft in FL. 2 with title "Twilights of the Folk", dated 23rd, 24th February 1900. Several variants.

No. 78. A much rehandled draft in FL. 2, with title "Twilights of the Folk".

No. 79. Draft in FL. 2, with variants, including:

Line 9: "lembic" for "limbeck".

On the same page, a second version, nearer to the present text.

No. 80. In FL. 2 a draft dated 2nd August 1900, with good number of variants.

No. 81. Draft with many variants in FL. 3.

Nos. 82 and 83. Both in *Hermes*, 6th November 1902, but with the order of sequence reversed. Common title "Twilights of the Gods".

No. 84. Draft with several variants in FL. 2.

Nos. 86, 87, 88, 91, 93, 94, 98, 99. These were first published in *Hermes*, Jubilee Number, 1902, under the common title "The Wanderer". The Latin epigraph preceding them began with *Quia*, altered to *Quoniam* in *Poems 1913*. These four lines were apparently written by Brennan himself, though he attributed them to "Frater Basilius", supposed author of "*De luce abdita*" ("the guarded ray"). See notes by R.G.H. in *Southerly*, number 4 of 1949. The phrase "the guarded ray" appears in the second "Epilogue" (number 105), line 81. A letter from Brennan to Richard Pennington (see volume II of present edition) helps to elucidate the scansion of the more "irregular" *Wanderer* poems.

No. 87. Here, as in the *Hermes* text, the first line begins with "Each day". In his table Brennan wrote "Daily".

No. 88. In FL. 2 a neatly written draft is dated Easter-tide 1901. The text is as in *Poems 1913*, but the last two lines are written with a reversed slope, which was Brennan's occasional way of indicating italics.

No. 89. FL. 3 has a draft with some six variants.

No. 90. A considerably rehandled pencil draft in FL. 3.

No. 95. Published in *Lilley's Magazine*, 1st June 1911, under title "The Wanderer".

No. 96. Variants in a pencilled draft in FL. 3 include "ground" for "combes" in line 13.

No. 100. Published in *Hermes*, 27th April 1905, along with number 51 (see note on latter). A draft in FL. 3, dated January 1905, has among its variants "dusky" for the *Poems 1913* reading "dusty" (line 5). This earlier reading is restored in the present edition. A pencilled heading, "Wanderer", has been struck out by Brennan.

No. 101. Published in *The Heart of the Rose*, June 1908, along with number 30 (see note on latter).

No. 102. A pencilled draft in FL. 3 is written with so few emendations that it is probably copied from earlier drafts. As the poem is dated 1907, the "venom'd dart" of stanza 6 probably refers to Brennan's mother-in-law rather than to his wife.

No. 103. A draft with several variants in FL. 3.

No. 105. A draft in FL. 3 has so many erasures and variants that it is impossible to discuss it here.

Immediately after number 105 in *Poems 1913* was this notice:

"POEMS by C. J. Brennan  
Written 8.v. 1894—15. xii. 1913  
Title-page by Lionel Lindsay  
Printed by G. B. Philip and Son."

Then came Brennan's bibliographical notes; a list of 93 subscribers, and this final note:

"This list was closed Oct. 31 1914  
The book was published Dec. 1914."

## A CHANT OF DOOM

THE text is exactly that of the original edition, published by Angus and Robertson in 1918. The title on the cover was *The Chant of Doom*; but on the title-page (facing the reproduction of a portrait of Brennan etched by Lionel Lindsay) it was *A Chant of Doom and Other Verses*. The inner title has been retained here.

The dates and acknowledgments at the end of individual pieces were in the 1918 edition. As well as the ordinary edition there were fifty numbered copies, printed on hand-made paper, of which thirty-two were for sale.

The date of composition given for the concluding poem was 3rd-4th November. The place, not given in the original edition, was Newport.

## POEMS HITHERTO UNCOLLECTED

CLASSIFICATION of these poems was a thorny problem. Division into three different chronological groups seemed most satisfactory and has been adopted. But within each group the exact chronological order could not always be established; and in fact the order finally adopted for the early group had to be rather arbitrary in certain cases. The allocation of a serial number to each poem is the work of the editor, who has also put in such titles as are in square brackets.

(1) Published in *Our Alma Mater*, 1887, along with another Latin poem of less interest ("Petrus ad vincula"), while Brennan was still a pupil at River-view. Text by courtesy of Fr J. P. Smith, S.J.

(2) Published in *Southerly*, number 4 of 1950, as "Marine". The full title was supplied by J.J.Q. from a source which cannot now be identified (probably a ms. in his possession). The *Southerly* text here used is from a ms. in the Mitchell Library.

There are several echoings of Mallarmé's *Prose (pour des Esseintes)*: for example the form of the title; the metre (as far as it is possible for French and English metres to coincide); the use of quatrains; the four-syllable opening word "Perversity", corresponding to Mallarmé's quadrisyllabic "Hyperbole"; the adjective "lucid" attached to a flower. The title, with its special use of "prose" (in the Old French sense), was no doubt intended to indicate that these echoes were deliberate.

Brennan dated the ms. as shown in our text: "On the Equator, June 1894", that is, on his way back from Germany. Opposite the date he wrote (simultaneously or later?): "To serve as prelude to my Poems".

(3) First published by R.G.H. in *Southerly*, number 2 of 1951, in an article entitled "CHRIS BRENNAN: Reliquiae". R.G.H. had found a pocket note-book of Brennan's kept in 1895-6, containing early versions or fragments of this and other pieces. The title of this fragment was "Eucalypti". In the same article he quotes the complete text here used, "from D.O.R. papers in the Mitchell".

(4) Quoted by R.G.H. in above article, and from same source. The text in *Southerly* is in italics. To the first two lines of the last (unfinished) stanza R.G.H. appends the query: "To replace above two lines?" He also gives a translation and some notes supplied by Fr Timothy Kelly. One note is: "The metrical form of iambic tetrameters (Saturnian, based on stress not quantity) is the same as that most frequently found in the Catholic liturgy, that is, in the Missal and Breviary."

(5) and (6) Both given by R.G.H. in his "Reliquiae". He suggests "bliss" as the missing rhyme of (5); but the missing word could hardly have rhymed

with "this", which is not the last word of a line, as the scansion shows. Further, one is left wondering whether (6) is not a continuation of (5) rather than a separate piece. R.G.H. quotes also the fragments of Brennan's intended conclusion to (6):

"that you shall"  
"that which had lit the night for us"  
"and feel thro' all your pallid blood"  
"the dire infinity of desire"  
"the space that"  
"the lifeless mockery of night"

(7) Text found in J.J.Q. papers, in Quinn's handwriting. No indication of date, but the copy is in a group apparently dating from the early period; and J.J.Q. points out that D.O.R. had written at the end, in pencil, 1896. The group of poems in which J.J.Q. has included this was apparently sent to D.O.R. (though it is not in D.O.R. papers in the Mitchell Library); for after the text Brennan had written: "Here endeth the punishment of O'Reilly." At the top he had written: "Also something that looks like Blake."

(8) Text from a printed version in J.J.Q. papers, with this pencilled note: "From Australian Limited Edition, using A.G.S.[tephens]'s text which is better than either of the two in the Mitchell. Caps of the text dropped." There is a draft with variants in FL. 2.

(9) In J.J.Q. papers, with no indication of date, but obviously belonging to early group. In line 3 J.J.Q. had, when making his copy, written "citizen", here corrected to "citizens".

(10) In J.J.Q. papers, in same group as foregoing. Quinn's only note is "D.O.R. papers n[o] d[ate]." But it is *not* in the D.O.R. papers.

(11) Text in J.J.Q. papers, in Quinn's writing. The two pieces are numbered II and III. Number I is apparently the "old theme" itself, that is ideas expressed in early pieces such as (*Poems 1913*) numbers 5 (1894) and 34 (1896).

(12) In J.J.Q. papers, in Quinn's writing. Brennan had put a note (for D.O.R.? ) at the end:

"it was the rhyme that made me put  
this line about a cave  
no matter! when the cave is shut  
I can no longer rave."

The heading was "The heart's desire of a Symbolist, done out of the incomprehensible (and presumably improper) French into plain and decent English."

(13) Handwritten copy by J.J.Q., in his papers. The full heading is: "Variations of a single subject. Three facets of a Black Diamond not yet crystallized. DOGGEREL."

(14) Handwritten copy by J.J.Q. in his papers. A draft in FL. 2 is dated 9th September 1900. At the top of the text (in J.J.Q. copy): "The title and motto of this pome [sic] are: Why not pull down the blind?" Note at end, addressed to Brereton: "Will you answer the riddle—what these verses have to do with you? If you can't I won't. I don't quite like the Symonsy form."

(15) There is a fragmentary draft in FL. 1. Our text was supplied by J.J.Q. to A.R.C., but the whereabouts of ms. seems unknown. R. R. Kidston, in a letter to H. M. Green, 25th November 1944, wrote: "There is a queer piece called 'Vigil' in *Hermes*, somewhere about 1911-1915" (actually August 1916). In the ms. whence came Quinn's copy Brennan had written in parentheses after the title: "Among my ms. verses this piece bears the number 50, and the date March 1898. It was written in answer to a friend's verses, received on a certain anniversary: they ended with the line 'Floats out the phantom Butterfly of Night'. This piece, being part freak, part experiment, and not quite seriously conceived, was in advance excluded from any collection of my verses; but it seemed to certain friends, with whose judgment my liking agrees, that there are some lines here too good to be lost. Consequently they were sent in to the *Australian Magazine*, of blessed oblivion, and if it had survived its fifth number, they would have appeared there. After eighteen and a half years, *Hermes* kindly provides them with sepulture."

(16) and (17) Copies, from ms. belonging to Mr Justice Ferguson, kindly supplied by R.G.H. The heading that covers both pieces is simply *Nietzsche*. Actually, they are translations of two poems in Nietzsche's *Dionysos-Dithyramben* (1888). The original of (16) is "Die Sonne sinkt", and (17) is a translation of "Letzter Wille". Brennan's italics correspond to Nietzsche's spacing-out (the Gothic equivalent of italics); except that "battle" is not so treated, whereas in the original "Schlacht" is spaced out. It is interesting to note that Nietzsche begins his lines with a small letter (except after a full-stop), as Brennan usually does.

(18) Text from a draft in FL. 2 with several erasures and emendations, and several gaps as here indicated.

(19) Text is from a clean copy written on last page of FL. 2 and is presumably Brennan's. Alongside it he has written a short Whistler anecdote.

(20) Fragmentary, with gaps as indicated in our text; communicated by R.G.H. from ms. belonging to Mr Justice Ferguson. "Dark power lurking in my life" suggests some affinity with the "Fatum" ("Dumb Sibyl sitting at my birth") of *XXI Poems*. Just after the text Brennan has written:

"A rose smiles wan expiring languidly  
above the blood-red rim of prophesy  
and under shows more pale  
in the dead water glass'd only to fail  
still smiling to a pallid wistfulness  
its silent smile that sleeps  
where the wave reddens from the porphyry  
around a Triton's sun-gilt nakedness  
whose laughter's breath distorts his trumpet-shell"

Yeats = symbolism

Moods = the *équations sommaires* of Mallarmé

This fragment is an early sketch of a translation from Henri de Régnier which Brennan used in his article on the latter, *Bulletin*, 21st October 1899. See Volume II for the completed translation.

(21) The text is that of *Southerly*, number 4 of 1949, which was taken from the *Bulletin*, 9th September 1899. Though Brennan's other translations from French have been kept for Volume II of the present edition, this one has been kept in the verse volume for its intrinsic value: it is a singularly skilful rendering of an elusive original, and at the same time an excellent interpretation of it. The original was one of 83 tributes, in a volume published in Paris in 1873, to the memory of Théophile Gautier, who had died in October 1872. Mallarmé supposed himself to be raising his *coupé*, on which a monster was wrought in gold, to his famous confrère.

(22) The text used here was copied by J.J.Q. many years ago from a ms. now undiscoverable. There is no copy among the Brereton papers. The sonnet was dedicated thus:

"To Brereton, the vegetarian, returned from a trip on the Northern Rivers—where, as he had written to me, leeches creep beneath the sleeper's eyelids and lianas bar the way (the region being therefore that of Lilith, Mother of Mystery, Serpent-Wife, Vampire-Mother, whom yet to see in her secret beauty is the Poet's eternal task and particularly mine—*vide opus magnum publice factum*)—what time, *circa fin. Jan. 1899*, the Purple Page (*v. Brereton's poem there published ex tempore*) fell upon us both, reproaching Brereton with lack of Blood and the Self-Parodist with lack of logic—

this mystical  
SONNET"

There is, indeed, some self-parodying: compare "Lilith" (i) in *Poems 1913*. A version in the Ferguson ms., communicated by R.G.H., has several variants,

and the dedication is much shorter. Boanerges is A. G. Stephens, then editor of the "Purple" (Red) Page of the *Bulletin*.

(23) Text in J.J.Q.'s papers, in his own writing. The last four lines make the destination of the poem clear. It is followed by Brennan's note:

"Motto: Punctuation is a curse  
Spoils the chisell'd look of verse  
makes it clear to babes at nurse  
NB if the comp don't make it worse"

(24) Text: a copy made by J.J.Q. from a ms. in his collection, dated 20th June 1920; but a note in Quinn's papers says that this date refers to the final stanza only: the others were written much earlier. An apparent mistyping in line 3 of Quinn's copy ("read" for "rend") has here been corrected. The epigraph is from Milton's "*Il Penseroso*", lines 109-110, where *Cambuscan* is in italics (Oxford edition). The second stanza is from *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, i. 2. whence also comes the title: "This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling." The "left half told" of the epigraph gives a useful clue: apparently Brennan has amused himself by "completing" the declamatory fragment that Shakespeare had put into Bottom's mouth.

(25) For the background of these verses, written after the death of Fr Keating, see "Biographical Introduction". Thanks are here due to Fr J. P. Smith for supplying the text from *Our Alma Mater* (December 1913), and to Mr G. H. Gellie, Department of Classics, University of Melbourne, for preparing both this text and the text of (28) for the printer.

(26) Written in Miss E. J. Mitchell's copy of *Poems 1913*. Our text from a copy in J.J.Q.'s papers apparently received from Brereton. Brennan dated the piece, May 1915.

(27) Text is from *Hermes*, November 1915. R. R. Kidston, in a letter (already quoted) to H. M. Green, 25th November 1944, quotes a text with a few variants (in the punctuation only). He pertinently remarks that in line 2 "hasten'd" would seem more consistent than "hastened".

(28) These valedictory verses for Randolph Hughes, who was leaving for Europe, were dated 27th August 1915. The "this" of the separate hexameter at the end refers to the volume of the works of Aristophanes (a parting gift) in which the lines were inscribed. Brennan placed on the same level as the other letters the iota which are normally subscript.

(29) Text from a copy, marked "copy from Leon Gellert" (editor of *The Home*), but in J.J.Q.'s writing, in the latter's papers. It is interesting to see that Brennan did not view his *A Chant of Doom* without a touch of humour.

(30) Published in St John's College (University of Sydney) Magazine, 1922 (copy supplied by Mr Bryan O'Sullivan, per J.J.Q.). The heading was "Lines

(on reading in the *S. M. H.* how Christian Temperance Women had thanked God for hearing their prayers for ‘a peaceful settlement in the East’). Text was followed by this note (in brackets): “Poetry being poetry, I have taken the date of the battle—St Michael’s Day, May 1806—from the *Morgante* XXVII, 112, as likewise the legend of Durendal cast into the sea, *ibid.* XXVII, 37. C.J.B.”

(31) The first of the poems inspired by Vie; written in her copy of *Poems 1913*, and dated by Brennan 15th February 1923.

(32) Written in Vie’s copy of *Poems 1913*, where Brennan dated it 15th February 1923.

(33) This poem presents several problems. In *Southerly*, number 2 of 1951, a version appeared, with some other poems by Brennan, under the title of “Tall Candelabra”; that being, in effect, the opening phrase in the copy supplied by Dr George Mackaness. *Southerly* also published, as a separate poem, “High lords, that on the great assize”, adding Brennan’s note: “Written in the black of Crown Street” (that is, after Vie’s death).

J.J.Q., however, sent A.R.C. a good few years ago the version published in the present edition, in which the first line is quite different; in which Brennan gives the Old French original of his refrain by way of an epigraph; and of which, extraordinarily, “High lords” is the concluding stanza. He stated that this was a copy of a holograph ms.

Now, the “High lords” passage actually does fit, both in sense and in metrical structure; and the refrain is common. But how are we to explain the discrepancy in the dates? J.J.Q. said that the main part was written before March 1925, that is, before Vie’s death, and that some of the variants, in coloured ink on the ms., were probably in Vie’s handwriting. On the other hand, “High lords” was written after her death.

If, then, J.J.Q. was right (which is fairly obvious), the most plausible solution of the engima is that Brennan added the “High lords” stanza in a final version made in 1927; and Dr Mackaness’s text is apparently an isolated draft of this “High lords” stanza. The Mackaness texts are so different in many respects that it is indispensable to reproduce them here. They are:

## I

Tall candelabra, in the bright  
soft dusk of plenilunar night,  
pale in its radiance, that stand  
about our head, on either hand;  
or dark and stark, but quiet still  
when from their brimming leaves they spill  
the tinkle of the slender rain;  
or heaving huge, when the hard strain

and grapple of the clutching wind  
sets the great boughs to creak and grind:  
so, on our chamber-walls, the trees  
make shadow for our tapestries—  
save when, more sweet, our fire burnt low  
by winter midnight keeps a glow  
of watchful kindness thro' the room  
or, spurting, sets the friendly gloom  
to dance and flicker at its will:  
but let it play, so we lie still.

Storm blows [etc].

The last God bless you said, the last  
soft touch exchanged and you sleep fast;  
so fast you sleep I scarce can hear  
your breathing neighbourhood, tho' near  
I wake a while and bend above  
this little mystery of love  
that brought us twain, that wander'd wide,  
at last, obedient, side to side:  
and in the while I wake, I know  
that all that enginery of woe  
men call their world its while must cease  
to leave our angel guard our peace;  
and all that hate and will us harm  
must slumber too, and no alarm  
these nine hours yet, can penetrate  
where we are: so let foolish hate  
sleep out its time; the night is ours,  
to drain glad morning thro' its hours:  
the night is ours: the night is love,  
and folds us in her wings, the dove.

Storm blows . . .

## II

High lords, that on the great assize  
temper the doom to mortal eyes,  
to mortal eye and nerve and brain:  
that yearn to spare the burning pain  
his mortal chattels yet must know  
when he shall visit, arm'd with throe,

that god of terrible aspect:  
O strong to pity and protect  
who cry you from the bitter vale  
where love and hope and that one grail  
he shows to all (not this alone)  
are lost and blurr'd and stumble on  
in wretchedness because they miss  
each other, yet their woe is bliss:  
ye that have heard so oft of old,  
have heard, and brooded o'er your fold;  
that heard me too, so long time past,  
this is the prayer I make at last:  
O Powers of Sleep and Dream, if now  
I should seem tardy in my vow,  
forgive: it is her blessed grace,  
since you consent; and this her place  
where sleep falls light and lingers sweet  
and dream can send me nought to greet  
with gladness such as that her eyes  
bring mine, with every dawn's surprise.

[No refrain].

Both the above texts as communicated direct to A.R.C. by Dr Mackaness some years ago.

(34) Apparently written May 1925, about two months after Vie's death.  
Text communicated by Dr Mackaness.

(35) The text here used, dated November 1925, was kindly communicated by Dr Mackaness. J.J.Q. maintained that the poem had already been sent to Brereton about July of same year. Published in *New Triad*, 1st April 1928.

(36) Written in Brennan's hand in a copy of *Poems 1913* given to "A. Conor O'Brien (Macleod) at Manar this 22. V. 1931 from her friend neighbour and fellow-penman Chris. Brennan." The verses were followed by this note: "*eodem dato* in the small hours." They were thus apparently written in the night from 21st to 22nd May 1931. Brennan had also written in this copy: "I hear the sound of a melodious lying Irishman." Text, inscription, and note kindly supplied by Dr Mackaness.

(37) Text from ms. owned by Vivian Crockett, with this heading: "For Virginia Crockett iv I '32." The signature below is "Chrissie". Virginia was Mr Crockett's little daughter. A version sent to A.R.C. by Dr Mackaness has several variants, the most substantial being in line 11: "it yet may keep, the antient woe."

## APPENDIXES



## APPENDIX A

(XXI POEMS; MSS. FL. 1, FL. 2, FL. 3)

**XXI POEMS: TOWARDS THE SOURCE.** This is a booklet of thirty-nine pages, with brown-paper covers, published by Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1897. As Brennan says in his bibliographical notes to *Poems 1913*, there were 200 copies, of which 150 were for sale. As the copy from which the texts hereunder are taken is numbered (in Brennan's handwriting) 76, it is evident that more than the 50 reserved copies were numbered. (The copy in question is inscribed: "To Walter Edmunds, the author's friendship, C.B. 28/7/97." Judge Edmunds is described in the bibliographical notes to *Poems 1913* as "the 'only begetter' of this belated edition". It is through the kindness of his daughter, Miss R. M. Edmunds, of Canberra, that this copy has been made available.)

On the outside front cover, between the main title, *XXI Poems*, and the sub-title, *Towards the Source*, the initial and terminal dates of composition are given as MDCCCXCIII and MDCCCXCVII. The twenty-first poem is set apart from the others, at the end. Titles and first lines of the various poems are as follows:

- FIRST NOCTURN (*Northern*): "I will free my soul from this stifling place"
- TREES: "We sat entwined an hour or two together"
- SECOND NOCTURN (*Tropic*): "Sighing—"
- BELLS: "After the garish day"
- AUBADE: "We woke together on a gusty dawn"
- FATUM: "Dumb Sibyl, sitting at my birth" (Title omitted in table, but written in in pencil in Brennan's writing).
- FUNERA REGUM: "Autumn: the year breathes dully towards its death"
- THULE: "Where star-cold and the dread of space"
- SICUT INCENSUM: "*Dies Dominica!* the sunshine burns"
- ADVESPERASCIT: "The grand cortège of glory and youth is gone"
- CITIES: I "The yellow gas is fired from street to street"
- SOUL-SICKNESS: II "Ah, who will give us back our long-lost innocence"
- DAWN: III "Let us go down, the long dead night is done"
- MISTS: "Deep mists of longing blur the land"
- SEAS: "when summer comes in her glory and brave the whole earth blows"

SOURCE: "And shall the living waters heed"

BLUE FLOWER: "And does she still perceive, her curtain drawn"

ROMANCE: "Of old, on her terrace at evening"

ERO SICUT DEUS: "My heart was wandering in the sands"

THE LONELIEST HOUR: "White dawn, that tak'st the heaven with sweet surprise"

VISION: 'I saw my life as whitest flame"

The five poems in this early edition which were not reprinted in *Poems 1913* are:

FIRST NOCTURN (*Northern*)

. . . *in locum refrigerii . .*

I will free my soul from this stifling place,

I will plunge where the waters are cold and roar!

I will dash myself into the midst of their race:

Below in the forest I know the place—

The woods hide the dam over which they pour,  
But I hear them ever in the lonely night—

And there where the whiten'd wave  
Strains back towards the peace forsaken—repentant,

in vain! —I will plunge and lave  
My naked body, my throbbing soul

That the waters may heal and save.

Or hush! do you hear? it sounds like the sea!

Yes, the sea must be near! it would make me whole:

I will steal me out of the hothouse at night

When she sees me not, when she heeds not me

When her cruel play hath other prey

I will creep down still to the mother's call from the  
stifling house—you will not betray?

Creep down and leap

Headlong into their bosom, the waters! drink long and deep

Cool me, lave me without and within,

Cool the hotness of mortal sin

Yield up the mortal breath—

O the deep

O the sea-wind's breadth and the blue,  
The speaking blue of the mystic night!

They shall freshen my soul from its fever of sleep  
From its dream of death  
And the flesh shall be born anew!

Then beat me ye waves! O beat me to death,  
Whirl me, buried in your seething spray!  
I will none of your languid ironic caresses  
Such as she yields here in the night of her tresses—  
That fritter the soul away—  
Up here in the hothouse: she laughs in the night  
When the fever'd desire  
May find no delight  
In the pleasure withheld till the joy is fled  
And the heart grown fierce, till the soul is dead  
And passion paler with hate:  
But cruel, O sea, will I have you and fierce and strong in  
your chastening ire  
To drown this passion, to quench this fire  
That is eating my soul away.

(Is it not too late?)

Then cleans'd might I walk in my mists again  
That my soul loves, haunted by loves without stain  
Pallid as the mists and cold as they  
That I dream of ever in the lonely night—  
O their silver silence, the mists! lo, there  
They dream over river-bank and lake!  
Thro' the hothouse glass I see them wake  
To the lamp of the rising moon:—my prayer  
Dost thou hear it, Lord? do I cry in vain?  
Is there no way out of the choking air?

#### SECOND NOCTURN (*Tropic*)

Sighing—  
the wind from the equator thro' the trees  
faintly fell  
or wander'd like a spirit ill at ease,  
that we heard its echoes dying  
where we lay  
in our chamber by the tropic ocean's swell  
night and day.

Lying—  
side by side—  
we heard the rising ocean to the dying wind replying,  
heard its surge advance with still insistent call  
or subside  
to the night-wind's dying fall  
sighing—  
thro' the night we heard it sobbing  
as the tide  
rose in rhythmic monotone;  
till at last our twin hearts pulsed upon its ceaseless throbbing,  
till we felt them fall and rise and drift asunder  
leagues of night between them thrown—  
O so wide!  
O the wonder  
that we felt but a vague and strange emotion  
felt a dim and blind and infinite emotion  
of the mystery, the wonder  
that the night-wind and the ocean  
and the traitor night should set us twain asunder  
who were lying,  
heart to heart,  
in our love-chamber by the boundless ocean—  
there were lying—  
yet apart,  
sunder'd by the nightly ocean  
heart from heart!

BELLS

. . *paco cruentos* . .

After the garish day  
its dust and turbulence and aching glare,  
fled to familiar night  
I sat at the evening's quiet work  
freshen'd in brain and nerve;  
paused for a moment in the quiet labour  
—the golden lamplight brooded on the floor  
and all seem'd to listen to the churchbells ringing  
solemn and glad, across the lake of memory,  
a far-off strain of peace:

*Peace!*

*no craving, no unrest . .  
seeing all, hearing all,  
giving thanks ever,  
not of the world but dwelling in it  
cloister'd, watchers of eternity  
chant we the hours  
untouch'd by the day or its glare!  
but at monastic midnight  
sing we for him that will hear us  
faithful ever, our hymn of praise  
content in the peace of our dream.*

**AUBADE**

We woke together on a gusty dawn  
in the dim house amid the level waste  
and stared in anguish on the stretch of years  
fill'd with grey dawn and ever-weeping wind

for as the hour hung still 'twixt night and day  
we whom the dark had drawn so close together  
at that dead tide as strangers saw each other  
strangers divided by a sea of years

we might not weep out our passion of despair  
but in lorn trance we gazed upon each other  
and wonder'd what strange ways had brought our hands  
together in that chamber of the west

we felt the dumb compulsion of the hour  
to wander forth in spirit on the wind  
and drift far apart in undiscover'd realms  
of some blank world where dawn for ever wept

[FATUM]

Dumb Sibyl, sitting at my birth  
(or shall I call thee Sphinx?) that thought  
my riddle thus in brain distraught  
. . *His Elsinore the patient earth,*

*this shivering loon shall drape himself  
among congenial rooks and daws  
play Hamlet to his soul's applause  
and pay him with his fancy's pelf..*

unseal thy lips if ne'er again!  
and if I may not swing me high  
where nuptial-songs of sea and sky  
might fit my soul for Imogen

teach me at least of such desires  
to lay the ghost and so escape  
scorn of the night my trappings ape  
and keen derision of its fires.

“*Fatum*” was published, without title, in *Hermes*, 28th May 1895, with the initials M.M. instead of a signature. In the *Hermes* text the italicized passage is in inverted commas; comma after “lips”; “And” for “and” in line 10; comma after “Imogen”; and the final line is: “and twinkling irony of its fires.”

FL. 1; FL. 2; FL. 3.

There are three books of mss. in the Fisher Library, University of Sydney (kindly lent by the Librarian, Mr E. V. Steel), which for convenience are here designated as FL. 1, FL. 2, and FL. 3.

FL. 1 is a neatly bound book of quarto size, the pages being marked with large consecutive numbers so neatly and with such black ink that at first sight they seem to have been imprinted by a machine. Some pages having been torn out, the number series is occasionally interrupted. On the outside front cover Brennan has printed in large capitals: *LILITH*, with a coiled snake drawn beneath the name; to the right, and lower, is: “Verse. C.B. MDCCXCXCV”. Obviously this date refers only to the time when he began using the book.

The outside title, “Lilith”, is misleading; for although pages 102-47 are used for a neat and apparently, at that time, definitive copy of this poem (with various notes), the book also contains several other poems: notably, a series of 19 pieces which were almost certainly intended to be the definitive text for *XXI Poems* (1897). The only piece not taken over for the 1897 edition is “Rain and Spleen” (which later became number 9 in *Poems 1913*). In its stead Brennan used, in *XXI Poems*, “My heart is wandering in the sands”, “White dawn that tak’st the heaven with sweet surprise”, and “I saw my life as whitest flame”.

Brennan's table at the end of FL. 1 includes a title, "Threnos", and quotes the first line as "Her place is dark"; but unfortunately he has torn this piece out and written in pencil, after the title, "destroyed". Another missing poem is, as shown by the table, "Imogen"; a name that occurs in "Fatum" (XXI Poems).

FL. 1 further contains a translation of the "scene" in Mallarmé's *Hérodiade*, which is however not quoted in the present edition, as Brennan has tried his hand at it several times without apparently reaching finality.

FL. 2 is a folio reference catalogue belonging to the Sydney Public Library, and its printed date is 1896. Brennan has utilized the alternate blank pages for drafting or copying his texts, using the book in both directions by turning it upside down when necessary. On the "Lilith" title-page at the front of the catalogue he has put the date 19th February 1896; but as in the case of FL. 1, this is obviously only a starting date. Into the cloth on the back cover he has cut a capital T, representing "Tyre", and in effect there is in this book an almost complete, neatly written copy of *The Burden of Tyre*. There is also quite a large number of other texts, quoted and discussed elsewhere in the present edition.

FL. 3 is another large Public Library reference catalogue, similarly utilized. On the fly-leaf it is dated 16th March 1899; though at the beginning of the catalogue proper Brennan has written, apparently in reference to the original professional purpose of the volume, "ad usum Chr. Brennan P.L. 1895". Entries and annotations on the printed pages make it clear that he used both FL. 2 and FL. 3 for professional purposes as well as for his own creative work. Like FL. 2, FL. 3 has a note written in 1921 showing that Brennan presented these two precious MSS. books to George Robertson.

Included in FL. 3 are:

1. A copy of "Lilith: A Mystery".
2. The beginning of a "definitive" copy of *The Burden*, which degenerates into a series of disconnected passages, and notes.
3. Drafts and fragments of a number of other poems, discussed elsewhere in the present edition. These include even some fragments of *A Chant of Doom*.

Brennan has cut into the cloth of the back cover of FL. 3 the name "Lilith" in Hebrew characters.

## APPENDIX B

### BRENNAN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO *A MASK* (1913)

THE Women's College in the University of Sydney was founded in 1888 by Act of Parliament, but the first student entered in residence only in March 1892. To mark, in 1913, the twenty-first anniversary of this real beginning, a festival was arranged, which was to include the performance of an allegorical mask. The writing of this mask of famous women, historical and fictitious, was undertaken by Brennan and J. Le Gay Brereton; and the text was published in Sydney, in August 1913: a paper-covered brochure. (For a proposed later staging just before Brennan's death see *The Biographical Introduction*.)

On the fly-leaf of one of the copies in the Mitchell Library a note in Brennan's hand indicates the portions written by Brereton and himself respectively.

The general structure of the *Mask* is this: There is a song (words by Brereton) with two voices and chorus. Then the Sibyl, on the steps of a small temple, recites a prologue; after which Rumour introduces various celebrated women, and the Sibyl sums up the deeds and qualities of each. (There are some interludes of dancing to vary the performance.) At the end, an epilogue is pronounced by the Sibyl; then there is a final song (words by Brereton) with solo and chorus, followed by a "wave dance" of maidens who retreat "as if with a receding tide till they are lost in the darkness".

Brennan's note indicates that Queen Victoria and the Empress of China were to have been included in the mask, but that "neither writer would undertake their lines". Brennan insisted on the inclusion of Sairey Gamp, and Florence Nightingale was given as a pair for her. Both writers carried out their assignment independently, seeing each other's work only when all was finished.

The passages given below are by Brennan. Names in square brackets show the point at which personages enter, whose lines were written by Brereton. Brennan's notes do not make it clear who wrote the various brief remarks by Rumour, but it can be assumed that they were written in each case by the poet who composed the lines immediately following them.

SIBYL. Once Erythraean, next I moved my place  
to Cumae, and assumed the Latin face,  
and many a nation boasted me its own  
and fable made me seven, who am one.

I am that *Sibyl* whom the Romans claim  
as mother of the world and of their fame,  
whom Peter's Rome invokes with David's lay  
as witness to the latest wrathful day.  
Not like the senseless Sphinx, that can but stare  
deaf both to supplication and despair,  
half I reveal and half I leave to hope,  
that thought may wake to its eternal scope  
and the tense mind, at last, win thro' the veil.  
So, for an hour, I come to hint the tale  
of woman, in whose form myself am masked:  
and if the imperfect pens my bidding tasked  
should falter and mine oracles look blear,  
I trust the sense that dwells within the ear  
to piece the broken music to the round:  
for even the Sibyl may not cross her bound.

(*Rumour enters.*)

**SIBYL.** And this my handmaid, *Rumour*, much defamed,  
whom baffled poets, in their ire, have framed  
a monster, shouting with a hundred throats:  
but how shall truth be given to man that dotes  
on fancies bred of his own craving nerves,  
whereof is this conceit that he deserves  
to get, untasked with heat, unmarked with blow,  
a worthless gift, the truth he could not know.  
Blame Rumour not; blame man, that will not make  
right use of her, but babbles in her wake.

[Dancing interlude.]

(*Helen enters.*)

**RUMOUR.** *Helen*, the phantom of the world's desire,  
whose beauty touched the peaks of Troy with fire.

**SIBYL.** Dust, o'er the plains of Simois, day by day,  
those ten long years  
roll'd sullenly above the vengeful play  
of driven spears.

Between the black ships and the Skaian gate  
it went and came:  
and underneath was bitter work and hate  
and hell's dark flame;

And where it rose, most dense, about the greaves  
they fell in turn,  
the brave, the fair, the best, in trampled sheaves,  
till Troy should burn.

Sarpedon, Hektor, and white Thetis' swift  
chivalrous son,  
and Paris, doomed by Aphrodite's gift:  
and all for one,

Who looked, those years, across the plain and saw  
the rolling cloud  
bear back the torch, as the reluctant law  
of Zeus allowed,

Till, one fell night, disrupted thro' their bound,  
with crackling fire  
the sounding towers of Ilion smote the ground  
to one vast spire

of conquering dust.—Or shall we trust the tale  
how Hermes made  
in Makronisi, for the Trojan bale,  
a golden shade,

Whom Paris clasp'd, and while his kinsmen spilt  
their cheated blood,  
she dwelt with Proteus, far, and free from guilt,  
in widowhood?

Who knows? The later wiser minstrels show  
on Homer's page  
a gentle golden lady, fading slow,  
skilled to assuage

The grief Odysseus' son might not control  
but broke in tears—  
because herself bore sorrow in her soul  
for all the years,

Wherein she must forego the joy to see,  
thro' gradual days,  
her little maiden bud, Hermione,  
thread girlhood's ways.

The stern embattled kings with burning arms  
have hid her face;  
her beauty doomed her to a thousand harms;  
Song gave her grace.

(*Penelope enters.*)

RUMOUR. Whom Troy made widow for a score of years,  
*Penelope*, beset with nightly fears.

SIBYL. She sits apart; hardly the drunken brawl  
reaches her, where above their meat and wine  
the suitors riot in Odysseus' hall:  
dim in the smoky torch the figures shine

of the close web she weaves round her delay;  
outside the night-wind knocks and strives to tell  
of him that gropes upon the lonely way  
whose secret he must seek in pallid hell,

her husband, wandering prisoner of the foam:  
she listens not: her heart is all intent  
upon the quiet dream of hearth and home,  
sweet habit, and calm duty and content;

And this suffices her; she hath no dule  
save she should quit her housewife's daily rule.

(*Tarpeia and Lucretia enter.*)

RUMOUR. Old Rome, once hallowed, mistress, by thy feet,  
hath sent this pair before thy judgment-seat.

SIBYL. Let them approach. Or I am much abused,  
or, Rumour, here we see thy gifts misused.  
*Tarpeia* was a child and, frankly bold,  
admired the Sabines' arm-worn coils of gold:  
but traitress? Rumour shuts her lips and smiles  
nor may I disallow my handmaid's wiles.  
The Roman, lest he should confess defeat,  
has hid her in a fourfold winding-sheet  
of doubt, more baffling than the Sabine shields.  
So much at least, this evening, Rumour yields

that, thro' her fable, we may read her kin.  
Next comes the victim of false Tarquin's sin,  
*Lucretia*, much admired and often sung,  
because, the steel at her soft throat, she clung  
to life, a span, purchased with killing shame,  
so much as served to clear her threatened name,  
then judged, and dealt her verdict with the knife.  
The blood that heralds her the martyr-wife  
washed Rome of kings: her heart-wound was the source  
whence the august Republic drew its course,  
and, when the tyrant closed its famous day,  
its protestants took her heroic way.

(*Agrippina enters.*)

RUMOUR. Rome sends us next, of her imperial brood,  
dire *Agrippina*, third of Julia's blood.

SIBYL. A man's contriving brain and steel-clad hand  
to grasp at power and perfect all she plann'd,  
and all a woman may, by charm and wile  
and wantonness, was hers: with cynic smile  
she played the Roman matron to the street,  
the daughter of Germanicus, complete;  
while in her home no shame was left undrain'd,  
and murder, at the last, left nought unstained  
in niece and spouse and queen of him she slew.  
So she attained, and for a space she grew  
in power, as she had ween'd, ere yet her child  
reveal'd the taint wherewith their blood was filed:  
but, when she proved him all her own, she paid  
a reckoning that leaves the soul afraid.

(*Monnica enters.*)

RUMOUR. Next *Monnica*, whose son twice cost her throes,  
until she bare him pure for God's repose.

SIBYL. Patient and prayerful and God built unseen  
His temple in her heart, she watch'd her son  
follow false doctrine, and dark paths obscene  
of sinful joy, driven by the malison

of Africa's hot blood and tortuous brain,  
and wept and prayed, and at the last she got  
this happiness, to know her life not vain,  
but saw him purge his soul of each vile spot;  
and, ere the end, in quiet Ostia,  
beside the window looking on the close,  
she spoke with him of the Lord's peace, and saw,  
in spirit, things that pass our senses' shows:  
Then gave her body to a stranger sod,  
knowing that every place is near to God.

[Dancing interlude.]

(*Medea enters.*)

RUMOUR. The Colchian princess, daughter of the Sun,  
*Medea*, crown'd with crime and malison.

SIBYL. Her passion burned too long, barbaric flame!  
and Jason's waned, and worldly wisdom came,  
whispering him how sweet a thing to cease  
from wandering, and see his wealth increase,  
and be no more a broken man, and place  
his children by their peers, with upheld face:  
and the only price that he should put away  
a wife no wife, and take a princely pay,  
a bargain, whence might grow, as often plann'd,  
increase of power to either given hand.  
And Jason, for his youth was over-worn,  
stoop'd to the sordid bond, and felt no scorn  
fall on him from his high heroic days:  
nor reck'd of that incalculable blaze  
wherein the blood of Helios should flare  
disastrous, thro' Medea's fierce despair,  
and lay his house in ashes, and his bride  
a wretched corpse, ere he might touch her side,  
and both his sons, slain by their mother's hand;  
leaving him naught, save, on the lonely strand,  
the shadow of rotting Argo, where the wood  
slew him, who came there, day by day, to brood.

[Griselda.]

(*Joan enters.*)

RUMOUR. *Joan of Lorraine*, the angel maid of France,  
who raised the broken lilies with her lance.

SIBYL. Saint by the sword and martyr by the flame,  
Joan, that good maid, whom English, to their shame,  
burnt at Rouen, then slander'd on their stage:  
Saint Joan, whom neither hate nor bestial rage  
but very love and pity for thy folk,  
compell'd beneath the battle's iron yoke,  
and cloth'd thee in the virgin blue of steel:  
Saint Joan, be with us still: give us to feel  
the pure and righteous wrath that may not brook  
the inveterate wrong; send that archangel look  
that stabs the heart of evil, clear of hate,  
the look that was thine own, immaculate.

[Isabeau de Bavière; Queen Elizabeth; Mary Queen of Scots; dancing interlude; Madame de Pompadour.]

(*Madame de Chantal enters.*)

RUMOUR. *Saint Chantal*, ancestress of Sévigné.

SIBYL. A woman of the world, and yet a saint,  
the happy blend that France alone might show,  
with home and husband lost, she did not faint  
but gave her strength to help devotion grow.

[Charlotte Corday.]

(*Madame Récamier enters.*)

RUMOUR. Fair *Récamier*, model of Stael's Corinne.

SIBYL. Here charms were but the handmaid of her brain;  
she sought no lover, but won many a friend:  
René, heart-soured to find ambition vain,  
drew soothing from her influence till the end.

[Elizabeth Fry; then a Woman Criminal; Lady Hamilton; Angelica Kauffmann.]

(*Sairey Gamp enters.*)

RUMOUR. Make way! I hear her pattens, broad and big,  
who put to rout that bragian Betsy Prig.

SIBYL. I shrink abash'd; for not in all her lives  
could one poor Sibyl get the growth that carries  
such wisdom as her ample bodice hives,  
the friend of Mrs Harris;

The angel of the bedside, kind or cruel,  
her gin-glass neighbour to each low-turn'd lamp,  
her snuff dropt casual in each patient's gruel,  
impoging Sairey Gamp !

See how she stands, confronting gravell'd fate,  
four-square upon her aphorism that sums  
all wisdom: "SEEK NOT TO PROTICIPATE,  
BUT TAKE THEM AS THEY COMES."

[Florence Nightingale; Taglioni.]

(*Madame Curie enters.*)

RUMOUR. *Madame Curie*, professeur en Sorbonne—

SIBYL. The lady of the electrons: Nature yields  
to her the secrets even I must bear  
to hear as news: for different are our fields  
and those have fall'n to her in ample share.  
She stands man's peer, even of his proudest brow  
even in this age of the prepotent brain;  
earth's most enlighten'd city must avow  
this Polish lady as a precious gain.

#### EPILOGUE

By the grim Kimmerian trench  
where Odysseus' bloodless ghosts  
throng'd unto the reeking drench

whence alone their pallid breasts  
might inhale the smoke that lent  
strength to answer his behests,

shapes of women, wistful bent,  
drifted on the murky wind:  
so Proserpin gave consent.

This our magic is more kind,  
calling, with no savage rite,  
only with the spell of mind

from the far reluctant night  
shapes that filled our rustic stage  
for your passing hour's delight.

Thus far Woman's written page.  
Life alone may write the next:  
Sibyl never did engage

to reveal the guarded text:  
hath she made her promise good?  
—If our play leave you perplexed

see where future womanhood,  
here and now, in studious halls,  
harks, beyond the ermine hood,

to the greater life that calls.

*EXPLICIT*

[Song, etc.]

## APPENDIX C

### SUNDRY NOTES AND FRAGMENTS

#### 1. *Fugitive verses and fragments*

(a) The summer goes, once more: how many stay?  
and yet I did not lend me to her play  
being stranger in my heart: I went with her  
and gave my senses to her pretty stir  
(Written without erasures in FL. 3.)

(b) Lo, on the next Dominical  
not as grammarian's whelp I go  
to table at his patron's call  
or stoolward, with Trimalchio

(Quoted by R.G.H. in *Southerly*, number 4 of 1949, from the 1895-6 pocket-book discussed in his *Reliquiae*.)

(c) Unstable as water, not to build upon,  
saith one, thou shalt excel not. Verily  
thou shalt excel not, heart  
the star is known  
that doth the fickleness of seas control (restrain)  
and man hath come to tell the way o' the wind's whim  
But thou! —what hidden world, upon the rim  
of the scant-peopled night wandering (circling)  
maketh thy heartstrings to its subtle stress  
blindly to waver, a curse in that dead time  
plann'd when the world

(Written in FL. 2. The words in parentheses have been added as alternatives in the ms.)

(d) What hidden world, circling upon the edge  
of the scant-peopled night immemorable  
maketh my spirit to its subtle stress  
blindly to waver? in what distant age  
who thought the spell? these tides of dim . . . . .  
drawn to the dark . . . . .

O shadow of a world where Fate at will  
hurls the vast piles of gloom on passionate blaze,  
O sway'd by chords of night and winds and seas

(Pasted into FL. 2 opposite the foregoing fragment. The points of suspension are written in the ms.)

2. *Some notes on “Lilith” by Brennan*

- (a) In FL. 2, this project-sketch, neatly written, but with a perpendicular cancelling line in ink drawn through it:

[First sketch of “Lilith”]

How she bore him that he might love her  
and by love know her  
How he loves yet fears and flies her and her serpent brood  
How his other spouse was made  
to bind him to earth  
But he has slept in Her hair  
How he shall not know the other  
but always seek  
and see  
in her the first  
How he is ever her bondslave  
How he shall hide him from her  
shaping him Gods  
building Babels and fanes  
wherein she shall lurk  
in whose ruin she and her serpent  
brood shall dwell  
How she will greet him beyond  
and  
How he shall sleep in her embrace to all Eternity

- (b) Notes written at the end of the “Lilith” text in FL. 1. The numbers, put in by Brennan, refer to his own numbering of the lines in *this text*. Below we have quoted these lines in their FL. 1 form. Brennan uses too great a variety of letter-sizes to be reproduced here, where they are adumbrated by small capitals and italics.

(Hymn.Hom.Demeter, 24)

**LILITH** Hebr. Lil, night = mystery (Hecate ἀταλὰ φρονέουσα)  
first wife of Adam: changed to demon (serpent):  
brood of devils, dragons; she becomes a haunting of the  
night

*nuptial attraction of mystery, revulsion, disillusion*  
compare witch-marriage and change at midnight  
Gautier's *Albertus*, Lamia, Melusina,  
visions round Undine's bride-bed  
(2) Melusina's children (with the tusk, etc.)

she carries off new-born  
she dwells in solitary places, also in ruins

Isaiah XXXIV. 14.

*Serpents* the bridals of Lilith and Adam begot death upon earth  
darkness coil'd on itself in caverns, resting-  
places of old night

Apollo's victory  
*observe* he slew in the Python the *horror*  
of mystery, not mystery itself,  
for he too spoke in oracles and song

*Sphinx*

*Sacerdotal* snakes: Hermes and Aesculap  
'Gorgons and Hydras and Chimaeras dire', Griffins etc.

*NIGHT* *Bubo* eternal hideousness: pass beyond  
the human focus and the central core is seen  
to be horror

*Medusa*

*Echidna*

*WATER* the mirror of Lilith who has only one tail in  
common with the  
*Siren* (scales of snake or fish)

*Melusine and Undine*

448 FOREST *Pan* or the mystery of the brooding noon when the  
silence is as terrible as a great shout

2 Lilith as bride, Hymn. Orph. II, 2

νύξ νένεσις πάντων ἦν καὶ Κύπριν καλέσωμεν

6 Spenser, Epithalamion 340

16 Homer, Od. μ 188 καὶ πλείονα εἰδώς

186 the derivative sense of Chimaera

361 "Altérée d'amour humain et de sympathie . . . Méduse avait dit qu'à la lumière du soleil sa face pouvait être aussi belle que celle d'Athéné; et la déesse, en sa colère, répliqua que tout mortel qui regarderait ce visage serait changé en pierre . . . Méduse est la nuit étoilée."—MALLARMÉ, *les dieux antiques*, 167, 171,

482 "Only there does Lilith repose," 5 Isaiah 13, Cheyne (34, 14)

499 the book named of the Preacher

The lines to which Brennan refers in his FL. 1 text are:

448 Chill pinions brush upon its hushing way

2 Lady of Night: she in the delicate frame

6 begat on her not Majesty, as Jove

16 hinting the nameless things revealed, a bane

186 Chimaera beating up the opening heaven

332 changing to Eos or pale Iole (Brennan has omitted his comment)

361 cluster'd the terror of Medusa's curls

482 exudes in rays of shadow that beyond

499 king, that wast mighty in the easy way (of thy desire etc.)

(c) A projected table of contents in FL. 1 includes the short poem, "She listens by the sources", in "The Shadow of Lilith". "Vigil" (Majestically etc.) was intended for "The Labour of Night".

## APPENDIX D

### EARLY PIECES IN LETTERS TO A. B. PIDDINGTON

The poems that follow were discovered—or rather, rediscovered—in a file of letters sent to A. B. Piddington during Brennan's stay in Germany and on his way back to Sydney. By the time they came to light, it was too late to include them in a more appropriate part of this volume.

1. A poem enclosed in an envelope dated “Berolini. 21/12/93”. The address on the envelope is in verse. The text is preceded by this note:

“*Prosa Mystica*—fie on the days of my materialism! that I prefix'd the name to this

*Salve, diva cerevisia  
Ave, ave liquor Munichiae*

Fie!—but I am chang'd and the title ‘Mystic Prose’—not given because the epistle is in verse, nor yet insinuating a poetic nature of my last effusion—precedeth a higher strain. What! *semper ego auditor?* hath *des Esseintes* his Prose and shall Piddington remain unhonor'd? Hear my Christmas strain:”

#### MYSTIC PROSE

(For A.B.P.)

Sprung from the mist and from the blue  
deep mirror'd in the dreaming eyes,  
what earth-born wet, what clinging dew  
forbids thee winged to arise?

else thro' the deep far-folded halls  
and thro' the slumbrous roll of space  
o'er morning seas, past whirling balls  
untravers'd course of any pace,

accustome'd winger of the cold  
pierc'd or unpierc'd by any ray  
over the quicken'd city roll'd  
this pompous sumptuous Christmas day

and me too quicken'd to surprise  
who still—perhaps—its token bears  
caught in the spot which damn his eyes  
—the region where he shot no hares.

I other in its action share,  
the irritation driven far  
—that ne'er before now could not bear  
the wonted smoke of my cigar!

The church-bells of the hollow cold  
to easy of deception ring  
the self-same azure song which—gold!—  
the trumpets of the summer sing.

Welcome no visions of the night  
Welcome the lightness of before  
Welcome the absence of affright  
on opening the midnight door

to pacing of the lonely street  
awaiting, scarce a distance hence  
—chewing the food of fancy sweet  
the symbol of my reticence.

What symbol? other than we knew  
once by that midnight radiance kist  
that vanishes before the blue  
—They parent here, the other miss'd,

—Sprung—father here, the other gone  
before his paramour her play  
invok'd come, on thy lustrous crown  
bearing the symbol's burning ray.

Chimera!—keener than the lynx  
the pale-wash'd shadow flit I see—  
for me no answer to the Sphinx  
heard by the ears of Anthony:

the ancient alphabets, adieu  
leather and dust, well may ye fare!  
for us the flowers and perfumes new,  
word, gramarye and visions rare,

his cryptic songs and sibylline  
the singer of Hyperbole—  
But hurling down the thought divine  
crashes the mighty Shadow, He

—extinguishing the living light—  
banisheth us, eternal mate,  
to join the poets of the night  
in the dim meadows desolate!

*25th December 1893.*

II. The following poem was in an envelope addressed (in verse) to Piddington from Berlin; the Sydney postmark is 15th February 1894. In the right margin, at the top, Brennan has written “*Tempore Vespertino*”.

HYMNUS S. CHRISTOPHORI

IN IPSIUS LAUDEM

*Simplicitas! ex cerebro  
non vis levare te meo  
meditantis crepusculo?*

*Alleluia*

*quid? num te recusavit mens  
involuti omnipotens  
—dixit inimicus, amens?*

*Alleluia*

*amicus aequa—pellit te  
foras soror Hyperbole  
(id ipsa dixerat de se)?*

*Alleluia*

(*at caecis non apparuit  
quibusque sola haec stetit*)  
—non ita mi manum tulit  
*Alleluia*

*at comprehendet carmina  
et illius et arcana  
cujus in corde lumina*  
*Alleluia*

*ut hic, per albas nebulas  
flammatia per pallidas  
—dant aliis argutias*  
*Alleluia*

*Lucis creator optime  
ut adis non precabor te  
magnificat anima mea*  
*Alleluia*

*ut adis sol non precabor  
intimo corde laetabor  
et tenebris non celabor*  
*Alleluia*

*quibus videre non placet  
eos infernis Deus det  
—Diabolus hos rapiet*  
*Alleluia*

*Spississimas in tenebras  
ignium at tu adeas  
sanctissima simplicitas*  
*Alleluia*

*laus prima sit Christophoro  
Joanni secundo loco  
et tertia sit Brennano  
diluculo crepusculo  
in sempiterna saecula*  
*Amen*

*In omni die festo cantandus*

III. In same envelope as the above:

SEQUENCE

IN DILUCULO TOTIUS DIEI

—But comes again intensified!  
Visions at ending of the night  
fumes of the brain beatified  
shudder, before the icy light

—But comes again intensified!  
it comes! it comes lassitude  
the irritation had not died  
nor yet the dread anxietude

dread of the dim intangible  
dimming the present—far-seen—light  
dread of the cold invisible  
—visions at ending of the night

waking to the crepuscle crude  
shudder before the icy—hied  
hence from thy face, disquietude  
—But comes again intensified

unbeaten by Chimera's wing  
obsession of the ice-clogg'd brain  
it comes—this, unquickenning!  
alone thy sorry Twelfth-Night train.

But better gift hath he to bring  
—choking the three, who only bore  
into the presence of the King  
abundance of the natural store—

but better gifts hath he to bring  
—mated are ye! whose spirit bold  
uplifts its brazen strength to sing  
undaunted by the craven cold

but better gifts hath he to bring  
—but mated not the fourth, the Lord  
who beats with never-tiring wing  
that o'er the stiffen'd city roll'd

What comes again intensified  
—Visions at ending of the night!  
and me too hardened in my pride  
to leave the path of old delight

Chimer's shadow o'er the [thee?] cast!  
—What, ere the ending of my race  
no visitor of any past  
grim Failure must I see thy face?

but quench'd the symbol's resonant flame  
—grim Failure, must I see thy face?  
Shame, not thy place, not mine the blame—  
invok'd, do me so much of grace

that at thy seldom bidding come—  
and drive afar thy dreaded chance  
making the wilder'd head her home  
Mystification's scornful glance!

of him, who fill'd the number not  
smitten, like him he smote—not quite!  
nor stinguish'd quite the foulsome spot,  
his suffering eyes still view the light—

but still (hope not) the token bears  
—vainly the glasses strive to hide  
(laughed the land of no dead hares!)  
—what comes again intensified  
  
—visions at ending of the night  
or seen in garishness of day—  
would hide you from his searching sight  
upon the dim and perilous way

follow—before the end we win  
mated ye three and match'd are ye!  
the royal intruder enters in  
O sounding house of mystery!

farewell, the leaders of the blind!  
—Chimera's wing beats no more slow  
and let them wander with their kind  
diuturno diluculo

farewell—but what we lately bade  
refuse freedom—still the pride  
of reticence, hath opening made  
—What comes again intensified—

it comes deepest quietude  
—hideth not from a better sight  
waking to the crepuscle crude  
Visions at ending of the Night—

Berolini

*In festo Epiphaniae*

IV. The following text, copy of which was supplied by J. J. Quinn several years ago, seems to have been in the same envelope as (V) below.

MON ALLEMAGNE

(Amende)

*Allons trouver la blonde nixe  
aux fontaines des rochers creux  
loin des mots vains et de la rixe  
parmi ces murs poussiéreux*

*Par la vieille route des preux  
viens en ami haut chantant—fixe!  
aux fontaines des rochers creux  
allons trouver la blonde nixe*

*et laisse le gonfanon fixe  
flotter sur ces créneaux lépreux  
Dans la forêt aux ronds heureux  
la fleur bleue aux rochers se fixe  
Allons trouver la blonde nixe*

V. The text of what Brennan here calls “HYMN (to A.B.P.)” bears no date-stamp, but appears to have been posted at Adelaide when he was on his way home from Germany. It is the same text as *Prose (Marine)*, published in the present volume. Underneath, “Written at sea. June, 1894”.

VI. Probably in the same envelope as V; Whistler’s butterfly signature drawn at top left:

SONNET ANGLAIS

*Que vers la terre matinale  
où vos corps femmes sont des fleurs  
tu rêves de la mer natale  
papillon âme des couleurs*

*que de vols éperdus au dôme  
incurvé sur les pâles soirs  
ou de te perdre heureux fantôme  
dans la pénombre des miroirs*

*de te fondre dans les ténèbres  
rasant les fleuves inconnus  
ou les immenses mers funèbres  
de tes ailerons ingénus*

*au moins voyageur du Mystère  
que je te revoie donc*

Vistlaire.



