

A REGRET

That all my songs are sung into the air,
Like the rich-throated trees', unlistened to,
Would cost me but a summer-cloud of care
Except for you.

But you, whom time is beckoning, would go
More happily if garlands you could see
Laid at my feet; which I'd at yours bestow
How happily.

With tenderness unvenomed of all pain.
I would live on in leafy Lacedæmon
With new companions and the olden zest,
Renewed, eternal, lordly in strength,
And tinder to the spark of hot adventure.
Felicities ahead, on the dancing floor of the cymballed sun,
Even with Castor gone, allure me more
Than faint companionship with him among the shades.
This is the truth, the shameful truth of wisdom
That rowels to rebellion all my heart.
But god, my father, O lonely god,
He is the loneliest of all your ghosts!
Life to him was my companionship,
And now, bewildered, on the bank of Lethe
He waits, his heart calls like a child in fear,
Calls out for me, who always answered.
If I had gone before him into hell
He would have followed, wilfuller than fate.
The swan-like woman, our own mother, and the swan-bright sire
Dowered us both with cold white hardihood,
But him with the wild swan's burden and perfection
Of single love. He needed me in life,
And, O, in death, implacable and holy sire,
His need is infinite, and tears my heart!
Let me cast off my youth, and die, and be with him!
I kneel for what men ask delaying of --
Beseech you, father, death!"

A great peace came, the stillness grew all peace;
The wings of the oak-trees drooped and curved themselves
Over the bowed young god. His bosom was drenched with peace.
And the glory of a voice bright-brimming

The mead of the infertile sea.
Through the long levels of the air
The earth-sounds rose, infrequent and unearthly:
The loud cicada of the goatherd's shout,
The thud where ocean in her sleep
Flings one arm up the shore,
The warning from mid-air the leader of the wild-geese sounds
Piloting through the smoke of smouldering Troy
His solemn echelons.

Pollux heard the signal of the bird
As he stood at the portal of the unmerciful god,
And pain bowed his beautiful head and closed his eyes:
For he remembered how in Lacedæmon
When the first film of ice clinked on the marshes
And grass was stiff and morning blue with cold,
He lay in the saw-grass with his laughing brother
As the honking flights drew in;
Together whispering they lay and peered and counceled
Till the seething wings stormed in and thundered above their
covert,
When crying aloud they leaped, and loosened the long clean
arrows.
He remembered, and bowed, alone in the moonlight;
His heart was founded within him, the fresh wound bled,
And he turned to the god again, for elsewhere
There was no turning and no hope at all.
His voice plead through his words:
" You will not bring him back . . . Then let me go
And be with him in hell, for hell with him
Is sweeter than the earth without."

A LEGEND OF LACEDÆMON

He stood with the screen of trees betwixt him and the summit,
The oak-trees of his father, old as time and bronze,
But vehement silver now where the moonlight sprinkled the
leaves with silver

And even the ebon snakes of the trunks and branches
Had markings of silver and burned where they curved.
Beyond the screen, where his somber gaze thrust vainly,
Eternal dark and hush, the place of the god,
Dread abode of his father, under the stars.

He spoke, and the untrembling silver of the trees
Shivered: "My brother is dead." The silence healed,
Like lake-water where a sword thrusts and withdraws.

He waited. Again his low words shook and died away:
"I am your son, and you have slain my brother."

The tangle of the trees plunged in a panic breathing
And reared, the rapid silver of their undersides quaking like mail;
But the words clove them large and quiet, for the god spoke:

"The beautiful children of the earth perish:
It is the law. And brief is sorrow."

But the elder and immortal of the Dioscuri
Lowered not his head, and the long pallor of his throat
Shone like marble, only the hollow at its base in shadow:

"My sorrow has no mortal element to briefen it.

Send into hell, not unpitiful god, and fetch my brother back."

An ocean sigh from the core of dark took tone: "To die again?"

As a young hunter lost in the woods, in the twilight forest,
Passing the craggy mouth of some gray cave,

These and the dead acanthus,
These are all that remain
Of the garlands and wreaths of Phæstos,
On the shattered tomb of Phæstos.
Why are they here with their singing
And not on the steep of Ida
Where chalk-marks of snow attest
The infinite ravage of summer?
Ah, these are the people of Minos,
The beautiful flame-colored Cretans of old,
Who sang through the palace and danced in the
 dædal days,
In the delicate days before Troy.
And now they cry through the palace,
Drunk with the harsh desolation,
Mad with the terrible sunlight,
Calling for Minos the king,
Calling for sweet Ariadne,
In the empty desolate sunlight,
Flashing their flame-colored wings.

MEDUSA

There is a tale of brow and clotted hair
Thrust in the window of a banquet room
Which froze eternally the revellers there,
The lights full on them in their postured doom:
The queen still held the carmine to her lips,
The king's mouth stood wide open for its laugh,
The jester's rigid leer launched silent quips;
Only a blind man moved and tapped his staff.
I cannot guess that physiognomy
The sight of which could curdle into stone
The gazer, though pities, horrors, terrors I
Have made encounter of and sometimes known.
But I knew one who turned to stone with terror
Of facing quietly a flawless mirror.

THREE OLD TUNES

1

I have no knowledge what it was
That Atlas stood upon,
The time he hove the burly world
And held it in the sun —
Ignorance that alone prevents
My shouldering as much,
Who reel to lift sunflower-high
A bubble-soul or such.

2

Damocles, friend Damocles,
Felicitous in single doom,
High in the dark of my own room
So many sword-blades tug and tease
I envy luck like Damocles'.

3

I knew Midas, I knew him well,
I am familiar with his hell:
A secret cankered in his heart,
By speech he thought to ease the smart
And chose for hearers of his shame
Reeds that suck mud and have no name,
Fancying though they'd shed no tear

FOR RIP WHO DIED MAD

When I go down to Acheron,
A tired lonely shade,
I'll wish the hand of some sweet ghost,
Once dear, in mine were laid;

And ferrying that murky flood
The valiant scorn to drink,
I'll strain to see the dead I love
Down at the landing's brink.

Far off in blue and silver glens
Where melts the folded mist,
They will be loitering blissfully
In cloaks of amethyst.

But as my prow scrapes on the marl,
One watcher faithful, quaint,
Will dash to meet me who am still
His master, friend, and saint.

And Rip with paws upon my breast
And warm breath on my hair
Will tell with little snuggled whines
How long was waiting there,

And how the madness is quite gone
That turned his heart untrue.
I shall have lost, please Proserpine,
Somewhat of madness, too.

SHROUD SONG

Only asters gone to seed,
Goldenrod and fennel-weed,
Make her meagre diadem,
Brede her snowy cuffs and hem.
Stitch the blossoms gone to feather
On her breast where frost's the weather,
Here a sprig and there a spray —
Loveliness has gone its way.
There are those who had as lief
Be buried with remembered grief
As live a long long time with it
Stuck in the live heart it has split.
Asters here. — Her only care
Was breathing anything but air;
Her only wish — let's lay them slanted,
So — a simple one, and granted.

ALTITUDE

A star, a cloud, a bird, a bell
Know that the world does very well,
But snakes and flitter-mice and men
Perceive it as a noisome pen.
Sky and steeple and top o' tree
Are places where I long to dwell
And do, infrequently,
But house of earth and field and fen,
Fair for night-stops now and then,
Are usual home to me.
No wonder but by fit and spell
I think the world does very well.

PAN REJECTED

There will be other kisses on your eyes
But none like mine,
And every kiss will be a shadow kiss
Because of mine.
Your larkspur eyes with tears another brings
Will surely shine,
But they refused my purple shrouds of sorrow,
A gift divine.
Mortal you are, who might have been, a moment,
Mine.