BEGGAR OF BEAUTY
BY SUNDAR GIFFIN

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To
Father and Mother
INTRODUCTION

SUNDAR GIFFIN is of the company of those who go upon the “secret way.” Hers is the questing spirit. Her poetry reflects many moods, poignant expressions of joy and sorrow, observation of nature, reflection, meditation—of sun and shadow. But dominant in the lines, as an essence outbreathing from them, is the aspiring spirit. The lines sing themselves in multi-form, multicolored patterns, as it were, iridescently. Surely this is the function, as it is the sign, of the true poet—to weave in light, word-rhythms of light, for the Festival of Light. Significant are these lines from the Hymn to Pure Light:

Thy feet at every step press on my heart,
NURI—BLESSED ONE!
Thy glances to my spirit speak
Unseen and beautiful as dew.
In fragrant beauty everywhere Thou art.

At the source, then, of this body of poetic utterance lies the soul of pure striving—of undimmed aspiration. The winged words take spontaneous form and
body in song, rising and spiralling freely into the Infinite, “carolling their songs to God.” Subtle is the singing, delicate, and varied with the hue and texture of the song. Rich, sensuous with a warmly pulsing beauty, its petals combine to form the fragrant flowers of spirit. One comes at times, as it were, upon a breath of unearthly fragrance, messenger and harbinger, it may be, of the far-off worlds. As a veritable fountain flow the cadences in their joyance and adoration.

In the House of Poetry there are many mansions. These rhythms seem to take form unconsciously—or shall we say superconsciously? In the varied themes are range, depth and variation of form and treatment. It is as though the poet were weaving her garland of song before the altars of the world—these altars the “hero Sun, the mountainous seas,” and the seeking heart of man. Devoid of the crass mould and taint of the studiously imitative, they have an originality which carries within itself a “healing liquid freshness.” The delicate wingdust still lingers here. The “dream-cloud worlds,” the “amber stars evanescent,” “the fragrant corollas of night-lure,” the “wondrous way the seagull stands—upon the floor of space”—the “round rapture of the notes that gush from skylarks’ throats”—these are a few of the elements of nature sifting through the vision.

Sundar Giffin comes quietly. She does not jostle the throng. Deeply impassioned, she comes withal delicately, in an ordered way. At home, poet-wise, in this mysterious universe, she comes with a frank reticence, carefully guarding the treasure. Her cadences know how to fall gently, gently, “quiet as the speech of ripened grain.”

Especially strong is the note of compassion in such poems as The Barren Woman’s Son, Beggar of Beauty, Woman of the Desert, Eros, Transmutation, Dust, and Compassionate.

—All that ever fainted,
Dropped to the ultimate
Black ember of the pit,
All that was ever living,
Was felt or visioned—
All is made into incense
That burns within the praying veil.—

High is lifted the banner of Womanhood. Such poems as The Mother Speaks, Mother’s Dusk Song and Mother of the World, full of reverence and tenderness, bear aloft the challenge of Woman and guard her chalice.

Oh, desperate unborn
Who know not the garden, the silence, the sea! . . .
O blessed women! . . .
Finally, the pilgrim's striving rises to a note of ecstasy in thought of the ineffable union:

Then shalt Thou
Hear my clamor
In the aeon's night,
See me—but I shall not see Thee.
My flying shall be caught up
In Thy flight . . .
My upward reaching shall be
Stretched up to Thy height . . .
My little brightness
Be extinguished in Thy light!

These poems form, in their totality, a virtual garnering of the Flame-Wine of the spirit.

MARY SIEGRIST

July, 1931.
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PSALM

Speak! Maker and Shaper!
My soul attends!
Oh, may the pathway to Perfection,
Guarded by twin pillars . . . knowing and feeling,
Power and love that equilibrate action,
Blaze in a stream of Light Unquenchable!
May it be marked beyond the chance of loss—
By flaming angels hurtling into dark—
Still-born abortive destinies,
All vain imaginings of woe;
Who with ceaseless play of two-edged swords,
Plunge down the abyss, all the false gods!
Sun-spreading Glory,
Which 'twere annihilation but to breathe
Or sound thy name!
Send one true ray
To shatter this my substance!
Scatter to infinity the me unreal,
Pervade the melted heart,
Absorb the cleanséd mind.
Impulse perpetual!
Changeless Mandate, Sing!
Creation, wrapped in its own hush,
Becomes one mighty listening ear
Tuned to the voice of God.

[13]
Take Thou my soul
Unstrung by fingers of grief,
And make it to thy subtle touch a viol . . .
That all its discords gather to one tone.
Thou knowest how to take the splintered things,
The broken wires and the tuneless keys,
And from those fragments build an instrument
To fill with music the unmeasured halls.
What matter though its music even yet
Vibrate to crucifixion’s overtones?
Out of that sorrow Thou wilt strike one chord.

MODES

There is a certain way
A vibrant ship
With free-blown sails
Rides on the vast
And pathless ocean trails.

There is a tender way
A master hand
Lays on the wooing bow,
Waking to life
The colored souled cello.

There is a secret way
A questing heart—
A heart that seeking—sings,
Poises its tone above the breath
On wings.

There is a silent mode
Of dwelling here
In flesh upon the earth,
Where moments to eternities
Give birth.
There is a quiet way
That light is shed
From eyes most patiently,
Of one who really sees
Humanity.

There is a wondrous way
The sea-gull stands
Upon the floor of space
Still—in the wildness
Of the wind's embrace.

There is a lovely way
Rebecca walked,
And on her head the jar—
The sunken well's sweet waters
Sought afar.

There is an ancient path
Where journeying is
The wages of the just,
And death—a feeble footprint
In the dust.

BEGGAR OF BEAUTY

To M. S.

Three things hung in ether
Above the head of the poet:
They were an organ, a heart
And a bell—not of earth.

Slight and harmless as a hollow reed
He lay, under the peaked mansard
Of a tottering house
And a mauve moonlight wrapped him
Like Lazarus dead and born again,
In waving cerements.
Spent he was with having plunged
To the abyss, that cauldron
Wherein he with many walked,
Having descended to the core
Of their foul stupor.
Unlidded eyes swam toward him
Out of windows opened on decay and fear.
He had heard their voices
Croaking obscene lies—
Heard the putrifying dead
Who laughed and drank and ate,
Closing his window on their hate-ridden breath,
Humbly unknowing the only sunlight there
To be the shafts of gold struck from his pen,
Writ in his blood and graved on eternal light.

And now three things hung in ether
Above his bed—an organ, a heart and a bell
On a path of color—a spectrum of loveliness
Moving across his sight.
He, unaware of each rebirth at dawn
Had thought himself to be ever about to die—
Having eaten nothing all his life save Beauty
And fasted beneath the tree where her fruit grew;
And every year was famine in the land.
And while the madman praying fell asleep
He dreamed her leaf was blown across his mouth—
Humbly unknowing he was her heavy fruit—
Heavy with ripeness a starving earth might drink.

And now was hung in the ether above his head
A bell, a heart and an organ—not of earth.
The bell was his sky of life wherein he poured
His worshipping breath—the fragrance of his deeds;
The bell—his unmeasured chalice, his echoing dome
Starred with potential seed of endless song.

How to tell of that luminous sacred heart
Whose entombing walls had been broken by bitter
blows

Where the hidden dancer had dropped her seven
veils?—
The dancing star in naked beauty freed
In a temple where sinner and saint could lie prostrate!

And the silver organ? A choir of singing flutes
Resounded with music that flooded worlds beyond
worlds
And caught their language in those holy notes
Whose echoes rushed on the silence and dark of
earth
With the rush of silver birds with wings of light—
A pair of wings for the heart of every man
To lift him to whatever skies were his . . .

And all this wonder poured from the hollow reed
That was the beggar of Beauty—over his head
Hung in the ether on a jewelled path of light
Three things that were and are and ever shall exist:
A bell that rings to every questing word,
A heart made perfect in a blazing star,
A cluster of pipes that are the veins
Of the beggar of Beauty—the Singing—and the
Song! . . .
THE POTTER SPEAKS

Hold the hollow to the runnel of the obedient spring;
To the pattern of the mold the water-whispers cling.
Hear the melodies expire as it slowly fills,
Till the lyric's fragile secret is hidden in the rills.

Only when 'twas lying empty could the earth clay
hum
Overtones and undertones and be the wild wind's
drum,
Echo words of moistened stone and feel its mute
caress,
Repeat the lonely crying of a captured bird's dis-
tress;
Recall the laggard sweetness of a chanting shep-
herd's creed
Or flute the piteous yearning faltered from his
drowned reed.

As with a sated bee and silent—as an answered
quest,
Bliss-mad devotee—a mutely throbbing petal's
guest,
High priest of the nectar in fulfilled commune of
flowers;
Into the jar replete, nor in nor out the music showers,
Not a murmur of a taking nor surrender's thrill.

Filled with a million crumbs of sand the buried lute
is still—
Only a sea-shell bright with silver air can hold the
sea.

Embracing myriad dews and shaken with stifled
melody,
Out from the inarticulate jar and from the trembling
clays,
I—who made the sentient vessel, I—the Potter—
gaze.

Clinging pity of my smile is the luster of its glaze;
Jewels of its water are my teardrops fallen within.—
Who can measure teardrop's end or where the first
begin?

It is my heart—the very hollow—and my tear and
smile—
Are moon and sun, cool rain and stars—all potent
to beguile
Unsunned, unwatered seed and blind hid in a barren
soul;
To heal the wounded and shrive the dying whose lips
dare touch the bowl.
NOT GERMINATE OF EARTH

From secret laden soil
All permeate with dust of shattered things;
Of hopes that were mirage
And songs of a lark
That fell with wounded wings;
Shards from the timbers
Of lost argosy,
Wisps blown from futile sails—
Of unremembered tragedy;
From secret laden soil
Green leaves push out,
Hung on a vine that sings.
From some unfading seed
Not germinate of earth
But caught within the beaks
Of soaring birds,
As poets capture evanescent words,
A delicate flower springs.

The sparkling seeds—
They were bright heaven’s bequest
To such as walk as strangers without rest,
Who ever yearn
To touch some memory and learn
Of a lost garden by a sea of song
Where once they danced night long.

So far beneath the stars of night
The seeds appear in beads of light,
In the round rapture of the notes
That gush from skylarks’ throats—
Who sip the moonbeam fragrance of a pool
Whereon a lotus floats.

But when they hear—
These wanderers of the sky—
Earth’s pain and fear and piteous cry,
Wounded they sink upon the ground—

The light-encysted seed
Is freed
With death’s last whispered sound;
Scarcely perceived by even the subtlest glance,
Unfold the radiant flowers,
Most lovely buds—strange plants.

Weary and hungry sit
With eloquent white cheek
And meditative eye
Pale beings exquisite,
Denied the solace of a sigh.
Sweet buds that sing of life
And spread their melodies
Flinging their songs skyward,
Rare cadences of light—
Beauty too rarely heard!
The blossoms from the garden of the sky,
Pervade the dreams of lovers
Who survive upon their perfume—
Else must die.

CÉSAR FRANCK’S QUINTETTE IN F MINOR

A spray of notes and trembling silences
Repeated till the feeling air must swoon
Beneath the marching echoes of one tune,
Plucked on a grieving harp among the trees;
A melancholy voice of hostages
Crying in vain upon a frozen moon,
Through tempest, and then mercifully soon
Becalmed in deeps of far maternal seas.

Where are the songs and singing? Are they lost,
Those quivering pauses woven of Beauty’s skein?
Somewhere the tragic clods to chaos tossed
Arise, exult. Renascent heart and brain
Leap upward to a flaming Pentecost,
And gather deathless music out of pain. . . .
SHALL EROS YET BE BORN?

Make me some overture of Beauty—
I am sick and weary of Time's parturition.

I prayed the Gods to let me look on Beauty . . .

There was a painter who loved blue
But felt he did not know it—never used it.
It was a sacred star far off in heaven
That one might some day leap to—like a cloud
Drinking blue velvet from its blazing cup.

Another goose-stepped through color,
Dared to paint a blue-eyed child,
Bludgeoned its yellow curls with paint so hard
No tornado's finger could ever lift a hair.

Unless one is super man or super poet
He has no business going in for molding bronze or stone
Or daring to transmute present travail—
    Hell's plasticity—
To forms of pure transparency—
Fleeting truth no one wants to see;
Or torture to continuity of vision
Or thought or feeling—suffering, it may be—
Crackling symphonies played at once,
Béla Bartók-wise, in four rhythms.

But why seek reason gleaming through?
Why not just hear noise, be beaten
By dissonance, and find the answer
In what quivers after the last cymbal's blamm?

Can the critics help—sorting out what's worthy?
If what one has done pleased—that's no criterion;
If 'twas hated—no better rod of measure;
If what's offered blinds, deafens,
Twists feelings—that's no answer.

One is still shot into the air
Body sprawling—it seems the mind sprawls too
When form's all awry.
Distortion's no precipitate
For juggled meaninglessness—
But clambers bulbous on its own effluvia,
Choking what's left of air
With poison-drooling atoms,
Featured hunchback-wise.

Here in the opaque night
Let me touch your hand;
Make me some overture of Beauty—
I am sick and weary of Time's parturition—
No more trying to ferret out
Gods incomplete or overgrown.
Before our heartbeat's ground out utterly,
Let's wrench from inertia's tumuli
What's human—Just one thread of recognition
From any eye,
Caught in a needle of lightning
Will wind me up for time enough—
All I ask!

Shall we go on living as usual,
Seizing on this fluctuation and seek to blast
Out of it all—some sanity?
Shall we keep green,
Lie flat to earth,
Bamboo under torrents of rain,
Standing straight when the sun shines?
Or shall we slip aside from chaos
Into this "germ of me,"
For a long time forgetting,
Beginning to grow again—
Somewhere—somehow—
Waking in a quieter place,
Instantly to remember once more—Beauty?

Say the Spirit's medium is a golden song—
It hums there like a fly in amber;
Do you think the flesh is breaking through to hear it?
And all the ugly hurting is the detonation
Of what is lifeless that keeps the two
From hearing with the same ear?
Who are the great lovers?—
Spirit and flesh—
Shall Eros yet be born?
COMPASSIONATE

Altar of Gods unexpressed,
Flame too intense for sight!—
His eyes hide in his heart
Who dips them in that Light.
Eyes drunk on winey grapes
Singing like honey bees;
His tender hands exhale
Petal-soft fragrances;
His gesture—Beauty's flame
Preserved in ambergris.
So much of earth he has bought
So much has paid to Heaven;
For all of sky and dust
Has canceled and forgiven—
From seeking aught of God or man
He is blanched and shriven.
Outcast of sightless shrines,
Of Silence a high priest,
Into the holy of holies
Of even the meager and least—
Into their naked times sacrificial
No step he'll take;
Sees from the soil
Of their grime and sweat
How flowers spring—

From the worn print
Of their broken feet
The bruised stones sing—
And hears a music
That men do not know they make.
I HEARD AN ORIOLE

I heard an oriole
Thrilling to the sun,
Swelling, pulsing, trilling,
Thrilling to the sun;
His song an iridescent
Spray of stars
Hurled to the earth,
Dripping with red and blue,
With gold and purple spun.

There floated upward
Through the unfathomed deep
A tranquil lily
On the pool of sleep.
His rapture caught
The chill infolded bud
Close to the sky;
Startled with light
Its lovely blush
Perfumed the steep.

I walked in autumn
To the lilac tree:
From clustered mauve
And odorous sweet
And verdure free,
A nest clung mutely
Close to the pitying bough
Blown by the breeze,
Hollow and small and singing
Its stilling song to me.
EUCALYPTUS

I

Young

Greyhounds of earth
Slenderly pointing and still
Arched to the clouds
Tautened and lithe,
Lankly swaying in the wind!
Where suede limbs stray,
Where leafing boughs are thinned
Your sculptured muscles strive
Sheer through the air.
To far hunting grounds
Leap you . . . sweep you,
Hounds of the vale and hill.

II

Strange

Are you men
From far Himalayan peak
Wrapped in a ghostly
Auric cloud
Bluish in the milky haze?

A cool obedience
Pervades your days
Oblivious and bowed,
Birds in your pallid
Shreds of hair;
Weep you? . . . Sleep you—
Shadows that never speak?

III

Old

Ragged garments peel
And drop apart
Thinly to twisted bone;
You have dried
Old with the verdigris of rain,
With here and there
An ash-of-roses stain
Cindered by sun-tide.
What is it
Bids you bloom in spring?
Seeps through . . . keeps you—
Adagio pulse? . . . Your heart?
MARCH 18th

I

Softly in dawning's glimmer
Where leafless branches blow
Fluted a delicate breeze
Across dissolving snow.
The frost began to shimmer
Along the jewelled hedge.
Stirring the ragged trees
At the ghostly hillock's edge
To drowsy melodies
The wing of the dawn wind sped.

Veiled in a silver light
The short-eared owl has fled
To the starry northern night
Where the laggard winter clings.

Between the cornshock rows
In wet fields dimly green
Fresh-odored mallow springs
And there march satin crows.

II

On pussywillow spray
Bluejays and robins sway;
The slender maples preen
A softly feathered green;
From yellow willow trees
The baby squirrel sees
Where springs and brooks are flooded.
All through the muted night
Beauty has sprung and budded.

III

On the thin ice of the lake
The ducks alight—the drake
Black duck and golden-eye,
And in the turquoise sky
Rough legged hawks awake
And purple grackles fly.
DAYBREAK

Veils interfolding translucent veils, dropped upon Earth,
Bring heaven's touch to the soil,
The calm outsighing of Nature to the Universe,
The substance of stillness palpitating to innumerable strings,
A mighty controlled breath, intoning stupendous praise!

A deep amazing power of silent boughs
Expands skyward on green impenetrable waves,
Bathed with incredible visions of freshness—
The healing liquid freshness of their exhalation.

Bluejays call; silver splashes spurt from the lark's throat;
A wild canary worships joyously.
Feathery moss from a tree-bole throbs in one's palm, alive,
Vibrating firefully with the flush of swelling light.
The wild canary's rapture—does it come from the branch?
Or from the pulsing softness of wonder in the hand?

One by one, layers of pure dreams alift,
The sacred mists bestir unreally.

A heart is beating in the loamy hill-side,
Under the pliant shell of mold,
Twigs and sapful needles, twirled flakes of red madrone,
And the fresh reaping of dawn-wind sprays.
Etched traceries in powdery dust, black on rock and trail,
Mark where the lucent dew has dropped and wandered.
Fluttered down the passive trunks,
Rust-gold, filigree wings—a myriad—
Catch in permissive ferns.

Mysterious, insistent, pillared tone,
The Dawn—of wondrous upward-swelling ravishing response!
The Dawn—all thundering life in one muted sigh
All voice, all song, all glory of the world!
THE HUMMING BIRD

What do I see in the sunlight of gold?
What is this fluttering, quivering glimmer?
What is it darts with a rhythm untold,
Flashing and swaying in gossamer shimmer?

You are the butterfly’s glorious hue
Blent with the violet’s heart purple-dripping,
Drinking your spell from the dawn’s silver dew,
Tears of love’s roses most wantonly sipping.

Set me the dewdrop in chaplet divine
Wrought from the soul of a gold-hearted flower;
Capture the sparkle of ruby-red wine,
Scarce could such fantasy rival your dower.

Musical whir of your ultimate wing,
What but the lull of the brook, Spring’s first comer?
What but the chorus the daffodils sing?—
Oh my bright sun-bird, my red-throated hummer!

Kissing the sun-jeweled amethyst air,
Live on, hummin-bird, dart and hover;
Speechless to picture such mystery rare,
Silent I gaze like a wondering lover.

Spirit of rainbow and music you seem,
Soaring in ecstasy, heavenward flying,
Caught in the blue web, a breathing sunbeam,
Creature of sunlight, of beauty undying!
THE RAINDROP FLASHES

The raindrop flashes
To the sea,
Again climbs skyward mistily.
A minute purpose
Animates its life;
It seeks a reason
For the futile strife.

A snowflake flutters
To a child's eyelid;
Into a lily bulb
The dew has slid;
Or else almost
'Tis blest,
A tear of joy
On a mother's breast,
And trembling on her heart
It hears
A lullaby of the celestial spheres.
And yearns for wings
To carry it afar,
To some maternal dew-shine
Of the heavens—a star!

MOTH

I heard no beat of tired wings
Where thou did'st dance
Upon the sunlit strands
Athwart the turquoise ladder
Of the sky.
What yearning breath
Did catch thee,
To lay thee broken
At my feet? . . .
WHITE HERDS

Better than anything
I love to lie
Limp as cornsilk
And watch the sky.

On the blue mountain
White herds browse—
Quiet, remote . . .
As children drowse.

When the wind calls
Gleaming horns lift;
Up the steep slope
The white herds drift . . .

Onward and onward . . .

ANODYNE

There the pool is with its purling
Placid rhythms swirling—swirling—
There the lilies with their crescents,
Creamy petals drenched with essence
Of a still and secret sleeping
Through the water flower seeping.
SHADBLOW

Most delicate the blossoms ray
From undistinguished quiet stem
As though a starréd diadem
Were blown from evening's milky way.

So early, so alone—to sing
And trees still shivering in the rain!
It haunts the dusk—a white refrain,
A whisper from the flute of spring.

WONDER

I

I want to see the middle
And everything around—
What is hid behind the blue sky
And way down in the ground.

I wish I had the long neck
A giraffe beastie has
To taste the candy in the clouds
And every starry speck.

I'd love to touch the button
That makes the lights go on,
The starlight and the moonlight,
And then the blazing sun.

But most I've curiosity
About the thing inside of me,
That makes me want to feel and taste
To see and hear and be.
II
Sometimes I run away
And all day long I play
Off in the friendly wood.
I whistle all the songs of birds
And when I'm very good
They twitter round and talk to me
The way one's playmates should.
I'm acquainted with the biggest fish
That swishes in the spring
Where one day I lost a shiny wish—
Perhaps he'll find the thing—

III
I think the stars are tiny holes
In the floor of heaven's blue,
Where angels use a sweeping broom
To sweep the gold dust through.
And when it's rainy here below,
The angels scrub and splash,
The water drips right through the stars
And makes the rainbow flash.
And when it thunders awfully,
I'm never scared a bit
Because they move God's furniture about
In taking care of it.

IV
I know a round rock
Way up high
On the bare hill.
The wind's so strong
He makes my hair fly—
Up farthest from the earth
And nearest to the sky.
My secret rock is round
Just like a dome
And when I climb so far—
Below I see my home,
Above I see a star.
I see everything
In the whole world—
I have such fun!—
And when my picnic's done,
I stand up straight
And stretch my arms,
And with all my might halloo—
"Yoo-hoo!—do you see me—God?
Yoo-hoo, God!—I see You!"
He sees me because he echoes me
"Hoo-hoo—hoo-hoo—hoo-o-o-o!" . . .
TIMBRE

The bell cannot tell
What it is;
It can but ring;
It cannot say,
"I am true:
I am hollow!"
Not the bell—
But when a touch
Makes it sing
From the rim around,
What it is—must sound.

MY EYES HAVE LOOKED

My eyes have looked upon much
And now I lay them away,
It is not that I fear to see
What waits beyond the hour,
It is that what I see
I will look upon no more.
The shallow eye that spreads invading everything
Finds quickly easy grooves;
Bold eyes that run ahead
Inviting the feet to follow.

But I would rather walk
Like a groping beggar—blind,
And tapping with a cane
And tapping out the inches,
Walking with little sound.

You with your hurried eyes
Without hesitation will plunge,
You will press against one another,
You will pass me and leave me behind—
But I shall not jostle against you—
Perhaps I shall find a new way . . .
IN MANY A STRANGE GARDEN

In many a strange garden
The flowers were grown
To make your perfume.
Once you were nightshade,
Once you were grape,
And long ago the bloom
Of a seed unknown.

You are tang of bitterness—
Astarte's purple scent—
The fume of death.
Always your petals were scattered,
Always your blooms were crushed,
But ever a seed was caught
In the fringe of your cerement.

TEA

Our breath between us
In the formal space—
Sweet-smelling veil
Fluttering the sequins
Of white words—
Transparent—meaningless
With light shining through.

Over the crescent of my cup
I looked at you.
Each snared the sudden
Sensitive astonishment
In the other's eyes.

A freighted impression—
An old outlandish ship—
Sailed across golden tea.

Slight charming adventure—
So full of treasure!

It were wiser not
To explore mysterious cargo!
VIBRANT

Shall roses bloom
When any heart
Is breaking?
Why should my hand
Not pluck
And lay them on
That breast
To still its aching?

For sympathy
Transmuted into roses
The healing heart
Of Beauty's self
Discloses.

INTERVAL

Climb up the sky,
O Moon!
Before you night is flying.
Lose not the Sun
Or soon
Be shrunken, empty, crying.

Your distance keep,
O Moon,
Or stars must fall
And soon
You too—in dead seas lying! . . . .
LEAVES

Here on the cool resistless leaves
I lie and rest my autumn heart.
They rustle with the beat
Of passing feet;
Mutely I lie apart.

To them, young summer's night
Now is a dream
Of dim star-shine;
For me, love's head upon my breast—
Wet with these tears of mine.

They sheltered the bird's nest
Where the bare fledglings peep;
And in my arms a child
I rocked to sleep.

When they were spotted
With the murk of passing time,
They gave themselves unto the rain
And washed away the stain.

Darkened with the dust
Of reason and of time—
Wind-torn by fears—
Under the sky of life I lay
Washed clean by tears.

And yet the leaves—
Gaunt mimicry of summer—
Still they clung
Long after summer.
The bitter wind must tear them
From the branches where they hung.

They drifted—made their pattern
On the air
And did not dare
To know their aftermath
Of smoke and flame.

But I was never moored to tree;
My hands were never fastened hungrily
To twigs. The very fame
That might have been for me
I did not claim.

And now we all altogether lie.
Faded their brilliant stain;
Myself with folded eye
Wait here and rest me.

Why, ah why
So long before the spring
Must I arise again?—
To seek the sky? . . .
LENORE

Beloved, how quietly you slipped away
The tender petal-garment of your soul
And with a gesture of benignant grace
Unfurled the wondrous shimmer of your wings!

And how upon the heights your spirit sings! . . .
What holy angel touched you as you lay
So stillly sleeping, silent as a dream,
The whole eternal mystery on your face? . . .

DUST

I

"Is this all that is left?"

Drift-dust that blinded
The marching ones,
The dim far caravans
Of old ghost deserts,
The salt of their tears
That lifts from bruised
Highways,
Is this all that is left—
Muffling the drums of memory?

Where are the wild ones
Who roved and were tamed
And who hid?
Are they dust
Frightened from swift trails?
Blood dust—of sharp stones?

Not by their earth-to-earth
Are they rememberéd
But by wisps of nomad fires,
By the lazy soot of hearths
Sacred against hunger,
Altar of slain beasts,  
Sacred against freeze,  
The mute eloquence  
Of hunger and satiety  
Rose and faltered and sank.

"Confetti in the parade of dust"  
Petal dust and cloudy pollen,  
Skyey plateau's golden grain  
Flailed by the sun,  
Ashes of bird's wings  
Singed by high noon,  
Pulverized sparkle of frost,  
Enamel of deep-sea pearls  
Crushed for wine,  
The patterned fringe  
Of foam-beat sand,  
Silver dripping of stars'  
Sleep-song,  
How many eye-lids  
Have you buried?  
Bright hair, and finger tips  
Pink like small buds and  
Brittle as last year's leaf,  
All this is a true thing.  
This is shavings  
In the wind's work-shop.

All the shining glimmer  
Of homing birds
And scales of crimson fishes,
The ruined glaze
Of dragon fly's patine,
Ground shards of temple colonnades,
Spices and seeds
From ancient tombs,
These are confetti
In the parade of dust.

"Who can patch these chips together?"

Have you seen the white made-up moon,
Isis' ethereal powder puff?
And the milky way
Spread like a white peacock's tail?—
Have you felt
The trickle of dreams—
Remembered no longer,
And waking less remembered than dreams?

Have you known the fatal drug of eyes
Dissolved in one cup?
Caresses tenuous of thirsty hands
That unrefreshed fell apart
Like withered blooms?
Enameled smiles of sirens'
Lucent mouths, flinging
Into the wine of air
A poisoned shower of false stars? . . .
Orchids decompose in these vapors.

Have you touched
The crumbled texture of worn moments?
The shadowy wisps of
All past silences—
Invisible attrition of hearts ground fine?
The swarming motes of
Heartbeats ever fainter,
Never still—adagio—adagio?
Who can patch these chips together—
Exotic lacquer of a painted idol?

All this became dust unwillingly,
Dancing in the desert of disenchantment.
If it were not for this folly-colored dust
There had never been a beautiful sunset.

"Mingling their living eyes and their dead passionate dust"

They who slept within the crystal,
Dreamed in the tree-sap tides
And wakened in flesh,
Their hero atoms marched
From the molten lava
Of the world's core
To seek their loves
In the perfume of a rose.
And Strength and Beauty
Even in the grove
Crept to their Mecca,
Finding their moment
Of eternity in Kaaba's glass,
Each finding each and
Mingling their living eyes
And their dead passionate dust.
V

"Where nothing is lost and nothing is revealed."

Ah—priceless beyond price
Is that strange incense
Made of the loves of all
Who ever were alive.
These golden mists
Soar beyond distance
Above earth's moon—
These are the stars
And the light of stars
Beyond earth's sun! . . .

From this inarticulate dust
Is spun a singing gauze
A weave of colored melodies
Where nothing is lost
And nothing is revealed—
A praying veil more fine
Of texture than an infant's skin,
More fine than a thinker's brain.
All that ever fainted,
Dropped to the ultimate
Black ember of the pit,

All that was ever living
Was felt or visioned,
All is made into incense,
That burns within the praying veil.

Clouds of flower-smelling mist
Roll ever from its folds;
Clouds like white marble
Pile up their summits to the sun.
Temples are built of their beauty;
Their stones gleam and sing
And are fragrant with secrets,
Their domes, the arches and spires
Are distant and lost,
Shattering the crystal of the sun
And spilling its silence.

Poured from that temple's inmost shrine,
Poured from the lute of Beauty
A voice flames forth,
All voices gathered
To its single tone.

Ah music!
Ah lute of life!
Ah—praying veil
Undulating before
The Holy of Holies! . . .
PORTENTS

Here is the well . . .
Its fissured ring
Embossed with mold,
A well hoar-aged and lone,
All withering pale emerald moss
Crusted over with fungused gold
Set in the rain enamelled stone.
A little pool within its deep,
Sunny with innocence of skies
Impaled upon its flash,
And gently rhyming to the airs
Its trustful splash,
Trembles to icy stillness,
Fixed in transparent sleep.

And autumn has silenced
The music of summer.

And there a spider—
Tireless and wary,
Grotesque and hairy,
Danced upon glistening thread,
Spinning and tying
Wheel within wheel—
At last upon the very center lying.
Its perfect patterned web spread

From rim to rim
Across the old well’s brim.

The web is a shrouding lid to eye
Where laughter is no more,
Whose tears are frozen.

A pale thing fluttered . . .
A crushed moth pitifully creeping?
Oh no—a bloom whose silent weeping
Fell on a reedy bough
Where melody long since was uttered.

Night sky, pent up of woe!
Dumbly the moon blinks
From the well’s cold mire.
The spider has scuttled to a dark root’s cloak.
Like anguished smoke
From tear quenched fire,
The cobwebs blow.
The poor bloom’s petals
Scattered to a bank of snow.

And the echo of summer’s song
Swoons in the sepulchre of winter.
TWO SWANS

Mutely along the rivulets of spring
A pair of swans narcissus-white had sped;
Strangers they were, adrift on cadent wing,
Their unknown spacious skies forever fled.

Soft as the tears an April moon had wept,
Floated the swans within a lake's caress
Whereon a singing wind in beauty leapt,
Breathing the waters into liveliness.

With harmonies of exquisite design—
Color and line and rhythmic postures blent—
The two in mutuality divine,
One on the other their sweet glances bent.

Along the banks and on the hillside bare,
Grasses and buds flamed into colored song;
The dogwood's beauty startled thrushes there
Nesting their young beneath the blossoms' throng
Hearing the wooing tones and fledgling cries,
The swans felt each its heartsong in its throat,
Remembering that the swan in singing dies—
In silent pathos drowned its heavenly note.

Now summer is gone and birds, on autumn wings;
The pageant leaves are fallen, woods are mute.
The swans alone remain and nothing sings;
Across the lake there calls no lover's lute.

Stagnant the waters, filled with leaves and grasses,
Who dared not sing, in narrowing circles move.
The fragrant wind of dreams—no more it passes,
Who dared not sing—from them fled also love.
THE MOURNING DOVE

The mourning dove sounded its note,
We walked through the cooling wood;
Through the branches it sobbed at dark—
I never had understood.

I was too happy, remote
In the moonlight with my love,
Hearing his voice and the lark—
Now I hear only the dove! . . .

RETICENCE

Folded in your beauty,
Sealed by your glance,
I learned to secrete myself
In a waterfall of bliss—
Learned to wait like a seed
Smiling under the snow.

A star's small
Thimble of light
Is concealed in the milky way;
My heart is veiled in crystal mist,
My secret hid in a pearl . . .
THE KISS

Up through the air
Exquisitely float
White violets
Through morning light
Trailing long stems
Green like river water.

Over distant harp-strings
A hand sweeps once—
Sounding a delicate chord . . .

JOURNEY

One summer night I heard
A stirring in the leaves.
It was a bird.
Moonbeams were lute strings;
Luster of night was crooning
A song my love sings... . .

Now I hurry along the road
And in the leaves is stirring
A dissonant tree-toad—
Too near the nest it seems.
The moon is a mist
And through the dust of dreams
I cannot see the face I kissed.
BARE HILLS

I must not deeply lack
Nor inward fear
That these dun hills, these barren fields
Bring never back
Blue lupin, yellow poppies
Of another year.

When water on that day
From out the well
Your white hand drew, and laved my eyes,
Freshened my way,
What drink you gave the heart knows—
And can it tell?

’Tis futile I should yield
To upraise the stream
From rest, invoke warm rain, too soon
Waking the field,
The hill once more to startle
With golden dream.

Old song’s last echo pales—
Then singing again!
Your music moves within me still,
Nor ever fails;
Like a lost river hid—
And covered pain.

THE LISTENER

Almost on all fours crawling,
Bend low, old woman, under your fagots,
Winter is coming fast, hurrying along:
Run along, old she!

Horsemen are coming, hurrying along;
Your ear is close to the ground,
Far away you hear prancing along the road.

Hair clings to the mud as you hobble,
A white hair here and there marks your passing—
But no fagots dropt.

Shiver, old uncouth animal,
Crawl along on your feet and your nose,
Skinny hands strained above skinny shoulders;
Claw fast comfort for bitter days.

Plop, plop, plop!
The masters are coming,
Hurrying along, hurrying along;
You’ll frighten their horses, you old beast.
Those thorny fagots bristle up
Like hair on a fearsome wild thing.
Hobble faster, hobble faster!
Hop out of the way: the road’s narrow!
Crawl into the thickets;
Winter is coming;
Branches and twigs are blanched and yellowed
Like you, old woman, like you—
All old bones cracking under the lash.

Lie down, stretch and groan;
Let the earth bear your burden awhile;
Rest your scraggly locks on the mould,
Your ear to the ground.

Clump, clump, clump!
Mutter of the boots!
Mutter of the boots!
The masters will meet them at the crossways—
Millions and millions!
Run along, old vivandiere,
Fagots are brands,
Fagots are brands!

SUN WORSHIP

To the cross of Juniperro de Serra—
The stone cross high on the hill
That stands up out of the dunes—
I go there—to the top of the knoll.

Rest, dreaming, waking are for me
Lying lonely on the sands
On the hill above the city
And looking up at the gulls.

Now I have been seeing
And I have been thinking
How wide are the arms of the cross
Of Father Juniperro de Serra,
And thinking how great its height—
Like a tall man reaching the sky.

I stand and look far away
At the city of Saint Francis spread
Under many hills. The steeples
And the staring windows are red
With the fiery red of sunset.

But now I look at the sea . . .
The sun bobs on a twig
Between the sea and sky;
It is covered with red bloom
Like a tangerine of gold;
Its red and golden juices
Are flooding the colored sea.

The copper tongues of the waves—
Over and over and over—
Strike the molten gong of the sea.

The clouds that cover the sky
Drink up from the rim of the earth
Like sponges, the flaming juice
Of that huge and ripened fruit.

O huge and gleaming fruit,
Maddened to drink of your wine,
I am a deeper cup than the sea,
A hollow cup wider than the sky,
Longing for your wine of beauty
More thirstily than the town
Aching and sultry in the hills.

Sky-rocket tangerine
A moment—then you will be gone,
A sudden strange blotting of color
From the avid windows and towers,
The basalt cross of de Serra!

I that am hurt by your going,
That am a pale shell without you,
Cry for a bauble of light
That burst, and beauty is gone.
The world has broken its toy—
A hoop of light climbing the sky!

I weep that am lonely on the hill
For the image of loveliness gone,
Loveliness only a dream—
Fruit falling from the twig
Cast up to this thirsty hill
Before the bloodless night
One life-red golden drop.

One drop—it stains my skin,
My heart, with sweet-smelling juice!
My fingers are tipped with flame!

Down in the black-shadow town,
In the empty cup of the hills,
The fruit on the tables is tasteless;
The burning has gone from the hearths.

O hands flame-warm, reach out!
O drunken heart with wine,
Go down to the city set in black
Where the flowering tapers are lost!
WOMAN OF THE DESERT

Sunk from the heart of dream-world clouds
Into the seeking breast of the sea,
The westering flaming sun
Has slipped into oblivion;
Lost is its dipping rim,
Melted to ambient splendor.

Budded mysteriously from out
A shimmering stalk
(That ghostly thread of dusk
Binding the radiant day
To the hair of his mother night).
The luminous moon-flower nods,
Springing from the purple root
Of unfathomable dark.

Where shifting, drifting, sifting,
The quivering mutable sands defied,
Now undulates a shroud of powdery white
Stirred by the voiceless haste
Of fanning wind-wings.

Through an inverted vaporous sea
Gleam amber stars evanescent,
Poised on eternal stems,
Tranquil as faraway songs
On the lips of a mother.

Strange beauty breathed from pulsing earth
Touches thy listening face,
Woman of the desert.
Where thou dost move,
Fragile corollas of night-lure
Without calyx, bulb or stem,
With filmy tenuous petals kiss thy knees.

Languorous perfume saturates thy hair;
The slender throat aweary,
Heavy hair bedrenched,
Inclines thy face to earth.
The trail obliterated,
Thou dreamest through obscurity,
Hot sands enwrithed about thy feet.

Woman of the desert, child of lost light,
Of silvery veils obscure,
In solitude unsolaced,
All flowery odorous bedewed,
Between the moon and thee
Swings low a gauzy dusk.

Athwart its laddered mesh
Thy fingers weave,
Threading a way to the sea.
Touch with thy prayerful hands
The ethereal strands.
Like an aspiring bow
Thy sobbing body curved,
Strain to thine uttermost height.
With patient fingers thread thou mesh by mesh
The faint illumined upper web,
Until the salt tang of the open sea
Smites from thine eyes
The mask of stupor
And tired feet at last
Are washed by shallow crystals
Of the deep.

Fling out thine arms!
With fragile hands describe
Great wings in blue-stained ether!
Flash into spray, blend with the wave,
Abandon to the mighty winds
Thyself! . . .
Follow the lost-to-thee
Sun of thy world! . . .

THE BARREN WOMAN’S SON *

“Say, have you seen him,
The barren woman’s son?—
Him I caught with ropes of sand
In the desert of desire?”
Thus cried Marah.

“I strayed from the edge of the town,
From the sight of the huts and the walkways
Full of hollows from the press of crowds.
I turned my back on the town.
A hot breeze came from the desert,
It warmed me and sought me;
(A hot breeze, a dry breeze;)
It carried away the intimate odors of the town.

The barren woman’s son came dancing toward me,
Dancing on the tips of his pointed shoon;
With seeds of the date-palm he pelted me.
His soundless laughter stirred the air,
The hot dry air.

The sands purred with the teasing of his feet;
With tap of his pointed shoon
Secrets whispered from the waste.

* In the Vedas, the illusory nature of the phenomenal world is termed “Maya”. The common people of India call her the “Barren Woman.”
His smile beckoned,
Charmed the feelers of the air;
Winding tentacles encircling drew me
Like a walker in sleep.

When I listened the crooning song
Slid into silence.
When I only looked,
The slow melody of his smile
Like a dim sigh cradled me,
And I followed his rapid mad dancing
As sunlight flits through leaves,
While my fingers caught at his girdle,
Felt him like a shadow
That was and now is not.
Whirling sand stung my lips,
I was buffeted by lashing thongs
By which I sought to bind him,
Thrown back to fall of a sudden,
Trembling to crouch, to crawl,
Never touching, clutching
At those mocking shoon;
Again to lurch on drunkenly,
Arms outstretched, waving futile blind fingers.
On the harp-strings of my flying mane
The hand of fate twanged loveless discords.

Bled I then to drown him
In purple-black waves of my hair,
In a whirling lustrous eddy,
Till his sibilant smile should gasp and die
Like a fish in the shining nets.
With sliding smile he lured,
The barren's woman's son;
He stamped the running sands
With the heels of his pointed shoon
And a rug grew there
Of little flowers
Thrilling to drowsy fragrance
And beautiful bloom.
With sliding smile he lured,
And Marah cried:
"O mate of my shadow,
Life dies in my heart
To a tired falling echo;
As the wind goes to sleep
In the grasses
I lose myself in thee!"
Mouth crying, forgetting to breathe,
Swooned to his arms and lips...

Face down in wind-torn dust,
Hair of my head trampled, broken,
Flesh scorched,
And at my breast an adder hanging!
Sick unto death were my hands,
Abhorring to touch.

With the cold flame of mine eyes
My wounds were seared.
The adder’s fangs were frozen,
The air shuddered where it dropt.
With swish—swish—
It rustled and slid,
Like a lying smile slid
On the desert’s face,
A lost sneer in the empty flatness.

Ho, Leader of the Caravan,
To the end of a long thong bind me,
Tied to the straps of the last burdened beast;
Drag me in sand till I scour
His touch from my flesh;
Fling me scarce breathing at the oasis edge
Where dry desert lips
Suck the green from the grasses!

There by Marali’s bitter well
I’ll smear me with ashes
And cleanse me in waters of poor broken tears;

Kneel where life dies to a breath,
Where sun and moon, stars and the heavens,
Day, earth and mountainous seas
Swarm in chaos of black night uncreate.

I cut my body open
That he may walk out of my heart—
(For well I know that his blood
Turns to sighing dust
Unless he drink from my heart.)

I will scrape and scrape
From the devious paths of my brain
The stain of his biting shoon—
(For well I know that he cannot smile or sing
Unless I rock him in the hollow of my thoughts.)

I draw a circle round my dreams
Of smiling, of dancing, of singing,
Of plush of darkness and diamond drips of sunshine—
(For well I know unless I hold him in my dreams
He has no being.)

See, all the price I’ve paid
Has not beggared me:
Here’s gold in my girdle still,
Sapphires, rubies and pearls.
When a caravan comes again
I'll buy purple veils for my innocent hair,
And pure white to cover my face,
The snowiest linen for my petal-clean flesh,
A garment of shimmering Persian rose,
And last a mantle of blue of the deep sea,
And precious sandals for my feet
To tread a new earth.

I shall ride on a tall camel
And a living thread in my hand
Like the long stem of a lotus
Shall guide me over the wastes.
My eyes shall be queen's eyes that day,
Tearless and free and farseeing;
They shall behold the sparkling minarets
Of my own city. . .
No wind-blown echo
Or thin forgotten shadow
Of that wraith-mirage
Shall slumber there.

Against the blaze of welcoming light
Behold my domes afar like swollen buds
And lace-leaf spires,
And in the minaret an angel muezzin
Calling, "Peace, peace, peace!" . . .

TO THOSE WHO KNOW
Here is a humble shelter—a home
Whose earthy floor gives room
To bundles of pasture-grass and bloom.

There in a corner leans the plow
Blackened and rude-cut from a bough,
And jars of barley and corn and wheat.

Hither gladly the cows come
With dripping udders meadow-sweet.
The hen, the rooster, the dove come home,
The thankful ass, the hare, the lamb,
The barking dog and the ram.
The storks come home on flapping wings,
Under the thatch a dark bird sings.

Here is a granary of rest,
Here is the heaven of the dumb;
The earth yields to the shaggy breast,
To the meek and lowly sleep will come.

At midnight Mary and Joseph come
The white ass knows what they know not—
Mary's welcome in this mean spot.

Fowls of the air and beasts of the field,
Wise men and stars and angels yield
Space for Mary and space for HIM.
To those who know him—to them he has come
 Where he is born and shines is home,
 Heaven of beast and seraphim.
The inhuman race of rulers of men—
 Mary and the white ass pass their door.

The barley seed, the wheat and the corn
 Bloom and die and have rebirth.

From the pasture cows bring milk for the poor,
 To clothe the naked, brutes are shorn;
 He is their brother—
 His Mother their mother.

But the inhuman race of rulers of men
 Crucify him and crown him with thorn—
 . . .
 He lives and rises and calls again! . . .

THE MOTHER SPEAKS

I

Let my thoughts hover about them—my sons—
 Esctatic and vitally palpitant
 To enter into them when the temple door is open
 Like white vestals and pure doves!

No drowsy maid briefly disturbed
 By imperious summons
 But a woman awake,
 I know the sound of Love's beseeching.
 My eyes behold him through the heavy door
 In his sweet beauty.

What is moonlight to a maid?
 I have floated in a flood of amber light
 Like a secret fish, flashing and subtle,
 Dived like a shadow to the moon's heart of mystery.

Sons have I borne,
 At my breasts nourished them,
 Died and lived again with a thousand painful gasps
 In a dark garden. . . .
And of Silence—what knows she?
Of the still wind of Ceres’ breathing
Upon thrilling buds at dawn?
Of the forever swishing of the great bird
With black wing of sorrow
With white wing of hope,
Of pallid sleep—lids sealed
With drops of honeyed light—
Beads of prayer?

_Silence!
Sacred tenuous flames of women’s souls
Rise—girding the earth with rainbows in the night—
To sway in tender pity—and bending,
To anoint with pristine fires
The brows of the children.
Oh—desperate unborn!
Who know not the garden—the silence—the sea!

II

Once I chanted of drama—of music and art—
Yet was stranger to them.
Now at its meek duties
My heart flames into understanding.
Instead of hands aspiring in golden dance
Under blazing skies of splendor,
My back is bent to coarse toil and endless service—
Thousands and thousands of little acts.

In their eternal streaming
These souls have come by me—
Into this little swirl.
Should I not intensely yearn to succor them—
Guests of my body, heart and mind,
Own-kind of my soul?

III

The outward, wayward child
Is a stretching shell
At which the self within is tugging,
Chiseling a universe
Willing at last to be _his subject._

The beast may not be beaten
For his not-knowing.
Let no blind unmanaged force
Of innocent young life
Impel to stupid reaction.

Gentle—wholly believing—divinely suffering;
Enable us, Compassion, to guide them
Into channels of fine instinct;
Grant us grace to teach our sons
How in freedom to follow!
O blessed women!
Mary, mother of Christ,
Mother of Buddha,
Mothers of the masters, who dwelt upon poor earth,
Conflagrations of pity:
Speak to us from your hallowed peaks!
Ye are great women—
Ye mothers of the mighty!
O Divine Compassion,
Touch us! . . .

Ave—Ave—the day,
When killers in their battle lines shall see
When their hells of death-darts fall!
The air swarms with red hearts of women,
Dripping to the mire of mangled mankind
To flutter eternally in broken pain.
And there—the six beseeching dumb mouths
Of Christ on the mount!
And his eyes—oh—his eyes! . . .

System upon system!
Suns and planets!
Moons and illimitable spaces!
Gods—and upon the spiral pathway
The ceaselessly aspiring atom!
Intelligence and energy!
Breather and breathed upon!
Chant ye majestic praises!

Woman—tip your bowl toward earth,
Stain it with victory! . . .
RELATIVITY

Up through my bitter clay
And my unhappy dust,
A diamond makes its way,
A star to my deep night,
Which, piercing through to day,
Turns black in white sunlight.

Within too darkened earth
It shone a poignant germ
Astir, and seeking birth.
But even with release—
Alas, now is there dearth
Of rest, nor any peace.

Afar through pathless space
Beyond those stranger worlds,
Wresting the ultimate place,
It ever brighter glows,
Burning and blazing the race,
Light unto Light it flows.

MOTHER OF THE WORLD

Divine mother of the universe, of countless universes,
Speak to me with thy many voices:
Long gleaming shores of restless continents,
Great mysterious waters ever moving.
Speak to me with tongues of moons and stars and
suns,
In roars and whispers of unconquerable winds;
Speak to me in odors of the gardens of the cosmos,
The ancient sighing of mighty forests across the seas!
O Mother—my Life—teach me!
Enfold me in thy gracious arms,
Nourish me at thy breast of power and love,
Breathe upon my face thy will—
To grow,
To burst all bonds,
To breathe fully,
To drink in golden light,
To bathe my upraised eyes in the dew of thy glorious
tears.
Teach me to know—
O Infinite Ocean,
Majestic Source of Living Well-springs—
Thou art the Mother of shining Gods! . . .
MOTHER'S DUSK SONG

The door is open:
Yet I move not,
Though the dusk calls,
Though the scent of petunias
Wanders through the garden—
Petunias at dusk!

The door is open:
Yet I move not,
Though the bend of the road sings,
Though the scent of petunias
Wanders through the gateway—
Petunias at dusk!

I move not—
Through the green smother of the garden,
Through the smooth pool of purple shadows
To the hushing moist of folded leaves,
The wooing odors and the intoning road,
The seeking tendril of the dimming road:
They would miss my body's warmth,
The touch, the voice!

The door is open:
Yet I move not,
Though the dusk calls,
Though the scent of petunias
Wanders through the garden—
They would miss my smile!
WINDOWS

Like an empty house
Wait I;
My eyes are patient windows
Lifted to the sky,
Blindly opaque to shine
Of stars and moon—
(Darkness obliterated
Day—too soon.)
Utterly unfulfilled
Till night is gone,
To blaze with light
Consuming the dark
At dawn.

The lord of the house?
His journey is done,
On the lost side
Of the world—
In the chariot
Of the sun.

BALDER, THE SKAND

Balder, the God of kindness,
Beauty and youth
Pursued by enemies of godly truth
For his protection had been cast a spell
Upon the forest trees of mount and dell—
Upon all shrubs deep rooted in the ground
Reaching heavenward the air around,
That never weapon wrought of them should harm.
The mistletoe alone escaped the charm.

Hate made an arrow from its fatal wood
Wounding to death the God Balder, the good.

Why were the godlike
Down the world’s highway
Cruelly murdered
Blotting the sun from day,
Whose sympathy with every living thing
Fell like rain on the desert’s parchéd ring?

Children of that love
Spread upon the wind,
The beauty of Balder’s heart
To cruel and kind.
Even those who live like trees and plants
Unaware, dreaming, felt his undying glance.
But those his potency could not impress
Exist like mistletoe in rootlessness.

But mourning for the God
To joy is turned
That his heart’s light still burns
That in him burned! . . .

HYMN TO PURE LIGHT

At evening dost Thou hear the temple bells,
Nuri—Blessed One?
Feel a coolness on Thy cheek
And breezes from the sweet fresh water wells?
The herds are resting in the meadow grass,
Nuri—Blessed One!
Thankful birds their nests must seek
And flowers hold their dews till Thou dost pass,
Branches bend, the leaves are whispering prayer—
Nuri—Blessed One!
All exhales a fragrance meek;
To thee, the soul of each itself must bare.

Thy feet at every step press on my heart
Nuri—Blessed One!
Thy glances to my spirit speak
Unseen and beautiful as dew—
In fragrant beauty everywhere Thou art.

At dawn with every breath we worship Thee,
Nuri—Blessed One!
Send Thy strength unto the weak
Thy love—Thy beauty—and Thy harmony!
TRANSMUTATION

Sun! Hero Sun!
There's never any ending
To the desire for blending.
The green must permeate
The leaves of May
And buds inhale
Intoxication of a summer's day.
And by October's birth
Are come the pagans there:
Flame-rose vine leaves,
Bronze and golden-shine leaves,
Gay mad wine leaves,
On trees and bushes everywhere—
On painter's palette earth
And palpating
On the stained air.

Too much of Autumn's grape
Has drenched each mound;
Yellow and purple
Fling themselves to dust.
The drunken weeds are
Gypsying on the ground;
The fern spores change
To tiny coins of rust;

Bittersweet is sunred gold;
Hydrangeas seagreen
And delicate mauve unfold.

Sun! Hero Sun!
Softly shall I follow
From earth's midmost hollow,
From the ocean's slime
Through milky faces
Of luminous waves that climb,
From the most ancient
To new-born of days,
By fields of flowers and grain
On the kite-strings of the rain,
Past seas, past continents and shores,
I shall follow and embrace
Wide purple space
And storm the starry doors! . . .

Hero! Hero!
Invisible to sight—
Beyond the sun,
Behind the silence—
Shall I run and run.
Then shalt Thou
Hear my clamor
In the æon's night,
See me—but I shall not see Thee.
My flying shall be caught up
In Thy flight. . . .
My upward reaching shall be
Stretched up to Thy height. . . .
My little brightness
Be extinguished in Thy Light! . . .

Sun! Hero Sun!
Though Thou shalt seek and follow
From the earth’s midmost hollow,
Such as I—and flee—
As from me,
I—Unself shall rest
One with Thee—
Hid in Thy breast! . . .