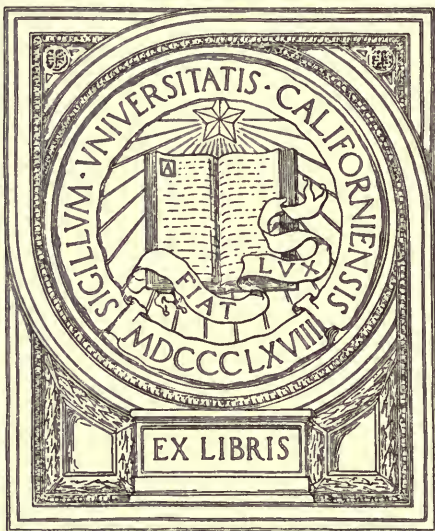


# Preludes and Symphonies

By John Gould Fletcher



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
AT LOS ANGELES



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PRELUDES AND SYMPHONIES



# PRELUDES AND SYMPHONIES

BY  
JOHN GOULD FLETCHER



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AT LOS ANGELES  
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TO  
AMY LOWELL  
IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF  
HER FRIENDSHIP

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G. W. Clark

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## NOTE

THE present volume is a reissue of the author's two earlier books, *Irradiations; Sand and Spray* (1915) and *Goblins and Pagodas* (1916). Thanks are due to the editors of *Poetry* (Chicago), *The Egoist* (London), and *The Little Review* (New York) for permission to reprint certain of these poems that originally appeared in the pages of their respective publications.



# CONTENTS

IRRADIATIONS . . . . .	I
EPILOGUE . . . . .	40
SAND AND SPRAY (A SEA-SYMPHONY) . . . . .	41
PART I. THE GALE . . . . .	43
PART II. VARIATIONS . . . . .	45
(1) SAILBOATS . . . . .	45
(2) THE TIDE . . . . .	46
(3) THE SANDS . . . . .	48
(4) THE GULLS . . . . .	49
(5) STEAMERS . . . . .	50
(6) NIGHT OF STARS . . . . .	52
PART III. VARIATIONS . . . . .	53
(1) THE GROUNDSWELL . . . . .	53
(2) SNOW AT SEA . . . . .	55
(3) THE NIGHT WIND . . . . .	56
(4) THE WRECK . . . . .	57
(5) TIDE OF STORMS . . . . .	58
PART IV. THE CALM . . . . .	59

# GOBLINS AND PAGODAS

## SECTION I. THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE 1

PROLOGUE . . . . . 3

PART I. THE HOUSE . . . . . 5

Bedroom . . . . . 5

Library . . . . . 6

Indian Skull . . . . . 6

Old Nursery . . . . . 7

The Back Stairs . . . . . 8

The Wall Cabinet . . . . . 9

The Cellar . . . . . 9

The Front Door . . . . . 10

PART II. THE ATTIC . . . . . 11

In the Attic . . . . . 11

The Calendar in the Attic . . . . . 12

The Hoopskirt . . . . . 13

The Little Chair . . . . . 14

In the Dark Corner . . . . . 14

The Toy Cabinet . . . . . 15

The Yardstick . . . . . 16

## CONTENTS

PART III. THE LAWN . . . . .	17
The Three Oaks . . . . .	17
An Oak . . . . .	18
Another Oak . . . . .	18
The Old Barn . . . . .	19
The Well . . . . .	20
The Trees . . . . .	20.
Vision . . . . .	21
Epilogue . . . . .	22
SECTION II. SYMPHONIES . . . . .	23
BLUE SYMPHONY . . . . .	25
SOLITUDE IN THE CITY (SYMPHONY IN BLACK AND GOLD) . . . . .	31
I. Words at Midnight . . . . .	31
II. The Evening Rain . . . . .	32
III. Street of Sorrows . . . . .	34
IV. Song in the Darkness . . . . .	35
GREEN SYMPHONY . . . . .	39
GOLDEN SYMPHONY . . . . .	46
WHITE SYMPHONY . . . . .	53

## CONTENTS

MIDSUMMER DREAMS (SYMPHONY IN WHITE AND BLUE) . . . . .	62
ORANGE SYMPHONY . . . . .	67
RED SYMPHONY . . . . .	75
VIOLET SYMPHONY . . . . .	82
GREY SYMPHONY . . . . .	87
POPPIES OF THE RED YEAR (A SYMPHONY IN SCARLET) . . . . .	93



# IRRADIATIONS



## I

THE spattering of the rain upon pale terraces  
 Of afternoon is like the passing of a dream  
 Amid the roses shuddering 'gainst the wet green stalks  
 Of the streaming trees — the passing of the wind  
 Upon the pale lower terraces of my dream  
 Is like the crinkling of the wet grey robes  
 Of the hours that come to turn over the urn  
 Of the day and spill its rainy dream.

Vague movement over the puddled terraces:  
 Heavy gold pennons — a pomp of solemn gardens  
 Half hidden under the liquid veil of spring:  
 Far trumpets like a vague rout of faded roses  
 Burst 'gainst the wet green silence of distant forests:  
 A clash of cymbals — then the swift swaying footsteps  
 Of the wind that undulates along the languid terraces.  
 Pools of rain — the vacant terraces  
 Wet, chill and glistening  
 Towards the sunset beyond the broken doors of to-day.

## IRRADIATIONS

### II

GAUNT sails — bronze boats of the evening —  
Float along the river where aloft  
Like dim swans the clouds die  
Softly.

I am afraid to traverse the long still streets of evening;  
For I fear to see the ghosts that stare at me  
From the shadows.  
I will stay indoors instead and await my wandering dream.

She is about me, fluid yet, and formless;  
The wind in her hair whispers like dim violins:  
And the faint glint of her eyes shifts like a sudden move-  
ment  
Over the surface of a dark pool.

She comes to me slowly down the lost streets of the evening,  
And their immutable silence is in her feet.  
Let no lamps flare — be still, my heart — hands, stay:  
For I would touch the lips of my new love with my lips.

# IRRADIATIONS

## III

IN the grey skirts of the fog seamews skirl desolately,  
And flick like bits of paper propelled by a wind  
About the flabby sails of a departing ship  
Crawling slowly down the low reaches  
Of the river.

About the keel there is a bubbling and gurgling  
Of grumpy water ;  
And as the prow noses out a way for itself,  
It seems to weave a dream of bubbles and flashing foam,  
A dream of strange islands whereto it is bound :  
Pearl-islands drenched with the dawn.

The palms flash under the immense dark sky,  
Down which the sun dives to embrace the earth :  
Drums boom and conches bray,  
And with a crash of crimson cymbals  
Suddenly appears above the polished backs of slaves  
A king in a breastplate of gold  
Gigantic

Amid tossed roses and swaying dancers  
That melt into pale undulations and muffled echoes  
'Mid the bubbling of the muddy lumpy water,  
And the swirling of the seamews above the sullen river.

## IRRADIATIONS

✓  
IV

THE iridescent vibrations of midsummer light,  
Dancing, dancing, suddenly flickering and quivering  
Like little feet or the movement of quick hands clapping,  
Or the rustle of furbelows or the clash of polished gems.  
The palpitant mosaic of the midday light.  
Colliding, sliding, leaping and lingering: *Ezra Pound -*  
O, I could lie on my back all day, *"obvious"*  
And mark the mad ballet of the midsummer sky.

Revolutionary in rhythms -  
does not disregard the  
essential of cadence.

## IRRADIATIONS

### V

OVER the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;  
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

Whirlpools of purple and gold,  
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,  
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and  
balancing

Amid the vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades.  
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies in the light:  
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards,  
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,  
The sun broidered upon the rain,  
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;  
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

## IRRADIATIONS

### VI

THE balancing of gaudy broad pavilions  
Of summer against the insolent breeze:  
The bellying of the sides of striped tents,  
Swelling taut, shuddering in quick collapse,  
Silent under the silence of the sky.

Earth is streaked and spotted  
With great splashes and dapples of sunlight:  
The sun throws an immense circle of hot light upon the  
world,  
Rolling slowly in ponderous rhythm  
Darkly, musically forward.

All is silent under the steep cone of afternoon:  
The sky is imperturbably profound.  
The ultimate divine union seems about to be accomplished,  
All is troubled at the attainment  
Of the inexhaustible infinite.

The rolling and the tossing of the sides of immense pavilions  
Under the whirling wind that screams up the cloudless sky.



# IRRADIATIONS

## VII

FLICKERING of incessant rain  
On flashing pavements:  
Sudden scurry of umbrellas:  
Bending, recurved blossoms of the storm.

The winds came clanging and clattering  
From long white highroads whipping in ribbons up summits:  
They strew upon the city gusty wafts of apple-blossom,  
And the rustling of innumerable translucent leaves.

Uneven tinkling, the lazy rain  
Dripping from the eaves.

## IRRADIATIONS

### VIII

THE fountain blows its breathless spray  
From me to you and back to me.

Whipped, tossed, curdled,  
Crashing, quivering:  
I hurl kisses like blows upon your lips.  
The dance of a bee drunken with sunlight:  
Irradiant ecstasies, white and gold,  
Sigh and relapse.

The fountain tosses pallid spray  
Far in the sorrowful, silent sky.

# IRRADIATIONS

## IX

THE houses of the city no longer hum and play:  
They lie like careless drowsy giants, dumb, estranged.

One presses to his breast his toy, a lighted pane:  
One stirs uneasily: one is cold in death.

And the late moon, fearfully peering over an immense  
shoulder,  
Sees, in the shadow below, the unpeopled hush of a street.

Amy Lowell -  
"Organic Quality  
which defies explanation"

## IRRADIATIONS

### X

THE trees, like great jade elephants,  
Chained, stamp and shake 'neath the gadflies of the breeze;  
The trees lunge and plunge, unruly elephants:  
The clouds are their crimson howdah/canopies,  
The sunlight glints like the golden robe of a Shah.  
Would I were tossed on the wrinkled backs of those trees.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XI

THE clouds are like a sombre sea:  
On shining screens of ebony  
Are carven marvels of my heart.

'Gainst crimson placques of cinnabar  
Shrills, like a diamond, dawn's last star.

The gardens of my heart are green:  
The rain drips off the glistening leaves.  
In the humid gardens of my soul,  
The crimson peonies explode.

I am like a drop of rose-flushed rain  
Clinging to crimson petals of love.

In the afternoon, over gold screens,  
I will brush the blue dust of my dreams.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XII

THE pine, rough-bearded Pan of the woods,  
Whispered in my ear his sleepy-sweet song.  
Like liquid fire it ran through my veins.  
Thus he piped: Sad, lonely son of the woods,  
Lie down in the long still grass and sleep,  
Ere the dawn has hidden her swelling breasts,  
Ere the morning has covered her massive flanks,  
With the flame-coloured mantle of noon.  
Lie down in the dewless grass nor awake  
To see whether afternoon has hurried in  
From the rim of her purple robe dropping dim flowers:  
Golden flowers with pollen-dusty cups,  
Flowers of silence. Heed not though eve  
Should sail, a grey swan, in the pool of the sky,  
Spreading low ripples. Heed these not!  
Only awake when slim twilight  
Plunges her body in the last blown spray of the sun!  
Awake then, for twilight and dawn are your day:  
Therefore lie down in the long dim grass and sleep,  
And I will blow my low pipes over you.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XIII

As I went through the city by day  
I saw shadows in sunlight :  
But in the night I saw everywhere  
Stars within the darkness.

(A coldly fluting breeze :  
Dark Pan under the trees.  
Low laughter : up the sky  
A star like a street-lamp left on high.)

As I went through the city by day  
I was hustled by jostling people.  
But in the night, the wind of the darkness  
Whispered, "Hush !" to my soul.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XIV

BROWN bed of earth, still fresh and warm with love,  
Now hold me tight :  
Broad field of sky, where the clouds laughing move,  
Fill up my pores with light :  
You trees, now talk to me, chatter and scold or weep,  
Or drowsing stand :  
You winds, now play with me, you wild things creep,  
You boulders, bruise my hand !  
I now am yours and you are mine : it matters not  
What Gods herein I see :  
You grow in me, I am rooted to this spot,  
We drink and pass the cup, immortally.



## IRRADIATIONS

### XV

O SEEDED grass, you army of little men  
Crawling up the long slope with quivering, quick blades of  
steel:

You who storm millions of graves, tiny green tentacles of  
Earth,

Interlace yourselves tightly over my heart,

And do not let me go:

For I would lie here forever and watch with one eye

The pilgrimaging ants in your dull, savage jungles,

The while with the other I see the stiff lines of the slope

Break in mid-air, a wave surprisingly arrested,

And above them, wavering, dancing, bodiless, colourless,  
unreal,

The long thin lazy fingers of the heat.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XVI

AN ant crawling up a grass-blade,  
And above it, the sky.  
I shall remember these when I die:  
An ant and a butterfly  
And the sky.

The grass is full of forget-me-nots and poppies:  
Through the air darts many a fly.  
The ant toils up its grass-blade,  
The careless hours go by.

The grass-blades bow to the feet of the lazy hours:  
They walk out of the wood, showering shadows on flowers.  
Their robes flutter vaguely far off there in the clearing:  
I see them sometimes from the corner of my eye.

## XVII

THE wind that drives the fine dry sand  
Across the strand:  
The sad wind spinning arabesques  
With a wrinkled hand.

Labyrinths of shifting sand,  
The dancing dunes!

I will arise and run with the sand,  
And gather it greedily in my hand:  
I will wriggle like a long yellow snake over the beaches.  
I will lie curled up, sleeping,  
And the wind shall chase me  
Far inland.

My breath is the music of the mad wind;  
Shrill piping, stamping of drunken feet,  
The fluttering, tattered broidery flung  
Over the dunes' steep escarpments.

The fine dry sand that whistles  
Down the long low beaches.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XVIII

BLUE, brown, blue: sky, sand, sea:  
I swell to your immensity.  
I will run over the endless beach,  
I will shout to the breaking spray,  
I will touch the sky with my fingers.  
My happiness is like this sand:  
I let it run out of my hand.

Harriet Monroe -

"Perseus subject in

mood of artistic

detachment - rather than

identifying himself

with it.

# IRRADIATIONS

## XIX

THE clouds pass  
Over the polished mirror of the sky:  
The clouds pass, puffs of grey,  
There is no star.

The clouds pass slowly:  
Suddenly a disengaged star flashes.  
The night is cold and the clouds  
Roll slowly over the sky.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XX

I DANCE:

I exist in motion :

A wind-shaken flower spilling my drops in the sunlight.

I feel the muscles bending, relaxing beneath me ;  
I direct the rippling sweep of the lines of my body ;  
Its impact crashes through the thin walls of the atmosphere,  
I dance.

About me whirls

The sombre hall, the gaudy stage, the harsh glare of the  
footlights,

And in the brains of thousands watching

Little flames leap quivering to the music of my effort.

I have danced:

I have expressed my soul

In unbroken rhythm,

Sorrow and flame.

I am tired : I would be extinguished beneath your beating  
hands.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXI

NOT noisily, but solemnly and pale,  
In a meditative ecstasy you entered life :  
As performing some strange rite, to which you alone held  
the clue.

Child, life did not give rude strength to you ;  
From the beginning, you would seem to have thrown away,  
As something cold and cumbersome, that armour men use  
against death.

You would perhaps look on him face to face, and so learn  
the secret

Whether that face wears oftenest a smile or no ?  
Strange, old, and silent being, there is something  
Infinitely vast in your intense tininess :  
I think you could point out, with a smile, some curious star  
Far off in the heavens, which no man has seen before.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXII

THE morning is clean and blue and the wind blows up the clouds:

Now my thoughts gathered from afar  
Once again in their patched armour, with rusty plumes and  
blunted swords,

Move out to war.

Smoking our morning pipes we shall ride two and two  
Through the woods.

For our old cause keeps us together,  
And our hatred is so precious not death or defeat can break  
it.

God willing, we shall this day meet that old enemy  
Who has given us so many a good beating.  
Thank God we have a cause worth fighting for,  
And a cause worth losing and a good song to sing.



## IRRADIATIONS

### XXIII

TORRIDLY the moon rolls upward  
Against the smooth immensity of midsummer sky,  
Changeless, inexhaustible :  
The city beneath is still.  
Heaven and Earth are clasped together,  
Momently life grows as careless  
As the life of the intense stars.  
Out of the houses climbing,  
Fuming up windows, flickering from every rooftop,  
Rigid on sonorous pinnacles,  
Silently swirl aloft  
Love's infinite flamelets.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXIV

O ALL you stars up yonder,  
Do you hear me? Beautiful, winking, sullen eyes,  
I am tired of seeing you in the same old places,  
Night after night in the sky.  
I hoped you would dance — but after twenty-six years,  
I find you are determined to stay as you are.  
So I make it known to you, stars clustered or solitary,  
That I want you to fall into my lap to-night.  
Come down, little stars, let me play with you:  
I will string you like beads, and shovel you together,  
And wear you in my ears, and scatter you over people —  
And toss you back, like apples, if I choose.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXV

As I wandered over the city through the night,  
I saw many strange things:  
But I have forgotten all  
Except one painted face,  
Gaudy, shameless night-orchid;  
Heavy, flushed, sticky with narcotic perfume,  
There was something in you which made me prefer you  
Above all the feeble forget-me-nots of the world.  
You were neither burnt out nor pallid,  
There was plain, coarse, vulgar meaning in every line of you,  
And no make-believe:  
You were at least alive,  
When all the rest were but puppets of the night.

Reminded of "Chances"  
Imagists showing a  
changed point of view -  
reactions to the world  
in which they live

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXVI

SLOWLY along the lamp-emblazoned street,  
Amid the last sad drifting crowds of midnight  
Like lost souls wandering,  
Comes marching by solemnly  
As for some gem-bedecked ritual of old,  
A monotonous procession of black carts  
Full crowded with blood-red blossom :  
Scarlet geraniums  
Unfolding their fiery globes upon the night.  
These are the memories of day moulded in jagged flame :  
Lust, joy, blood, and death.  
With crushed hands, weary eyes, and hoarse clamour,  
We consecrate and acclaim them tumultuously  
Ere they pass, contemptuous, beyond the unpierced veil of  
silence.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXVII

I THINK there was an hour in which God laughed at me,  
For as I passed along the street,  
I saw that all the women—although their bodies were dex-  
terously concealed—  
Were thinking with all their might what men were like:  
And the men, mechanically correct, cigars at lips,  
Were wanting to rush at the women,  
But were restrained by respectability or timidity,  
Or fear of the consequences or vanity or some puerile dream  
Of a pale ideal lost in the vast grey sky.  
So I said to myself, it is time to end all this:  
I will take the first woman that comes along.  
And then God laughed at me—and I too smiled  
To see that He was in such good humour and that the sun  
was shining.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXVIII

I REMEMBER, there was a day.  
During which I did not write a line of verse :  
Nor did I speak a word to any woman,  
Nor did I meet with death.

Yet all that day I was fully occupied :  
My eyes saw trees, clouds, streets, houses, people ;  
My lungs breathed air ;  
My mouth swallowed food and drink ;  
My hands seized things, my feet touched earth,  
Or spurned it at my desire.

On that day I know I would have been sufficiently happy,  
If I could have kept my brain from bothering at all  
About my next trite poem ;  
About the tedious necessities of sex ;  
And about the day on which I would at last meet death.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXIX

It is evening, and the earth  
Wraps her shoulders in an old blue shawl.  
Afar off there clink the polychrome points of the stars,  
Indefatigable, after all these years!  
Here upon earth there is life, and then death,  
Dawn, and later nightfall,  
Fire, and the quenching of embers:  
But why should I not remember that my night is dawn in  
    another part of the world,  
If the idea fits my fancy?  
Dawns of marvellous light, wakeful, sleepy, weary, dancing  
    dawns,  
You are rose petals settling through the blue of my evening:  
I light my pipe to salute you,  
And sit puffing smoke in the air and never say a word.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXX

I HAVE seemed often feeble and useless to myself,  
And many times I have wished that the tedium of my life  
Lay at last dissolved in the cold acid of death :  
Yet I have not forgotten  
The sparkling of waters in the sunlight,  
The sound of a woman's voice,  
Gliding dancers,  
Chanting worshippers,  
A child crying,  
The wind amid the hills.  
These I can remember,  
And I think they are more of me  
Than the wrinkles on my face and the hungry ache at my  
heart.



# IRRADIATIONS

## XXXI

My stiff-spread arms  
Break into sudden gesture ;  
My feet seize upon the rhythm ;  
My hands drag it upwards :  
Thus I create the dance.

I drink of the red bowl of the sunlight :  
I swim through seas of rain :  
I dig my toes into earth :  
I taste the smack of the wind :  
I am myself :  
I live.

The temples of the gods are forgotten or in ruins :  
Professors are still arguing about the past and the future :  
I am sick of reading marginal notes on life,  
I am weary of following false banners :  
I desire nothing more intensely or completely than this  
    present ;  
There is nothing about me you are more likely to notice  
    than my being :  
Let me therefore rejoice silently,  
A golden butterfly glancing against an unflecked wall.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXXII

TO/DAY you shall have but little song from me,  
For I belong to the sunlight.  
This I would not barter for any kingdom.

I am a wheeling swallow,  
Blue all over is my delight.  
I am a drowsy grass-blade  
In the greenest shadow.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXXIII

My desire goes bristling and growling like an angry leopard;  
My ribs are a hollow grating, my hair is coarse and hard,  
My flanks are like sharp iron wedges, my eyes glitter as chill  
glass;

Down below there are the meadows where my famished  
hopes are feeding,

I will waylay them to windward, stalking in watchful pa-  
tience,

I will pounce upon them, plunging my muzzle in the hot  
spurt of their blood.

## IRRADIATIONS

### XXXIV

THE flag let loose for a day of festivity;  
Free desperate symbol of battle and desire,  
Leaping, lunging, tossing up the halyards;  
Below it a tumult of music,  
Above it the streaming wastes of the sky,  
Pinnacles of clouds, pyres of dawn,  
Infinite effort, everlasting day.  
The immense flag waving  
Aloft in glory:  
Over seas and hilltops  
Transmitting its lightnings.

# IRRADIATIONS

XXXV

WHAT weave you, what spin you,  
What wonder win you,  
You looms of desire?  
Sin that is splendour,  
Love that is shameless,  
Life that is glory,  
Life that is all.

[ 37 ]

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## IRRADIATIONS

### XXXVI

LIKE cataracts that crash from a crumbling crag  
Into the dull/blue smouldering gulf of a lake below,  
Landlocked amid the mountains, so my soul  
Was a gorge that was filled with the warring echoes of song.

Of old, they wore  
Shining armour, and banners of broad gold they bore:  
Now they drift, like a wild bird's cry,  
Downwards from chill summits of the sky.  
Fountains of flashing joy were their source afar;  
Now they lie still, to mirror every star.  
In circles of opal, ruby, blue, out-thrown,  
They drift down to a dull, dark monotone.

Pluck the loose strings, singer,  
Thrum the strings;  
For the wind brings distant, drowsy bells of song.  
Loose the plucked string, poet,  
Spurn the strings,  
For the echoes of memory float through the gulf for long.

My songs seem now one humming note afar:  
Light as ether, quivering 'twixt star and star,

## IRRADIATIONS

But yet, so still

I know not whence they come, if mine they are.

Yet that low note

Increases in force as if it said, "I will":

Kindled by God's fierce breath, it would the whole world fill.

Till steadily outwards thrown,

By trumpets blazoned, from the sky downblown,

It grows a vast march, massive, monotonous, known

Of old gold trumpeteers

Through infinite years:

Bursting the white, thronged vaults of the cool sky.

Till hurtling down there falls one mad black hammer-blow:

Then the chained echoes in their maniac woe

Are loosed against the silence, to shriek uncannily.

The strings shiver faintly, poet:

Strike the strings,

Speed the song:

Tremulous upward rush of wheeling, whirling wings.

## IRRADIATIONS

### EPILOGUE

THE barking of little dogs in the night is more remembered  
than the shining of the stars:

Only those who watch for long may see the moon rise:  
And they are mad ever after and go with blind eyes  
Nosing hungrily in the gutter for the scraps that men throw  
to the dogs;  
Few heed their babblings.



SAND AND SPRAY

A SEA-SYMPHONY



PART I. THE GALE

*Allegro furioso.*

PALE green/white, in a gallop across the sky,  
The clouds retreating from a perilous affray  
Carry the moon with them, a heavy sack of gold;  
Sharp arrows, stars between them shoot and play.

The wind, as it strikes the sand,  
Clutches with rigid hands  
And tears from them  
Thin ribbons of pallid sleet,  
Long stinging hissing drift,  
Which it trails up inland.

I lean against the bitter wind :  
My body plunges like a ship.  
Out there I see grey breakers rise,  
Their ravelled beards are white,  
And foam is in their eyes.  
My heart is blown from me to-night  
To be transfixed by all the stars.

Steadily the wind  
Rages up the shore :

## SAND AND SPRAY

In the trees it roars and battles,  
With rattling drums  
And heavy spears,  
Towards the house-fronts on it comes.

The village, a loose mass outflung,  
Breaks its path.  
Between the walls  
It bounces, tosses in its wrath.  
It is broken, it is lost.

With green/grey eyes,  
With whirling arms,  
With clashing feet,  
With bellowing lungs,  
Pale green/white in a gallop across the sky,  
The wind comes.

The great gale of the winter flings himself flat upon earth.

He hurriedly scribbles on the sand  
His transient tragic destiny.

# SAND AND SPRAY

## PART II. VARIATIONS

### (1) SAILBOATS

*Scherzando.*

LIGHT as thin-winged swallows pirouetting and gyrating,  
The sails dance in the estuary :  
Now heeling to the gust, now cantering,  
Bobbing as shuttles back and forth from each other.  
They scorn the black steamers that steadily near them  
On a course direct, with white spume of smoke from their  
bows,  
With snapping crash of breakers they fling themselves for-  
ward :  
Black on the wing-tips, white on the underside.  
These are the birds of the land breeze,  
Nesting on green waves in the gold sunlight :  
These are the sailships  
Heeling and tossing about in the estuary.

## SAND AND SPRAY

### (2) THE TIDE

*Con moto ondeggiante.*

THE tide makes music  
At the foot of the beach ;  
The waves sing together,  
Rumble of breakers.  
Ships there are swaying  
Into the distance,  
Thrum of the cordage,  
Slap of the sails.

The tide makes music  
At the foot of the beach ;  
Low notes of an organ  
'Gainst the dull clang of bells.  
The tide 's tense purple  
On the untrodden sand :  
Its throat is blue,  
Its hands are gold.

The tide makes music :  
The tide all day  
Catches light from the clouds  
That float over the sky.

## SAND AND SPRAY

Ocean, old serpent,  
Coils up and uncoils ;  
With sinuous motion,  
With rustle of scales.

## SAND AND SPRAY

### (3) THE SANDS

*Lento : appassionato.*

SHALLOW pools of water  
Are drinking up the sky ;  
Chasms of cool blue-white  
In the brown of the sands.  
The clouds are in them,  
The houses on the shore,  
The winds rumple the even  
Glimmer of the reflection.

I dash across those shallow pools :  
Starring their gauzy surface :  
A plopping rush of bubbles :  
I turn and watch my boot-tracks  
Oozing upwards slowly in the dark wind-wrinkled sand.



# SAND AND SPRAY

## (4) THE GULLS

*Molto Allegro.*

WHITE stars scattering,  
Pale rain of spray/drops,  
Delicate flash of smoke wind/drifted low and high,  
Silver upon dark purple,  
The gulls quiver  
In a noiseless flight, far out across the sky.

## SAND AND SPRAY

### (5) STEAMERS

*Maestoso.*

LIKE black plunging dolphins with red bellies,  
The steamers in herds  
Swim through the choppy breakers  
On this day of winds and clouds.  
Wallowing and plunging,  
They seek their path,  
The smoke of their snorting  
Hangs in the sky.

Like black plunging dolphins with red bellies,  
The steamers pass,  
Flapping their propellers  
Salt with the spray.  
Their iron sides glisten,  
Their stays thrash:  
Their funnels quiver  
With the heat from beneath.

Like black plunging dolphins with red bellies,  
The steamers together  
Dive and roll through the tumult  
Of green hissing water.

## SAND AND SPRAY

These are the avid of spoil,  
Gleaners of the seas,  
They loom on their adventure  
Up purple and chrome horizons.

## SAND AND SPRAY

### (6) NIGHT OF STARS

*Allegro brillante.*

THE sky immense, bejewelled with rain of stars,  
Hangs over us:  
The stars like a sudden explosion powder the zenith  
With green and gold;  
North-east, south-west, the Milky Way's pale streamers  
Flash past in flame;  
The sky is a swirling cataract  
Of fire, on high.

Over us the sky up to the zenith  
Palpitates with tense glitter:  
About our keel the foam bubbles and curdles  
In phosphorescent joy.  
Flame boils up to meet down-rushing flame  
In the blue stillness.  
Aloft a single orange meteor  
Crashes down the sky.

# SAND AND SPRAY

## PART III. VARIATIONS

### (I) THE GROUNDSWELL

*Marcia Funebre.*

WITH heavy doleful clamour, hour on hour, and day on  
day,

The muddy groundswell lifts and breaks and falls and slides  
away.

The cold and naked wind runs shivering over the sands,  
Salt are its eyes, open its mouth, its brow wet, blue its hands.

It finds naught but a starving gull whose wings trail at its  
side,

And the dull battered wreckage, grey jetsam of the tide.

The lifeless chilly slaty sky with no blue hope is lit,  
A rusty waddling steamer plants a smudge of smoke on it.

Stupidly stand the factory chimneys staring over all,  
The grey grows ever denser, and soon the night will fall:

The wind runs sobbing over the beach and touches with  
its hands

Straw, chaff, old bottles, broken crates, the litter of the sands.

## SAND AND SPRAY

Sometimes the bloated carcase of a dog or fish is found,  
Sometimes the rumped feathers of a sea-gull shot or drowned.

Last year it was an unknown man who came up from the  
    sea,  
There is his grave hard by the dunes under a stunted tree.

With heavy doleful clamour, hour on hour, and day on day,  
The muddy groundswell lifts and breaks and falls and slides  
    away.

## SAND AND SPRAY

(2) SNOW AT SEA

*Andante.*

SILENTLY fell  
The snow on the waters  
In the grey dusk  
Of the winter evening:  
Swirling and falling,  
Sucked into the oily  
Blue/black surface  
Of the sea.

We pounded on slowly;  
From our bows sheeted  
A shuddering mass of heavy foam:  
Night closed about us,  
But ere we were darkened,  
We saw close in  
A great gaunt schooner  
Beating to southward.

Silently fell  
The snow on the waters,  
As we pounded north  
In the winter evening.

## SAND AND SPRAY

### (3) THE NIGHT WIND

*Adagio lamentoso.*

WIND of the night, wind of the long cool shadows,  
Wind from the garden gate stealing up the avenue,  
Wind caressing my cool pale cheek completely,  
All my happiness goes out to you.

Wind flapping aimlessly at my yellow window curtain,  
Wind suddenly insisting on your way down to the sea,  
Buoyant wind, sobbing wind, wind shuddering and plaintive,  
Why come you from beyond through the night's blue mystery?  
tery?

Wind of my dream, wind of the delicate beauty,  
Wind strumming idly at the harp-strings of my heart :  
Wind of the autumn—O melancholy beauty,  
Touch me once—one instant—you and I shall never part!

Wind of the night, wind that has fallen silent,  
Wind from the dark beyond crying suddenly, eerily,  
What terrible news have you shrieked out there in the  
stillness?  
The night is cool and quiet and the wind has crept to sea.



# SAND AND SPRAY

## (4) THE WRECK

*Grave : triste.*

Its huge red prow  
Uplifted in a tragic attitude,  
It waits out there ; the seas around  
Bubble and hiss with moaning sound :  
In sight of port at the gates of the sea,  
It waits upreared expectantly.

It has known the joy of battle,  
It has known the shock of wreck :  
The spray coated its planking,  
The sands swallow its deck :  
Monument of the sea,  
That knows and that forgets eternally.

It heaves its scarred brow towards the city :  
The city pays it little heed :  
Indifferent, brutal, without pity,  
Stern cargo steamers trudge and speed ;  
The sun glares on it and the gulls wheel and flash,  
The rain beats on its deck, the winds pass silently ;  
It is out there alone with the immense sea :  
Alone with its forgotten tragedy.

## SAND AND SPRAY

### (5) TIDE OF STORMS

*Allegro con fuoco.*

CROOKED, crawling tide with long wet fingers  
Clutching at the gritty beach in the roar and spurt of spray,  
Tide of gales, drunken tide, lava-burst of breakers,  
Black ships plunge upon you from sea to sea away.

Shattering tide, tide of winds, tide of the long still winter,  
What matter though ships fail, men sink, there vanish glory?  
War-clouds shall hurl their stinging sleet upon our last  
adventure,  
Night-winds shall brokenly whisper our bitter, tragic story.

# SAND AND SPRAY

## PART IV. THE CALM

*Largo.*

IN the morning I saw three great ships,  
Almost motionless,  
Becalmed on an infinite horizon.

The clatter of waves up the beach,  
The grating rush of wet pebbles,  
The loud monotonous song of the surf,  
All these have soothed me  
And have given  
My soul to rest.

At noon I shall see waves flashing,  
White power of spray.

The steamers, stately,  
Kick up white puffs of spray behind them.  
The boiling wake  
Merges in the blue/black mirror of the sea.

One eye of the sun sees all:  
The world, the wave, my heart.  
I am content.

## SAND AND SPRAY

In the afternoon I shall dream a dream  
Of islands beyond the horizon.

White clouds drift over the sky,  
Frigates on a long voyage.

In the evening a mute blue stillness  
Clutches at my heart.  
Stars sparkle upon the tips of my fingers.

Mystical hush,  
Fire in the darkness;  
The breaking of dreams.

But in the morning I shall see three great ships,  
Almost motionless,  
Becalmed on an infinite horizon.

SECTION I  
THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE



## PROLOGUE

THE house that I write of, faces the north :  
No sun ever seeks  
Its six white columns,  
The nine great windows of its face.

It fronts foursquare the winds.

Under the penthouse of the veranda roof,  
The upper northern rooms  
Gloom outwards mournfully.

Staring Ionic capitals  
Peer in them :  
Owl-like faces.

On winter nights  
The wind, sidling round the corner,  
Shoots upwards  
With laughter.

The windows rattle as if some one were in them  
wishing to get out  
And ride upon the wind.

## THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

Doors lead to nowhere :

Squirrels burrow between the walls.

Closets in every room hang open,

Windows are stared into by uncivil ancient trees.

In the middle of the upper hallway

There is a great circular hole

Going up to the attic.

A wooden lid covers it.

All over the house there is a sense of futility ;

Of minutes dragging slowly

And repeating

Some worn-out story of broken effort and desire.



## PART I. THE HOUSE

### BEDROOM

THE clump of jessamine  
Softly beneath the rain  
Rocks its golden flowers.

In this room my father died :  
His bed is in the corner.  
No one has slept in it  
Since the morning when he wakened  
To meet death's hands at his heart.  
I cannot go to this room,  
Without feeling something big and angry  
Waiting for me  
To throw me on the bed,  
And press its thumbs in my throat.

The clump of jessamine  
Without, beneath the rain,  
Rocks its golden flowers.

## THE HOUSE

### LIBRARY

Stuffy smell of mouldering leather,  
Tattered arm-chairs, creaking doors,  
Books that slovenly elbow each other,  
Sown with children's scrawls and long  
Worn out by contact with generations:  
Tattered tramps displaying yourselves —  
“We, though you broke our backs, did not complain.”  
If I had my way,  
I would take you out and bury you quickly,  
Or give you to the clean fire.

### INDIAN SKULL

Some one dug this up and brought it  
To our house.  
In the dark upper hall, I see it dimly,  
Looking at me through the glass.

Where dancers have danced, and weary people  
Have crept to their bedrooms in the morning,  
Where sick people have tossed all night,  
Where children have been born,  
Where feet have gone up and down,  
Where anger has blazed forth, and strange looks  
have passed,

## THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

It has rested, watching meanwhile  
The opening and shutting of doors,  
The coming and going of people,  
The carrying out of coffins.

Earth still clings to its eye-sockets,  
It will wait, till its vengeance is accomplished.

### OLD NURSERY

In the tired face of the mirror  
There is a blue curtain reflected.  
If I could lift the reflection,  
Peer a little beyond, I would see  
A boy crying  
Because his sister is ill in another room  
And he has no one to play with:  
A boy listlessly scattering building blocks,  
And crying,  
Because no one will build for him the palace of  
    Fairy Morgana.  
I cannot lift the curtain:  
It is stiff and frozen.

# THE HOUSE

## THE BACK STAIRS

In the afternoon  
When no one is in the house,  
I suddenly hear dull dragging feet  
Go fumbling down those dark back stairs,  
That climb up twisting,  
As if they wanted no one to see them.  
Beating a dirge upon the bare planks  
I hear those feet and the creak of a long/locked door.

My mother often went  
Up and down those selfsame stairs,  
From the room where by the window  
She would sit all day and listlessly  
Look on the world that had destroyed her,  
She would go down in the evening  
To the room where she would sleep,  
Or rather, not sleep, but all night  
Lie staring fiercely at the ceiling.

In the afternoon  
When no one is in the house :  
I suddenly hear dull dragging feet  
Beating out their futile tune,  
Up and down those dark back stairs,  
But there is no one in the shadows.

# THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

## THE WALL CABINET

Above the steep back stairs  
So high that only a ladder can come to it,  
There is a wall cabinet hidden away.

No one ever unlocks it ;  
The key is lost, the door is barred,  
It is shut and still.

Some say, a previous tenant  
Filled its shelves with rows of bottles,  
Bottles of spirit, filled with spiders.

I do not know.  
Above the sleepy still back stairs,  
It watches, shut and still.

## THE CELLAR

Faintly lit by a high-barred grating,  
The low-hung cellar,  
Flattens itself under the house.

In one corner  
There is a little door,  
So low, it can scarcely be seen.

## THE HOUSE

Beyond,  
There is a narrow room,  
One must feel for the walls in the dark.

One shrinks to go  
To the end of it,  
Feeling the smooth cold wall.

Why did the builders who made this house,  
Stow one room away like this?

## THE FRONT DOOR

It was always the place where our farewells were taken,  
When we travelled to the north.

I remember there was one who made some journey,  
But did not come back.  
Many years they waited for him,  
At last the one who wished the most to see him,  
Was carried out of this selfsame door in death.

Since then all our family partings  
Have been at another door.

## PART II. THE ATTIC

### IN THE ATTIC

DUST hangs clogged so thick  
The air has a dusty taste :  
Spider threads cling to my face,  
From the broad pine-beams.  
There is nothing living here,  
The house below might be quite empty,  
No sound comes from it.  
The old broken trunks and boxes,  
Cracked and dusty pictures,  
Legless chairs and shattered tables,  
Seem to be crying  
Softly in the stillness  
Because no one has brushed them.  
No one has any use for them, now,  
Yet I often wonder  
If these things are really dead :  
If the old trunks never open  
Letting out grey flapping things at twilight ?  
If it is all as safe and dull  
As it seems ?

## THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

Why then is the stair so steep,  
Why is the doorway always locked,  
Why does nobody ever come?

### THE CALENDAR IN THE ATTIC

I wonder how long it has been  
Since this old calendar hung here,  
With my birthday date upon it,  
Nothing else — not a word of writing —  
Not a mark of any hand.

Perhaps it was my father  
Who left it thus  
For me to see.

Perhaps my mother  
Smiled as she saw it ;  
But in later years did not smile.

If I could tear it down,  
From the wall  
Somehow  
I would be content.  
But I am afraid, as a little child, to touch it.



# THE ATTIC

## THE HOOPSKIRT

In the night when all are sleeping,  
Up here a tiny old dame comes tripping,  
Looking for her lost hoopskirt.

My great-grand aunt — I never saw her —  
Her ghost does n't know me from another,  
She stalks up the attic stairs angrily.

The dust sets her sneezing and coughing,  
By the trunk she is limping and hopping,  
But alas — the trunk is locked.

What 's an old dame to do, anyway!  
Must stay in a mouldy grave day on day,  
Or go to heaven out of style.

In the night when all are snoring,  
The old lady makes a dreadful clatter,  
Going down the attic stairs.

What was that? A ghost or a burglar?  
Oh, it was only the wind in the chimney,  
Yes, and the attic door that slammed.

# THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

## THE LITTLE CHAIR

I know not why, when I saw the little chair,  
I suddenly desired to sit in it.

I know not why, when I sat in the little chair,  
Everything changed, and life came back to me.

I am convinced no one at all has grown up in the house,  
The break that I dreamed, itself was a dream and is broken.

I will sit in the little chair and wait,  
Till the others come looking after me.

And if it is after nightfall they will come,  
So much the better.

For the little chair holds me as tightly as death;  
And rocking in it, I can hear it whisper strange things.

## IN THE DARK CORNER

I brush the dust from this old portrait:  
Yes, it is the same face, exactly,  
Why does it look at me still with such a look of hate?

## THE ATTIC

I brush the dust from a heap of magazines:  
Here there is all what you have written,  
All that you struggled long years and went down  
to darkness for.

O God, to think what I am writing  
Will be ever as this!

O God, to think that my own face  
May some day glare from this dust!

## THE TOY CABINET

By the old toy cabinet,  
I stand and turn over dusty things:  
Chessmen — card games — hoops and balls —  
Toy rifles, helmets, swords,  
In the far corner  
A doll's tea-set in a box.

Where are you, golden child,  
Who gave tea to your dolls and me?  
The golden child is growing old,  
Further than Rome or Babylon  
From you have passed those foolish years.  
She lives — she suffers — she forgets.

## THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

By the old toy cabinet,  
I idly stand and awkwardly  
Finger the lock of the tea-set box.  
What matter — why should I look inside,  
Perhaps it is empty after all !  
Leave old things to the ghosts of old ;

My stupid brain refuses thought,  
I am maddened with a desire to weep. ;

### THE YARDSTICK

Yardstick that measured out so many miles  
    of cloth,  
Yardstick that covered me,  
I wonder do you hop of nights  
Out to the still hill-cemetery,  
And up and down go measuring  
A clayey grave for me ?

## PART III. THE LAWN

### THE THREE OAKS

THERE are three ancient oaks,  
That grow near to each other.

They lift their branches  
High as beckoning  
With outstretched arms,  
For some one to come and stand  
Under the canopy of their leaves.

Once long ago I remember  
As I lay in the very centre,  
Between them :  
A rotten branch suddenly fell  
Near to me.

I will not go back to those oaks :  
Their branches are too black for my liking.

# THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

## AN OAK

Hoar mistletoe  
Hangs in clumps  
To the twisted boughs  
Of this lonely tree.

Beneath its roots I often thought treasure was buried:  
For the roots had enclosed a circle.

But when I dug beneath them,  
I could only find great black ants  
That attacked my hands.

When at night I have the nightmare,  
I always see the eyes of ants  
Swarming from a mouldering box of gold.

## ANOTHER OAK

Poison ivy crawls at its root,  
I dare not approach it,  
It has an air of hate.

One would say a man had been hanged to its branches,  
It holds them in such a way.

## THE LAWN

The moon gets tangled in it,  
A distant steeple seems to bark  
From its belfry to the sky.

Something that no one ever loved,  
Is buried here:  
Some grey shape of deadly hate,  
Crawls on the back fence just beyond.

Now I remember — once I went  
Out by night too near this oak,  
And a red cat suddenly leapt  
From the dark and clawed my face.

## THE OLD BARN

Owls flap in this ancient barn  
With rotted doors.

Rats squeak in this ancient barn  
Over the floors.

Owls flap warily every night,  
Rats' eyes gleam in the cold moonlight.

## THE GHOSTS OF AN OLD HOUSE

There is something hidden in this barn,  
With barred doors.

Something the owls have torn,  
And the rats scurry with over the floors.

### THE WELL

The well is not used now,  
Its waters are tainted.

I remember there was once a man went down  
To clean it.  
He found it very cold and deep,  
With a queer niche in one of its sides,  
From which he hauled forth buckets of bricks and dirt.

### THE TREES

When the moonlight strikes the tree-tops,  
The trees are not the same.

I know they are not the same,  
Because there is one tree that is missing,  
And it stood so long by another,  
That the other, feeling lonely,  
Now is slowly dying too.



## THE LAWN

When the moonlight strikes the tree-tops  
That dead tree comes back ;  
Like a great blue sphere of smoke  
Half buoyed, half ravelling on the grass,  
Rustling through frayed branches,  
Something eerily cheeping through it,  
Something creeping through its shade.

### VISION

You who flutter and quiver  
An instant  
Just beyond my apprehension ;  
Lady,  
I will find the white orchid for you,  
If you will but give me  
One smile between those wayward drifts of hair.

I will break the wild berries that loop themselves over  
the marsh-pool,  
For your sake,  
And the long green canes that swish against each other,  
I will break, to set in your hands.  
For there is no wonder like to you,  
You who flutter and quiver  
An instant  
Just beyond my apprehension.

## EPILOGUE

WHY it was I do not know,  
But last night I vividly dreamed  
Though a thousand miles away,  
That I had come back to you.

The windows were the same :  
The bed, the furniture the same,  
Only there was a door where empty wall had  
    always been,  
And someone was trying to enter it.

I heard the grate of a key,  
An unknown voice apologetically  
Excused its intrusion just as I awoke.

But I wonder after all  
If there was some secret entrance-way,  
Some ghost I overlooked, when I was there.

SECTION II  
SYMPHONIES



## BLUE SYMPHONY

### I

THE darkness rolls upward.  
The thick darkness carries with it  
Rain and a ravel of cloud.  
The sun comes forth upon earth.

Palely the dawn  
Leaves me facing timidly  
Old gardens sunken :  
And in the gardens is water.

Sombre wreck — autumnal leaves ;  
Shadowy roofs  
In the blue mist,  
And a willow/branch that is broken.

Oh, old pagodas of my soul, how you glittered  
across green trees !

Blue and cool :  
Blue, tremulously,  
Blow faint puffs of smoke

## SYMPHONIES

Across sombre pools.  
The damp green smell of rotted wood;  
And a heron that cries from out the water.

### II

Through the upland meadows  
I go alone.  
For I dreamed of someone last night  
Who is waiting for me.

Flower and blossom, tell me, do you know of her?

Have the rocks hidden her voice?  
They are very blue and still.

Long upward road that is leading me,  
Light hearted I quit you,  
For the long loose ripples of the meadow/grass  
Invite me to dance upon them.

Quivering grass  
Daintily poised  
For her foot's tripping.

Oh, blown clouds, could I only race up like you,  
Oh, the last slopes that are sun-drenched and steep!

## BLUE SYMPHONY

Look, the sky!  
Across black valleys  
Rise blue/white aloft  
Jagged unwrinkled mountains, ranges of death.

Solitude. Silence.

### III

One chuckles by the brook for me:  
One rages under the stone.  
One makes a spout of his mouth  
One whispers — one is gone.

One over there on the water  
Spreads cold ripples  
For me  
Enticingly.

The vast dark trees  
Flow like blue veils  
Of tears  
Into the water.

Sour sprites,  
Moaning and chuckling,  
What have you hidden from me?

## SYMPHONIES

“In the palace of the blue stone she lies forever  
Bound hand and foot.”

Was it the wind  
That rattled the reeds together ?

Dry reeds,  
A faint shiver in the grasses.

### IV

On the left hand there is a temple :  
And a palace on the right-hand side.  
Foot passengers in scarlet  
Pass over the glittering tide.

Under the bridge  
The old river flows  
Low and monotonous  
Day after day.

I have heard and have seen  
All the news that has been :  
Autumn's gold and Spring's green !

Now in my palace  
I see foot passengers



## BLUE SYMPHONY

Crossing the river :  
Pilgrims of autumn  
In the afternoons.

Lotus pools:  
Petals in the water.  
These are my dreams.

For me silks are outspread.  
I take my ease, unthinking.

### v

And now the lowest pine-branch  
Is drawn across the disk of the sun.  
Old friends who will forget me soon,  
I must go on,  
Towards those blue death-mountains  
I have forgot so long.

In the marsh grasses  
There lies forever  
My last treasure,  
With the hopes of my heart.

The ice is glazing over,  
Torn lanterns flutter,  
On the leaves is snow.

## SYMPHONIES

In the frosty evening  
Toll the old bell for me  
Once, in the sleepy temple.

Perhaps my soul will hear.

Afterglow :  
Before the stars peep  
I shall creep out into darkness.

## SOLITUDE IN THE CITY

(*Symphony in Black and Gold*)

### I

#### WORDS AT MIDNIGHT

BECAUSE the night is so still,  
Because there is no one about,  
Not the tiny squeak of a mouse over the carpet,  
Nor the slow beat of a clock at the top of the stairway,  
I am afraid of the night that is coming to me.

I know out there  
Some one is thinking of me, some one is wondering about  
me,  
Some one is needing me, some one is dying for my sake,  
Yet I remain alone.

I know that life is calling: I cannot resist it:  
Too much of myself I have given ever to turn away,  
I know that shame, sickness, death itself shall befall me,  
And I am afraid.

O night, hide me in your long cold arms:  
Let me sleep, but let me not live this life!

## SYMPHONIES

There are too many people with haggard eyes standing  
before me  
Saying, "To live you must suffer even as we."

Yet life bitterly bids me: "Go on to the last,  
No matter the mud and the cold rain and the darkness:  
No matter the drear pilgrims in whose eyes you shall look  
for long,  
And see all suffering, madness, death and despair."

Because my heart is cramped in,  
Because I have suffered much,  
Because my hope is like a candle-flame quenched at  
midnight,  
Because I dare dream yet of joy,  
I can take my night and the life that is coming to me.

## II

### THE EVENING RAIN

O the rain of the evening is an infinite thing,  
As it slowly slips on the motionless pavement;  
Greasy and grey is the rain of the evening,  
As it dribbles into the dirty gutters  
And slides down the drains with a roar!

## SOLITUDE IN THE CITY

Ragged men cower  
Under the doorways:  
Umbrellas nod like drowsy birds.  
Bat-umbrellas,  
Teetering, balancing,  
Where will you spread your wings to-night?

Tangled between the factory-chimneys,  
I have seen the golden lamps wake this evening:  
Spinning and whirling, darting and dancing,  
Tangled with the glittering rain.

Omnibuses lurch  
Heavily homeward  
Elephants tinselled in tawdry gold:  
Taxicabs fight  
Like wild birds squalling,  
Wild birds with roaring, clattering wings.

O the rain of the evening is an infinite thing,  
As it shivers to jewel-heaps spilt on the pavement.  
The façades frown gloomily at its beauty,  
The façades are dreaming of the day.

With rippling, curling,  
Serpentine convolutions

## SYMPHONIES

The pavements drip with drunken light.  
Crimson and gold,  
Shot with opal,  
They glare against the sullen night.

O the rain of the evening is an infinite thing  
As it slowly dries on the dirty pavement.  
Red low-browed clouds jut over the sky:  
And in the cool sky there are stars.

### III

#### STREET OF SORROWS

You street of sorrows bending  
Over your golden lamps in the evening ;  
Dark street that is very silent,  
And everywhere the same :  
Elsewhere there is song and riot,  
Like golden fireflies flickering,  
Elsewhere the crane's gaunt muscles  
Tug the city up to the stars.

But who in the dawn should come near you?  
There are dry leaves rattling behind him.  
And who should come in the noonday ?  
There are shadows that squat on the pave.

## SOLITUDE IN THE CITY

And who should come in the evening ?  
There is one : a ship in dark waters.  
And who should come at nightfall,  
To feel cold hands at his heart ?

You street of solitude waiting  
Patient and still in the evening :  
Old street that is very weary,  
And everywhere the same ;  
You that have seen joy passing.  
Into pain, into tears, into darkness,  
Street of the dead and musty,  
I have drunk your cold poison to-night.

## IV

### SONG IN THE DARKNESS

It is the last night that I can be solitary :  
Henceforth the keys and wards of me are held in  
other hands.

Dark clouds trail over the sky :  
Troops of song retreating :  
But in the sunset  
Once more have I seen aloft  
Incredible summits of gold, far on the south horizon.

## SYMPHONIES

One purple veil of rain  
Floats downward over the city ;  
And as it settles slowly  
The light goes out of it.

Chimneys with massive summits  
Stand gaunt and black and evil :  
Like a river of lead, to seaward  
The river steadily rolls.

It is the last night that I can be solitary :  
Life takes me in black coils.

One green light glitters :  
Then a swift taxi  
Scatters another  
As it speeds on.

The chimneys rank  
Their motionless forces  
Against the swift movement  
Of tugs in the stream ;  
Against the flame-chariots  
Of the Embankment ;  
Against the bowing trees,



## SOLITUDE IN THE CITY

Against the blowing smoke, .  
Against the busy rain.

With dying might  
The light invades  
The city's hall:  
Curtained by dripping fringes  
Of buoyant tattered cloud,  
Tossed by the wind.

It is the last night that I can be solitary;  
And all my city of dreams is burning up to-night.

But yet there waits for me something lost back in the  
darkness:

Something I have never seized: a shape, a voice, a gesture,  
Something behind my shoulder: grey robes that stir and  
rustle.

Something that moves away from me when I would touch  
it with my hand.

Cities of the beyond, what great black-walled horizons  
Dare you climb up, and down what steep incredible valleys?  
I suddenly perceive that I have been mocked in you,  
And therefore will I sow the earth with rain of stars  
to-night.

## SYMPHONIES

It is the last night that I can be solitary ;  
The rain invites to drunkenness : the wind blows  
through my brain.

Shiplike the sliding golden trams  
Procession by and intercross :  
With tulips, daffodils, crocuses  
The whole street blossoms at my feet :  
Now kindle, flames, and let blow out  
The crimson rose against the grey,  
Let night itself be blotted out  
In life's monotonous drone of day.

It is the last night that I can be solitary :  
It is the last time that no feet  
But mine can beat upon the floor ;  
It is the last time that no hands  
But mine can pound upon my heart ;  
It is the last time that no voice  
But mine can cry and yet be lost ;  
It is the last time I shall see  
The pavements like a mirror stare at me.

## GREEN SYMPHONY

### I

THE glittering leaves of the rhododendrons  
Balance and vibrate in the cool air ;  
While in the sky above them  
White clouds chase each other.

Like scampering rabbits,  
Flashes of sunlight sweep the lawn ;  
They fling in passing  
Patterns of shadow,  
Golden and green.

With long cascades of laughter,  
The mating birds dart and swoop to the turf :  
'Mid their mad trillings  
Glints the gay sun behind the trees.

Down there are deep blue lakes :  
Orange blossom droops in the water.

In the tower of the winds,  
All the bells are set adrift :

## SYMPHONIES

Jingling  
For the dawn.

Thin fluttering streamers  
Of breeze lash through the swaying boughs,  
Palely expectant  
The earth receives the slanting rain.

I am a glittering raindrop  
Hugged close by the cool rhododendron.  
I am a daisy starrng  
The exquisite curves of the close/cropped turf.

The glittering leaves of the rhododendron  
Are shaken like blue-green blades of grass,  
Flickering, cracking, falling:  
Splintering in a million fragments.

The wind runs laughing up the slope  
Stripping off handfuls of wet green leaves,  
To fling in peoples' faces.  
Wallowing on the daisy/powdered turf,  
Clutching at the sunlight,  
Cavorting in the shadow.

## GREEN SYMPHONY

Like baroque pearls,  
Like cloudy emeralds,  
The clouds and the trees clash together ;  
Whirling and swirling,  
In the tumult  
Of the spring,  
And the wind.

### II.

The trees splash the sky with their fingers,  
A restless green rout of stars.

With whirling movement  
They swing their boughs  
About their stems:  
Planes on planes of light and shadow  
Pass among them,  
Opening fanlike to fall.

The trees are like a sea ;  
Tossing ;  
Trembling,  
Roaring,  
Wallowing,  
Darting their long green flickering fronds up at the sky,  
Spotted with white blossom-spray.

## SYMPHONIES

The trees are roofs :  
Hollow caverns of cool blue shadow,  
Solemn arches  
In the afternoons.  
The whole vast horizon  
In terrace beyond terrace,  
Pinnacle above pinnacle,  
Lifts to the sky  
Serrated ranks of green on green.

They caress the roofs with their fingers,  
They sprawl about the river to look into it ;  
Up the hill they come  
Gesticulating challenge :  
They cower together  
In dark valleys ;  
They yearn out over the fields.

Enamelled domes  
Tumble upon the grass,  
Crashing in ruin  
Quiet at last.

The trees lash the sky with their leaves,  
Uneasily shaking their dark green manes.

# GREEN SYMPHONY

## III

Far let the voices of the mad wild birds be calling me,  
I will abide in this forest of pines.

When the wind blows  
Battling through the forest,  
I hear it distantly,  
The crash of a perpetual sea.

When the rain falls,  
I watch silver spears slanting downwards  
From pale river/pools of sky,  
Enclosed in dark fronds.

When the sun shines,  
I weave together distant branches till they enclose  
    mighty circles,  
I sway to the movement of hooded summits,  
I swim leisurely in deep blue seas of air.

I hug the smooth bark of stately red pillars  
And with cones carefully scattered  
I mark the progression of dark dial/shadows  
Flung diagonally downwards through the afternoon.

## SYMPHONIES

This turf is not like turf:

It is a smooth dry carpet of velvet,  
Embroidered with brown patterns of needles and cones.  
These trees are not like trees:  
They are innumerable feathery pagoda-umbrellas,  
Stiffly ungracious to the wind,  
Teetering on red-lacquered stems.

In the evening I listen to the winds' lispings,  
While the conflagrations of the sunset flicker and clash  
    behind me,  
Flamboyant crenellations of glory amid the charred ebony  
    boles.

In the night the fiery nightingales  
Shall clash and trill through the silence:  
Like the voices of mermaids crying  
From the sea.

Long ago has the moon whelmed this uncompleted temple.  
Stars swim like gold fish far above the black arches.

Far let the timid feet of dawn fly to catch me:  
I will abide in this forest of pines:  
For I have unveiled naked beauty,



## GREEN SYMPHONY

And the things that she whispered to me in the darkness,  
Are buried deep in my heart.

Now let the black tops of the pine-trees break like a spent  
wave,

Against the grey sky :

These are tombs and memorials and temples and altars  
sun-kindled for me.

## GOLDEN SYMPHONY

### I

SEEN from afar, the city  
To-day is like a golden cloud :  
Strayed from the sky and moulded  
Into dim motionless towers.

Music is passing far off :  
Music serenely  
Is climbing up and vanishing  
On the long grey stairways of the sky,  
In fanlike rays of light.

Now it falls slowly,  
Careering, toppling,  
Shivering and quivering like burnished glass or  
laburnum-blossom,  
Golden cascades.

Peace : now let the music  
Sound from further away,  
Red bells out of memory's  
Blue dream of regret.

## GOLDEN SYMPHONY

Seen from afar, the city  
To-day is like a fleet of sails :  
Breaking the foam of dark forests,  
In which I have strayed so long.

They march together slowly,  
The golden temple terraces,  
Against the dark remembrance  
Of my pools of despair.

O golden angelus that sounded prolonging uncertain  
    memories,  
I have seen the swallows hovering to you and followed  
    their dark trails of passage.

The gates of the city lie open,  
And the whole world goes homeward,  
Full-pulsing bells in the foreground,  
Catching my soul with them  
On where the sun soars broadly through the incense-  
    dome of the sky.

### II

High chimes from the belfry ;  
The noonday approaches

## SYMPHONIES

With its golden apparel  
Rustling about its feet.

High dreams of my city,  
Where we, a band of brothers,  
Build our proud dream of beauty  
Before we fall into dust.

The golden days have come for us :  
With mandolins, sword-thrusts, laughter.  
Even the very dust of the street  
Grows gold beneath our feet.

Bronze bell-notes poured from deep blue wells :  
Molten gold out of the sky.  
Pillars of yellow marble  
On the summits of which the gods sleep.

Now we are swimming ;  
About us a great golden halo  
Vibrates from us downwards,  
Ebbing its life away.

Golden clouds are circling  
Like angels and archangels  
About the eye of the sun.

## GOLDEN SYMPHONY

Flaming sunset :  
Mad conflagrations  
Licking at the earth,  
The blue/black walls of space,  
Iron mountains vast on the horizon.

O golden spear that dartled through the darkness !  
The evening star sparkled and threw us its message.

### III

In the bosom of the desert  
I will lie at the last.

Not the grey desert of sand  
But the golden desert of great wild grasses,  
This shall receive my soul.

In the high plateaus,  
The wind will be like a flute-note calling me  
Day after day.

Short bursts of surf,  
The wind climbs up and stops in the grass ;  
And the golden petals  
Brush drowsily over my face.

## SYMPHONIES

White butterfly that flutters across my sea of golden blossom;  
Tell me, what are you looking for, lone white butterfly?

I am seeking for a strange lonely white flower ;  
Its petals are honeyless ; and in the wind it is still.

White butterfly, come, fold your wings over my heart :  
I am the white blossom, the white dead blossom for you.

In the golden bosom of the prairie,  
I am lying at the last  
Like a pool that is stilled.

But they who shared with me my life's adventure,  
Who tossed their ducats like dandelions into the sunlight,  
I know that somewhere they with songs are building,  
Golden towers more beautiful than my own.

### IV

I only know in the midnight,  
Something will be born of me.

The village drowns in the darkness,  
But aloft in the temple  
There is a thud of gongs and a shuffle of hollow voices  
In the dark corridors.

## GOLDEN SYMPHONY

The golden temple  
That kindled like a rose against the sunset,  
Now is dark and silent,  
One light glimmers from its façade.

In the inner shrine  
One stiff golden curtain  
Hangs from floor to roof.

Black, impassive, helmeted  
In felt like stiff black warriors,  
The lamas slowly gather,  
Kneeling in a row.

The hollow brazen trumpets  
Blare and snore.  
The drums, festooned with skulls,  
Roar.

Suddenly with a clash of gongs,  
And a squeal from ear-splitting bugles,  
The golden veil is rent.

Cavernous blue darkness !  
And within it  
Smiling,

## SYMPHONIES

Naked,  
Rose/empurpled,  
Rippling with crimson/violet light, behold the god.

Hail, great jewel in the lotus blossom !  
Rosy flame that kindling  
Flashes on the emptiness  
Or Nirvana's sea !

Before the shrine, as before,  
Once more the golden curtain,  
And the black shapes vanish.

Aloft in the hollow temple  
There is a shuffle of feet and a sound of hollow voices,  
Soon lost.

The village drowns in the darkness :  
Like a vast black cube  
The temple looms above it,  
There is no light on its façade.

Suddenly, all the golden temple  
Kindles like a rose against the dawn.

I only know in the midnight  
Something has been born of me.



## WHITE SYMPHONY

### I

FORLORN and white,  
Whorls of purity about a golden chalice,  
Immense the peonies  
Flare and shatter their petals over my face.

They slowly turn paler,  
They seem to be melting like blue/grey flakes of ice,  
Thin greyish shivers  
Fluctuating mid the dark green lance/thrust of the leaves.

Like snowballs tossed,  
Like soft white butterflies,  
The peonies poise in the twilight.  
And their narcotic insinuating perfume  
Draws me into them  
Shivering with the coolness,  
Aching with the void.  
They kiss the blue chalice of my dreams  
Like a gesture seen for an instant and then lost forever.

\* \*

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[ 53 ]

## SYMPHONIES

Outwards the petals  
Thrust to embrace me,  
Pale daggers of coldness  
Run through my aching breast.

Outwards, still outwards,  
Till on the brink of twilight  
They swirl downwards silently,  
Flurry of snow in the void.

Outwards, still outwards,  
Till the blue walls are hidden,  
And in the blinding white radiance  
Of a whirlpool of clouds, I awake.

\* \*  
\*

Like spraying rockets  
My peonies shower  
Their glories on the night.

Wavering perfumes,  
Drift about the garden;  
Shadows of the moonlight,  
Drift and ripple over the dew-gemmed leaves.

## WHITE SYMPHONY

Soar, crash, and sparkle,  
Shoal of stars drifting  
Like silver fishes,  
Through the black sluggish boughs.

Towards the impossible,  
Towards the inaccessible,  
Towards the ultimate,  
Towards the silence,  
Towards the eternal,  
These blossoms go.

The peonies spring like rockets in the twilight,  
And out of them all I rise.

### II

Downwards through the blue abyss it slides,  
The white snow-water of my dreams,  
Downwards crashing from slippery rock  
Into the boiling chasm :  
In which no eye dare look, for it is the chasm of death.

Upwards from the blue abyss it rises,  
The chill water-mist of my dreams ;  
Upwards to greyish weeping pines,  
And to skies of autumn ever about my heart,

## SYMPHONIES

It is blue at the beginning,  
And blue/white against the grey/greenness ;  
It wavers in the upper air,  
Catching unconscious sparkles, a rainbow/glint of sunlight,  
And fading in the sad depths of the sky.

Outwards rush the strong pale clouds,  
Outwards and ever outwards ;  
The blue/grey clouds indistinguishable one from another :  
Nervous, sinewy, tossing their arms and brandishing,  
Till on the blue serrations of the horizon  
They drench with their black rain a great peak of change/  
less snow.

\* \*

\*

As evening came on, I climbed the tower,  
To gaze upon the city far beneath :  
I was not weary of day ; but in the evening  
A white mist assembled and gathered over the earth  
And blotted it from sight.

But to escape :  
To chase with the golden clouds galloping over the horizon :  
Arrows of the northwest wind  
Singing amid them,  
Ruffling up my hair !

## WHITE SYMPHONY

As evening came on the distance altered,  
Pale wavering reflections rose from out the city,  
Like sighs or the beckoning of half-invisible hands.  
Monotonously and sluggishly they crept upwards  
A river that had spent itself in some chasm,  
And dwindled and foamed at last at my weary feet.

Autumn ! Golden fountains,  
And the winds neighing  
Amid the monotonous hills :  
Desolation of the old gods,  
Rain that lifts and rain that moves away ;  
In the green/black torrent  
Scarlet leaves.

It was now perfectly evening :  
And the tower loomed like a gaunt peak in mid-air  
Above the city : its base was utterly lost.  
It was slowly coming on to rain,  
And the immense columns of white mist  
Wavered and broke before the faint-hurled spears.

I will descend the mountains like a shepherd,  
And in the folds of tumultuous misty cities,  
I will put all my thoughts, all my old thoughts, safely  
to sleep.

## SYMPHONIES

For it is already autumn,  
O whiteness of the pale southwestern sky!  
O wavering dream that was not mine to keep!

\* \*

\*

In midnight, in mournful moonlight,  
By paths I could not trace,  
I walked in the white garden,  
Each flower had a white face.

Their perfume intoxicated me : thus I began my dream.

I was alone ; I had no one to guide me,  
But the moon was like the sun :  
It stooped and kissed each waxen petal,  
One after one.

Green and white was that garden : diamond rain hung  
in the branches,  
You will not believe it !

In the morning, at the dayspring,  
I wakened, shivering ; lo,  
The white garden that blossomed at my feet  
Was a garden hidden in snow.

It was my sorrow to see that all this was a dream.

# WHITE SYMPHONY

## III

Blue, clogged with purple,  
Mists uncoil themselves :  
Sparkling to the horizon,  
I see the snow alone.

In the deep blue chasm,  
Boats sleep under gold thatch ;  
Icicle-like trees fret  
Faintly rose-touched sky.

Under their heaped snow-eaves,  
Leaden houses shiver.  
Through thin blue crevasses,  
Trickles an icy stream.

The pines groan white-laden,  
The waves shiver, struck by the wind ;  
Beyond from treeless horizons,  
Broken snow-peaks crawl to the sea.

\* \*

\*

Wearily the snow glares,  
Through the grey silence, day after day,  
Mocking the colourless cloudless sky  
With the reflection of death.

## SYMPHONIES

There is no smoke through the pine tops,  
No strong red boatmen in pale green reeds,  
No herons to flicker an instant,  
No lanterns to glow with gay ray.

No sails beat up to the harbour,  
With creaking cordage and sailors' song.  
Somnolent, bare-poled, indifferent,  
They sleep, and the city sleeps.

Mid-winter about them casts,  
Its dreary fortifications :  
Each day is a gaunt grey rock,  
And death is the last of them all.

\* \*  
\*  
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Over the sluggish snow,  
Drifts now a pallid weak shower of bloom ;  
Boredom of fresh creation,  
Death-weariness of old returns.

White, white blossom,  
Fall of the shattered cups day on day :  
Is there anything here that is not ancient,  
That has not bloomed a thousand years ago?



## WHITE SYMPHONY

Under the glare of the white-hot day,  
Under the restless wind-rakes of the winter,  
White blossom or white snow scattered,  
And beneath them, dark, the graves.

Dark graves never changing,  
White dream drifting, never changing above them :  
O that the white scroll of heaven might be rolled up,  
And the naked red lightning thrust at the smouldering  
earth!

## MIDSUMMER DREAMS

*(Symphony in White and Blue)*

### I

THERE is a tall white weed growing at the top  
of this sand hill :

In the grass  
It is very still.

It lifts its heavy bracts of flattened bloom  
Against the sky  
Hazily grey with brume.

Out over yonder boats pass  
And the swallows  
Flatten themselves on the grass.

The lake is silvering beneath the heat.  
The wind's feet  
Touch lazily each crest,  
Like white gulls slow flapping  
To windward.

## MIDSUMMER DREAMS

One rose white cloud slowly disengages, loosening itself,  
And stands  
Above the larkspur-coloured water :  
Like Dione's daughter  
Braiding up her wet hair with her pale hands.

### II

The moon puts out her face at a rift between the trees,  
Which do not lift one drooping leaf, this night of June.  
There is no lazy breeze to set them clashing adrift.

Thin gleams of silver rise and break in the air,  
Fireflies — here and there.

Forest of blue masses suddenly quivering with rapid points  
of white,  
Are the forests beneath the sea where no breeze passes  
As still as you to-night ?

The moon puts out her face at a rift between the trees ;  
Through my window, the bed cut evenly with diagonal  
shafts of light,  
Is a boat rocking out adrift.

Under it bend the silver tips of the dark blue coral trees,  
And fireflies like glass fish  
Drift and ripple upwards in the breeze.

# SYMPHONIES

## III

We are drifting slowly, you and I,  
To where the clouds are lifting  
High-fretted towers in the sky:  
Palaces of ivory,  
Which we look at dreamily.  
Over our sail  
Frail white clouds,  
Drift as slowly  
Over the undulant pale blue silk of the water,  
As we.

We are racing swiftly, you and I,  
The sun darts one firm track  
Through the blue-black  
Of the crinkled water.  
Gold spirals spattering, flashing,  
The water heaves and curls away at our bow,  
A mad fish splashing.

We are rocked together, you and I,  
To this undulant movement.  
White cloud with blue water blent,  
Cloud dipping down to wave its lazy head,

## MIDSUMMER DREAMS

Wave curling under cloud its cloudy blue.

I and you,

All alone, alone, at last.

I hold you fast.

### IV

The midsummer clouds were piling up upon the south  
horizon,

Mountains of drifting translucence in the larkspur-fields  
of the sky :

Ascending and toppling in crumbled ravines, dribbling  
down chasms of silence,

Reassembling in crowded multitudes, massive forms one  
above another.

And I saw in their ridges and hollows, the appearance of a  
woman

Immeasurable, carven in stainless marble, motionless, naked,  
fair :

Her head thrown back, her pointed breasts upgleaming in  
chill sunlight,

Her heavy flanks dark in the shadow, resting forever  
inert.

And up to her there suddenly clomb and hurried another  
cloud,

Huge, hairy, bulging, and knobby, with dark and knotted  
brows :

## SYMPHONIES

And he thrust out long bungling arms to her and drew  
himself up to her,

And I watched them melting together, blue mouth to sad  
white mouth.

## ORANGE SYMPHONY

### I

Now that all the world is filled  
With armies clamouring ;  
Now that men no longer live and die, one by one,  
But in vague indeterminate multitudes :

Now that the trees are coppery towers,  
Now that the clouds loom southward,  
Now that the glossy creeper  
Spatters the walls like spilt wine :

I will go out alone,  
To catch strong joy of solitude  
Where the treelines, in gold and scarlet,  
Swing strong grape-cables up the smouldering face  
of the hill.

### II

Guns crashing,  
Thudding,  
Ululating,  
Tumultuous.

## SYMPHONIES

Guns yelping over the cracked earth,  
Where dry bugles blare.

Here in this hollow  
It is very quiet,  
Only the wind's hissing laughter  
In the place of tombs.

One by one these gaunt scarred faces  
Lift up blurred wrinkled inscriptions  
Silently beseeching me to stop and ponder.  
What does it matter if I do not stop to read them?  
No one at all has gone this way that I have chosen before.

A leaf drops slowly in silence ;  
It is a long time twisting and hovering on its way to  
the earth.

Guns booming,  
Bellowing,  
Crashing,  
Desperate.  
Insistent outcry of savage guns,  
Rocking the gloomy hollow.

I will run out like the wind,  
Snarling, with savage laughter ;



## ORANGE SYMPHONY

Like the wind that tosses the grey/black clouds,  
Against the shot/racked barrier of flaming trees.

I will race between the grey guns,  
And the clouds, like shrapnel exploding,  
Flinging their hail through the tumult,  
Bursting, will melt in cold spray.

I am the wanderer of the world ;  
No one can hold me.  
Not the cannon assembled for battle,  
Nor the gloomy graves of the hollow,  
Nor the house where I long time slumbered,  
Nor the hilltop where roads are straggling.  
My feet must march to the wind.

Like a leaf dropping slowly,  
An orange butterfly turning and twisting,  
I touch with moist passionate palms the leaden inscriptions  
Of my past. Then I turn to depart.

### III

The trees dance about the inn ;  
The wind thrusts them into flamelets.  
Now my thoughts gipsying,  
Go forth to strange walls and new fires.

## SYMPHONIES

Mouths stained with brown/red berries,  
Bronzed cheeks sunken, unshaven,  
Ragged attire ;  
We swing our guitars at the hip  
As we tramp heedless, uncaring.

In the inn the fire crackles :  
On the hearth the wine is simmering.  
Lift up the brown beaker one instant,  
Drink deeply — fling out the last coin — let us go.  
On the plains there is drooping harvest,  
But no harvest can for long time hold us,  
We have seen the winds, baffled,  
Racing up the orange-flecked trench of the hills.

### IV

On the hill summit  
Where the gusty wind all night long has assailed me,  
Now I see stars vanishing  
Before the long cold clutching fingers of dawn.

Stars scintillant, fire-hued, metallic,  
Topaz fruit of the deep-blue garden :  
Southward you go, my constellations,  
And leave me with the white day, alone.

## ORANGE SYMPHONY

Over the hilltop  
Swish with a scurry of wings  
Millions of pale brown birds,  
Songless, pulsing southward.

Birds who have filled the trees,  
And who fled long ago at my passing,  
Now you clatter in heedless tumult,  
Fanning with your hot wings my face.

Carry this word to the southward ;  
Say that I have forgotten them that wait for me,  
All the loves and the hates need expect me no longer,  
In the autumn at last I am alone.

Suddenly  
The wind crashes through the tree-tops;  
Stripping away their orange-tiled domes ;  
Stark blue skeletons, forbidding  
Gesticulate in my face.  
You whom I planted and lavished  
With all the wealth and beauty I had to bestow  
Hurry away, vain harvest,  
The winds' scythes can reap you,  
Where you lie on the earth, and to death's barns you  
can go.

## SYMPHONIES

Beyond the hilltop  
I have seen only the sky.  
The wind, naked, prodding up black-furred clouds,  
Cossacks of winter.

Cry, wind,  
Shriek to the shivering southland,  
That I am going into winter,  
That I do not hope to return.

Farewell, crowded stars,  
Farewell, birds, winds, clouds and treetops,  
I, weary of you all, seek my destined joy in the north-  
land,  
Amid blue ice and the rose-purple night of the pole.

### v

Beyond the land there lies the sea ;  
And on the sea with wings unfurled,  
Bloodily huge the sunset rests,  
Feathers flickering and claws curled,  
Watching to seize the ruined world.

Rolling in a torrent,  
Brown leaves, my achievements,  
Rise up from dark-wooded valleys

## ORANGE SYMPHONY

And scatter themselves on the sea ;  
Brown birds, my wild dreams,  
Mingle their bodies together,  
Shrieking and clamouring as they pass,  
Black charred silhouettes  
Against the west, curtained in orange flame.  
Now the wind starts up  
And strikes the seething water :  
Hissing in uncoiled fury  
Each foam-curved wave darts forward  
To clash and batter  
The smouldering iron-rust cliff,  
Where the end of my road is lost.

Rise up, black clouds ;  
Pounce upon the sunset :  
Tear it with your jagged teeth.  
Fling yourselves, seething winds, in circles  
Upon the blue-black water,  
Swirl, leaves, and dance  
Amid the chaos of breakers,  
Flicker, birds, an instant  
Against the tawny tiger throat of the sun  
Which is snarling in the west.  
Beat down, O great winds, westward,  
Loose reins and gallop to seaward,

## SYMPHONIES

Rush me, too, to that ocean,  
In which I have found my goal.

Lash me, lap me, rugged waves of blue-black water,  
Dash me, clutch me and do not let me rest one instant ;  
All through the purple-blue night rock and soothe me,  
Till I awaken dreamingly at the faint rose breast of the dawn.

## RED SYMPHONY

### I

OVER the ink/black cauldron of the sea,  
Heavily, on wings of leaden cloud,  
Howling the sunset  
Races out to assail me.

Long have I voyaged,  
Night after night the grey rains swept the sea :  
The heaving breakers  
Hissed and quivered but held no light.

Now my voyage is ending,  
White storm winds have swept bare my soul ;  
With their harsh laughter,  
Their maddening mockery,  
Their bayonet thrusts of despair.

Over the keen, clean-swept zenith  
Roll crushingly, huge masses of cloud :  
Dull, ponderous, sagging with the burden  
Of creaking snow.

## SYMPHONIES

They drop flat on the sea,  
They hang menacing over me,  
They festoon the sun  
With swags of crimson light.

They stripe the horizon,  
They bar every way with their iron tongues ;  
They loom weltering over my effort,  
They steadfastly close me in.

Meanwhile the sun  
With dying force  
Wrenches one little crack  
In the midst of the sagging masses,  
And I steer on to it.

Like a crimson lake  
The light overflows and touches the bulging surfaces  
With carmine, with scarlet,  
With orange, with vermillion,  
With brick red, with bluish purple,  
With maroon, with rose, with russet,  
With savage green, with snowy blue,  
With grey, with ebony, with gold.



## RED SYMPHONY

It is the storm of the evening  
That races out shrieking  
To assail me,  
And I hail it.

### II

The sky's vast emptiness  
Is crowded with fragments colliding,  
Ragged, splintered masses  
Swirling away to the night.

The volcano of the sun  
Has burst and split its crater :  
Black slag is hurled to the zenith  
Above the red lava-sea.

Black shrivelled, charred fragments  
Fall into the scarlet torrent :  
Huge tresses of darkness sweep over my face,  
Leaving me choking.

The sea is one crimson steaming fire ;  
Each fanged wavelet  
Flickers and dances about the one behind it,  
Hungriily licking at the ship.

## SYMPHONIES

Fierce whirling swords,  
Tossed spear-heads lancelike  
Spit and stab, then suddenly fall  
Leaving me there  
On a rolling summit of flame, facing a gulf of despair.

The ship  
Lurches  
With ice-cruled prow into the wave-trough ;  
And rises, rapidly dripping liquid fire,  
Long twisted necklaces, that burn out to green  
frozen chrysolite.

### III

Over my head a bell beats : it is midnight.  
Perhaps I will live to the dawn.

About me are the mouths of yawning furnaces  
And from these scarlet mouths the heat outpours,  
And darts and licks its dry tongues at my brain  
Till it, too, seems a black shell almost bursting  
With the force of flame in it.

Still, wearily, I swing my shovel,  
Spattering the black coal over the palates  
Of the snoring mouths which rapidly swallow.  
There is nothing else to do.

## RED SYMPHONY

My legs seem melting away in sweat beneath me :  
In my body my lungs and heart are fighting for air,  
My eyes are seared by the appalling scarlet,  
Of the furnaces about me — I scarcely see them —  
My shovelfuls fall short with every swing.

Without I hear the battering of the tempest,  
The ship is pounded sideways by black immeasurable wave  
    thrusts,  
And rising dizzily again, like a half-senseless fighter,  
Is again sent downwards, by those unseen fists.

My shovel rises to the ship's slow recovery,  
My shovel shoots out at the smash of toppling masses,  
Sometimes I pause and pant for an endless instant,  
While the ship crouches, quivering.

Over my head a bell beats : it is morning.  
Wearily I drop the shovel,  
And drag myself to the deck.

### IV

Afar  
There is something that seems a shore ;  
The sky has been blown clean of clouds except to westward,  
And these stare hard at me, like huge sardonyx towers.

## SYMPHONIES

I cling to a half-shattered rail that reels and dances,  
Soused by the choking water,  
My face a streaming mass of blood and salt and grime,  
I wait and dizzily I try to remember.

What is this city that out there awaits me ?  
Am I its conqueror ?

Will scarlet flags hang fluttering in the streets  
To greet my coming ?  
Will crimson lanterns  
Jingle and toss in festival to-night ?

Has the fire burned the ship and is the water  
But stinging icy fire,  
That whips and sears my face ?

Down there the furnaces go out, for the water  
Sloshes about the floor ;  
And steaming acrid fumes arise,  
No living soul could stay in such a place.

Out here the decks are shattered,  
The boats are shorn away,  
And far on the horizon,  
The city glares with its sardonyx towers.

## RED SYMPHONY

Now the red bells,  
The black/red bells,  
The storm bells,  
Break loose from the horizon,  
Leaping upon the eastern sea,  
And breaking it in their teeth.

The towers  
Infuriate, enkindle  
From base to summit,  
In layers, and orange terraces,  
Against the blue snow haze that drifts down on them  
from the east.

The ship of my soul  
Is rolling to port at last,  
With one clang from its heaving boilers,  
One sigh from its shaking funnels,  
One rattle from its loosened chains.  
I will lash myself to the masthead  
And wait  
Empty-eyed and open-mouthed,  
Till the city that is all one scarlet flame of death  
Takes me to itself at last.

## VIOLET SYMPHONY

### I

BUT yesterday  
Moonsails were raking high the harbour of my dreams.

Dull night of trees,  
Dark sorrows drooping,  
Glittering raindrops gleam on you  
In recollection  
Of my despair.

But yesterday  
Stardust was scattered deep on the dark gulf of my dreams.

Wind of the night,  
Questing, swaying, calling,  
Rustle of dull grasses,  
Why do you trouble me?

Yesterday  
Purple mist was powdered on the windless sea of dreams.

## SYMPHONIES

Faces of the night that pass me,  
Haggard, monotonous faces,  
Windblown hair and lustful lips,  
I am not what you desire.

Yesterday  
One — two — sails above the mist —  
Windswallows that hover  
Towards the rainclouds of the horizon,  
Out of the reedy harbours  
Rocking, swaying, falling,  
Blown to sea and parted  
Yesterday,  
Yesterday.

### II

Purple/blue bloom of night,  
Globed grapes clustered morosely  
Down the dark vineyards of untrodden streets :

The noise of the moments is like the clash of the hoofs  
of a horse rattling,  
Thin tattoo in the stillness :  
The noise of the moments takes me, uncaring,  
Towards the day.

## VIOLET SYMPHONY

With brassy crash, dawn's corybants  
Invade and trample the vineyard :  
Like a faun I hide and watch them,  
A dark cup in my hand.

Spoilers of my vineyard,  
Spilling the lees of my sweet red wine,  
You will yet ask in vain for a cup that is not yours,  
A purple, dewy cup of lonely night.

Trampers in the morning,  
Sunburnt faces and weary lips,  
There is yet a cup here you cannot have,  
I hold it in my hands.

Would you drink of it?  
Lay down your thyrses and timbrel.  
Break the harsh dance that flickers through the morning,  
Forget the scarlet perfumes of the day.

Remember only starless night, cool swish of many seas.

Faint pearl-glow of evening,  
Cool marble in the silence:  
Purple-blue grapes of night crushed freshly,  
Deep sleep and the drowsy stars.



# VIOLET SYMPHONY

## III

I love the night that in long violet shroud  
Slowly and lovingly wraps up the day,  
Hiding its blurred imperfections  
In endless tenderness.

I love the day's  
High violet cone of light,  
With thin haze on the horizon  
Like a wavering summer sea.

But most of all I love midsummer dawn,  
When far/off planes of light ascend and tremble together  
Like distant purple waves, the sound of whose dim breaking  
Is lost in the wild babel of awaking birds.

## IV

Twisted fragments of violet paper,  
The dawn drops you  
Into the green bowl filled with the day's grey waves.

I love the night's  
Deep purple grapes  
That yesterday  
Were crushed and spilled,

## SYMPHONIES

In long and sluggish rivers  
That joined and made a sea,  
Where, half-guessed through the mist,  
Two golden sails  
Drifted on silently.

The blue fume of my dreams  
Is laced with violet flame.

One golden sail alone came back to rest  
In its nest  
Among the reeds.  
The other sail is lost ;  
Behind the mist,  
Beyond the craggy rock,  
About which race in jagged white  
The waves,  
Horizon on horizon far away  
She waits.  
But through the day,  
Comes no faint song, nor creaking of the ropes.

Twisted fragments of violet paper,  
Charred and fallen :  
Out of the green bowl lazily coils grey smoke.

## GREY SYMPHONY

### I

Up on the hillside a long row of larches  
Shake from their grizzled beards the vestiges of rain,  
From grey/blue melting ice/slabs 'neath their arches  
The spring goes up again.

Writhing, exuding,  
Up/steaming, streaming,  
The earth is breathing to the sky  
Wet clouds of spring.

Dim rosy fans, the trees  
As they flick to and fro,  
Seem driving greyish vapour  
Over the snow.

The sky remodulates itself  
From violet/grey to blue,  
Under the upturned eaves of the blue larches  
The sun looks through.

## SYMPHONIES

Now with the heat of the sun  
The grey/blue ice/slabs quiver,  
They slide in muddy trickles  
Towards the river.

Up on the hillside between the long row of larches  
Fume up from south pale clouds that bear the rain ;  
In pearl and violet arches  
They break and shape again.

### II

I have seen in the evening  
The greyish/violet clouds  
Roll wearily back from northward  
To the place whence first they came.

One or two orange lamps burnt low  
Against deep purple hills —

The wind was hurrying, bundling them together,  
The pines awoke to sing  
The song of the snow buzzing and screaming  
On its one string.

I have seen within my heart  
Crocuses, purple and gold,

## GREY SYMPHONY

Drop cold and dull and colourless  
Beneath the snow.

One or two orange lamps burnt low,  
Vain memories.

The wind has driven me too many winters,  
My songs are snowflakes whirling about my breast.  
I will wrap my frozen and bitter songs about me,  
In one grey drift, and rest.

### III

Fluttering and soft the snow  
Flings outward, swirls and settles,  
But when I try to seize it,  
The wind tears it away.

Through poised green platforms of enormous pines,  
I see far hilltops pushing up blue roofs.  
Snow comes,  
And hums  
Through the woof  
Of the lower branches.  
It skips and dances:  
It drops in sluggish folds  
Of grey,

## SYMPHONIES

To where the frozen rhododendron bushes  
With lower air-gusts play,  
And the earth hushes  
Its movement.

Fluttering and soft the snow is blent  
In long loose spirals with my dream.

It is all I have, the snow,  
And I know  
That when I chase it, it will fly from me ;  
Beyond the lifeless green,  
Beyond the low blue hills,  
Beyond the pale straw-coloured glare,  
Down in the west  
It goes ;  
Straight southward where the purple-orange flare  
Of sunset flows,  
And into the blackened heart of my last rose  
Pours its despair.

Fluttering, soft, and dim  
Regrets that skip and skim  
Grey in the grey twilight ;  
Slim and weary whirls the snow,  
And where it goes I too shall go.

# GREY SYMPHONY

## IV

Of my long nights afar in alien cities  
I have remembered only this :  
They were black scarves all dusted over with silver,  
In which I wrapped my dreams ;  
They were black screens on which I made those pictures  
That faded out next day.

Youth without glory, manhood one mad struggle,  
Maturity a battle without trumpet calls :  
Long gleams from pallid suns seen only in my dreaming  
Struck those dissolving walls.

And of my days,  
I only know  
They slipped and fell,  
Like too-brief sunsets,  
Into the hill-ravines that held the snow.

Three lofty pines  
At the corners of my heart  
Waited, apart.

## SYMPHONIES

They only see  
In the mystery  
Of the grey sky,  
The jagged clouds that fly,  
Endlessly.



## POPPIES OF THE RED YEAR

*(A Symphony in Scarlet)*

### I

THE words that I have written  
To me become as poppies :  
Deep angry disks of scarlet flame full-glowing in the stillness  
Of a shut room.

Silken their edges undulate out to me,  
Drooping on their hairy stems ;  
Flaring like folded shawls, down-curved like rockets starting  
To break and shatter their light.

Wide-flaunting and heavy, crinkle-lipped blossom,  
Darting faint shivers through me ;  
Globed Chinese lanterns on green silk cords a-swaying  
Over motionless pools.

These are lamps of a festival of sleep held each night to  
welcome me,  
Crimson-bursting through dark doors.  
Out to the dull, blue, heavy fumes of opium rolling  
From their rent red hearts, I go to seek my dream.

## SYMPHONIES

### II

A riven wall like a face half torn away  
Stares blankly at the evening :  
And from a window like a crooked mouth  
It barks at the sunset sky.

And over there, beyond,  
On plains where night has settled,  
Tent-like encampments of vaporous blue smoke or mist,  
Three men are riding.

One of them looks and sees the sky :  
One of them looks and sees the earth :  
The last one looks and sees nothing at all.  
They ride on.

One of them pauses and says, " It is death."  
Another pauses and says, " It is life."  
The last one pauses and says, " 'T is a dream."  
His bridle shakes.

The sky  
Is filled with oval violet-tinted clouds  
Through which the sun long settled strikes at random,  
Enkindling here and there blotched circles of rosy light.

## POPPIES OF THE RED YEAR

These are poppies,  
Unclosing immense corollas,  
Waving the horsemen on.

Over the earth, upheaving, folding,  
They ride : their bridles shake :  
One of them sees the sky is red :  
One of them sees the earth is dark :  
The last man sees he rides to his death,  
Yet he says nothing at all.

### III

There will be no harvest at all this year ;  
For the gaunt black slopes arising  
Lift the wrinkled aching furrows of their fields, falling away,  
To the rainy sky in vain.

But in the furrows  
There is grass and many flowers.  
Scarlet tossing poppies  
Flutter their wind-slashed edges,  
On which gorged black flies poise and sway in drunken sleep.

The black flies hang  
Above the tangled trampled grasses,  
Grey, crumpled bundles lie in them :

## SYMPHONIES

They sprawl,  
Heave faintly ;  
And between their stiffened fingers,  
Run out clogged crimson trickles,  
Spattering the poppies and standing in beads on the grass.

### IV

I saw last night  
Sudden puffs of flame in the northern sky.

The sky was an even expanse of rolling grey smoke,  
Lit faintly by the moon that hung  
Its white face in a dead tree to the east.

Within the depths of greenish greyish smoke  
Were roars,  
Crackles and spheres of vapour,  
And then  
Huge disks of crimson shooting up, falling away.

And I said these are flower petals,  
Sleep petals, dream petals,  
Blown by the winds of a dream.

But still the crimson rockets rose,  
They seemed to be

## POPPIES OF THE RED YEAR

One great field of immense poppies burning evenly,  
Casting their viscid perfume to the earth.

The earth is sown with dead,  
And out of these the red  
Blooms are pushing up, advancing higher,  
And each night brings them nigher,  
Closer, closer to my heart.

### v

By the sluggish canal  
That winds between thin ugly dunes,  
There are no passing boats with creaking ropes to-day.

But when the evening  
Crouches down, like a hurt rabbit,  
Under the everlasting raincloud whirling up the north  
horizon,  
Downwards on the stream will float  
Glowing points of fire.

Orange, coppery, scarlet,  
Crimson, rosy, flickering,  
They pass, the lanterns  
Of the unknown dead.

## SYMPHONIES

Out where the sea, sailless,  
Is mouthing and fretting  
Its chaos of pebbles and dried sticks by the dunes.

By the wall of that house  
That looks like a face half torn away,  
And from its flat mouth barks at the sky,  
The sky which is shot with broad red disks of light,  
Petals drowsily falling.

### VI

“It was not for a sacred cause,  
Nor for faith, nor for new generations,  
That unburied we roll and float  
Beneath this flaming tumult of drunken sleep-flowers.  
But it was for a mad adventure,  
Something we longed for, poisonous, seductive,  
That we dared go out in the night together,  
Towards the glow that called us,  
On the unsown fields of death.

“Now we lie here reaped, ungarnered,  
Red swaths of a new harvest:  
But you who follow after,  
Must struggle with our dream:

## POPPIES OF THE RED YEAR

And out of its restless and oppressive night,  
Filled with blue fumes, dull, choking,  
You will draw hints of that vision  
Which we hold aloof in silence."

THE END







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