

THE  
CICADAS  
  
AND OTHER POEMS  
  
BY  
  
ALDOUS HUXLEY

Contents

THEATRE OF VARIETIES  
PICTURE BY GOYA  
CALIGULA  
NERO AND SPORUS, I  
NERO AND SPORUS, II  
MYTHOLOGICAL INCIDENT  
FEMMES DAMNfes  
ARABIA INFELIX  
THE MOOR  
NOBLEST ROMANS  
ORION  
MEDITATION  
SEPTEMBER  
SEASONS  
STORM AT NIGHT  
MEDITERRANEAN  
TtDE  
F&TE NATIONALE

MIDSUMMER DAY

AUTUMN STILLNESS

APENNINE

ALMERIA

PAGAN YEAR

ARMOUR

SHEEP

BLACK COUNTRY

CARPE NOCTEM

THE PERGOLA

LINES

THE CICADAS

AND OTHER POEMS

\*

THEATRE OF VARIETIES

Circle on circle the hanging gardens descend, Sloping from upper  
darkness, each flower face Open, turned to the light and laughter  
and life Of the sun-like stage. And all the space between, Like the  
hot fringes of a summer sky,

Is quick with trumpets, beats with the pulse of drums, Athwart whose  
sultry thunders rise and fall Flute fountains and the swallow flight  
of strings. Music, the revelation and marvellous lie \ On the bright  
trestles tumblers, tamers of beasts, Dancers and clowns affirm their  
fury of life.

c The World-Renowned Van Hogen Mogen in The Master Mystery of Modern  
Times.'

He talks, he talks ; more powerfully than even Music his quick words  
hammer on men's minds.

' Observe this hat, ladies and gentlemen ;

Empty, observe, empty as the universe Before the Head for which this  
Hat is made

Was or could think. Empty, observe, observe.' The rabbit kicks ; a  
bunch of paper flowers Blooms in the limelight; paper tape unrolls,

Endless, a clue. \* Ladies and gentlemen . . .' Sharp, sharp on  
malleable minds his words

Hammer. The little Indian boy

Enters the basket. Bright, an Ethiop's sword Transfixes it and  
bleeding is withdrawn.

Death draws and petrifies the watching faces.

' Ladies and gentlemen ': the great Van Hogen Mogen Smiles and is  
kind. A puddle of dark blood

<r

Slowly expands. e The irremediable

Has been and is no more.'

Empty of all but blood, the basket gapes.

' Arise !' he calls, and blows his horn. c Arise ! '

And bird-like from the highest gallery

The little Indian answers.

Shout upon shout, the hanging gardens reverberate.

Happy because the irremediable is healed,

Happy because they have seen the impossible, Because they are freed  
from the dull daily law,

They shout, they shout. And great Van Hogen Mogen Modestly bows,  
graciously smiles. The band Confirms the lie with cymbals and  
bassoons, The curtain falls. How quickly the walls recede, How soon  
the petrified gargoyles re-become Women and men ! who fill the warm  
thick air With rumour of their loves and discontents, Not suffering  
even great Hogen Mogen- Only begetter out of empty hats

Of rose and rabbit, raiser from the dead- To invade the sanctity of  
private life.

The Six Aerial Sisters Polpetini

Dive dangerously from trapeze to far Trapeze, like stars, and know  
not how to fall. For if they did and if, of his silver balls,  
Sclopis, the juggler, dropped but one-but one Of all the flying  
atoms which he builds With his quick throwing into a solid arch-  
What panic then would shake the pale flower faces Blooming so  
tranquilly in their hanging beds 1 What a cold blast of fear 1 But  
patrons must not, And since they must not, cannot be alarmed.

Hence Sclopis, hence (the proof is manifest)

The Six Aerial Ones infallibly

Function, and have done, and for ever will.

Professor Chubb's Automaton performs Upon the viols and virginals,  
plays chess, Ombre and loo, mistigri, tric-trac, pushpin, Sings  
Lilliburlero in falsetto, answers All questions put to it, and with  
its rubber feet Noiselessly dances the antique heydiguy. e Is it a  
man ? ' the terrible infant wonders.

And e no,' they say, whose business it is To say such infants nay.  
And ' no ' again They shout when, after watching Dobbs and Debs Step  
simultaneously through intricate dances, Hammer the same tune with  
their rattling clogs In faultless unison, the infant asks, ' And  
they, are they machines ? '

Music, the revelation and marvellous lie, Rebuilds in the minds of  
all a suave and curving Kingdom of Heaven, where the saxophone  
Affirms everlasting loves, the drums deny Death, and where great  
Tenorio, when he sings, Makes Picardy bloom only with perfumed  
roses,

And never a rotting corpse in all its earth.

Play, music, play ! In God's bright limelight eyes An angel walks  
and with one rolling glance Blesses each hungry flower in the  
hanging gardens.

4 Divine,' they cry, having no words by which To call the nameless  
spade a spade, c Divine Zenocrate ! ' There are dark mysteries Whose  
name is beauty, strange revelations called Love, and a gulph of  
pleasure and of awe Where words fall vain and wingless in the dark ;  
The seen Ineffable, the felt but all-Unknown And Undescribed, is  
God. 4 Divine, divine ! ' The god-intoxicated shout goes up.

c Divine Zenocrate !'

4 Father,' the terrible infant's voice is shrill,

4 Say, father, why does the lady wear no skirts ? ' She wears no  
skirts ; God's eyes have never been brighter. The face flowers open  
in her emanation.

She is the suave and curving Kingdom of Heaven Made visible, and in  
her sugared song The ear finds paradise. Divine, divine 1 Her belly  
is like a mound of wheat, her breasts Are towers, her hair like a  
flock of goats.

Her foof1S feat-with diamond toes

And she-divine Zenocrate-

And she on legs of ruby goes.

The face flowers tremble in the rushing wind

Of her loud singing. A poet in the pit

Jots down in tears the words of her Siren song.

So every spirit as it is most pure,

And hath in it the more of heavenly 'light, So it the rarer body  
doth procure To habit in, and is more fairly dight With cheerful  
grace and amiable sight:

For of the soul the body form doth take ;

And soul is form and doth the body make.

4 Now, boys, together. All with me,' she cries Through the long  
sweet suspense of dominant chords

4 For of the soul,' her voice is paradise,

4 For of the soul the body form doth take;

And soul is form and doth the body make.' Zenocrate, alone, alone  
divine !

God save the King. Music's last practical joke Still bugling in  
their ears of war and glory, The folk emerge into the night.

Already next week's bills are being posted :- Urim and Thummim,  
cross-talk comedians3;

Ringpok, the Magian of Tibet;

The Two Bedelias ; Ruby and Truby Dix;

Sam Foy and Troupe of Serio-Comic Cyclists . . . Theatre of  
immemorial varieties,

Old mummery, but mummers never the same ! Twice nightly every night  
from now till doomsday The hanging gardens, bedded with pale Hower  
faces. Young flowers in the old old gardens, will echo With ever  
new, with ever new delight.

PICTURE BY GO

A HIGHWAY ROBBERY

It is a scene of murder—elegant, is it not ? You lutanists, who play  
to naked Queens, As summer sleep or music under trees, As luncheon  
on the grass—the grass on which The country copulatives make sport,  
the pale Grass with the tall tubed hats, the inky coats And rosy,  
rosy among the funeral black (Memento Vivere) a naked girl.

But here the sleepers bleed, the tumbling couples Struggle, but not  
in love ; the naked girl Kneels at the feet of one who hesitates,  
Voluptuously, between a rape and a murder.

Bandits angelical and you, rich corpses ! Truth is your sister,  
Goodness your spouse. Towering skies lean down and tall, tall trees  
Impose their pale arsenical benediction, Making all seem exquisitely  
remote And small and silent, like a village fair

Seen from die hill-top, far far below.

And yet they walk on the village green to whom The fair is huge,  
tumultuous, formidable. Earth Lies unremembered beneath the feet of  
dancers Who, looking up, sec not the sky, but towers And bright  
invading domes and the fierce swings, Scythe-like, reaping and  
ravaging the quiet.

And when night falls, the shuddering gas-flares scoop Out of the  
topless dark a little vault

Of smoky gold, wherein the dancers still Jig away, gods of a home-  
made universe.

#### OR THE TRIUMPH OF BEAUTY

Prow after prow, the floating ships Bridge the blue gulph ; the road  
is laid ;

And Caesar on a piebald horse

Prances with all his cavalcade.

Drunk with their own quick blood they go. The waves flash as with  
seeing eyes ;

The tumbling cliffs mimic their speed, And they have filled the  
vacant skies

With waltzing Gods and Virtues, set Aeolus roaring with their shout,  
Made Vesta's temple on the cape Spin like a circus roundabout.

The twined caduceus in his hand, And having golden wings for spurs,  
Young Caesar dressed as God looks on And cheers his jolly mariners ;

Cheers as they heave from off the bridge The trippers from the  
seaside town ;

Laughs as they bang the bobbing heads And shove them bubbling down  
to drown.

There sweeps a spiral curve of gesture From the allegoric sky ;

Beauty, like conscious lightning, runs Through Jove's ribbed trunk  
and Juno's thigh,

Slides down the flank of Mars and takes

From Virtue's rump a dizzier twist, Licks round a cloud and whirling  
stoops Earthwards to Caesar's lifted fist.

A bwrgeess tumbles from the bridge

Headlong, and hurrying Beauty slips From Caesar through the plunging  
legs To the blue sea between the ships.

NERO AND SPORUS

OR THE TRIUMPH OF ART

The Christians by whose muddy light Dimly, dimly I divine

Your eyes and see your pallid beauty Like a pale night-primrose  
shine,

Colourless in the dark, revere

A God who slowly died that they

Might suffer the less, who bore the pain Of all time in a single  
day, The pain of all men in a single Wounded body and sad heart.

Tho Tt&ro smooth 'WLtor,

Builds me a Golden House ; and there The marble Gods sleep in their  
strength And the white Parian girls are fair.

Roses and waxen oleanders,

Green grape bunches and the flushed peach- All beautiful things I  
taste, touch, see, Knowing, loving, becoming each.

The ship went down, my mother swam : I wedded and myself was wed :

Old Claudius died of emperor-bane : Old Seneca too slowly bled.

The wild beast and the victim both,

The ravisher and the wincing bride, King of the world and a slave's  
slave, Terror-haunted, deified----

All these, sweet Sporus, I, an artist, Am and, an artist, needs must  
be.

Is the tune Lydian ? I have loved you. And you have heard my  
symphony

Of wailing voices and clashed brass, With long shrill flutings that  
suspend Pain o'er a muttering gulph of terrors, And piercing blasts  
of joy that end,

Gods, in what discord !-could I have So hymned the Furies, were the  
bane Still sap within the hemlock stalk, The red swords virgin-  
bright again ?

Or take a child's love that is all Worship, all tenderness and  
trust, A dawn-web, dewy and fragile-take And with the violence of  
lust

Tear and defile it. You shall hear The breaking dumbness and the  
thin Harsh crying that is the very music Of shame and the remorse of  
sin.

Christ died ; the artist lives for all; Loves, and his naked marbles  
stand

Pure as a column on the sky,

Whose lips, whose breasts, whose thighs demand

Not our humiliation, not

The shuddering of an after-shame ;

And of his agonies men know Only the beauty born of them.

Christ died, but living Nero turns

Your mute remorse to song; he gives To idiot Fate eyes like a  
lover's, And while his music plays, God lives.

NERO AND SPORUS

ii

Dark stirrings in the perfumed air Touch your cheeks, lift your  
hair.

With softer fingers I caress, Sporus, all your loveliness.

Round as a fruit, tree-tangled shines • The moon; and fire-flies in  
the vines, Like stars in a delirious sky, Glean and go out.  
Unceasingly The fountains fall, the nightingales Sing. But time  
flows and love avails Nothing. The Christians smoulder red ; Their  
brave blue-hearted flames are dead ; And you, sweet Sporus, you and  
I We too must die, we too must die.

Through the pale skeleton of woods Orion walks. The North Wind lays  
Its cold lips to the twin steel flutes That are his gun, and plays.

Knee-deep he goes, where penny-wiser Than all his kind who steal and  
hoard, Year after year some sylvan miser His copper wealth has  
stored.

The Queen of Love and Beauty lays

In neighbouring beechen aisles her baits— Bread-crumbs and the  
golden maize. Patiently she waits.

And when the unwary pheasant comes To fill his painted maw with  
crumbs, Accurately the sporting Queen Takes aim. The bird has been.

Secure, Orion walks her way.

The Cyprian loads, presents, makes fire.

He falls. 'Tis Venus all entire

Attached to her recumbent prey.

FEMMES DAMN&ES

(From the French of Charles Baudelaire)

The lamps had languisht and their light was pale ;

On cushions deep Hippolyta reclined.

Those potent kisses that had torn the veil From her young candour  
filled her dreaming mind.

With tempest-troubled eyes she sought the blue Heaven of her  
innocence, how far away !

Like some sad traveller, who turns to view The dim horizons passed  
at dawn of day.

Tears and the muffled light weary eyes, The stupor and the dull  
voluptuous trance, Limp arms, like weapons dropped by one who flies—  
All served her fragile beauty to enhance.

Calm at her feet and joyful, Delphine lay And gazed at her with  
ardent eyes and bright, Like some strong beast that, having mauled

its prey, Draws back to mark the imprint of its bite.

Strong and yet bowed, superbly on her knees, She snuffed her triumph, on that frailer grace Poring voluptuously, as though to seize The signs of thanks upon the other's face.

Gazing, she sought in her pale victim's eye The speechless canticle that pleasure sings, The infinite gratitude that, like a sigh,

Mounts slowly from the spirit's deepest springs.

\* Now, now you understand (for love like ours Is proof enough) that 'twere a sin to throw The sacred holocaust of your first flowers

To those whose breath might parch them as they blow.

\* Light falls my kiss, as the ephemeral wing That scarcely stirs the shining of a lake.

What ruinous pain your lover's kiss would bring 1 A plough that leaves a furrow in its wake.

\* Over you, like a herd of ponderous kine, Man's love will pass and his caresses fall

Like trampling hooves. Then turn your face to mine; Turn, oh my heart, my half of me, my all I

c Turn, turn, that I may see their starry lights, Your eyes of azure ; turn. For one dear glance I will reveal love's most obscure delights, And you shall drowse in pleasure's endless trance.'

' Not thankless, nor repentant in the least

Is your Hippolyta.' She raised her head.

\* But one who from some grim nocturnal feast Returns at dawn feels less disquieted.

' I bear a weight of terrors, and dark hosts Of phantoms haunt my steps and seem to lead.

I walk, compelled, behind these beckoning ghosts  
Down sliding roads  
and under skies that bleed.

How is oars so strange an act, so fuh? ol siramc ? Explain the terrors  
that disturb my bliss. When you say, Love, I tremble at the name ;  
And yet my mouth is thirsty for your kiss.

' Ah, look not so, dear sister, look not so !

You whom I love, even though that love should be a snare for my  
undoing, even though

Loving I am lost for all eternity.'

Delphine looked up, and fate was in her eye. From the god's tripod  
and beneath his spell, Shaking her tragic locks, she made reply :  
Who in love's presence dares to speak of hell ?

' Thinker of useless thoughts, let him be cursed, Who in his folly,  
venturing to vex

A question answerless and barren, first

With wrong and right involved the things of sex

\* He who in mystical accord conjoins

Shadow with heat, dusk with the noon's high fire, Shall never warm  
the palsy of his loins At that red sun which mortals call desire.

Go, seek some lubber groom's deflowering lust; Take him your heart  
and leave me here despised I Go—and bring back, all horror and  
disgust, The livid breasts man's love has stigmatized.

' One may not serve two masters here below.'

But the child answered : \* I am torn apart,

I feel my inmost being rent, as though A gulch yawned—the gulf  
that is my heart.

' Naught may this monster's desperate thirst assuage,— As fire 'tis  
hot, as space itself profound— Naught stay the Fury from her  
quenchless rage, Who with her torch explores its bleeding wound.

\* Curtain the world away and let us try If lassitude will bring the  
boon of rest.

In your deep bosom I would sink and die, Would find the grave's  
fresh coolness on your breast.'

Hence, lamentable victims, get you hence !

Hell yawns beneath, your road is straight and steep. Where all the

crimes receive their recompense Wind-whipped and seething in the  
lowest deep

With a huge roaring as of storms and fires, Go down, mad phantoms,  
doomed to seek in vain The ne'er-won goal of unassuaged desires, And  
in your pleasures find eternal pain 1

Sunless your caverns are ; the fever damps That filter in through  
every crannied vent Break out with marsh-fire into sudden lamps And  
steep your bodies with their frightful scent.

The barrenness of pleasures harsh and stale Makes mad your thirst  
and parches up your skin; And like an old flag volleying in the  
gale, Your whole flesh shudders in the blasts of sin.

Far from your kind, outlawed and reprobate, Go, prowl like wolves  
through desert worlds apart! Disordered souls, fashion your own dark  
fate, And flee the god you carry in your heart.

#### ARABIA INFELIX

Under a ceiling of cobalt

And mirrored by as void a blue, Wet only with the wind-blown salt,  
The Arabian land implores a dew.

Parched, parched are the hills, and dumb That thundering voice of  
the ravine ;

Round the dead springs the birds are seen No more, no more at  
evening come

(Like lovely thoughts to one who dwells In quiet, like enchanting  
hopes) The leopards and the shy gazelles And the light-footed  
antelopes.

Death starts at every rattling gust That in the withered torrent's  
bed

Whirls up a phantom of grey dust And, dying, lets the ghost fall  
dead

Dust in a dance may seem to live ; But laid, not blown, it brings to  
birth. Not wind, but only rain can give Life, and to a patient  
earth.

Hot wind from this Arabian land Chases the clouds, withholds the  
rain. No footstep prints the restless sand Wherein who sows, he sows  
in vain.

Into a vacant sky the moist

Grey pledge of spring and coming leaves Swam, and the thirsty hills rejoiced, All golden with their future sheaves.

Flower-phantoms in the parching air Nodded, and trees ungrown were bowed ; With love like madness, like despair, The mountain yearned towards the cloud.

If there were water, if there were

But a shower, a little fountain springing, How rich would be the perfumed air,

And the green woods with shade and singing

Bright hills, but by the sun accursed, Peaceful, but with the peace of hell-

Once on these barren slopes there fell A plague more violent than thirst:

And she in silence slowly came, Oh ! to transfigure, to renew, Came laden with a gift of dew, But with it dropped the lightning's flame ;

A flame that rent the crags apart, But rending made a road between For water to the mountain's heart, That left a scar, but left it green.

Anguish to kill inveterate pain And mortal slaking of desire ; Dew, and a long-awaited rain- A dew of blood, a rain of fire. L» 7

Faithless the cloud and fugitive ;

An empty heaven nor burns, nor wets ;

At peace, the barren land regrets

Those agonies that made it live.

#### THE MOOR

Champion of souls and holiness, upholder Of all the virtues, father of the Church, Honest, honest, honest Iago 1 how Crusadingly, with what indignant zeal (Ora pro nobis), caracoling on

Your high horse and emblazoned, gules on white, . Did you ride forth (Oh, pray for us), ride forth

Against the dark-skinned hosts of evil, ride, Martyr and saint, against those paynim hosts, Having for shield all Sinai, and for

sword, To smite rebellion and avenge the Lord, The sharp, the shining certainty of faith I (Ora pro nobis) point us out the Way.

' Lily bright and stinking mud : Fair is fair and foul is ill.

With her, on her, what you will.

This fire must be put out with blood, Put out with blood.'

But for a glint, a hint of questing eyes, Invisible, darkness through darkness goes On feet that even in their victim's dreaming Wake not an echo.

Lost, he is lost; and yet thus wholly in darkness Melted, the Moor is more Othello than when, Green-glittering, the sharp Venetian day Revealed him armed and kingly and commanding Captain of men.

How still she lies, this naked Desdemona, All but a child and sleeping and alone, How still and white !

Whose breast, whose arms, the very trustfulness

Of her closed eyelids and unhurried breath

More than a philtre maddeningly invite

Lust and those hands, those huge dark hands, and death.

' For oh, the lily and the mud I Fair is still fair and foulness, ill. With her, on her, what you will. This fire must be put out with blood.'

Well, now the fire is out, and the light too ; All, all put out. In Desdemona's place Lies now a carrion. That fixed grimace Of lidless eyes and starting tongue Derides his foolishness. Cover her face; This thing but now was beautiful and young. Honest Iago's Christian work is over ;

Short, short the parleying at the Golden Gate. ' For I am one who made the Night ashamed Of his own essence, that his dark was dark ;

• One who with good St. Jerome's filthy tongue Tainted desire and taught the Moor to scorn His love's pale body, and because she had Lain gladly in his arms, to call her whore And strangle her for whoredom.' So he spoke, And with majestic motion heaven's high door Rolled musically apart its burnished vans To grant him entrance.

Burning alone at midnight in the abyss Of some cathedral cavern ; pause, and then With face once more averted, hand in hand, Explore the unseen treasures of the dark.

Turning back meanwhile

From outer darkness, Othello and his bride Perceive the globe of

heaven like one small lamp

Romans bowed to shapes that they, Sculptors of the mind, set free ;  
Suppliant that they may be Peers of those to whom they pray.

#### NOBLEST ROMANS

Columns and unageing fountains, Jets of frost and living foam— Let  
them leap from seven mountains, The seven hills of Rome.

Flanked by arch and echoing arch, Let the streets in triumph go ;

Bid the aqueducts to march Tireless through the plain below.

Column-high in the blue air, Let the marble Caesars stand ;

Let the gods, who living were Romans, lift a golden hand.

Many, but each alone, a crowd, Yet of Romans, throng their shrine ;  
Worshippers themselves divine, Gods to gods superbly bowed;

#### ORION

Tree-tangled still, autumn Orion climbs

Up from among the North Wind's shuddering emblems

Into the torrent void

And dark abstraction of invisible power,

The heart and boreal substance of the night.

Pleione flees before him, and behind,

Still sunken, but prophetically near,

Death in the Scorpion hunts him up the sky

And round the vault of time, round the slow-curving year,

Follows unescapably

And to the end, aye, and beyond the end

Will follow, follow ; for of all the gods

Death only cannot die.

The rest are mortal. And how many lie Already with their creatures'  
ancient dust! Dead even in us who live—or hardly live, Since of our  
hearts impiety has made, Not tombs indeed (for they are holy; tombs

Secretly live with everlasting Death's Dark and mysterious life),

But curious shops and learned lumber rooms Of bone and stone and every mummied thing, Where Death himself his sacred sting Forgets (how studiously forgotten Amid the irrelevant to and fro of feet I), Where by the peeping and the chattering, The loud forgetfulness seemingly slain, He lies with all the rest—and yet we know, In secret yet we know,

Death is not dead, not dead but only sleeping, And soon will rise again.

Not so the rest. Only the Scorpion burns

In our unpeopled heaven of empty names

And insubstantial echoes ; only Death

Still claims our prayers, and still to those who pray Returns his own dark blood and quickening breath, Returns the ominous mystery of fear.

Where are the gods of dancing and desire ?

Anger and joy, laughter and tears and wine, Those other mysteries of fire and flame,

Those more divine than Death's—ah, where are they ?

Only a ghost between the shuddering trees, Only a name and ghostly numbers climb ;

And where a god pursued and fled, Only a ghostly time, a ghostly place Attends on other ghostly times and places. Orion and the rest are dead.

And yet to-night, here in the exulting wind, Amid the enormous laughters of a soul At once the world's and mine,

God-like Orion and all his brother stars

Shine as with living eyes,

With eyes that glance a recognition, glance a sign Across the quickened dark, across the gulphs That separate no more,

But, like wide seas that yet bring home the freight Of man's mad yearning for a further shore, Join with a living touch, unbrokenly,

Life to mysterious life,

The Hunter's alien essence to my own.

Orion lives; yet I who know him living, Elsewhere and otherwise

Know him for dead, and dead beyond all hope,

For 'tis the infertile and unquickenning death

Of measured places and recorded times, The death of names and numbers that he dies.

Only the phantom of Orion climbs.

Put out the eyes, put out the living eyes

And look elsewhere ; yes, look and think and be Elsewhere and otherwise.

But here and thus are also in their right,

Are in their right divine to send this wind of laughter Rushing through the cloudless dark And through my being ; have a right divine And imprescriptible now to reveal

The starry god, a right to make me feel, As even now, as even now I feel,

His living presence near me in the night.

A curved and figured glass hangs between light and light, Between the glow within us and the glow Of what mysterious sun without ?

Vast over earth and sky, or focussed burningly

Upon the tender quick, our spirits throw

Each way their images—each way the forms

O ! shall it be of beauty, shall it be The naked skeletons of doubt ?

Or else, symbolically dark, the cloudy forms Of mystery, or dark (but dark with death) Shapes of sad knowledge and defiling hate ?

£ Lighten our darkness, Lord.' With what pure faith, What confident hope our fathers once implored The Light! But 'tis the shitten Lord of Flies Who with his loathsome bounties now fulfils On us their prayers. Our fathers prayed for light. Through windows at their supplication scoured Bare of the sacred blazons, but instead

Daubed with the dung-god's filth, all living eyes, Whether of stars or men, look merely dead ;

While on the vaulted crystal of the night Our guttering souls

project,

Not the Wild Huntsman, not the Heavenly Hosts, But only times and places, only names and ghosts.

And yet, for all the learned Lord of Dung, The choice is ours, the choice is always ours, To see or not to see the living powers

That move behind the numbered points and times. The Fly King rules ; but still the choice remains With us, his subjects, we are free, are free

To love our fate or loathe it; to rejoice Or weep or wearily accept; are free, For all the scouring of our souls, for all The miring of their crystal, free to give Even to an empty sky, to vacant names, Or not to give, our worship ; free to turn Lifewards, within, without, to what transcends The squalor of our personal ends and aims, Or not to turn ; yes, free to die or live;

Free to be thus and passionately here, Or otherwise and elsewhere ;

Free, in a word, to learn or not to learn

The art to think and musically do

And feel and be, the never more than now Difficult art harmoniously to live All poetry—the midnight of Macbeth And ripe Odysseus and the undying light Of Gemma's star and Cleopatra's death And Falstaff in his cups ; the art to live That discipline of flowers, that solemn dance Of sliding weights and harnessed powers Which is a picture ; or to live the grave And stoical recession, row on row,

Of equal columns, live the passionate leaping,

The mutual yearning, meeting, marrying, And then the flame—still rapture, the fierce trance Of consummation in the Gothic night.

#### MEDITATION

The choice is always ours. Then, let me choose The longest art, the hard Promethean way Cherishingly to tend and feed and fan

That inward fire, whose small precarious flame, Kindled or quenched, creates

The noble or the ignoble men we are,

The worlds we live in and the very fates, Our bright or muddy star.

Up from among the emblems of the wind

Into its heart of power,

The Huntsman climbs, and all his living stars  
Are bright, and all are mine.

What now caresses you, a year ago Bent to the wind that sends a  
travelling wave Almost of silver through the silky corn Westward of  
Calgary ; or two weeks since Bleated in Gloster market, lowed at  
Thame, And slowly bled to give my lips desire ;

Or in the teeming darkness, fathoms down, Hung, one of millions,  
poised between the ooze And the wind's foamy skirts ; or feathered  
flew, Or deathwards ran before the following gun. And all day long,  
knee deep in the wet grass, The piebald cows of Edam chewed and  
chewed, That what was cheese might pulse thus feverishly; And now,  
prophetically, even now They ponder in their ruminating jaws My  
future body, which in Tuscan fields Yet grows, yet grunts among the  
acorns, yet Is salt and iron, water and touchless air, Is only  
numbers variously moved, Is nothing, yet will love your nothingness.

Vast forms of dust, tawny and tall and vague, March through the  
desert, creatures of the wind. Wind, blowing whither, blowing  
whence, who knows ?- Wind was the soul that raised them from the  
sand, Moved and sustained their movement, and at last Abating, let  
them fall in separate grains Slowly to earth and left an empty sky.

## SEPTEMBER

Spring is past and over these many days, Spring and summer. The  
leaves of September droop, Yellowing and all but dead on the patient  
trees.

Nor is there any hope in me. I walk

Slowly homewards. Night is as empty'and dark Behind my eyes as it is  
dark without And empty round about me and over me.

Spring is past and over these many days,

But, looking up, suddenly I see

Leaves in the upthrown light of a street lamp shining, Clear and  
luminous, young and so transparent, They seem but the coloured foam  
of air, green fire, No more than the scarce-embodied thoughts of  
leaves. And it is spring within that circle of light.

Oh, magical brightness ! The old leaves are made nev In the mind,  
too, some coloured accident

Of beauty revives and makes all young again, A chance light shines  
and suddenly it is spring.

## SEASONS

### STORM AT NIGHT

Blood of the world, time stanchless flows ; The wound is mortal and is mine.

I act, but not to my design,

Choose, but 'twas ever fate that chose, Would flee, but there are doors that close.

Winter has set its muddy sign

Without me and within. The rose Dies also in my heart and no stars shine.

But nightingales call back the sun;

The doors are down and I can run, Can laugh, for destiny is dead.

All springs are hoarded in the flowers ;

Quick flow the intoxicating hours, For wine as well as blood is red.

Oh, how aquarium-still, how brooding-warm This paradise ! How peacefully in the womb Of war itself, and at the heart of storm How safely-safely a captive, in a tomb- I lie and, listening to the wild assault, The pause and once-more fury of the gale, Feel through the cracks of my sepulchral vault The fine-drawn probe of air, and watch the pale Unearthly lightnings leap across the sky Like sudden sperm and die and leap again. The thunder calls and every spasm of fire Beckons, a signal, to that old desire In calm for tempest and at ease for pain. Dreaming of strength and courage, here I lie.

### MEDITERRANEAN

This tideless sapphire uniformly brims Its jewelled circle of Tyrrhenian shore. No vapours tarnish, not a cloud bedims, And time descending only more and more Makes rich, makes deep the unretiring gem. And yet for me who look on it, how wide The world of mud to which my thoughts condemn This loathing vision of a sunken tide !

The ebb is mine. Life to its lowest neap Withdrawn reveals that black and hideous shoal Where I lie stranded. Oh deliver me From this defiling death ! Moon of the soul, Can back the ntfе drat ran su strung- and okvp, Call back the shining jewel of the sea.

And if the tide should be for ever low, The silted channels turned to ooze and mire ? And this grey delta-if it still should grow, Bank after bank, and still the sea retire ? Retire beyond the halcyon

hopes of noon And silver night, the threat of wind and wave, Past  
all the dark compulsion of the moon, Past resurrection, past her  
power to save ? There is a firm consenting to disaster, Proud  
resignation to accepted pain.

Pain quickens him who makes himself its master, And quickening  
battle crowns both loss and gain. But to this silting of the soul,  
who gives Consent is no more man, no longer lives.

#### FETE NATIONALE

#### MIDSUMMER DA

These lamps, like some miraculous gift of rain, Evoke an April from  
the dusty weight

Of leaves that hang resigned and know their fate, Expecting autumn :  
they are young again.

And young these dancers underneath the trees Who pass and pass, how  
many all at one !

Like things of wax beneath an Indian sun, Melted in music. Oh, to be  
one of these, Of these the born inhabitants of earth, Each other's  
joyful captives ! Oh, to be Safe home from those far islands, where  
the free, Whose exile buys the honour of their birth, Hark back  
across the liberating sea To the lost continent of tears and mirth !

This day was midsummer, the longest tarrying Time makes between two  
sleeps. What have I done With this longest of so few days, how  
spent, Dear God, the golden, golden gift of sun ?

Virginal, when I rose, the morning lay Ready for beauty's rape, for  
wisdom's marrying.

I wrote : only an inky spider went, Smear after smear, across the  
unsullied day. If there were other places, if there were But other  
days than this longest of few ; If one had courage, did one dare to  
do That which alone might kill what now defaces This the one place  
of all the countless places, This only day when one will never dare  
1

#### AUTUMN STILLNESS

#### APENNINE

Gray is the air and silent as the sea's

Abysmal calm. One solitary bird

Calls from far time and other boughs than these; But the remembering  
silence sleeps, unstirred. All seems achieved, dried up the source  
of things. Or is the world too weary to invite Winters unborn and  
bid the latent springs Break out in flower, in fragrance, voice and  
light ? June once was here ; in this autumnal amber Lingers  
intangible the small clear trace Of his ephemeral flight, for ever  
still.

No more to hope, but only to remember:- Let there be silence round  
the slumbering will, And if time beckons, turn away your face.

In this parcht Apennine the sheep-bells must Serve with their  
tinkling for the liquid lapse And coolness, even in the noonday  
dust, Of absent streams—more liquidly, perhaps, Than water's self,  
if water were to gush Between the dry ribs of these bleaching  
hills : For in the womb of every pregnant hush A music sleeps ; and  
when some phantom tills, Arabia's punctual blossoming discloses Hues  
more than earthly, iris and evening gold. But vain those fountains,  
vain the ethereal roses ! There breathes no fragrance but of roots  
and mould, No quenching flows but in those humbler streams. Whose  
source is earth, is earth and not our dreams.

#### ALMERIA

#### PAGAN YEAR

Winds have no moving emblems here, but scour A vacant darkness, an  
untempered light;

No branches bend, never a tortured flower Shudders, root-weary, on  
the verge of flight; Winged future, withered past, no seeds nor  
leaves Attest those swift invisible feet: they run Free through a  
naked land, whose breast receives All the fierce ardour of a naked  
sun.

You have the Light for lover. Fortunate Earth ! Conceive the fruit  
of his divine desire.

But the dry dust is all she brings to birth, That child of clay by  
even celestial fire.

Then come, soft rain and tender clouds, abate This shining love that  
has the force of hate.

Heaven's eyes are shut, but cannot wholly kill The colours of the  
winter world. Suppressed And yet how strong, shining in secret,  
still Cinder and brooding sable and plum attest The absent Light. He  
with his longed rebirth Unclots the world to an airy dream of  
leaves ; Shines on ; the thin dream ripens into earth, And the huge  
elms hang dark above the sheaves. Magical autumn ! All the woods are  
foxes, Dozing outstretched in the almost silvery sun. Oh, bright sad  
woods and melancholy sky, Is there no cure for beauty but to run

Yet faster as faster flee hours, flowers and doxies And dying music,  
until we also die ?

ARMOUR

SHEEP

Crabs in their shells, because they cannot play Don Juan or the  
flageolet, are safe;

And every stout Sir Roger, stout Sir Ralph, Every Black Prince,  
Bayard and Bouchier may (Their ribs and rumps hermetically canned)  
Securely laugh at arrow, sword and mace. But in their polished and  
annealed embrace, Beneath their iron kiss and iron hand, The soft  
defenceless lips and flowery breast, The tender, tender belly of  
love receive From helm and clasping cop and urgent greave So deep a  
bruise that, mortally possessed, Love dies. Only the vulnerable will

Holds what it takes and, holding, does not kill.

Seeing a country churchyard, when the grey Monuments walked, I with  
a second glance, Doubting, postponed the apparent judgment day To  
watch instead the random slow advance Across the down of a hundred  
nibbling sheep. And yet these tombs, half fancied and half seen In  
the dim world between waking and sleep, These headstones browsing on  
their plot of green, Were sheep indeed and emblems of all life. For  
man to dust, dust turns to grass, and grass Grows wool and feeds on  
grass. The butcher's knife Works magic, and the ephemeral sheep  
forms pass Through swift tombs and through silent tombs, until Once  
more God's acre feeds across the hill.

BLACK COUNTRY

CARRE NOCTEM

Count yourselves happy that you are not rewarded For your deserts  
with brimstone from on high.

Mean, mean among the slag-heaps, mean and sordid, Your smoking town  
proclaims its blasphemy.

And yet, too merciful, the offended light Forgives not only, but  
with vesperal gold And roses of the sun repays your spite. Shining  
transfigured in the Northern cold, Instead of chimneys rise Italian  
towers, While temples at their feet, not factories, shine; And like  
the yet unbodied dream of flowers Hangs the flushed smoke, through  
which these eyes divine

Enormous gestures of the gods' fierce wooing, The nacreous flights,

the limbs of bronze pursuing.

There is no future, there is no more past, No roots nor fruits, but momentary flowers. Lie still, only lie still and night will last, Silent and dark, not for a space of hours, But everlastingly. Let me forget All but your perfume, every night but this, The shame, the fruitless weeping, the regret. Only lie still: this faint and quiet bliss Shall flower upon the brink of sleep and spread, Till there is nothing else but you and I Clapsed in a timeless silence. But like one Who, doomed to die, at morning will be dead, I know,, though night seem dateless,, that the sky Must brighten soon before tomorrow's sun.

## THE PERGOLA

### LINES

Pillars, round which the wooden serpents clamber Towards their own leaves, support the emerald shade, The eyes, the amethysts, the clustered amber, That weave the ceiling of this colonnade.

How many thousand Tyrrhenian Septembers Muskily ripen in a sun-warmed skin !

With all my autumns. For this tongue remembers Grapes that made sweet a sick child's medicine, Grapes of the South and of the submarine Dusk of an English hot-house. But when night Lids every shining glance of sky between Leaves now extinct, groping, bereft of sight, J reach her grapes, hnt an reward vine Pluck sea-cold nipples, still bedewed with brine.

All day the wheels turn ;

All day long the roaring of wheels, the rasping Weave their imprisoning lattices of noise,

And hammers, hammers in the substance of the world Carve out another cavernous world, a narrow Sepulchre, and seal it from the sky, Lord, with how great a stone !

Only a little beyond the factory walls Silence is a flawless bowl of crystal, Brimming, brimming with who can say beforehand, Who can, returning, even remember what

Beautiful secret. Only a little beyond

These hateful walls the birds among the branches Secretly come and go.

Time also sleeps, but on the darkening threshold Of each eternity pauses a moment

And still is time, but empty; still is time, And therefore knows his emptiness.

The walls are crumbled, the stone is rolled away (Is there one within ? is there a resurrection ?); Stars through the ruined lattices bear witness, ' Bear shining witness to the further silence, Witness to the night.

Night is pregnant; silence, alive with voices ; The fullness of the tomb is but corruption; Only the lifted stone invites the messengers, Only the empty sepulchre, and only Now and then, evokes

That which from the sepulchre arises.

Shy strangers, visiting feet came softly treading, Came very softly sometimes in the darkness, Oh, of what far nights and distant tombs I Came suddenly into the empty time, Came secretly and lingered secretly, And through the unsealed door

Beckoned me on to follow.

But lie unrisen, lie unvisited.

Merciful God, bid them to come again !

Sometimes in winter

Sea-birds follow the plough,

And the bare field is all alive with wings, With their white wings and unafraid alightings, Sometimes in winter. And will they come again ?

I have made time empty again ; empty, it invites them; They do not come; have rolled away the stone,

## THE CICADAS

Sightless, I breathe and touch ; this night of pines Is needly, resinous and rough with bark.

Through every crevice in the tangible dark The moonlessness above it all but shines.

Limp hangs the leafy sky ; never a breeze Stirs, nor a foot in all this sleeping ground; And there is silence underneath the trees- The living silence of continuous sound.

For like inveterate remorse, like shrill Delirium throbbing in the fevered brain, An unseen people of cicadas f01

Night with their one harsh note, again, again.

Life is their madness, life that all night long Bids them to sing  
and sing, they know not why ; Mad cause and senseless burden of  
their song ; For life commands, and Life! is all their cry.

I hear them sing, who in the double night Of clouds and branches  
fancied that I went Through my own spirit's dark discouragement,  
Deprived of inward as of outward sight:

Who, seeking, even as here in the wild wood, A lamp to beckon  
through my tangled fate, Found only darkness and, disconsolate,  
Mourned the lost purpose and the vanished good.

Now in my empty heart the crickets' shout Re-echoing denies and  
still denies

With stubborn folly all my learned doubt, In madness more than I in  
reason wise.

Again, again, with what insensate zest!

What fury of persistence, hour by hour !

Filled with what devil that denies them rest, Drunk with what source  
of pleasure and of power l 61 Life, life I The word is magical. They  
sing, And in my darkened soul the great sun shines ; My fancy  
blossoms with remembered spring, And all my autumns ripen on the  
vines.

Life I and each knuckle of the fig-tree's pale Dead skeleton breaks  
out with emerald fire. Life ! and the tulips blow, the nightingale  
Calls back the rose, calls back the old desire :

And old desire that is for ever new, Desire, life's earliest and  
latest birth, Life's instrument to suffer and to do,

Springs with the roses from the teeming earth;

Desire that from the world's bright body strips Deforming time and  
makes each kiss the first; That gives to hearts, to satiated lips

The endless bounty of to-morrow's thirst.

Time passes, and the watery moonrise peers Between the tree-trunks.  
But no outer light Tempers the chances of our groping years, No moon  
beyond our labyrinthine night.

Clueless we go ; but I have heard thy voice, Divine Unreason I  
harping in the leaves,

And grieve no more ; for wisdom never grieves, And thou hast taught  
me wisdom; I rejoice.

