





# THE LIGHTNING-STRUCK TOWER,







*The*  
LIGHTNING - STRUCK  
TOWER

★

*By*  
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FIRST PUBLISHED BY FREDERICK MULLER LTD.

IN 1947

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT

THE ST ANN'S PRESS

TIMPERLEY

ALTRINCHAM



#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Some of these poems have appeared in the *Spectator*, *Observer*, *Poetry London*, *Selected Writing* and *Windmill*, to the Editors of which my thanks are due



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE LIGHTNING-STRUCK TOWER is the symbol of the sixteenth card of the Tarot pack—that most primitive book of initiation handed down by the gypsies from generation to generation. It symbolises the materialisation of the spirit, the making visible of the material universe hitherto hidden in the imagination of God. So it seemed to me it might represent the attempt which every poet makes to crystallise in his poetry the imagination of love from which all true poetry springs. The writing of a poem is the attempt to make visible the landscape and inhabitants of the world of imagination. All artists have at some time realised in profound despair the inevitable degeneration of the original idea into its ultimate material form, like sea-shells carried home from the shore by children who, having found them wet with salt water and shining in the sun with iridescent light, weep to see them spread out upon the window-sill next morning.

S.S.

*For*  
W.J.T.  
P.D.  
&  
H.D.S.

## THE LIGHTNING-STRUCK TOWER

AYIN, the lightning-struck tower, the parapet fallen:

    Fallen are Jack and Jill:

    The ivory tower is broken, the dark tower fallen:

    Broken Parnassus hill.

With heads in the clouds no longer, the gods discover

The earth they dreamed into being, their first incarnate lover.

    The stars, their courses dreamed in imagined motion,

    Move in reality:

    The sea, in whose storm passion's delighted vision

    Thunders aloud "I am free,"

Smashes the bay-ringing rocks till anger dying

Falls with morning to quiet as a child sleeps after crying.

    Rivers, their cataracts loosed from time's imagined bonds,

    Flow into lake and stream:

    The wind in the trees is loosened, the scrolled ferns fronds

    Unfold their dreamer's dream.

The lizards, the humming-bird hawk-moth, the snake-headed  
    flower

Break from imagination in patterns of visible power.

    Gone are the gods from Parnassus: gods now of earth:

    Gods in disguise

    In the scientist, passionate searcher, who brings to birth

    What they devise:

The crystal, the atom, those dazzling forms of perfection

Shaped by idea, and the spirit's *finer* imagination.

Poets are gods: musicians, mathematicians, these  
Gods for ever in exile  
Seeking new forms to embody their restless divinities:  
Seeking for a while  
Moulds of perfection whose secret they leave us to explore  
Shapes of their bright imaginations fading on the cloudy shore.

*Ayin, the lightning-struck tower, the parapet fallen:  
Fallen are Jack and Jill:  
The ivory tower is broken, the dark tower fallen:  
Broken Parnassus hill.  
With heads in the clouds no longer, the gods discover  
The earth they dreamed into being, their first incarnate lover.*

## ON DECIDING NOT TO GO TO PERPIGNAN

*February 5, 1939*

TAKE the coward's course,  
Choose safety and shame,  
Keep the flesh whole  
And give the mind delight.  
Watch the fair sunsets  
And the risen moon  
Riding the hills by night.

Glut all your senses,  
Fill eye and ear—  
See the wild mistral  
Sweep across the bay;  
Watch the waves roaring,  
Hear them snort with joy,  
Tossing the smoking spray.

Let the puissant word  
Turn courage back;  
Listen to reason  
Persuading to retreat;  
Give up the battle  
•You dare not wish to win—  
Welcome desired defeat.

O STRANGELY NOW THE EYE  
BEHOLDS

O STRANGELY now the eye beholds  
The casual candle of the sun,  
For other lamps and lights outshine  
The splendour of this burning one.

O softly now the ear receives  
The distant echo of the sea,  
For other songs and lullabies  
Enchant the heart more cunningly.

O ice and flame are to the hand  
No longer nerves' extremest range,  
For colder springs and hotter fires  
Compel the body's sensual change.

O scent of spring and taste of wine  
Are ghosts of pleasures to the sense  
While love's crescendo gives to life  
Its ecstasy and eloquence.



## AUTO-DA-FE

*Venus the watery star and cold Diana  
Queen of the watery moon whose own tides draw  
Earth's oceans from their beds*

Beware! . . . Women are watery planets:  
that gleam you see is your reflected fire  
which in their tears does shine.

They change as water under a windy sky,  
or lie enchanted under a bland noon sun,  
or treacherous and dark under the stars.

Yet this is constant—their own element—  
this strange fluidity. You cannot say  
“I have a solid handful, here she is.”

Yet plunge your hand as often and as deep  
you still will find it wet.

But water can hold fire: and if she burns  
then, like a bog-fire, water will not quench  
but spread the fire along dark secret channels  
till it has burned for miles deep underground  
and all the roots are ash;  
the stems blacken upwards and mighty trees,  
far from the known and innocent-seeming fires  
flowering in night like torches,  
crash to their brilliant doom.

Nothing will put it out. The elements—  
water and fire—combine in constancy  
and only by burning all, burn to extinction.

You think the fires well out but suddenly  
at dusk or in the morning of some ordinary day  
small flames will flicker up and in an instant  
the blaze will drive you off to cooler cover.

So the heart ponders and burns itself away  
and all the waters of the moon-pulled earth  
cannot extinguish love's auto-da-fé.

## SONG

THE primrose and the celandine  
Which once with heavenly radiance shone  
Turn now on me dark faces all  
*In love's decline, in love's decline.*

The young sun then in strength would shine  
And draw the blossom from the bough,  
But noonday light hangs darkly now  
*In love's decline, in love's decline.*

On summer nights stars would incline  
To bend their influence on my love  
But night's incertitude is dark  
*In love's decline, in love's decline.*

## TIME'S CARREFOUR

"It's windy out to-day."

"It's windy and it's cold."

So we sit here  
close-gathered in Time's hand.

The American soldier in the flat above  
paces about thinking of Idaho,  
and over him the tarts in slippered leisure  
amuse themselves to make the daylight pass.

"Where do you come from?" "Where?  
I'm London born." "I'm an Australian."

"My parents came from Haute Savoie."

Yet gathered here—

all halted here—we pause

we linger at Time's carrefour

before we part,

before we scatter down Time's vanishing paths.

## TIME AND THE HEART

SITTING in the park  
She sees  
The air grow dark  
And stars  
Circle the trees.

Before her pass  
In Time's enchanted never  
Lovers of every season  
Seeking in Love's endeavour  
The body's reason.

Though she is old  
Her heart  
Out-beating Time's disaster  
Still sings apart  
Youth's tender aria.

## HYPERION TO A SATYR

I AM your Ganymede, page, buffoon,  
Your satellite and mirror-moon,  
The light-reflecting stream wherein  
Your changing image may be seen,  
Your Echo and your Psyche true,  
Your Sancho and your Palamon.

So my sweet Sun, consider well—  
The sun eclipsed, the moon is dull:  
The leaden echo from the voice proceeds,  
And Sancho only goes where Quixote leads.

## DISTANCE

LYING in bed, your loving messengers  
like homing pigeons in at the window came  
with the first morning sun;  
and foggy flats, grey hills and dreary camps,  
suburban slums, gasworks and factories,  
'all streams fed by the tears of those who mourn  
in homes that lie between these dual points  
positioned on the fixed diameter  
spanning the circle of our life and death,  
all, all rolled up into a small white flock  
of clouds beneath the bright wings of the doves  
and distance ceased.

Strange that the realists who measure miles  
should have no measure for hearts' distances  
which beat together, continents apart,  
and hand-in-hand give desultory hail  
from darkening promontories lost in spray.

## PSYCHE ON THE MOUNTAIN

*Written on the summit of Helm Crag*

*7 o'clock—June 5, 1943*

WHO greets me here?  
Whose psyche strayed  
In this small butterfly  
Among these rocks?  
It is so fragile;  
Is it yours,  
Beating its wings against the crag-encircling wind?

So silently it flies  
I hear it not:  
Only the waterfall  
Roaring below,  
The cry of stonechat  
In the gulley  
And the faint rasp of the wind on the rough-faced rock.

Each, each upon his rock  
Waiting alone  
In endless solitude:  
Our only messenger  
This wandering psyche,  
This butterfly  
Bearing our message to a friend or stranger.



Our only hope  
To launch the butterfly  
Upon the storm  
And wish it landfall.  
I greet your messenger,  
O, is it yours?  
And speed it back to you before day closes  
And seals the peaks apart in fearful night.

## ROSMERSHOLM

WHAT question is it lies within your lips?  
What lie escapes behind your liquid eye?  
What false imposture leans against your breast  
And cries to break the silence you impose?

*It is one love that masks another's face;  
It is false life that hides another's death;  
It is my soul that cries within my breast  
To break the silence that I must impose.*

Oh, who can sort out true and false or tell  
The liar from the lover or dismantle  
The elaborate contrivance of our hearts  
To build what seems a palace of delight?

*It is the first foundation stone forebodes  
Bright terraces of joy or ruin's prison;  
Built on another's sorrow the tallest tower  
Falters engulfed into the sea's despair.*

## MY ENEMY

My thoughts more injury than my deeds would dare  
And eyes dark basilisk fires would strip  
That gold as honey, white as jasmine, flesh  
Down from the rotten trellis of the bone:  
My raging heart would beat to poisoned air  
The mild serenity of those lying eyes.

But since mind's boundaries confine the thought  
(Desire a deed but only in the act)  
My enemy walks unhurt. It is  
My own flesh fevered, and my heart distraught.

## HATE SUPPRESSED

MONEY corrupts, and power and long success,  
But nothing rots the heart like hate suppressed.  
The smooth façade, the social attitude,  
The anger we endure in solitude,  
The constant practice of hypocrisy  
Infect me like a deadly leprosy  
And hurt the very inward soul in me  
Like lies to those we love.

## DRAGONFLY

THOSE unseeing eyes which register  
Upon the liquid surface of their glass  
The images of all who pass:

That painted head whose bright display rebukes  
The pale moth whiteness of a woman's skin  
Softly by lamplight seen:

Emergent from the nymph those brilliant scales  
Whose peacock-breasted blue the idle eye  
Surprises by its sudden brilliancy:

The *Dragonfly*, upon the leaf's dark heart,  
Watching the circling stream bear life away  
On long surrender to the distant sea.

For her, the watcher on those upper reaches,  
Death darkens not upon that brittle body  
Resting unchanged upon the darkening lily.

Only those liquid mirrors hold no more  
Within the fluid circle of their dream  
The drifting images upon the stream.

## FISH, MOTH AND MAN

SEEK not nor search those pools, slip-silver fish:  
No gentle river reaches will uncover  
But sucking whirlpools which will deep draw down  
Along dark labyrinthine streams to drown  
And cast to surface, and your small still corpse  
White-bellied to the starlight will discover.

Seek not nor search those flames, O pollen moth:  
No friendship warmth but passion's hot destroyer  
To burn soft honey wing, antennæ's feather.  
Ah, blind and dreaming, lost and timeless dancer,  
Sway not in light's bright music, seek for lover  
That flameless fire the moon that shines, no burner.

Seek not nor search his eyes: those sharp bright spears  
Would find their fatal entry to the keep.  
Turn swift aside, shut, fasten close those doors  
That open on your undefended halls;  
For he will storm the citadel and slaughter  
The lingering garrison . . . then trumpets high  
And gay flags flying in the sun, march on  
To leave in desolation those dark walls.

## SPRING DREAM

SPRING is that time when sleep and dream draw close  
To life. Last night I dreamed I walked with you  
Along a grassy road to a white gate.  
We drifted through on the warm leaf-bright air.  
The birds invisible sang: there violets grew  
As large and soft as pansies, but they grew  
Under the water; for a green stream flowed  
Beside the path and those dark-headed flowers  
Glowed under water and their shining leaves  
Stirred in the current and their smoky scent  
Rose faintly from the surface of that stream,  
Eddying in the air like visible smoke:  
Beyond this violet stream the banks reflected  
A paler primrose light and in the air  
Hundreds of brimstone butterflies beat their wings  
Creating a wilder light.

O Spring and Dream and Vision—so entangled,  
With birds and butterflies and leaves and streams,  
That Life is Subterfuge and Death is Dream.

## KEW GARDENS

*April 1943*

ON the pale waters of the Lake  
The ornamental geese sail by;  
The pinions of their half-raised wings  
Ready for some imagined flight  
They sail in Spring-resplendent pride,  
And as they turn into the sun  
Their harsh articulated cry  
Echoes up the waterside.

Within the shadow of a tree  
Float two wild mallard side by side  
Till bright explosion of desire  
Flings them from water into air;  
Following instinct's course they mount  
In ritual's seven-circled rings:  
The drake pursues the wheeling duck  
Implacable to strike her down.

They pass above my head and now  
The duck pursues the wheeling drake  
Who casts his image on the Lake;  
The wind crying in their wings  
Trails a long eerie call  
Across the silent fluid sky:  
It is as if they mated there  
In the finer element of air.



They stoop obliquely to the Lake.—  
Tearing the delicate surface wide  
Their feet cast up bright water flakes:  
Now once again they stilly float,  
• Their heads erect, their wings unstirred.  
The ornamental geese sail on:  
Round them the silent waters shine,  
Reflect the vacant evening air.

## KEW GARDENS IN MARCH

I LOVE to see young girls run hand in hand •  
Across the grass,  
Their laughter shrill and silly  
Like little birds that pass  
And tumble in the air:  
Their faces pale and their pale hair  
Lit with the faint brilliance of the sun  
Which tenderly explores each opening bud  
Of almond tree and prunus  
Whose pale shells drift on air's green-golden streams,  
Green-golden streams that yearly wash away  
Enchantment from the eyes of the unloved.

I weep to see young lovers lost  
In tender dream:  
The young girl seeks her lover  
By searching in his eyes and finding there  
Her imaged love—  
The boy, whose mouth in drowsy ecstasy  
Pursues in thought the outline of a kiss,  
Thinks not what lies beyond the greening thorn  
What winter's ravage plucks bright feather's crown.

## GARDENS OF ADONIS

IN Sussex on a sunny Sunday once  
Everyone, prams and parents, carried wands  
Of hazel pale with pollen-heavy catkins  
Like some Spring rite, some secret festival:  
The gardens of Adonis here transplanted  
To another clime than Sicily where children  
Carrying bowls of sprouting grass remember  
Venus's lover's longed-for resurrection.

## SOLDIER AND GIRL SLEEPING

*On a painting by William Scott*

It is late, already it is night,  
But still they wait, still spin the moments out:  
There is time yet and they rest  
Side by side on the hard station bench:  
For the train will come, will break  
These two apart and bear the half away.

Parting in love is not so hard a thing  
(Leaving a bright and crystal certitude  
Wrapping within the pain a kernel joy)  
As parting in love's echo:  
For outgoing love bears on its tide  
All things away and is more sure  
In its finality than Death.

These two are sleeping now:  
She sleeps so lightly,  
Wavering on the further verge of waking,  
While his stillness holds her firm  
In the fixed circle of his dream;  
She lies within the cavities of his being,  
The bright imagination of his heart,  
And through his darkened eyes sees not

The falling hand of Time,  
Nor through his sleeping ears can hear  
The tiger trains prowl in and out.

They sleep.

And parting has no time for them  
Nor place to hurt them in.

## BALLERINA INAMORATA

THE lover from his box,  
Bending to his dark passion  
The choreographer's score,  
Reveals his own creation,  
Enchants the dreaming dancer.

His eye designs the set  
Where you, young ballerina,  
Dance into the light;  
All other friends and rivals  
Your silver swan supporters.

And you upon the stage  
Unfold to him in wonder  
In ecstasy's *pas seul*  
The knowledge of your heart  
First felt within this hour.

In the long *pas de deux*  
Joy trembles to discover  
Its miracle of love  
While the pale obeisant chorus  
In satellite circles move.

On circle, pit and stall  
Death's dust begins to settle  
When the dancers are gone home  
And the final curtain's fallen  
And the lover's box is empty.

But on to-morrow's stage  
Within your lover's candle  
    Another dancer burns;  
Though your pale wings are blackened,  
Your moth enchantment over.

ON A CHILD  
ASLEEP IN A TUBE SHELTER

*London, March 1944*

He sleeps undreaming; all his world  
Furled in its winter sheath; green leaves  
And pale small buds fast folded lie  
As he lies curled as if his mother's arms  
Held him and tenderly kept the world away.

His eyelids draw soft shadows down  
And ward away the harsh lights' glare;  
His parted lips draw breath as though  
Breathing grass-scented, cool, hill-country air  
He tasted not this subterranean draught.

Indifferent trains roll in and out;  
Indifferent crowds, who stand or stroll  
Wearily up and down, who shout  
Against the echoing din: yet he sleeps still,  
Deep in oblivion beyond their farthest call

Whose searchlights finger stars but pass  
Looking for something else; whose town  
Sleeps with its eyes half-closed, its ears  
Alert for war's alarms, whose troubled dreams  
Stir the light surface of night's uneasy sleep.



The child is hidden underground  
Yet Sleep still lovingly seeks him out  
And keeps him tenderly till dawn.  
Above, men listen for the roll of guns  
• And sighs lie on the lips of drowsy watchers.

## THE ARTIST'S VISION

*On a shelter picture by Henry Moore*

THE artist sees the world in composition:  
in colour, pattern, rhythm, line and light,  
and we in Moore's tube shelter sketch are seen  
as solid half-recumbent female figures,  
still, statuesque, devoid of all emotion,  
shining in splendour of soft magenta and green.

Majestic, superhuman; as if some God  
were in the act—creating us from stone;  
leaning towards life, yet only half alive,  
half patient, malleable, enduring rock  
No heart will drive its pulse along our veins;  
no tears will gather in our vacant eyes;

No weariness has ever weighed us down  
'nor hunger ached in us, nor cold has curled  
its paralysing fingers round our limbs,  
nor pain, nor joy, nor love have ever known,  
but soulless megaliths we lie entranced  
in limbo's circle, lost between the worlds.

## FULL MOON

*London, August 5, 1944*

It is this moon which lights us here  
giving the town a forest look  
as though the houses were great trees,  
these streets green glades leading to silent lakes  
where all the stealthy creatures of the night  
converge to slake their thirst; where waxen blooms  
break and perfume the incandescent air:

This moon romanticising here  
shines on the field, but cannot ease  
the soldier's inconsolable death,  
cannot again recall his irreclaimable breath;  
cannot deflect the westward bearing bomb  
the deathward bearing which, night's death-hawk, seeks  
for someone sleeping in the moonlit town:

And this same moon shines down on you  
at Windermere, lights lakes and hills,  
smoothes rocks and draws far summits down  
so near you could upon the highest tops  
step from your leaning window and survey  
this island drifting darkly on the sea.

## ON PENTIRE HEAD

*September 1943*

*For P.D.*

### I

ONLY the earth bears scars  
that will not wear away  
for generations;  
the stones of Carthage  
mark Aeneas' stay,  
Dido's betrayal.

Dungeons and prisons stand  
whose walls still bar  
innocent prisoners  
from day's long beauty  
and night's darker star,  
Diana's splendour.

The carrion flesh and bone  
of ordinary men  
ruined in battle  
(whose dying semen  
golden pastures sicken)  
poison the fountain.

### II

Westward from Pentire Head  
the wide Atlantics reach  
to the Americas;

the waters finger  
rock and shell-moled beach  
like tender lover.

No one could guess for sure  
what ships and roving sailors  
lie on the sea-bed,  
where darkness filches  
all tone from colour,  
echo from whisper.

In the abyssal seas'  
monotonous cold,  
spin the sea-spiders;  
among the sea ferns  
stilted crabs behold  
man's dissolution.

Under the sloping sun  
the waters tenderly spread  
innocent surfaces,  
at heart rejoicing  
rich in earth's dead  
no more returning.

### III

Only the sky casts out  
the tragic defeated  
from its element;  
bears only the living  
young and exalted  
victor and joyous.

There, men like dying stars  
burn to extinction  
    in night's dark cavern,  
\* like meteors falling  
in expectation  
    of death's delivery:

No scar reveals their fall,  
no wound, no weeping  
    mars the serenity  
of heaven, innocent,  
as child who, sleeping,  
    sleeps undreaming.

## PLAGA MUNDI

O PLAGA mundi—in all the world  
There is one beach where time is found:  
The black shale crumbles and time falls out  
And lies exposed to sun and sea.  
The dinosaur from ancient eyes  
Watches the rout of night and day:  
O plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

O plaga mundi—of all this world  
Where ammonites, vast snails in stone,  
Once slowly moved and browsed upon  
Huge ferns and sea-weeds. Did they stand  
Great wheels and roll along the sand  
Or flat upon their sides swim by?  
O plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

O plaga mundi—in all that world  
We stood among those ancient rocks,  
Those crumbling cliffs scaled to the sky,  
Those mud rocks shelved and slabbed, those smooth  
Boulders rounded by the sea,  
And all time's fossils lived in us  
On plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

O plaga mundi—in all the world  
No sun so bright, no sky, no sea  
So still and coiled and quiet, no stones  
So smooth and old—those ancient bones  
Made us more fragile, lost, alone,  
On plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

## DEATH IN THE DESERT

THOSE signs upon his face, love's strange stigmata,  
Mark him as passion's child, no casual berry,  
Not frigid duty's fruit, no sprig of habit  
But flower of lovers' single union:  
Their shining jewel, passion's hoarded treasure,  
He lies the child of twenty generations.  
For when two stars drawn to each other's sphere  
Strain to their orbits, fuse in a single fire,  
From their bright wreck a new star shines in space,  
Brighter, more lovely.

There is a Himalayan orchis sleeps  
A hundred years within its quickening root  
Till on a single night desire that fountain  
Thrusts through the radiant snow dark leaves of longing  
From whose dark sheath springs then the darker shaft,  
A shadowy tower upthrust of pure desire:  
And in the stillness of the frozen air  
The blossoms break;  
And like a flight of wild white butterflies  
Maddened by moonlight hang on the trembling stem  
Through the slow passing of the winter night  
And in the morning wither. Flower and stem  
Shrink down into the root, itself dissolves;  
Nothing is left—no sign, no vestige lingers:



Only upon the eye that once beheld  
Such beauty, lies a pattern of perfection.  
So he upon my heart his image leaves  
Who now his fair head rests upon the sand  
• ~~So~~ on fairer lying, carrion-cleansed bone,  
Past Beauty's shadow and her skeleton.

## PARTING

WHAT gulfs of Space, what vaults of Time  
Echo between our footfalls now.  
On Euclid's parallels we walked  
Never to meet, yet side by side;  
And talked our hearts away and lay  
At starry night-time side by side.  
But now on two divergent paths  
We slowly fade; each image dims  
Upon the eye's pale retina;  
Our two divergent paths like arms  
Held out for the returning lover,  
But empty still for that dark figure  
Returns not but retreats for ever.

## THE GLASS OF LOVE IS FALLEN

THE glass of love is fallen  
Where once it was set fair,  
Not into storms and tempests  
Not into frost and fire  
But deep in the doldrums, grey and overcast.

Malign and chill the woodlands,  
Damp and sour the ground,  
For hate spawns in the flower  
Rotten with tears, whose round  
Chalice held high love's honey and sweet her golden dust.

## MUSIC AND VISION

*On seeing a blinded Airman at a recital given by Schnabel  
Royal Albert Hall, Friday, May 17, 1946*

MUSIC gives now the form and pattern  
Which once came to him through Vision  
Though yet he sees in bright confusion  
Fast-fading images renewing  
Their shapes in bright original splendour.

As Memory feels her way in dream,  
And stumbles on the haunting landscape  
In dream recurring, till that day  
When suddenly looking with startled eyes  
We see that lost dream-landscape blossom  
With sudden brilliance of bright day  
And the dreamer wakes in the land of his dream.

But he lives in this world of dreaming:  
Seeks to recall the shapes of day,  
To crystallise Laocoön forms  
Which glide through his mind in a hurrying stream  
While colour and shape dissolve and never  
Rests the conclusive, immobile image.

The Music mounts its shining ladders  
Up vaulted space, until a small  
Terrible Inescapable track  
Obliterates those trivial forms  
He struggles after: fills his heart  
With forms that have no visible shape;  
With pure form and light which lies  
Within his heart, and brings him sights  
Beyond the blindness of his eyes.

## BIRTHDAYS AND DEATHDAYS

WITHIN your eyes no clouded dread discloses  
The secret that I fear;  
Nor on your lips the taste of death embitters  
Their winter-warm desire.  
We keep each other's birthdays but in silence  
Our deathday passes by:  
Each year it comes, our deaths one year more near:  
Was it to-day, perhaps, or yesterday?  
Some unexciting day which unremarked  
Went out at midnight?  
Or will to-morrow's anniversary  
Mark up another year against our score?

Born under certain stars we bear that seed  
Implanted in us;  
That inescapable fate which hunted down  
King Oepidus to nothing.  
The anatomist knows us, the psychologist  
Explains our dreams.  
Yet you and I, love, know we hardly guess  
What thoughts the other has:  
And when we look at midnight out to sea  
Or watch those stars  
Which roaming on the outer edge of sight  
Know other suns  
What differing images pattern your eyes and mine,  
What differing symbols rise:

As Tess and Adam on that night looked up  
And she compared  
The stars to apples on a tree, some sound,  
The others rotten.  
And which are we? " asked Adam, Tess replied,  
" A blighted one."  
And knowing that true, she followed until her star  
Led to that summer morning when Angel stood  
And watched the black flag break above the tower  
Of Winchester gaol.

Yet still we will not care nor waste our time  
Guessing our day of death;  
But celebrate our birthdays when they come  
And celebrate continuance of our breath.

# NEGATIVE ENTROPY

*or*

## THE THIRD LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS

*or*

### HOW IT IS WE KEEP ALIVE

WE feed on crystals, feast on minerals,  
Batten upon the moon, consume the stars  
And through the channels of our love drain off  
The sun's heat and the whole world's energy.

The crocus and the oak, the elephant,  
The long-tailed tit, the taxidermist's owl,  
Our eyes, our hair, our nails, all, all the same—  
Millions of indistinguishable atoms  
Chaos in single numbers, order in millions.

Only the passionate indestructible pattern  
Of the all-but-eternal molecule, carries the key.  
Locked in its heart lies the secret  
To grow from the acorn the oak,  
From the corm the year's yellow crocus,  
From the fertilised cell the elephant,  
From the egg the tit or the owl,  
From eyes our children's eyes, from hair their hair  
And from our nails their same peculiar nails.



Each greedy of life resists death,  
Sucks sustenance from the desert;  
Devours the rock and the ruby.  
Until we cool to our end  
And dying provide new fires  
For love and fresh generation.

## EUMENIDES

HELLISH Time cast you ashore  
A couple of decades and more  
    Before I came to birth;  
Malignant Time kept me in hand  
Until it was too late to land  
    On this tormenting earth.

If Time had let us be  
Contemporaneously  
    Who knows what then?  
Fate would have interfered  
And kept each hemisphered,  
    From the other's ken.

## I • THOUGHT I HEARD THE SONG OF A BIRD

I THOUGHT I heard a bird  
Lying in my room in the heart of the city.

And then I sensed  
Pressing upon me in the denser air  
The lost light of worlds gone down in ruin  
Blazing upon the pictures and pale walls  
The heat of generations burning there  
And death's intenser cold. Despair, despair,  
The energies of thought and hope and terror  
Beat in the confines of the room like fever;  
All, all in motion through eternity,  
All, all for ever in my darkening room.

But O lying on my bed in the heart of the city,  
I thought I heard the song of a living bird.

## LIFE, BEETLES, BUTTERFLIES AND OTHERS

No one has been here before, we thought,  
As we leaned over the pool together:  
A bog-hole on top of a mountain, walled  
With peat and the bleached roots of heather,  
Whose water's amber and dark revealed  
Nothing at all. Like a dark jewel  
Burning within itself—or cast  
On the desolate shores of the Baltic lying  
Like a lump of golden gum which gleams  
Through the long smoke of the breaking wave

On the secret surface, as we watched,  
Beetles, oaring about in abandon,  
Patterned the water with delicate strokes  
And golden beetles, like polished seeds  
Or grains of iron pyrites, which  
Drawn by some invisible magnet  
Shot vertically up from the depths, to drop  
Idly down again, sliding down  
As if on a greased invisible causeway.  
Caddis worms slowly crept about  
On the peat-thick floor of the pool,  
Their cases of hollow stick adrift,  
Moored by the insect head and legs  
Which cautiously felt their way like antennæ  
Afraid of a sudden touch in the dark.

(I saw two butterflies fight for existence to-day—  
A red admiral fought with a tortoiseshell butterfly  
In the autumn sunlight. Each wanted to live  
As they fought for the last mouthful of summer's honey,  
Warred up and down waving their wild antennæ,  
Beating their delicate summer-reflecting wings.)

Yet year after year on top of that Yorkshire moor  
Those insects live on and on.  
The pool is warmed by the sun or crossed  
By sudden darkening thunder clouds;  
The rain soaks down the winds declaim,  
Snowstorms obliterate and ice enthralls.

They live "*for ever*."

"Our life's too short" we mournfully cry,  
"Back to Methuselah!" Yet even three hundred years  
Is not enough to hope what we long to do.

Eternity rather.

And there those beetles are  
Living on and on. And yet *we* die so soon  
And think our loves and thought do perish  
With our soft eyes and our strong hands.

## THE DARK JAGUAR

LAST night we rode, my love and I,  
On distant pilgrimage;  
I do not know by what lost track  
We came at last to that bright wood  
Where springs the fount and passion of our blood:  
*But savage in his cage still howls  
The yet untamed dark jaguar  
For the black jungle of his dream.*

Last night we sailed, my love and I,  
On an uncompassed course;  
Until we came to that lost isle  
Whose shores are still invisible  
Where grows the tree and fruit of our desire:  
*But furious in his cage still screams  
The angry scarlet mocking-bird  
For the white sunlight of his dream.*

Last night we flew, my love and I,  
Out of the universe;  
The stars like round unpointed moons  
Passed far behind. We came at last  
To the silent valleys of unfrontiered space:  
*Motionless from his cage still stares  
The golden eagle. His levelled eyes  
Seeking the mountains of his dream.*

## SUBLUNARY LOVE

1939

### I

ALL day the hyacinthine floods have surged  
about the roots of the sky-striving trees  
that lift their bright tops to the springtime air,  
whose tender leaves from sepalled sleep emerged  
add airy music to the singing bees.  
Earth with new flowers, air with young birds is gay,  
the violet, campion, orchid, bugle bright,  
speedwell, white starwort and a myriad blades,  
leaves, shoots and tendrils green as various  
as brilliant bird song—flashing feathers past  
of tit, finch, nuthatch, jay; and soon  
the calling woodpecker and as night falls  
Cuckoo, the wanderer, Cuckoo, Cuckoo calls.  
Birds, bees, buds, sunshine move now to their rest.  
The long spring day rolls over to the west.

### II

Now pools of silence wait the coming moon:  
only night's perfumes eddying spin and weave  
invisible melodies among the leaves,  
while passion sleeps in dreaming lily roots:  
how still, how dark the petalled waters lie:  
the nightingale in anguished silence leans  
her heart against the thorn and sorrow's song  
lies yet unsung upon her stifled tongue.

Now like the passing of a troupe of swans  
comes a faint heavenly stir, shadow of light  
from pinions beating white in a dark sky  
and swinging splendid from earth's caverned eye,  
the moon rolls slowly up the trembling sky.

### III

Along the moon's green tides that drown the wood,  
the moon's green waters that now fill the glade—  
all earthly show all colour washed away—  
drift by white bodies green and shadow pale  
as scentless petals of the Christmas rose  
that greener seem against the year-end's snow,  
so these more white appear in moon's green light,  
only their mouths glow red as mulberries,  
dark smouldering jewels in their secret leaves  
and strange eyes burn with dark deliberate fire  
in the radiant pallor of each countenance;  
Now each to each inexorably drawn  
stand face to face in tension like two drops  
of mercury before the invisible wall  
breaks and the drop is indivisibly one;  
so locked in ecstasy, so lost  
in passion's dark sublunary labyrinths  
they stand: then slowly spin into the dance  
and faster, wilder, in swift rapture whirl  
till all the trees seem reeling by in space—  
no sound at all but the moon's silent laugh  
rocking the earth upon its axle shaft.

### IV

So every lunar festival  
through the long hours of spring's enchanted dark  
they follow destined paths and trace  
ecstasy's constellation, passion's star;



through still summer's ominous quiet they dance,  
the moon more deadly, golden, perilous grown;  
white Hunter to red Harvester succeeds  
and first frosts snap leaves bleeding from the trees.  
Less wild, close-locked, in weariness,  
they spin among the falling leaves' brown rain  
thinking of summer's warm lascivious touch;  
nor dare to think of spring, those first sweet nights  
those trembling joys that flowering rosebright pain.

v

Patient, entranced, the sorrowing winter's trees  
grieve for the spring. An old white moon  
looks down and sees twin-mounded in the snow  
the graves that cover and embalm in ice  
the dancers' bodies linked, bound, interlocked  
in cold marmoreal splendour.  
The fox's footfall marks their silent graves  
Whereon death's shadow carves strange architraves.

## LAMENT FOR WALTER TURNER

I AM two beings now, one creature moves  
All joy withdrawn, a function and a brain;  
Paid acrobats,

Which through the day's work tear their idiot way  
For those who will not give us time to grieve  
And rock our grief;

The other, double-sensed, lives in those moments  
When you, beloved, live again within me  
Your instrument.

I know now what that sixth sense means, at last;  
It is the sense the newly dead feel through  
For a little while;

- It is the sense through which we reach the dead  
In that intenser essence of delight,  
Awareness doubled—

(These daffodils consume my power of sight  
Their winter-trespassing beauty burns away  
Despair to ashes.)

*Despair to ashes*—They burned your body, that sheath.  
So dear familiar, so known, so long beloved,  
Of you who loved

All cool delicious things: to dream of streams,  
Cold springs, and fountains; who loved to see the sun  
From a tree's shade.

Now, never again will birds their infinite song  
Pour in your ears their visible crystal streams  
Our waterfall:

Nor Hardy's thrush, nor Keats's nightingale  
Will sing again for you, nor Shelley's lark:  
*They sing for me.*

They sing for me and in their song I hear  
Your voice again—your presence everywhere  
In the energy of Spring.

## II

Perhaps as you lay entranced you saw *La Rose*  
And your brother with trays of camellias freshly picked  
To sell in the town;

Your father gay long ago and a famous dandy  
Conducting the Sunday concerts, playing the organ,  
Off for a bathe;

Or picnics up at the end of the railway track  
At the edge of the unknown Bush where the tree ferns grew  
By the water pools,

Where the sun shone with a passionate bright delight  
Through the thin-leaved trees, where snakes and birds and light  
Made single music.

## III

You looked so calm and gentle, you lay so still  
As the tide flowed up the river under the bridge;  
A tranquil sun

Shone winter-pale, lit up the room and burned  
The anemones' richer colours into the wood  
Of the polished table;

The sky and the river shone, blue, wintry, bright-  
The white room like a cavern of crystal glowed  
A cavern of snow,

When suddenly swooped like a swallow breasting the water  
A red-sailed boat sweeping upstream on the tide  
Under your window.

But your eyes were closed and the boat's bird-winged shadow  
Disturbed no dream, broke off no music's joy,  
Touched no bright thought.

#### IV

You come no more. I cannot yet believe  
Death conquered you—the bright unquenchable sun,  
Life's fiercest star.

You come no more. Yet everywhere traces lie  
Of your physical presence only insisting still  
*You come no more.*

#### V

Open the door—come in—O speak to me, speak, O beloved.—  
You cannot return. . . . To Dido's lamenting *Never*  
Death echoes *Never* again.







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