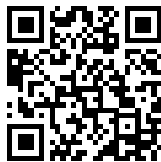

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THE
HAPPY MARRIAGE
AND OTHER POEMS
—
ARCHIBALD MACLEISH



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**THE HAPPY MARRIAGE
AND OTHER POEMS**

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HAPPY MARRIAGE
AND OTHER POEMS**

**BY
ARCHIBALD MACLEISH**



**BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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CONTENTS



THE HAPPY MARRIAGE	1
THE LORD CHANCELLOR PREPARES HIS OPINION	40
HUNTERS	46
> HANDS	47
HYPOCRITES	50
> INVOCATION	51
> CHAMBERS OF IMAGERY	54
THE GEOGRAPHER	56
THE TOMB OF THE ABBESS OF TOURS	57
> THE WORD	59
DIFFERENCE	61
> CHEVAUX DE BOIS	62
SONG	65
TO THE TUNE OF WALSINGHAM	66
BRONZE	68
OMNISCIENCE	70



KENNETH	71
FOR REMEMBRANCE	75
YEARS AGO	76
SONNET	79
ALIEN	80

THE HAPPY MARRIAGE
AND OTHER POEMS



THE HAPPY MARRIAGE

••

PART ONE



(1)

FIRST I will tell you something of these two.
He followed love as watchful as a child,
And yet unchildlike never quite beguiled
To think the thing he found the thing he
knew:

She, sure of all things seen by moon or sun,
And sure that these were all her eyes could
see,

Waited impatient for the victory
That should secure what was already won.

He followed love, she waited her true lover:
She waited what she need but wait to find;

[1]



He followed what pursuit could not discover
Nor time disclose nor death surprise and
bind.

Over the hills, he sang, and far away —
She never knew that land nor where it lay.

(2)

Well, he was drunk. That much was clear,
Or not quite clear but certain.

Queer

The way a rising moon will burn
Green copper!

Thing you'll never learn
From books: but out of life and beer
Or beer and life you may discern
Great truths — as that a tower gleams
In moon-fire like a torch and seems
A toppling brand of burnt emprise.
No teacher else is half so wise

[2]



At demonstrating chords and themes
The singing sort of men devise.

Take Helen, — all you hear of her
In lectures is a learned slur
Of couplets solemnly undressed
To indicate the female chest,
Till Helen's lost and nothing's sure
But that she had, praise God, a breast.

And then you're drunk and out you walk
Through High Street where the shadows
mock

The third dimension of thick day,
And walls chirp back the words you say;
And magically above your talk,
As lift faint mountains far away,
There lifts a sudden loveliness,
A flare of beauty, an excess



Of radiance, more sense than thought,
Like soundless music somehow caught
Back of the brain, or some impress
Of figures in a dream forgot —
And there stands Helen — there's the face
Young Marlowe saw past time and space
And would have seen again and died;
There, there the subtle breast, the side
White as white water, there the grace
Of queens and there the pride, the pride.

Helen, he said, — but was it she?
Somewhere he'd seen serenity
Drawn smooth as this across a flame
As bright to hide, and brows that tame
Eyes as unapt to secrecy, —
Nay, he had known these eyes, this same
Young breast, this throat. — There was a
name —



(3)

He had used love or lust or what's between
Long, long before. When he was still a boy
Old hairy love that hugs his knees for joy
And quavers tunes, ecstatic and obscene,
Grey goatish love that whistles to the fauns,
Had whistled fever through his aching flesh
And led him giddy down his nerves' dark
mesh
To lie with empresses and leprechauns.

So he had used and after in a mood
Of sluggish melancholy and vague grief,
Ruffled with such warm rifts as in a wood
A sunny wind blows over leaf by leaf,
Had longed for death that lies beneath the
ground
And feels no lust and listens to no sound.

[5]



(4)

And he had used love's dream of love before,
Love that hopes nothing but the hope it is,
Love that has no utterance in a kiss,
Nor eloquence in flesh, but would adore
Its perfect adoration, its desire,
As musingly in wonder as the moon
Stares back into a brook whose running
 rune
Burns with the imaged argent of moon-fire.

Sometimes in music when the phrase would
 close
And yet yearn on in silence, unfulfilled,
Once in the imperfection of a rose,
Once in an ape's face marvellously stilled,
He had imagined the perfected thing,
The hope made real, the unfolded wing.

[6]



(5)

But she was both, — she was both loved and
love,

She was desire and the thing desired,
She was Troy flame and she was Troy town
fired,

She was hope realized and the hope thereof:
Her slender body was the instant bloom
Of lovely secrecies; the shadowed swell
Of her small breast was beauty sensible;
Her stormy hair wore wonder like a plume.

Away, his sense of her was like the sense
Of moonlight under the smooth vague of
sleep;

Near, at her touch, her beauty's imminence
Was like a wave that falters at the leap
And lifts in foam a moment till it fall,
Filling with thunderous hush the interval.

[7]



(6)

Passing her in the day he had but dared
To meet her eyes and in the moment's touch
Seemed to his finching brain to dare too much
So proud she was and single and unshared.
She was another flesh than his he thought,
Another element, less earth than flame,
A different life, unnamed but for the name,
Her eyes should teach him if he could be
taught.

But now at midnight the remembering dark
Imaged her body naked by his side,
Her head half turned and on her mouth the
mark
Of lust fed full and still unsatisfied,
And her clear eyes that had compelled his
mind
Were humble now and hideously kind.

[8]



(7)

Under an elm tree where the river reaches
They watched the evening deepen in the sky,
They watched the westward clouds go tower-
ing by
Through lakes of blue toward those shining
beaches,
Those far enchanted strands where blowing
tides
Break into light along the shallow air;
They watched how like a ship's tall lantern
there
Over that silent surf the faint star rides.

Ship of a dream, he thought, — O dreamed of
shore
Beyond all oceans and all earthly seas!
Now would they never call him any more,
Now would they never hurt him with unease.

[9]



She was that ship, that sea, that syren
land;
And she was here, her hand shut in his hand.

(8)

Here, O wanderer, here is the hill and the
harbor,
Farer and follower, here the Hesperides.
Here wings the Halcyon down through the
glamorous arbor,
Here is the end of the seas.

Have you heard music at morning of far sea
singing?
Have you heard singing over the water at
dark?
This was the music you heard here forever
reringing,
Only the thrush, O hark!

[10]



Have you seen citadels glance in the sunset,
and towers?

Have you seen castles of glint and of gossamer
spun?

These, only these, were the heights, these hills
grown with flowers,

These were the gates of the sun.

There is no music but this, no loveliness
other, —

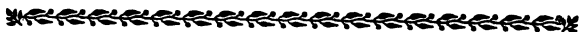
Only the reaching of arms and the rose of a
breast,

Only a girl's throat — beyond this earth ends
and seas smother,

And the old moon fades in the west.

There is no land beyond and no shore and no
ocean,

Nothing but night and the moon and the cold
thin air,



Where change never comes but the stars'
unchangeable motion,
Nor end but endlessness there.

(9)

Beatrice, Beatrice, poor Beatrice,
She said, and laughed and tossed aside the
book.

Once Dante saw her and his green bones
shook

And that you say was love. Why love is —
this —

She leaned above him in the sunlight there.
Poor Beatrice! The shadowy Florentine
Dissolved in shadow, and high heaven's queen
Drowned in the heavy darkness of dark hair.

Poor Beatrice — Poor Dante — did they miss
So much of love exalting love so much?

[12]




Or is it love to tremble on a kiss?
Or does true love love only past the touch?
But this was true whatever truth's device,
And this could live in Hell or Paradise.

(10)

Would you jig, O lusty loin?
O brain, would you dance so soon?
But love who pays the fiddler's coin
Must call the tune.

Not when you would, O soul,
Not, O flesh, when you will,
But when love nods, and the wild drums roll
And the fiddles shrill.



PART TWO



(1)

It was all quiet on that little hill,
And through the dusk a hazy quiet fell,
Quiet as lulled as after a slow bell
The silver quaver falters and is still.
There was no stir among the trees at all
Nor any lift of air along the ground;
Only soft rain that settled with no sound,
And rain drops on still leaves too stilled to fall.

He thought the stillness was her bridal house
And here within hushed walls of secretness
She lay and waited till his love should rouse
Echoes of longing, and with love's excess
Ring down this silence on a rising chime,
Ring down the heavens and the roof of time.

[14]



(2)

Turning he raised the latch and passed the
door

And stood upon the threshold of her room,
As though he stood upon the farthest shore
Of wonder and awaited there the bloom
Of moonrise on the sea. O, surely here,
Here in this heart of silence he should find
That something sought which now as he came
near

Was like moonrise and music in his mind.

Here, surely here, his very flesh should know
Beauty that has no knowledge in the flesh,
And beauty known within that mortal mesh
Should be immortal and true beauty show.
So should his body be his subtle brain
And thought be sense and sense be thought
again.

[15]



(3)

Things he had loved because he knew them
lost,
Things he had loved and never yet had
found —
The unintelligible beauty tossed
Back from a foolish dream — the smothered
sound
Of laughter from a window swiftly barred
In some monk's chronicle — the ruined grace
Of carven marbles that old rains had
marred —
Things he had lost and loved were in that
place.

And she was like the voice of those lost things
Haunting the body that his arms held near,
And singing there of other loves as sings
The bird at evening of another year.

[16]



But now she slept and was herself and seemed
More than his love and less than he had
dreamed.

(4)

She was herself, not his, not anything
That might be his or he might ever own,
Or ever think, or with much thinking bring
To words that may be spoken out and known;
And that dear image he had coined of her
To spend his love, and gilded with her
head,
Was but the counterfeit love's pensioner
Should hoard for all his wealth when she was
dead,

And all he knew of her was something less
Than what his hand could learn against her
side,

[17]



Or what his mouth remembered from the
press
Of her mute mouth. She had become the
bride
Of something in his sense that understood
The touch of things, the moments of the
blood.

(5)

They say they are one flesh:
They are two nations.
They cannot mix nor mesh: —
Their conjugations

Are cries from star to star.
They would commingle,
They couple far and far —
Still they are single.

[18]



With arms and hungry hands
They cling together,
They strain at bars and bands,
They tug at tether,

Still there are walls between,
Still space divides them,
Still are themselves unseen,
Still distance hides them.



PART THREE



(1)

I SEE you with my mind.
You are a swarm
Of dust,
A storm
Of timeless atoms blowing where they must,
From kind to crumbling kind.

I see you with my hands.
You are the earth.
The frame,
The girth,
Of all that is and is always the same,
And through all ruin stands.

I see you with my eyes.
You are my love,

[20]



You change,
You move,
You are alive and like all living strange
That being different dies.

(2)

She was not strange, but patterned from that
plan

Perfected in the worm and still rehearsed
In fishes and all furred and feathered cursed
By fur and feather to be unlike Man, —
A hollow cylinder hooped in with bone
Projecting sidewise to isosceles,
A simple tube, but modified to ease
The seed that must not die till it be sown.

And this new marvel, this long lovely line,
This melody, this mute Alcaic curve
From thigh to throat was still the Egg's design

[21]



To propagate leviathan and serve
The toad's eternity, — and only fine
Because he chose, and chose to misdivine.

(3)

Man is immortal, for his flesh is earth,
And save he lives forever — why, he dies:
Woman is mortal, for her flesh will rise
In each new generation of her birth.
She is the tree; we are the feverish
Vain leaves that gild her summer with our
 own,
And fall and rot when summer's overblown,
And wish eternity and have — our wish.

And man, immortal, marries his own dreams
Of immortality in flesh and blood,
And mortal woman, wiser than she seems,
Marries her man for evil or for good, —

[22]



Wherein perception sees what reason blurs:
She was not his, but he was only hers.

(4)

O hide your eyes,
O turn your head away;
Are you so wise, so wise,
To watch unchanged this chemistry of clay?

It is not we,
It is another two;
Hide that you may not see
What flushed unlovely things their bodies
do.

O think no grace
That I am glad of this:
I do not know your face,
It is not you but my own flesh I kiss.

[23]



Blind, blind your brow
And your too candid eyes:
You cannot love me now,
You cannot love what even love denies.

(5)

This was not love but love's true negative
That spends itself in passion to be spent,
And lives no longer than the wish may live
To waste itself and then is impotent.
And fails not only but confounds in fault
What love most lives upon, the very need,
The lack, the famine, the too thirsty salt,
Till wanting want love has no will to feed.

Yet, in the glut and surfeit of desire
Desire itself was perfected and found,
And fever burned by its consuming fire
Was bare as martyrs' bones beneath the
ground.

[24]



This was not love, the ever unpossessed,
But this was love of her made manifest.

(6)

Love is the way that lovers never know
Who know the shortest way to find their love,
And never turn aside and never go
By vales beneath nor by the hills above,
But running straight to the familiar door
Break sudden in and call their dear by name
And have their wish and so wish nothing more
And neither know nor trouble how they came.

Love is the path that comes to this same ease
Over the summit of the westward hill,
And feels the rolling of the earth and sees
The sun go down and hears the summer still,
And dips and follows where the orchards fall
And comes here late or never comes at all.

[25]



(7)

But love of her went wandering no mood
Of azure evening where the worm's slow spark
Kindled and dimmed and like enchantment
stood

The spring's young moon upon the silver dark,
Nor followed any path that seeking her
Sought beauty first and would not find her
breast

Save through old forests thick and loftier
Than guard the golden apples in the west.

She was the sky and country of his love,
The towns and towers and the outward farms,
And journeys in that land might only move
From her recalled to her recalling arms,
Where all horizons were attained and dear
Before he thought them far or wished them
near.

[26]



(8)

Whom do you love, she said, when you look out
So far beyond my eyes as our eyes meet?
Is she so like and yet unlike you doubt
If I'm the counterfeit or she's the cheat?
Or is she some one that I never was?
Or what I was and shall not be again?
Back of your eyes I think her image has
Not only longing and much more than pain.

She never had another's face but this,
He laughed and touched her cheek. She
 moved as you,
And spoke upon your tongue and used your
 kiss,
And knew the mysteries your wisdom knew,
And had your silence, and was called your
 name —
But was not I myself — was not the same!

[27]



(9)

As like, he said, as what we see of it
Is like and wider than the unseen sea —
Wider because the sea's not infinite
But banked and shored from possibility,
While what we see, because we cannot know
From maps or charts how far it should
 extend,
Is greater than the ocean and may flow
Over horizons till horizons end.

You have no bounds to me but my defect
Of eyes to see if there is more beyond,
And if I watch as they do who expect
Some sign, some drift of green, some lily frond
Borne out of unknown Indies in the west,
I watch your sea for shores you've not
 confessed.

[28]



Than dreaming I should find what I shall
not —
Till I remembered that I had forgot.

(11)

Throwing a careless pebble in the lake
She saw the clear sky crumple and the
hill

Waver and reel and all the sunlight spill
In swimming circles and the willows shake,
And watching said: You say love cannot
die,

But there's a lovely world has had an end.
And when he laughed and said the sky would
mend

She said: And that would be another sky.

And then: Oh, yes, the image will return
Being an image — yet the sky has tumbled

[30]



However bright the sky itself may burn —
That cannot fall you say? Her fingers
fumbled

Against his arm and in the touch he knew
Her heart had guessed the truth that was not
true.

(12)

They say to themselves, we will think of the
time that was.

Withdraws

The mist momentarily, flows
The dark down and away; and they muse
On a pattern of sky and a leaf there that blows.
And a happiness, sudden, unmeaning, un-
meant, without cause,

Arises, renews,

In that leaf, in that pattern of sky and there
gathers and grows.

[31]



They say to themselves, Ah, then we were
happy, love knows:

But shall we be happy again if we choose
A pattern of sky and a leaf there that blows,
As then, on the hurrying flaws,
When happiness was?



PART FOUR



(1)

HE leans against the window-sill:
The dusk has drizzled down to rose.
Delicious damps and odors fill
The musings of his thoughtful nose.

The soft wind slides seductive touch
Along the shoulders of the oak.
My dear, I love you, dear, so much —
He cannot think of whom he spoke.

(2)

The white of her Colonial
Showed patterns of a tranquil wall
Through lattices of apple trees,
And softly her serenities

[33]



Curled hazy blue above the backs
Of comfortable chimney stacks.
New England, not Arcadia,
She gardened her phenomena,
And tamed her asphodels to grow
To roses in a scarlet row.
New England fenced from Avalon,
The curtains of her peace were drawn
Against the peering of the moon,
And crickets shuffled down the tune
Of Pan among the lilac leaves.
From far away he saw her eaves
As shelter against every doubt,
And understood what was shut out
When doors swung back to shut him in, —
But what of that! It was no sin
To bolt with iron from the blaze
Of staring moon on empty ways
And bar the shutters to the sound



One's ecstatic youth
Proves true what has no proof in sense:
And time strikes out the evidence
But enters judgment on the rule,
So that one's wisdom, learned fool,
Knows only that the thing is true.
But he had knowledge, for he knew
His proofs and never tried their weight
As evidence to demonstrate
The truth of anything on earth
Except themselves, and what was worth
Believing of them.

She was real:
He knew because his hands could feel
The bones that threatened in her wrist.
And she proved nothing but the twist
That was her way of beauty — not
Some Beauty that he had forgot
Nor Truth that now was past belief.



A woman was no lawyer's brief
Compounded to persuade the sense
Of things beyond experience
No woman's body could fulfil,
But Holy Writ that can distil
The very peace it promises.

Once he had seen the Thing That Is
In every movement of her head —

He yawned and shuffled off to bed.

(4)

The humid air precipitates
In moisture on enamelled plates
And orient to opaline
The glass discolours. Crinkled green
Of lettuces grows limp and fades.
A rose bowl withering pervades

[37]



The room with sickliness and rusts
The whiteness crimson. Glutted lusts,
Renewing on a deeper nerve,
Denied, make conversation serve
Obscurer converse. Intimate,
Their meeting eyes interrogate
And being answered turn aside,
She secretly and satisfied,
He startled into discontent
By something in her quick assent,
Confided and discreetly masked,
That seemed to promise all he asked.

(5)

Beside her in the dark the chime
Of ratcheted revolving time
Repeating its repeated beat
Builds complicated incomplete
Sonatas in his listening brain,

[38]



Phrase upon phrase, till the refrain
Resolves into the tick and tock
Of seconds scissored by the clock.

He thinks he has composed his dream
Of love upon as slight a theme,
And all the arduous obscure
Perfections of his overture,
Unravelled part from varied part,
Were but the drumming of her heart.

But still the clacking clockwork spins
Music of marvellous violins.

(6)

Beauty is that Medusa's head
Which men go armed to seek and sever:
It is most deadly when most dead,
And dead will stare and sting forever —
Beauty is that Medusa's head.



THE LORD CHANCELLOR
PREPARES HIS OPINION

MY LORDS, this is a clear unmuddied case —

A clear unmuddied case! If ever stream
Of pure judicial reasoning bore down
More silt and wreckage of the heart's
unease

Than this thin rill! But let the sarcasm
stand;

It serves at least to thrust me on the cause
Full running, in a careless jogging start,
Ahead of fox and beagles, horn uplift,
Toot-tootling at full breath, as one who
knows

Before the hunt's up where the brush will fall.

My Lords, this is a clear unmuddied case.
The plaintiff is a lady of the Court,



A maid of honor to Her Majesty and known
By beauty's rumor far as Tyne and Tweed.

By beauty's rumor — there I've found
myself
With just the breath of satire; not one tone
Of all the tones her beauty struck in me,
Leaving me jangling like a belfry bell
Under a thrust of thunder.

She impleads
The courts of equity to have relief
Against defendant, in that he has made
A full heroic picture of herself,
Likest Diana, with the curved moon's arc
Crowning her head, and in her hand a spear;
No adjective beside to qualify
The fact of her —



Ah, there's another touch
To throw them off the scent. They'll nudge
and say,
My lord is mellow: they will never dream
How that still beauty on the canvas caught,
Caught and held fast, as in the brain
sometimes
A gesture of the soul is caught and held, —
How that still beauty stopped my mouth
with awe,
And left my poor brain gaping. Like a tree,
A birch tree, shining in a windy place
Where blown and shattered leaves of sun-
light fall,
And grasses ripple and the flooding blue
Seems to engulf the world; or like a wave
That tips with foam and flowering in the
sea
Drives on before the wind, a curve of sound



And failing flame of water, such intents
This phrase of mine obscures:

No adjective

Beside to qualify the fact of her.

The paint once dried, defendant made demand

For sums, excess of reason, which, refused,
The painter had his shameless painting set
Within the windows of a coffee house,
That all who paid might see and all who saw,
Knowing her face, — it was a replica
Most exquisite exact, her counsel saith, —
Might stand and stare. To this so-stated bill
Defendant has demurred.

So stands the cause.

My Lords, here is no ground for equity.
It is established from the earliest days



That save a man be injured in his purse,
Or in his lands, or in his common right,
He may not plead the Chancellor for aid.
And here what right is injured? Are there
fees

And rents and profits in a replica?
Is beauty such a thing as this grave court,
Accustomed to the solid weight of trade,
Apt to divide with cold appraising eye
The estates of merchants, and maintain the
scales

Against the shrewd in barter, long enured
To holding lands and livings in its trusts —
Is beauty such a value as we know?
Shall we weigh symmetry in sterling's worth?
Shall equity protect a woman's throat
Against the painter's interest in his paint?
The bill should be dismissed.



Ah, that's well done,
That's very well. I see them nod and bow
And echo what I've said; I see — I see —
Nay, nothing but a beauty such as time
In all its ebb and flow against this earth
Has never yet tossed, like a tinted shell,
High on the echoing beaches that look out
Toward the faint lights of the voyaging
stars.



HUNTERS

No more on slant wings of the fisher gull,
Flashing like blades across the blowing light,
Do I coast up the morning in slow flight
Peering for some rare silver in the sea;
No more at glitter of the beautiful
Drop wings and follow on the instant's lust
To close with hope forever on the thrust,
Or plunge at chance to seize what chance
may be.

No more nor ever like the bright brave gull
Will I go hawking in the windy world.
I am turned robin and I wisely pull
A worm occasional from garden sod,
Thankful to dodge the dreadful acorns hurled
In jest or malice by the garden god.



HANDS

EMPERORS, prophets, priests, named one by
one,
Great names of prophets who foretold the
sun,
Names of great emperors whose armies won —
These are but names and, being named, are
done.

But you are never dust, that had no name,
Nor any honor in your ages' fame;
You that were ageless and all times the
same.

You raised the stones that lie at Eridu,
Petra you built, where once the date-palm
grew;
And Egypt's pyramids, that cannot say



What king they house, nor what his death and
day,
Nor how he lived, are eloquent of you,
Naked and nameless modellers of clay.

You have no monument, yet every king
Who built a tomb for his remembering
Built with the marble you could hew and
bring;

And every conqueror who set a tower
To mark forever his triumphal power
Marked but your skill that labored there an
hour;

And every prophet who cried out the Word
Cried only meanings that your hearts had
heard,
Hearing the twilight silence and the bird.



And when these cities made of steel and stone
Are choked with earth and vaguely over-
blown,
Nothing will rest of all that now they own,
No fame, no wonder, but your hands alone.



HYPOCRITES

WHEN all the loves that loved her for her soul
Have married fleshly wives and comfortable,
When all the loves that loved her over well
For her sweet virtue have endured control,
When all the loves that loved her down the
roll

Of every excellence she should excel
Have lost their adjectives — then I shall tell
Wherefore I loved her, and tell true the whole.

I loved her for her youth that could not last,
I loved her for her laugh that could but die,
I loved her face that death should overcast,
I loved her but a day and it was past, —
And so I love her till all loves are by:
Moments and moonlight doth the heart hold
fast.



INVOCATION

O BEAUTY! If you ever hear
The rhymed halloo and lyric cheer
Of those that cry to you in verse,
Or marry you for ill or worse
In paint and canvas, clay and stone,
Or walk with God and you alone
In their own hearts (where their own
 pleasure
Can jog you both to any measure),
O Beauty! If you've ever heard
One chantey, jig or clinking word
That men have said or sung about you,
Then hear these sentences I shout you:
You fraud! You showman! puffer! gilder!
Adept in trappings to bewilder!
You window-dresser of that store
Where all that's sold was sold before!



You milliner! Creation done
Was there no decent world to run,
Or comet or small tidy moon,
But you must pipe your huckster's tune
Around and up and down our earth,
Exalting lack, decrying worth,
Impoverishing best with better,
Confounding creditor and debtor,
Or singing some dead girl immortal,
Or publishing a strange assortal
Of water, winds, and clouds, and skies,
And locks, and lips, and languid eyes?
And that's not all; for when we buy
You take our gold and shrug and sigh,
And say we had the thing before,
And having paid have nothing more
Than then we had. A many stars
And loves and glammers of old wars
You've sold me for their weight in ease



And not delivered. Now you please
To sell me life herself. You fraud!
Applaud her till the streets applaud,
Bow her with praise, — I'll never buy.
I tell you I have seen things change
And wither when you shift your eye
To untried seas and cities strange.



CHAMBERS OF IMAGERY

SOMETIMES, within the brain's old ghostly
house,

I hear, far off, at some forgotten door,
A music and an eerie faint carouse,
And stir of echoes down the creaking floor,

And then I rise and through the dusty gloom
Grove with swift fingers as a blind man goes,
Half sensing, half remembering the room,
Building the image of the world he knows,

And fumbling so down lightless passages
And winding stairs and windowless dark halls,
Now beckoned by the music's faint excess,
Now lost and listening at unsounding walls,

I come at last where, bolted in the stone,
A ruined door leans inward, and beyond



The voices clamor and the tune is blown
In swirl and silence of wind-troubled sound.

And then, impassioned of the thronging gods,
Eager of beauty, unlock bolts and bars, —
Alone, with grinning head that nods and nods,
Myself stands gibbering against the stars.



THE GEOGRAPHER

THERE stands a tower on a hill
Between the seven seas,
But how it's called I cannot tell
Nor where it is.

There lives therein a lady there
Whose breast is never still,
But if that land is far or near
I cannot tell.

Her lips are very sweet to close,
Her hands to overbear,
But whether they are true who knows
Or where they are?

Her hair is soft to drowse you in,
Her soft hair overflows:
You need not know the way of sin,
The way it goes.



THE TOMB OF THE ABBESS
OF TOURS

OVER the hills and very far away,
Far, far away and centuries ago,
She was so young, so swift to love, so slow —
Waiting the lover perfect every way —
To guess the thing was love and would not
stay.

She never thought to die. She did not
know

Her spring, put off, forestalled, would never
blow.

She never doubted there should come the
day.

She doubts not now. Her mouth that wears
the stone

Soft as the subtle fashion of the flesh



Has smiled eight hundred years for that dear
One,
That perfect lover humbled for her sake,
And her two eyes that lift beneath the lash,
Could he not kiss them even now awake?



THE WORD

How shall we call this love of ours? What
word

Marked from the drinking of another's mouth
And streaked with slaking the ancestral
drouth

And stained with syrups offered to the Lord —
What word will hold this wonder: where's the
bowl

Unused till now and never used for this,
Fit for the liquor of our avarice,
Spacious to brim this vintage of the soul —

Is there no word, no perfect word but one?
Is there no cup but this wherefrom have
sipped
Sad men and earthy since the morning's
sun?



**Must we then taste their sorrow where they
lipped
The edge of lust and take our passion up
Bitter already from the common cup?**



DIFFERENCE

I'd rather love the moon that will not see
Even my shadow beckoning to her,
Or sullen sleepy earth that does not stir
Under my lips, though they move lovelly,
Or any heedless beauty that may be,
Water blown over with a windy blur,
Or ice that blackens where the ripples were,
Rather than you who are so free of me.

I never find your ways but you are fled
Running the subtle deer of your delight,
I never taste some whimsy thing you've said
But there's a tang of hills I never knew,
And when you come to me, white feet, O
white,
And shining loveliness, it is not you.



CHEVAUX DE BOIS

WHO'LL ride on the Merry-go-round!

Toot! Toot!

Who'll ride on the Merry-go-round!

Who'll undergo birth

For a whirl on the earth,

Who'll ride on the Merry-go-round!

Ump! Ump!

Who'll ride on the Merry-go-round!

You swing through unlimited space

With nothing to hold you in place,

You circle the sun

Till you're giddy with fun

And the nebulæ laugh in your face,

Toot! Toot!

And the nebulæ laugh in your face.



Three hundred and sixty-five twirls
To each of your annual whirls,
 With a vortical moon
 For a sort of balloon
And a meteorite in your curls,
 Ump! Ump!
And a meteorite in your curls.

You can ride on the Pegasus steed,
Or the hobbledy horse on a lead;
 It won't matter a bit
 If you pull or you hit
There's only one possible speed,
 Toot! Toot!
There's only one possible speed.

You can ride on the true lover's throne
With the lad or the lass that's your own,



You can laugh at the rest
In his arms, — on her breast, —
But you'll stop, when you stop, by your lone,
Ump! Ump!
But you'll stop, when you stop, by your lone.

You pay as you enter, my dear,
And you pay after that every year,
And you pay after that
When they pass the big hat,
And you pay when you leave, never fear,
Toot! Toot!
And you pay when you leave us, my dear.



SONG

HE is no lover of the sea
Who loves her never faithlessly,
Who loves her never most and least,
Slavered, fierce, upleaping beast,
Who loves her neither least nor most,
The shrouded girl, the hushing ghost,
Who never loves deceitfully,
He is no lover of the sea.



TO THE TUNE OF WALSINGHAM

THERE is an old-time lovers' song
Of a lost love and untrue,
And one that sought her all along
And in dark and in dew.

And all the world where he should rove
The winding of his way,
He asked them of his false love,
Was she glad, was she gay.

I never heard what man he was
Nor her name that he sought;
Four hundred years is long to pass,
So I said, so I thought.

But yesterday at twilight
Quite quiet as I came,



There stood a withered man and white
And the song was the same;

How should I know your false love
When my own love is true?
Upon your heart you wear her glove
And her rose, and her rue.

How should I know the burning hair
Of your false lovely bride?
It is herself soft standing there
At your heart, at your side.



BRONZE

CHANGE; the rains pass, the daffodils decay,
May's thorn is withered soon,
And summer's rose
Follows the morning of a summer's day,
And with the moon
The sky pales, the wet wind blows,
And summer's gone.

Change; and nothing changes.
There is no space
To seize the shifting fashion and cry Now.
Always the shadow ranges,
Always the hour estranges,
Always to-morrow's morrow's at the brow.
Only our hearts,
Only our hearts that hold to loveliness
With hot undoubting — where the swallow
darts



Find an enduring grace,
And in a face
Unchanging beauty there —
Only our hearts, when beauty has impair,
And lovely strangeness is in death more
 strange,
Imagine change.



OMNISCIENCE

THERE was a lad and he sat alone,
And he watched the sky where a bird had
 flown,
And he watched the sea where a wind had run,
And he watched his shadow in the sun.

And he said, I know that birds go by
And leave no singing in the sky,
I know that winds blow silverly
And leave no brightness on the sea,

I know that when I'm digged away
My shadow's shadow will not stay:
Now God that knows both when and why,
He said, is not so wise as I.



KENNETH

O ROSA MUNDI, O unearthly rose
That perishes, that dies, that surely dies,
That perishes and goes
Into the dust again,
Into the groping root, the prying vein,
The terrible dumb hunger of the grass,
Or drifting wide will pass
Down to the sea,
The unremembering remindful sea, —
O flesh that dies,
Something there is of thee
More than the red idea, the lingered breath,
That bears no faith nor vassalage to death
Nor suffers any change;
Some imprint of the vanished form and fire,
Form that the hands desire,
Color the eyes adore,



Color and shape,
That lives, that lives, that does endure; not
strange,
Not utterly dissolved, not less nor more,
Nor lonely imaging, —
Some coin of beauty's buried gold to escape
Earth and the secret thieving of the spring.

O Death, not all, not all his beauty's strength,
His dark crowned head,
His body's shining length
Of subtle gracefulness, is shattered, dead,
Dead and forever lost.
I see him lie, a naked swimmer tossed
High on the pallid sands,
With all the tawny summer crowning him,
His broad brown hands
Cupped to the flooding sun; thigh, shoulder,
throat,



A perfect rhythm, a fierce suspended note
Of life intensely living, gay, —
I know again that day.

Ah, pitiful! He had no splendid dream,
No song, no vision's spark,
To lead him, blind, with fitful tossing gleam
Beyond your hour of dark;
He had no dream
Who was himself a music and a flame,
Who sought not glory, but himself became
The glory of his victories,
Who died
Clean washed in anger and the fighter's pride,
Unearthed of ease,
And down those burning skies
Fell like a shattered star.

O Rosa Mundi — in the rose that dies
Something there is, not mystical and far,



But dear, familiar, sure,
As in a dream the hazy voices are,
Something that lives, that lives, that lives,
that does endure.



FOR REMEMBRANCE

**I AM your grief, and after I am dead
No heart will ever break for you again.
Even these very words that I have said
Will then intend, if any read them then,
Another sorrow in your stead.**



YEARS AGO

WHY should I think of spring in France
When each new April's new mischance
Of gypsy magic and green change
Leaves earth familiarly strange?
Were there not springs before that spring?
Was there not whist and whispering
Of wind in willow until then?
And shall there not be springs again?
I can remember times more near
And longer past than that strange year;
Hip-booted springs, half faun, half boy,
Over the lakes in Illinois,
Following the swollen runnels down
To beaches where the waves broke brown
Shaking the air, and the landward breeze
Smelled of fresh water and far pine trees.
And overnight in the steep ravine



The first hepatica grew green;
And brief, too brief, New Haven Junes,
Green mornings, harbor-smelling noons,
And twilights flat on the shadowy turf
Washed with the footfalls' shallow surf,
With a drifting voice far off and sweet,
And the rumble of wheels on the Chapel
Street,

Drowsing and talking whimsily
Of Noah's ark and a life at sea.
I can remember springs more near,
Yet never when the winter's clear
And there's an earthy smoke about
And sluggard black flies blunder out,
Never do I remember these,
But seeing tint the apple trees
I see the orchards north from Meaux
Haggard with dust where the wagons go,
And smelling plow lands under rain



I smell the soft French earth again
Cut deep beneath the clumsy guns,
And hearing how some whistler runs
His broken scale hear then the song
That sunny days and all day long
A dead boy used to sing and sing.

But there were songs before that spring.



ALIEN

HERE in this inland garden
Unrumorous of surf,
Here where the willows warden
Only the sunny turf,

Here in the windy weather,
Here where the lake wind lulls,
Slowly on silver feather
Drift overhead the gulls.

O heart estranged of grieving
What is a sea-bird's wing?
What beauty past believing
Are you remembering?

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