Classic Poetry Series

David Herbert Lawrence

- 109 poems -

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David Herbert Lawrence (11 September 1885 – 2 March 1930)

David Herbert Lawrence, novelist, short-story writer, poet and essayist, was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England, in 1885. Though better known as a novelist, Lawrence's first-published works (in 1909) were poems, and his poetry, especially his evocations of the natural world, have since had a significant influence on many poets on both sides of the Atlantic. His early poems reflect the influence of Ezra Pound and Imagist movement, which reached its peak in the early teens of the twentieth century. When Pound attempted to draw Lawrence into his circle of writer-followers, however, Lawrence decided to pursue a more independent path.

He believed in writing poetry that was stark, immediate and true to the mysterious inner force which motivated it. Many of his best-loved poems treat the physical and inner life of plants and animals; others are bitterly satiric and express his outrage at the puritanism and hypocrisy of conventional Anglo-Saxon society. Lawrence was a rebellious and profoundly polemical writer with radical views, who regarded sex, the primitive subconscious, and nature as cures to what he considered the evils of modern industrialized society. Tremendously prolific, his work was often uneven in quality, and he was a continual source of controversy, often involved in widely-publicized censorship cases, most famously for his novel Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928). His collections of poetry include Look! We Have Come Through (1917), a collection of poems about his wife; Birds, Beasts, and Flowers (1923); and Pansies (1929), which was banned on publication in England.

Besides his troubles with the censors, Lawrence was persecuted as well during World War I, for the supposed pro-German sympathies of his wife, Frieda. As a consequence, the Lawrences left England and traveled restlessly to Italy, Germany, Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, the French Riviera, Mexico and the United States, unsuccessfully searching for a new homeland. In Taos, New Mexico, he became the center of a group of female admirers who considered themselves his disciples, and whose quarrels for his attention became a literary legend. A lifelong sufferer from tuberculosis, Lawrence died in 1930 in France, at the age of 44.

Views

Critic and admirer Terry Eagleton situates Lawrence on the radical right wing, as hostile to democracy, liberalism, socialism, and egalitarianism, though never actually embracing fascism. Some of Lawrence's beliefs can be seen in his letters to Bertrand Russell around the year 1915, where he voices his opposition to enfranchising the working class, his hostility to the burgeoning labour movements, and disparages the French Revolution, referring to

"Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" as the "three-fanged serpent." Rather than a republic, Lawrence called for an absolute Dictator and equivalent Dictatrix to lord over the lower peoples.

Lawrence continued throughout his life to develop his highly personal philosophy. His unpublished introduction to Sons and Lovers established the duality central to much of his fiction. This is done with reference to the Holy Trinity. As his philosophy develops, Lawrence moves away from more direct Christian analogies and instead touches upon Mysticism, Buddhism, and Pagan theologies. In some respects, Lawrence was a forerunner of the growing interest in the occult that occurred in the 20th century.

Poetry

Although best known for his novels, Lawrence wrote almost 800 poems, most of them relatively short. His first poems were written in 1904 and two of his poems, Dreams Old and Dreams Nascent, were among his earliest published works in The English Review. His early works clearly place him in the school of Georgian poets, a group not only named after the reigning monarch but also to the romantic poets of the previous Georgian period whose work they were trying to emulate. What typified the entire movement, and Lawrence's poems of the time, were well-worn poetic tropes and deliberately archaic language. Many of these poems displayed what John Ruskin referred to as the pathetic fallacy, the tendency to ascribe human emotions to animals and even inanimate objects.

Just as the First World War dramatically changed the work of many of the poets who saw service in the trenches, Lawrence's own work saw a dramatic change, during his years in Cornwall. During this time, he wrote free verse influenced by Walt Whitman. He set forth his manifesto for much of his later verse in the introduction to New Poems. "We can get rid of the stereotyped movements and the old hackneyed associations of sound or sense. We can break down those artificial conduits and canals through which we do so love to force our utterance. We can break the stiff neck of habit...But we cannot positively prescribe any motion, any rhythm."

Lawrence rewrote many of his novels several times to perfect them and similarly he returned to some of his early poems when they were collected in 1928. This was in part to fictionalise them, but also to remove some of the artifice of his first works. As he put in himself: "A young man is afraid of his demon and puts his hand over the demon's mouth sometimes and speaks for him." His best known poems are probably those dealing with nature such as those in Birds Beasts and Flowers and Tortoises. Snake, one of his most frequently anthologised, displays some of his most frequent concerns; those of man's modern distance from nature and subtle hints at religious themes.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob tree

I came down the steps with my pitcher

And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

(Excerpt, "Snake")

Look! We have come through! is his other work from the period of the end of the war and it reveals another important element common to much of his writings; his inclination to lay himself bare in his writings. Although Lawrence could be regarded as a writer of love poems, his usually deal in the less romantic aspects of love such as sexual frustration or the sex act itself. Ezra Pound in his Literary Essays complained of Lawrence's interest in his own "disagreeable sensations" but praised him for his "low-life narrative." This is a reference to Lawrence's dialect poems akin to the Scots poems of Robert Burns, in which he reproduced the language and concerns of the people of Nottinghamshire from his youth.

Tha thought tha wanted ter be rid o' me.

'Appen tha did, an' a'.

Tha thought tha wanted ter marry an' se

If ter couldna be master an' th' woman's boss,

Tha'd need a woman different from me,

An' tha knowed it; ay, yet tha comes across

Ter say goodbye! an' a'.

(Excerpt, "The Drained Cup")

Although Lawrence's works after his Georgian period are clearly in the modernist tradition, they were often very different to many other modernist writers, such as Pound. Modernist works were often austere in which every word was carefully worked on and hard-fought for. Lawrence felt all poems had to be personal sentiments and that spontaneity was vital for any work. He called one collection of poems Pansies, partly for the simple ephemeral nature of the verse but also as a pun on the French word panser, to dress or bandage a wound. "The Noble Englishman" and "Don't Look at Me" were removed from the official edition of Pansies on the grounds of obscenity, which he felt wounded by. Even though he lived most of the last ten years of his life abroad, his thoughts were often still on England. Published in 1930, just eleven days after his death, his last work Nettles was a series of bitter, nettling but often wry attacks on the moral climate of England.

O the stale old dogs who pretend to guard

the morals of the masses,

how smelly they make the great back-yard

wetting after everyone that passes.

(Excerpt, "The Young and Their Moral Guardians")

Two notebooks of Lawrence's unprinted verse were posthumously published as Last Poems and More Pansies. These contain two of Lawrence's most famous poems about death, Bavarian Gentians and The Ship of Death.

Works:

Novels

The White Peacock (1911), edited by Andrew Robertson, Cambridge University Press, 1983
The Trespasser (1912), edited by Elizabeth Mansfield, Cambridge University Press,1981
Sons and Lovers (1913), edited by Helen Baron and Carl Baron, Cambridge University Press, 1992
The Rainbow (1915), edited by Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Cambridge University Press, 1989
Women in Love (1920), edited by David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen, Cambridge University Press, 1987
The Lost Girl (1920), edited by John Worthen, Cambridge University Press, 1981
Aaron's Rod (1922) edited by Mara Kalnins, Cambridge University Press, 1988
Kangaroo (1923) edited by Bruce Steele, Cambridge University Press, 1994
The Boy in the Bush (1924), edited by Paul Eggert, Cambridge University Press, 1990
The Plumed Serpent (1926), edited by L. D. Clark, Cambridge University Press, 1987
Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928), edited by Michael Squires, Cambridge

University Press, 1993
The Escaped Cock (1929), later re-published as The Man Who Died
The Virgin and the Gypsy (1930)

Short stories collections

The Prussian Officer and Other Stories (1914), edited by John Worthen, Cambridge University Press, 1983
England, My England and Other Stories (1922), edited by Bruce Steele, Cambridge University Press, 1990
The Horse Dealer's Daughter (1922)
The Fox, The Captain's Doll, The Ladybird (1923), edited by Dieter Mehl, Cambridge University Press, 1992
St Mawr and other stories (1925), edited by Brian Finney, Cambridge University Press, 1983
The Woman who Rode Away and other stories (1928) edited by Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn, Cambridge University Press, 1995
The Rocking-Horse Winner (1926)
The Virgin and the Gipsy and Other Stories (1930), edited by Michael Herbert, Bethan Jones, Lindeth Vasey, Cambridge University Press, 2006 (forthcoming)
Love Among the Haystacks and other stories (1930), edited by John Worthen, Cambridge University Press, 1987
Collected Stories (1994) – Everyman's Library

Collected letters

The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume I, September 1901 – May 1913, ed. James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1979
The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume II, June 1913 – October 1916, ed. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1981
The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume III, October 1916 – June 1921, ed. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson, Cambridge University Press, 1984
The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume IV, June 1921 – March 1924 , ed. Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield, Cambridge University Press, 1987
The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume V, March 1924 – March 1927, ed. James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey, Cambridge University Press, 1989
The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume VI, March 1927 – November 1928 , ed. James T. Boulton and Margaret Boulton with Gerald M. Lacy, Cambridge University Press, 1991
The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume VII, November 1928 – February 1930, ed. Keith Sagar and James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1993
The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, with index, Volume VIII, ed. James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 2001
The Selected Letters of D H Lawrence, Compiled and edited by James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1997

Poetry collections

Love Poems and others (1913)
Amores (1916)
Look! We have come through! (1917)
New Poems (1918)
Bay: a book of poems (1919)
Tortoises (1921)
Birds, Beasts and Flowers (1923)
The Collected Poems of D H Lawrence (1928)
Pansies (1929)
Nettles (1930)
Last Poems (1932)
Fire and other poems (1940)
The Complete Poems of D H Lawrence (1964), ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts
The White Horse (1964)
D. H. Lawrence: Selected Poems (1972), ed. Keith Sagar.

Plays

The Daughter-in-Law (1912)
The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd (1914)
Touch and Go (1920)
David (1926)
The Fight for Barbara (1933)
A Collier's Friday Night (1934)
The Married Man (1940)
The Merry-Go-Round (1941)
The Complete Plays of D H Lawrence (1965)
The Plays, edited by Hans-Wilhelm Schwarze and John Worthen, Cambridge University Press, 1999

Non-fiction books and pamphlets

Study of Thomas Hardy and other essays (1914), edited by Bruce Steele, Cambridge University Press, 1985, Literary criticism and metaphysics
Movements in European History (1921), edited by Philip Crumpton, Cambridge University Press, 1989, Originally published under the name of Lawrence H. Davison
Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious (1921/1922), edited by Bruce Steele, Cambridge University Press, 2004
Studies in Classic American Literature (1923), edited by Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen, Cambridge University Press, 2003
Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and other essays (1925), edited by Michael Herbert, Cambridge University Press, 1988
A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover (1929) – Lawrence wrote this pamphlet to explain his novel
Apocalypse and the writings on Revelation (1931) edited by Mara Kalnins, Cambridge University Press, 1980
Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence (1936)
Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished and Other Prose Works by D. H. Lawrence (1968)
Introductions and Reviews, edited by N. H. Reeve and John Worthen, Cambridge University Press, 2004
Late Essays and Articles, edited by James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 2004
Selected Letters, Oneworld Classics, 2008. Edited by James T. Boulton

Travel books

Twilight in Italy and Other Essays (1916), edited by Paul Eggert, Cambridge University Press, 1994
Sea and Sardinia (1921), edited by Mara Kalnins, Cambridge University Press, 1997
Mornings in Mexico (1927), edited by Virginia Crosswhite Hyde, Cambridge University Press, 2009
Sketches of Etruscan Places and other Italian essays (1932), edited by Simonetta de Filippis, Cambridge University Press, 1992

Works translated by Lawrence

Lev Isaakovich Shestov All Things are Possible (1920)
Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin The Gentleman from San Francisco (1922), tr. with S. S. Koteliansky
Giovanni Verga Mastro-Don Gesualdo (1923)
Giovanni Verga Little Novels of Sicily (1925)
Giovanni Verga Cavalleria Rusticana and other stories (1928)
Antonio Francesco Grazzini The Story of Doctor Manente (1929)
Manuscripts and early drafts of published novels and other works

Paul Morel (1911–12), edited by Helen Baron, Cambridge University Press, 2003, an early manuscript version of Sons and Lovers
The First Women in Love (1916–17) edited by John Worthen and Lindeth Vasey, Cambridge University Press, 1998

Mr Noon, (unfinished novel) Parts I and II, edited by Lindeth Vasey, Cambridge University Press, 1984
The Symbolic Meaning: The Uncollected Versions of Studies in Classic American Literature, edited by Armin Arnold, Centaur Press, 1962
Quetzalcoatl (1925), edited by Louis L Martz, W W Norton Edition, 1998, ISBN 0-8112-1385-4, Early draft of The Plumed Serpent
The First and Second Lady Chatterley novels, edited by Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn, Cambridge University Press, 1999

Paintings

The Paintings of D. H. Lawrence,London: Mandrake Press, 1929
D. H. Lawrence's Paintings, ed. Keith Sagar, London: Chaucer Press, 2003
The Collected Art Works of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Tetsuji Kohno, Tokyo: Sogensha, 2004

A Baby Asleep after Pain

As a drenched, drowned bee
Hangs numb and heavy from a bending flower,
 So clings to me
My baby, her brown hair brushed with wet tears
 And laid against her cheek;
Her soft white legs hanging heavily over my arm
Swinging heavily to my movements as I walk.
 My sleeping baby hangs upon my life,
Like a burden she hangs on me.
 She has always seemed so light,
But now she is wet with tears and numb with pain
Even her floating hair sinks heavily,
 Reaching downwards;
As the wings of a drenched, drowned bee
 Are a heaviness, and a weariness.

David Herbert Lawrence

A Baby Running Barefoot

When the bare feet of the baby beat across the grass
The little white feet nod like white flowers in the wind,
They poise and run like ripples lapping across the water;
And the sight of their white play among the grass
Is like a little robin’s song, winsome,
Or as two white butterflies settle in the cup of one flower
For a moment, then away with a flutter of wings.

I long for the baby to wander hither to me
Like a wind-shadow wandering over the water,
So that she can stand on my knee
With her little bare feet in my hands,
Cool like syringa buds,
Firm and silken like pink young peony flowers.

David Herbert Lawrence

A Love Song

Reject me not if I should say to you
I do forget the sounding of your voice,
I do forget your eyes that searching through
The mists perceive our marriage, and rejoice.

Yet, when the apple-blossom opens wide
Under the pallid moonlight's fingering,
I see your blanched face at my breast, and hide
My eyes from diligent work, malingering.

Ah, then, upon my bedroom I do draw
The blind to hide the garden, where the moon
Enjoys the open blossoms as they straw
Their beauty for his taking, boon for boon.

And I do lift my aching arms to you,
And I do lift my anguished, avid breast,
And I do weep for very pain of you,
And fling myself at the doors of sleep, for rest.

And I do toss through the troubled night for you,
Dreaming your yielded mouth is given to mine,
Feeling your strong breast carry me on into
The peace where sleep is stronger even than wine.

David Herbert Lawrence

A Passing Bell

Mournfully to and fro, to and fro the trees are waving;
What did you say, my dear?
The rain-bruised leaves are suddenly shaken, as a child
Asleep still shakes in the clutch of a sob—
Yes, my love, I hear.

One lonely bell, one only, the storm-tossed afternoon is braving,
Why not let it ring?
The roses lean down when they hear it, the tender, mild
Flowers of the bleeding-heart fall to the throb—
It is such a little thing!

A wet bird walks on the lawn, call to the boy to come and look,
Yes, it is over now.
Call to him out of the silence, call him to see
The starling shaking its head as it walks in the grass—
Ah, who knows how?

He cannot see it, I can never show it him, how it shook—
Don’t disturb him, darling.
—Its head as it walked: I can never call him to me,
Never, he is not, whatever shall come to pass.
No, look at the wet starling.

David Herbert Lawrence

A Sane Revolution

If you make a revolution, make it for fun,
don't make it in ghastly seriousness,
don't do it in deadly earnest,
do it for fun.

Don't do it because you hate people,
do it just to spit in their eye.

Don't do it for the money,
do it and be damned to the money.

Don't do it for equality,
do it because we've got too much equality
and it would be fun to upset the apple-cart
and see which way the apples would go a-rolling.

Don't do it for the working classes.
Do it so that we can all of us be little aristocracies on our own
and kick our heels like jolly escaped asses.

Don't do it, anyhow, for international Labour.
Labour is the one thing a man has had too much of.
Let's abolish labour, let's have done with labouring!
Work can be fun, and men can enjoy it; then it's not labour.
Let's have it so! Let's make a revolution for fun!

David Herbert Lawrence

A Spiritual Woman

Close your eyes, my love, let me make you blind;
    They have taught you to see
Only a mean arithmetic on the face of things,
A cunning algebra in the faces of men,
    And God like geometry
Completing his circles, and working cleverly.

I'll kiss you over the eyes till I kiss you blind;
    If I can—if any one could.
Then perhaps in the dark you'll have got what you want to find.
You've discovered so many bits, with your clever eyes,
    And I'm a kaleidoscope
That you shake and shake, and yet it won't come to your mind.
Now stop carping at me.—But God, how I hate you!
    Do you fear I shall swindle you?
Do you think if you take me as I am, that that will abate you
Somehow?—so sad, so intrinsic, so spiritual, yet so cautious, you
Must have me all in your will and your consciousness—
    I hate you.

David Herbert Lawrence

A Winter's Tale

Yesterday the fields were only grey with scattered snow,
And now the longest grass-leaves hardly emerge;
Yet her deep footsteps mark the snow, and go
On towards the pines at the hills' white verge.

I cannot see her, since the mist's white scarf
Obscures the dark wood and the dull orange sky;
But she's waiting, I know, impatient and cold, half
Sobs struggling into her frosty sigh.

Why does she come so promptly, when she must know
That she's only the nearer to the inevitable farewell;
The hill is steep, on the snow my steps are slow—
Why does she come, when she knows what I have to tell?

David Herbert Lawrence

A Youth Mowing

There are four men mowing down by the Isar;
I can hear the swish of the scythe-strokes, four
Sharp breaths taken: yea, and I
Am sorry for what's in store.

The first man out of the four that's mowing
Is mine, I claim him once and for all;
Though it's sorry I am, on his young feet, knowing
None of the trouble he's led to stall.

As he sees me bringing the dinner, he lifts
His head as proud as a deer that looks
Shoulder-deep out of the corn; and wipes
His scythe-blade bright, unhooks

The scythe-stone and over the stubble to me.
Lad, thou hast gotten a child in me,
Laddie, a man thou'lt ha'e to be,
Yea, though I'm sorry for thee.

David Herbert Lawrence

After Many Days

I wonder if with you, as it is with me,
If under your slipping words, that easily flow
About you as a garment, easily,
   Your violent heart beats to and fro!

Long have I waited, never once confessed,
Even to myself, how bitter the separation;
Now, being come again, how make the best
   Reparation?

If I could cast this clothing off from me,
If I could lift my naked self to you,
Of if only you would repulse me, a wound would be
   Good; it would let the ache come through.

But that you hold me still so kindly cold
Aloof my floating heart will not allow;
Yea, but I loathe you that you should withhold
   Your pleasure now.

David Herbert Lawrence

Anxiety

The hoar-frost crumbles in the sun,
 The crisping steam of a train
Melts in the air, while two black birds
 Sweep past the window again.

Along the vacant road, a red
 Bicycle approaches; I wait
In a thaw of anxiety, for the boy
 To leap down at our gate.

He has passed us by; but is it
 Relief that starts in my breast?
Or a deeper bruise of knowing that still
 She has no rest.

David Herbert Lawrence

At the Window

The pine-trees bend to listen to the autumn wind as it mutters
Something which sets the black poplars ashake with hysterical laughter;
While slowly the house of day is closing its eastern shutters.

Further down the valley the clustered tombstones recede,
Winding about their dimness the mist’s grey cerements, after
The street lamps in the darkness have suddenly started to bleed.

The leaves fly over the window and utter a word as they pass
To the face that leans from the darkness, intent, with two dark-filled eyes
That watch for ever earnestly from behind the window glass.

David Herbert Lawrence

Baby Tortoise

You know what it is to be born alone,
Baby tortoise!
The first day to heave your feet little by little from the shell,
Not yet awake,
And remain lapsed on earth,
Not quite alive.

A tiny, fragile, half-animate bean.

To open your tiny beak-mouth, that looks as if it would never open,

Like some iron door;
To lift the upper hawk-beak from the lower base
And reach your skinny little neck
And take your first bite at some dim bit of herbage,
Alone, small insect,
Tiny bright-eye,
Slow one.

To take your first solitary bite
And move on your slow, solitary hunt.
Your bright, dark little eye,
Your eye of a dark disturbed night,
Under its slow lid, tiny baby tortoise,
So indomitable.
No one ever heard you complain.

You draw your head forward, slowly, from your little wimple

And set forward, slow-dragging, on your four-pinned toes, Rowing slowly forward.
Whither away, small bird?
Rather like a baby working its limbs,
Except that you make slow, ageless progress
And a baby makes none.

The touch of sun excites you,
And the long ages, and the lingering chill
Make you pause to yawn,
Opening your impervious mouth,
Suddenly beak-shaped, and very wide, like some suddenly gaping pincers;
Soft red tongue, and hard thin gums,
Then close the wedge of your little mountain front,
Your face, baby tortoise.

Do you wonder at the world, as slowly you turn your head in its wimple
And look with laconic, black eyes?
Or is sleep coming over you again,
The non-life?

You are so hard to wake.

Are you able to wonder?

Or is it just your indomitable will and pride of the first life
Looking round
And slowly pitching itself against the inertia
Which had seemed invincible?

The vast inanimate,
And the fine brilliance of your so tiny eye,
Challenger.

Nay, tiny shell-bird,
What a huge vast inanimate it is, that you must row against,
What an incalculable inertia.

Challenger,
Little Ulysses, fore-runner,
No bigger than my thumb-nail,
Buon viaggio.

All animate creation on your shoulder,
Set forth, little Titan, under your battle-shield.

The ponderous, preponderate,
Inanimate universe;
And you are slowly moving, pioneer, you alone.

How vivid your travelling seems now, in the troubled sunshine,
Stoic, Ulyssean atom;
Suddenly hasty, reckless, on high toes.

Voiceless little bird,
Resting your head half out of your wimple
In the slow dignity of your eternal pause.
Alone, with no sense of being alone,
And hence six times more solitary;
Fulfilled of the slow passion of pitching through immemorial ages
Your little round house in the midst of chaos.

Over the garden earth,
Small bird,
Over the edge of all things.

Traveller,
With your tail tucked a little on one side
Like a gentleman in a long-skirted coat.

All life carried on your shoulder,
Invincible fore-runner.

David Herbert Lawrence

Ballad of Another Ophelia

Oh the green glimmer of apples in the orchard,
Lamps in a wash of rain!
Oh the wet walk of my brown hen through the stackyard,
Oh tears on the window pane!

Nothing now will ripen the bright green apples,
Full of disappointment and of rain,
Brackish they will taste, of tears, when the yellow dapples
Of autumn tell the withered tale again.

All round the yard it is cluck, my brown hen,
Cluck, and the rain-wet wings,
Cluck, my marigold bird, and again
Cluck for your yellow darlings.

For the grey rat found the gold thirteen
Huddled away in the dark,
Flutter for a moment, oh the beast is quick and keen,
Extinct one yellow-fluffy spark.

Once I had a lover bright like running water,
Once his face was laughing like the sky;
Open like the sky looking down in all its laughter
On the buttercups, and the buttercups was I.

What, then, is there hidden in the skirts of all the blossom?
What is peeping from your wings, oh mother hen?
'Tis the sun who asks the question, in a lovely haste for wisdom;
What a lovely haste for wisdom is in men!

Yea, but it is cruel when undressed is all the blossom,
And her shift is lying white upon the floor,
That a grey one, like a shadow, like a rat, a thief, a rain-storm,
Creeps upon her then and gathers in his store.

Oh the grey garner that is full of half-grown apples,
Oh the golden sparkles laid extinct!
And oh, behind the cloud-sheaves, like yellow autumn dapples,
Did you see the wicked sun that winked!

David Herbert Lawrence

Bat

At evening, sitting on this terrace,
When the sun from the west, beyond Pisa, beyond the mountains of Carrara
Departs, and the world is taken by surprise ...

When the tired flower of Florence is in gloom beneath the glowing
Brown hills surrounding ...

When under the arches of the Ponte Vecchio
A green light enters against stream, flush from the west,
Against the current of obscure Arno ...

Look up, and you see things flying
Between the day and the night;
Swallows with spools of dark thread sewing the shadows together.

A circle swoop, and a quick parabola under the bridge arches
Where light pushes through;
A sudden turning upon itself of a thing in the air.
A dip to the water.

And you think:
'The swallows are flying so late!'

Swallows?

Dark air-life looping
Yet missing the pure loop ...
A twitch, a twitter, an elastic shudder in flight
And serrated wings against the sky,
Like a glove, a black glove thrown up at the light,
And falling back.

Never swallows!
Bats!
The swallows are gone.

At a wavering instant the swallows gave way to bats
By the Ponte Vecchio ...
Changing guard.

Bats, and an uneasy creeping in one's scalp
As the bats swoop overhead!
Flying madly.

Pipistrello!
Black piper on an infinitesimal pipe.
Little lumps that fly in air and have voices indefinite, wildly vindictive;

Wings like bits of umbrella.

Bats!

Creatures that hang themselves up like an old rag, to sleep;
And disgustingly upside down.

Hanging upside down like rows of disgusting old rags
And grinning in their sleep.
Bats!

Not for me!

David Herbert Lawrence

Bavarian Gentians

Not every man has gentians in his house
in Soft September, at slow, Sad Michaelmas.
Bavarian gentians, big and dark, only dark
darkening the daytime torchlike with the smoking blueness of Pluto's gloom,
ribbed and torchlike, with their blaze of darkness spread blue
down flattening into points, flattened under the sweep of white day
torch-flower of the blue-smoking darkness, Pluto's dark-blue daze,
black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue,
giving off darkness, blue darkness, as Demeter's pale lamps give off light,
lead me then, lead me the way.
Reach me a gentian, give me a torch!
Let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of a flower
down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened on blueness
down the way Persephone goes, just now, in first-frosted September
to the sightless realm where darkness is married to dark
and Persephone herself is but a voice, as a bride
a gloom invisible enfolded in the deeper dark
of the arms of Pluto as he ravishes her once again
and pierces her once more with his passion of the utter dark
among the splendour of black-blue torches, shedding
fathomless darkness on the nuptials.

Bavarian gentians, tall and dark, but dark
darkening the daytime torch-like with the smoking blueness of Pluto's gloom,
ribbed hellish flowers erect, with their blaze of darkness spread blue,
blown flat into points, by the heavy white draught of the day.

David Herbert Lawrence

Beautiful Old Age

It ought to be lovely to be old
to be full of the peace that comes of experience
and wrinkled ripe fulfilment.

The wrinkled smile of completeness that follows a life
lived undaunted and unsoured with accepted lies
they would ripen like apples, and be scented like pippins
in their old age.

Soothing, old people should be, like apples
when one is tired of love.
Fragrant like yellowing leaves, and dim with the soft
stillness and satisfaction of autumn.

And a girl should say:
It must be wonderful to live and grow old.
Look at my mother, how rich and still she is! -

And a young man should think: By Jove
my father has faced all weathers, but it's been a life!

David Herbert Lawrence

Bei Hennef

The little river twittering in the twilght,
The wan, wandering look of the pale sky.
This is almost bliss.

And everything shut up and gone to sleep,
All the troubles and anxieties and pain
Gone under the twilight.

Only the twilight now, and the soft 'Sh! ' of the river
That will last for ever.

And at last I know my love for you is here;
I can see it all, it is whole like the twilight,
It is large, so large, I could not see it before,
Because of the little lights and flickers and interruptions,
Troubles, anxieties and pains.

You are the call and I am the answer.
You are the wish, and I the fufilment.
You are the night, and I the day.
What else? It is perfect enough.
It is perfectly complete,
You and I,
What more--?
Strange how we suffer in spite of this.

David Herbert Lawrence

Belief

Forever nameless
Forever unknwon
Forever unconceived
Forever unrepresented
yet forever felt in the soul.

David Herbert Lawrence

Birdcage Walk

When the wind blows her veil
 And uncovers her laughter
I cease, I turn pale.
When the wind blows her veil
From the woes I bewail
 Of love and hereafter:
When the wind blows her veil
I cease, I turn pale.

David Herbert Lawrence

Blue

The earth again like a ship steams out of the dark sea over
The edge of the blue, and the sun stands up to see us glide
Slowly into another day; slowly the rover
Vessel of darkness takes the rising tide.

I, on the deck, am startled by this dawn confronting
Me who am issued amazed from the darkness, stripped
And quailing here in the sunshine, delivered from haunting
The night unsounded whereon our days are shipped.

Feeling myself undawning, the day's light playing upon me,
I who am substance of shadow, I all compact
Of the stuff of the night, finding myself all wrongly
Among the crowds of things in the sunshine jostled and racked.

I with the night on my lips, I sigh with the silence of death;
And what do I care though the very stones should cry me unreal, though the clouds
Shine in conceit of substance upon me, who am less than the rain.
Do I know the darkness within them? What are they but shrouds?

The clouds go down the sky with a wealthy ease
Casting a shadow of scorn upon me for my share in death; but I
Hold my own in the midst of them, darkling, defy
The whole of the day to extinguish the shadow I lift on the breeze.

Yea, though the very clouds have vantage over me,
Enjoying their glancing flight, though my love is dead,
I still am not homeless here, I've a tent by day
Of darkness where she sleeps on her perfect bed.

And I know the host, the minute sparkling of darkness
Which vibrates untouched and virile through the grandeur of night,
But which, when dawn crows challenge, assaulting the vivid motes
Of living darkness, bursts fretfully, and is bright:

Runs like a fretted arc-lamp into light,
Stirred by conflict to shining, which else
Were dark and whole with the night.

Runs to a fret of speed like a racing wheel,
Which else were aslumber along with the whole
Of the dark, swinging rhythmic instead of a-reel.

Is chafed to anger, bursts into rage like thunder;
Which else were a silent grasp that held the heavens
Arrested, beating thick with wonder.

Leaps like a fountain of blue sparks leaping
In a jet from out of obscurity,
Which erst was darkness sleeping.

Runs into streams of bright blue drops,

Water and stones and stars, and myriads
Of twin-blue eyes, and crops

Of floury grain, and all the hosts of day,
All lovely hosts of ripples caused by fretting
The Darkness into play.

David Herbert Lawrence

Brooding Grief

A yellow leaf from the darkness
Hops like a frog before me.
Why should I start and stand still?

I was watching the woman that bore me
Stretched in the brindled darkness
Of the sick-room, rigid with will
To die: and the quick leaf tore me
Back to this rainy swill
Of leaves and lamps and traffic mingled before me.

David Herbert Lawrence

Brother and Sister

The shorn moon trembling indistinct on her path,
Frail as a scar upon the pale blue sky,
Draws towards the downward slope: some sorrow hath
Worn her down to the quick, so she faintly fares
Along her foot-searched way without knowing why
She creeps persistent down the sky's long stairs.

Some day they see, though I have never seen,
The dead moon heaped within the new moon's arms;
For surely the fragile, fine young thing had been
Too heavily burdened to mount the heavens so.
But my heart stands still, as a new, strong dread alarms
Me; might a young girl be heaped with such shadow of woe?

Since Death from the mother moon has pared us down to the quick,
And cast us forth like shorn, thin moons, to travel
An uncharted way among the myriad thick
Strewn stars of silent people, and luminous litter
Of lives which sorrows like mischievous dark mice chavel
To nought, diminishing each star's glitter,

Since Death has delivered us utterly, naked and white,
Since the month of childhood is over, and we stand alone,
Since the beloved, faded moon that set us alight
Is delivered from us and pays no heed though we moan
In sorrow, since we stand in bewilderment, strange
And fearful to sally forth down the sky's long range.

We may not cry to her still to sustain us here,
We may not hold her shadow back from the dark.
Oh, let us here forget, let us take the sheer
Unknown that lies before us, bearing the ark
Of the covenant onwards where she cannot go.
Let us rise and leave her now, she will never know.

David Herbert Lawrence

Butterfly

Butterfly, the wind blows sea-ward,
    strong beyond the garden-wall!
Butterfly, why do you settle on my
    shoe, and sip the dirt on my shoe,
Lifting your veined wings, lifting them?
    big white butterfly!

Already it is October, and the wind
    blows strong to the sea
from the hills where snow must have
    fallen, the wind is polished with
        snow.
Here in the garden, with red
    geraniums, it is warm, it is warm
but the wind blows strong to sea-ward,
    white butterfly, content on my shoe!

Will you go, will you go from my warm
    house?
Will you climb on your big soft wings,
    black-dotted,
as up an invisible rainbow, an arch
till the wind slides you sheer from the
    arch-crest
and in a strange level fluttering you go
    out to sea-ward, white speck!

Anonymous submission.

David Herbert Lawrence

Conceit

It is conceit that kills us
and makes us cowards instead of gods.

Under the great Command: Know thy self, and that thou art mortal!
we have become fatally self-conscious, fatally self-important, fatally entangled in the Laocoön coils of our conceit.

Now we have to admit we can't know ourselves, we can only know about ourselves.
And I am not interested to know about myself any more,
I only entangle myself in the knowing.

Now let me be myself,
now let me be myself, and flicker forth,
now let me be myself, in the being, one of the gods.

David Herbert Lawrence

Conundrums

Tell me a word
that you've often heard,
yet it makes you squint
when you see it in print!

Tell me a thing
that you've often seen
yet if put in a book
it makes you turn green!

Tell me a thing
that you often do,
when described in a story
shocks you through and through!

Tell me what's wrong
with words or with you
that you don't mind the thing
yet the name is taboo.

David Herbert Lawrence

Craving for Spring

I wish it were spring in the world.

Let it be spring!
Come, bubbling, surging tide of sap!
Come, rush of creation!
Come, life! surge through this mass of mortification!
Come, sweep away these exquisite, ghastly first-flowers,
which are rather last-flowers!
Come, thaw down their cool portentousness, dissolve them:
snowdrops, straight, death-veined exhalations of white and purple crocuses,
flowers of the penumbra, issue of corruption, nourished in mortification,
jets of exquisite finality;
Come, spring, make havoc of them!

I trample on the snowdrops, it gives me pleasure to tread down the jonquils,
to destroy the chill Lent lilies;
for I am sick of them, their faint-bloodedness,
slow-blooded, icy-fleshed, portentous.

I want the fine, kindling wine-sap of spring,
gold, and of inconceivably fine, quintessential brightness,
rare almost as beams, yet overwhelmingly potent,
strong like the greatest force of world-balancing.

This is the same that picks up the harvest of wheat
and rocks it, tons of grain, on the ripening wind;
the same that dangles the globe-shaped pleiads of fruit
temptingly in mid-air, between a playful thumb and finger;
oh, and suddenly, from out of nowhere, whirls the pear-bloom,
upon us, and apple- and almond- and apricot- and quince-blossom,
storms and cumulus clouds of all imaginable blossom
about our bewildered faces,
though we do not worship.

I wish it were spring
cunningly blowing on the fallen sparks, odds and ends of the old, scattered fire,
and kindling shapely little conflagrations
curious long-legged foals, and wide-eared calves, and naked sparrow-bubs.

I wish that spring
would start the thundering traffic of feet
new feet on the earth, beating with impatience.

I wish it were spring, thundering
delicate, tender spring.
I wish these brittle, frost-lovely flowers of passionate, mysterious corruption
were not yet to come still more from the still-flickering discontent.

Oh, in the spring, the bluebell bows him down for very exuberance,
exulting with secret warm excess,
bowed down with his inner magnificence!

Oh, yes, the gush of spring is strong enough
to toss the globe of earth like a ball on a water-jet
dancing sportfully;
as you see a tiny celluloid ball tossing on a squirt of water
for men to shoot at, penny-a-time, in a booth at a fair.

The gush of spring is strong enough
to play with the globe of earth like a ball on a fountain;
At the same time it opens the tiny hands of the hazel
with such infinite patience.
The power of the rising, golden, all-creative sap could take the earth
and heave it off among the stars, into the invisible;
the same sets the throstle at sunset on a bough
singing against the blackbird;
comes out in the hesitating tremor of the primrose,
and betrays its candour in the round white strawberry flower,
is dignified in the foxglove, like a Red-Indian brave.

Ah come, come quickly, spring!
come and lift us towards our culmination, we myriads;
we who have never flowered, like patient cactuses.
Come and lift us to our end, to blossom, bring us to our summer
we who are winter-weary in the winter of the of the world.
Come making the chaffinch nests hollow and cosy,
come and soften the willow buds till they are puffed and furred,
then blow them over with gold.
Coma and cajole the gawky colt’s-foot flowers.

Come quickly, and vindicate us.
against too much death.
Come quickly, and stir the rotten globe of the world from within,
burst it with germination, with world anew.
Come now, to us, your adherents, who cannot flower from the ice.
All the world gleams with the lilies of death the Unconquerable,
but come, give us our turn.
Enough of the virgins and lilies, of passionate, suffocating perfume of corruption,
no more narcissus perfume, lily harlots, the blades of sensation
piercing the flesh to blossom of death.
Have done, have done with this shuddering, delicious business
of thrilling ruin in the flesh, of pungent passion, of rare, death-edged ecstasy.
Give us our turn, give us a chance, let our hour strike,
O soon, soon!
Let the darkness turn violet with rich dawn.
Let the darkness be warmed, warmed through to a ruddy violet,
incipient purpling towards summer in the world of the heart of man.

Are the violets already here!
Show me! I tremble so much to hear it, that even now
on the threshold of spring, I fear I shall die.
Show me the violets that are out.

Oh, if it be true, and the living darkness of the blood of man is purpling with violets,

if the violets are coming out from under the rack of men, winter-rotten and fallen,
we shall have spring.
Pray not to die on this Pisgah blossoming with violets.
Pray to live through.
If you catch a whiff of violets from the darkness of the shadow of man
it will be spring in the world,
it will be spring in the world of the living;
wonderment organising itself, heralding itself with the violets,
stirring of new seasons.

Ah, do not let me die on the brink of such anticipation!
Worse, let me not deceive myself.

David Herbert Lawrence

Cruelty and Love

What large, dark hands are those at the window
Lifted, grasping in the yellow light
Which makes its way through the curtain web
At my heart to-night?

Ah, only the leaves! So leave me at rest,
In the west I see a redness come
Over the evening's burning breast --
For now the pain is numb.

The woodbine creeps abroad
Calling low to her lover:
The sunlit flirt who all the day
Has poised above her lips in play
And stolen kisses, shallow and gay
Of dalliance, now has gone away
-- She woos the moth with her sweet, low word,
And when above her his broad wings hover
Then her bright breast she will uncover
And yeild her honey-drop to her lover.

Into the yellow, evening glow
Saunters a man from the farm below,
Leans, and looks in at the low-built shed
Where hangs the swallow's marriage bed.
The bird lies warm against the wall.
She glances quick her startled eyes
Towards him, then she turns away
Her small head, making warm display
Of red upon the throat. Her terrors sway
Her out of the nest's warm, busy ball,
Whose plaintive cries start up as she flies
In one blue stoop from out the sties
Into the evening's empty hall.

Oh, water-hen, beside the rushes
Hide your quaint, unfading blushes,
Still your quick tail, and lie as dead,
Till the distance covers his dangerous tread.

The rabbit presses back her ears,
Turns back her liquid, anguished eyes
And crouches low: then with wild spring
Spurts from the terror of the oncoming
To be choked back, the wire ring
Her frantic effort throttling:
Piteous brown ball of quivering fears!

Ah soon in his large, hard hands she dies,
And swings all loose to the swing of his walk.
Yet calm and kindly are his eyes
And ready to open in brown surprise

Should I not answer to his talk
Or should he my tears surmise.

I hear his hand on the latch, and rise from my chair
Watching the door open: he flashes bare
His strong teeth in a smile, and flashes his eyes
In a smile like triumph upon me; then careless-wise
He flihgs the rabbit soft on the table board
And comes towards me: ah, the uplifted sword
Of his hand against my bosom, and oh, the broad
Blade of his hand that raises my face to applaud
His coming: he raises up my face to him
And caresses my mouth with his fingers, smelling grim
Of the rabbit's fur! God, I am caught in a snare!
I know not what fine wire is round my throat,
I only know I let him finger there
My pulse of life, letting him nose like a stoat
Who sniffs with joy before he drinks the blood:
And down his mouth comes to my mouth, and down
His dark bright eyes descend like a fiery hood
Upon my mind: his mouth meets mine, and a flood
Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown
Within him, die, and find death good.

David Herbert Lawrence

Discipline

It is stormy, and raindrops cling like silver bees to the pane,
The thin sycamores in the playground are swinging with flattened leaves;
The heads of the boys move dimly through a yellow gloom that stains
The class; over them all the dark net of my discipline weaves.

It is no good, dear, gentleness and forbearance, I endured too long:
I have pushed my hands in the dark soil, under the flower of my soul
And the gentle leaves, and have felt where the roots are strong
Fixed in the darkness, grappling for the deep soil's little control.

And there is the dark, my darling, where the roots are entangled and fight
Each one for its hold on the oblivious darkness, I know that there
In the night where we first have being, before we rise on the light,
We are not brothers, my darling, we fight and we do not spare.

And in the original dark the roots cannot keep, cannot know
Any communion whatever, but they bind themselves on to the dark,
And drawing the darkness together, crush from it a twilight, a slow
Burning that breaks at last into leaves and a flower's bright spark.

I came to the boys with love, my dear, but they turned on me;
I came with gentleness, with my heart 'twixt my hands like a bowl,
Like a loving-cup, like a grail, but they spilt it triumphantly
And tried to break the vessel, and to violate my soul.

But what have I to do with the boys, deep down in my soul, my love?
I throw from out of the darkness my self like a flower into sight,
Like a flower from out of the night-time, I lift my face, and those
Who will may warm their hands at me, comfort this night.

But whosoever would pluck apart my flowering shall burn their hands,
So flowers are tender folk, and roots can only hide,
Yet my flowerings of love are a fire, and the scarlet brands
Of my love are roses to look at, but flames to chide.

But comfort me, my love, now the fires are low,
Now I am broken to earth like a winter destroyed, and all
Myself but a knowledge of roots, of roots in the dark that throw
A net on the undersoil, which lies passive beneath their thrall.

But comfort me, for henceforth my love is yours alone,
To you alone will I offer the bowl, to you will I give
My essence only, but love me, and I will atone
To you for my general loving, atone as long as I live.

David Herbert Lawrence

Discord in Childhood

Outside the house an ash-tree hung its terrible whips,
And at night when the wind arose, the lash of the tree
Shrieked and slashed the wind, as a ship's
Weird rigging in a storm shrieks hideously.

Within the house two voices arose in anger, a slender lash
Whistling delirious rage, and the dreadful sound
Of a thick lash booming and bruising, until it drowned
The other voice in a silence of blood, 'neath the noise of the ash.

David Herbert Lawrence

Dissolute

Many years have I still to burn, detained
Like a candle flame on this body; but I enshine
A darkness within me, a presence which sleeps contained
In my flame of living, her soul enfolded in mine.

And through these years, while I burn on the fuel of life,
What matter the stuff I lick up in my living flame,
Seeing I keep in the fire-core, inviolate,
A night where she dreams my dreams for me, ever the same.

David Herbert Lawrence

Dolor of Autumn

The acrid scents of autumn,
Reminiscent of slinking beasts, make me fear
Everything, tear-trembling stars of autumn
And the snore of the night in my ear.

For suddenly, flush-fallen,
All my life, in a rush
Of shedding away, has left me
Naked, exposed on the bush.

I, on the bush of the globe,
Like a newly-naked berry, shrink
Disclosed: but I also am prowling
As well in the scents that slink

Abroad: I in this naked berry
Of flesh that stands dismayed on the bush;
And I in the stealthy, brindled odours
Prowling about the lush

And acrid night of autumn;
My soul, along with the rout,
Rank and treacherous, prowling,
Disseminated out.

For the night, with a great breath intaken,
Has taken my spirit outside
Me, till I reel with disseminated consciousness,
Like a man who has died.

At the same time I stand exposed
Here on the bush of the globe,
A newly-naked berry of flesh
For the stars to probe.

David Herbert Lawrence

Dreams

All people dream, but not equally.
Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their mind,
Wake in the morning to find that it was vanity.

But the dreamers of the day are dangerous people,
For they dream their dreams with open eyes,
And make them come true.

David Herbert Lawrence

Dreams Nascent

My world is a painted fresco, where coloured shapes
Of old, ineffectual lives linger blurred and warm;
An endless tapestry the past has women drapes
The halls of my life, compelling my soul to conform.

The surface of dreams is broken,
The picture of the past is shaken and scattered.
Fluent, active figures of men pass along the railway, and I am woken
From the dreams that the distance flattered.

Along the railway, active figures of men.
They have a secret that stirs in their limbs as they move
Out of the distance, nearer, commanding my dreamy world.

Here in the subtle, rounded flesh
Beats the active ecstasy.
In the sudden lifting my eyes, it is clearer,
The fascination of the quick, restless Creator moving through the mesh
Of men, vibrating in ecstasy through the rounded flesh.

Oh my boys, bending over your books,
In you is trembling and fusing
The creation of a new-patterned dream, dream of a generation:
And I watch to see the Creator, the power that patterns the dream.

The old dreams are beautiful, beloved, soft-toned, and sure,
But the dream-stuff is molten and moving mysteriously,
Alluring my eyes; for I, am I not also dream-stuff,
Am I not quickening, diffusing myself in the pattern, shaping and shapen?

Here in my class is the answer for the great yearning:
Eyes where I can watch the swim of old dreams reflected on the molten metal of dreams,
Watch the stir which is rhythmic and moves them all as a heart-beat moves the blood,
Here in the swelling flesh the great activity working,
Visible there in the change of eyes and the mobile features.

Oh the great mystery and fascination of the unseen Shaper,
The power of the melting, fusing Force—heat, light, all in one,
Everything great and mysterious in one, swelling and shaping the dream in the flesh,
As it swells and shapes a bud into blossom.

Oh the terrible ecstasy of the consciousness that I am life!
Oh the miracle of the whole, the widespread, labouring concentration
Swelling mankind like one bud to bring forth the fruit of a dream,
Oh the terror of lifting the innermost I out of the sweep of the impulse of life,
And watching the great Thing labouring through the whole round flesh of the world;
And striving to catch a glimpse of the shape of the coming dream,
As it quickens within the labouring, white-hot metal,
Catch the scent and the colour of the coming dream,
Then to fall back exhausted into the unconscious, molten life!

David Herbert Lawrence

Dreams Old

I have opened the window to warm my hands on the sill
Where the sunlight soaks in the stone: the afternoon
Is full of dreams, my love, the boys are all still
In a wistful dream of Lorna Doone.

The clink of the shunting engines is sharp and fine,
Like savage music striking far off, and there
On the great, uplifted blue palace, lights stir and shine
Where the glass is domed in the blue, soft air.

There lies the world, my darling, full of wonder and wistfulness and strange
Recognition and greetings of half-acquaint things, as I greet the cloud
Of blue palace aloft there, among misty indefinite dreams that range
At the back of my life's horizon, where the dreamings of past lives crowd.

Over the nearness of Norwood Hill, through the mellow veil
Of the afternoon glows to me the old romance of David and Dora,
With the old, sweet, soothing tears, and laughter that shakes the sail
Of the ship of the soul over seas where dreamed dreams lure the unoceaned explorer.

All the bygone, hushèd years
Streaming back where the mist distils
Into forgetfulness: soft-sailing waters where fears
No longer shake, where the silk sail fills
With an unfelt breeze that ebbs over the seas, where the storm
Of living has passed, on and on
Through the coloured iridescence that swims in the warm
Wake of the tumult now spent and gone,
Drifts my boat, wistfully lapsing after
The mists of vanishing tears and the echo of laughter.

David Herbert Lawrence

Drunk

Too far away, oh love, I know,
To save me from this haunted road,
Whose lofty roses break and blow
On a night-sky bent with a load

Of lights: each solitary rose,
Each arc-lamp golden does expose
Ghost beyond ghost of a blossom, shows
Night blenched with a thousand snows.

Of hawthorn and of lilac trees,
White lilac; shows discoloured night
Dripping with all the golden lees
Laburnum gives back to light.

And shows the red of hawthorn set
On high to the purple heaven of night,
Like flags in blenched blood newly wet,
Blood shed in the noiseless fight.

Of life for love and love for life,
Of hunger for a little food,
Of kissing, lost for want of a wife
Long ago, long ago wooed.

. . . . . .

Too far away you are, my love,
To steady my brain in this phantom show
That passes the nightly road above
And returns again below.

The enormous cliff of horse-chestnut trees
Has poised on each of its ledges
An erect small girl looking down at me;
White-night-gowned little chits I see,
And they peep at me over the edges
Of the leaves as though they would leap, should I call
Them down to my arms;
"But, child, you're too small for me, too small
Your little charms."

White little sheaves of night-gowned maids,
Some other will thresh you out!
And I see leaning from the shades
A lilac like a lady there, who braids
Her white mantilla about
Her face, and forward leans to catch the sight
Of a man's face,
Gracefully sighing through the white
Flowery mantilla of lace.

And another lilac in purple veiled
 Discreetly, all recklessly calls
In a low, shocking perfume, to know who has hailed
Her forth from the night: my strength has failed
 In her voice, my weak heart falls:
Oh, and see the laburnum shimmering
   Her draperies down,
As if she would slip the gold, and glimmering
   White, stand naked of gown.

 . . . . . .

The pageant of flowery trees above
 The street pale-passionate goes,
And back again down the pavement, Love
 In a lesser pageant flows.

Two and two are the folk that walk,
 They pass in a half embrace
Of linkèd bodies, and they talk
 With dark face leaning to face.

Come then, my love, come as you will
 Along this haunted road,
Be whom you will, my darling, I shall
 Keep with you the troth I trowed.

David Herbert Lawrence

Elegy

Since I lost you, my darling, the sky has come near,
And I am of it, the small sharp stars are quite near,
The white moon going among them like a white bird among snow-berries,
And the sound of her gently rustling in heaven like a bird I hear.

And I am willing to come to you now, my dear,
As a pigeon lets itself off from a cathedral dome
To be lost in the haze of the sky, I would like to come,
And be lost out of sight with you, and be gone like foam.

For I am tired, my dear, and if I could lift my feet,
My tenacious feet from off the dome of the earth
To fall like a breath within the breathing wind
Where you are lost, what rest, my love, what rest!

David Herbert Lawrence

Epilogue

Patience, little Heart.
One day a heavy, June-hot woman
Will enter and shut the door to stay.

And when your stifling heart would summon
Cool, lonely night, her roused breasts will keep the night at bay,
Sitting in your room like two tiger-lilies
Flaming on after sunset,
Destroying the cool, lonely night with the glow of their hot twilight;
There in the morning, still, while the fierce strange scent comes yet
Stronger, hot and red; till you thirst for the daffodillies
With an anguished, husky thirst that you cannot assuage,
When the daffodillies are dead, and a woman of the dog-days holds you in gage.
Patience, little Heart.

David Herbert Lawrence

Excursion

I wonder, can the night go by;
Can this shot arrow of travel fly
Shaft-golden with light, sheer into the sky
   Of a dawned to-morrow,
Without ever sleep delivering us
From each other, or loosing the dolorous
   Unfruitful sorrow!

What is it then that you can see
That at the window endlessly
You watch the red sparks whirl and flee
   And the night look through?
Your presence peering lonelily there
Oppresses me so, I can hardly bear
   To share the train with you.

You hurt my heart-beats' privacy;
I wish I could put you away from me;
I suffocate in this intimacy,
   For all that I love you;
How I have longed for this night in the train,
Yet now every fibre of me cries in pain
   To God to remove you.

But surely my soul's best dream is still
That one night pouring down shall swill
Us away in an utter sleep, until
   We are one, smooth-rounded.
Yet closely bitten in to me
Is this armour of stiff reluctancy
   That keeps me impounded.

So, dear love, when another night
Pours on us, lift your fingers white
And strip me naked, touch me light,
   Light, light all over.
For I ache most earnestly for your touch,
Yet I cannot move, however much
   I would be your lover.

Night after night with a blemish of day
Unblown and unblossomed has withered away;
Come another night, come a new night, say
   Will you pluck me apart?
Will you open the amorous, aching bud
Of my body, and loose the burning flood
   That would leap to you from my heart?

David Herbert Lawrence

Firelight and Nightfall

The darkness steals the forms of all the queens,
But oh, the palms of his two black hands are red,
Inflamed with binding up the sheaves of dead
Hours that were once all glory and all queens.

And I remember all the sunny hours
Of queens in hyacinth and skies of gold,
And morning singing where the woods are scrolled
And diapered above the chaunting flowers.

Here lamps are white like snowdrops in the grass;
The town is like a churchyard, all so still
And grey now night is here; nor will
Another torn red sunset come to pass.

David Herbert Lawrence

Giorno dei Morti

Along the avenue of cypresses,
All in their scarlet cloaks and surplices
Of linen, go the chanting choristers,
The priests in gold and black, the villagers. . .

And all along the path to the cemetery
The round dark heads of men crowd silently,
And black-scarved faces of womenfolk, wistfully
Watch at the banner of death, and the mystery.

And at the foot of a grave a father stands
With sunken head, and forgotten, folded hands;
And at the foot of a grave a mother kneels
With pale shut face, nor either hears nor feels

The coming of the chanting choristers
Between the avenue of cypresses,
The silence of the many villagers,
The candle-flames beside the surplices.

David Herbert Lawrence

Gloire de Dijon

When she rises in the morning
I linger to watch her;
She spreads the bath-cloth underneath the window
And the sunbeams catch her
Glistening white on the shoulders,
While down her sides the mellow
Golden shadow glows as
She stoops to the sponge, and her swung breasts
Sway like full-blown yellow
Gloire de Dijon roses.

She drips herself with water, and her shoulders
Glisten as silver, they crumple up
Like wet and falling roses, and I listen
For the sluicing of their rain-dishevelled petals.
In the window full of sunlight
Concentrates her golden shadow
Fold on fold, until it glows as
Mellow as the glory roses.

David Herbert Lawrence

Green

The dawn was apple-green,
The sky was green wine held up in the sun,
The moon was a golden petal between.

She opened her eyes, and green
They shone, clear like flowers undone,
For the first time, now for the first time seen.

David Herbert Lawrence

Grey Evening

When you went, how was it you carried with you
My missal book of fine, flamboyant hours?
My book of turrets and of red-thorn bowers,
And skies of gold, and ladies in bright tissue?

Now underneath a blue-grey twilight, heaped
Beyond the withering snow of the shorn fields
Stands rubble of stunted houses; all is reaped
And garnered that the golden daylight yields.

Dim lamps like yellow poppies glimmer among
The shadowy stubble of the under-dusk,
As farther off the scythe of night is swung,
And little stars come rolling from their husk.

And all the earth is gone into a dust
Of greyness mingled with a fume of gold,
Covered with aged lichens, past with must,
And all the sky has withered and gone cold.

And so I sit and scan the book of grey,
Feeling the shadows like a blind man reading,
All fearful lest I find the last words bleeding
With wounds of sunset and the dying day.

David Herbert Lawrence

How Beastly the Bourgeois Is

How beastly the bourgeois is
especially the male of the species--

Presentable, eminently presentable--
shall I make you a present of him?

Isn't he handsome? Isn't he healthy? Isn't he a fine specimen?
Doesn't he look the fresh clean Englishman, outside?
Isn't it God's own image? tramping his thirty miles a day
after partridges, or a little rubber ball?
wouldn't you like to be like that, well off, and quite the
thing

Oh, but wait!
Let him meet a new emotion, let him be faced with another
man's need,
let him come home to a bit of moral difficulty, let life
face him with a new demand on his understanding
and then watch him go soggy, like a wet meringue.
Watch him turn into a mess, either a fool or a bully.
Just watch the display of him, confronted with a new
demand on his intelligence,
a new life-demand.

How beastly the bourgeois is
especially the male of the species--

Nicely groomed, like a mushroom
standing there so sleek and erect and eyeable--
and like a fungus, living on the remains of a bygone life
sucking his life out of the dead leaves of greater life
than his own.

And even so, he's stale, he's been there too long.
Touch him, and you'll find he's all gone inside
just like an old mushroom, all wormy inside, and hollow
under a smooth skin and an upright appearance.

Full of seething, wormy, hollow feelings
rather nasty--
How beastly the bourgeois is!

Standing in their thousands, these appearances, in damp
England
what a pity they can't all be kicked over
like sickening toadstools, and left to melt back, swiftly
into the soil of England.

David Herbert Lawrence

If You are a Man

If you are a man, and believe in the destiny of mankind
then say to yourself: we will cease to care
about property and money and mechanical devices,
and open our consciousness to the deep, mysterious life
that we are now cut off from.

The machine shall be abolished from the earth again;
it is a mistake that mankind has made;
money shall cease to be, and property shall cease to perplex
and we will find the way to immediate contact with life
and with one another.

To know the moon as we have never known
yet she is knowable.
To know a man as we have never known
a man, as never yet a man was knowable, yet still shall be.

David Herbert Lawrence

In a Boat

See the stars, love,
In the water much clearer and brighter
Than those above us, and whiter,
Like nenuphars.

Star-shadows shine, love,
How many stars in your bowl?
How many shadows in your soul,
Only mine, love, mine?

When I move the oars, love,
See how the stars are tossed,
Distorted, the brightest lost.
—So that bright one of yours, love.

The poor waters spill
The stars, waters broken, forsaken.
—The heavens are not shaken, you say, love,
Its stars stand still.

There, did you see
That spark fly up at us; even
Stars are not safe in heaven.
—What of yours, then, love, yours?

What then, love, if soon
Your light be tossed over a wave?
Will you count the darkness a grave,
And swoon, love, swoon?

David Herbert Lawrence

In Trouble and Shame

I look at the swaling sunset
And wish I could go also
Through the red doors beyond the black-purple bar.

I wish that I could go
Through the red doors where I could put off
My shame like shoes in the porch,
My pain like garments,
And leave my flesh discarded lying
Like luggage of some departed traveller
Gone one knows not where.

Then I would turn round,
And seeing my cast-off body lying like lumber,
I would laugh with joy.

David Herbert Lawrence

Intimates

Don't you care for my love? she said bitterly.

I handed her the mirror, and said:
Please address these questions to the proper person!
Please make all requests to head-quarters!
In all matters of emotional importance
please approach the supreme authority direct! -

So I handed her the mirror.
And she would have broken it over my head,
but she caught sight of her own reflection
and that held her spellbound for two seconds
while I fled.

David Herbert Lawrence

Irony

Always, sweetheart,
Carry into your room the blossoming boughs of cherry,
Almond and apple and pear diffuse with light, that very
Soon strews itself on the floor; and keep the radiance of spring
Fresh quivering; keep the sunny-swift March-days waiting
In a little throng at your door, and admit the one who is plaiting
Her hair for womanhood, and play awhile with her, then bid her depart.

A come and go of March-day loves
Through the flower-vine, trailing screen;
A fluttering in of doves.
Then a launch abroad of shrinking doves
Over the waste where no hope is seen
Of open hands:
Dance in and out
Small-bosomed girls of the spring of love,
With a bubble of laughter, and shrilly shout
Of mirth; then the dripping of tears on your glove.

David Herbert Lawrence

Kangaroo

Delicate mother Kangaroo
Sitting up there rabbit-wise, but huge, plump-weighted,
And lifting her beautiful slender face, oh! so much more
gently and finely lined than a rabbit's, or than a hare's,
Lifting her face to nibble at a round white peppermint drop
which she loves, sensitive mother Kangaroo.

Her sensitive, long, pure-bred face.
Her full antipodal eyes, so dark,
So big and quiet and remote, having watched so many
empty dawns in silent Australia.

Her little loose hands, and drooping Victorian shoulders.
And then her great weight below the waist, her vast pale belly,
With a thin young yellow little paw hanging out, and
straggle of a long thin ear, like ribbon,
Like a funny trimming to the middle of her belly, thin
little dangle of an immature paw, and one thin ear.

Her belly, her big haunches
And, in addition, the great muscular python-stretch of her tail.

There, she shan't have any more peppermint drops.
So she wistfully, sensitively sniffs the air, and then turns,
goes off in slow sad leaps
On the long flat skis of her legs,
Steered and propelled by that steel-strong snake of a tail.

Stops again, half turns, inquisitive to look back.
While something stirs quickly in her belly, and a lean little
face comes out, as from a window,
Peaked and a bit dismayed,
Only to disappear again quickly away from the sight of the
world, to snuggle down in the warmth,
Leaving the trail of a different paw hanging out.

Still she watches with eternal, cocked wistfulness!
How full her eyes are, like the full, fathomless, shining
eyes of an Australian black-boy
Who has been lost so many centuries on the margins of
existence!
She watches with insatiable wistfulness.
Untold centuries of watching for something to come,
For a new signal from life, in that silent lost land of the
South.

Where nothing bites but insects and snakes and the sun,
small life.
Where no bull roared, no cow ever lowed, no stag cried,
no leopard screeched, no lion coughed, no dog barked,
But all was silent save for parrots occasionally, in the
haunted blue bush.

Wistfully watching, with wonderful liquid eyes.
And all her weight, all her blood, dropping sackwise down towards the earth's centre,
And the live little-one taking in its paw at the door of her belly.

David Herbert Lawrence

Last Words to Miriam

Yours is the shame and sorrow,
But the disgrace is mine;
Your love was dark and thorough,
Mine was the love of the sun for a flower
He creates with his shine.

I was diligent to explore you,
Blossom you stalk by stalk,
Till my fire of creation bore you
Shrivelling down in the final dour
Anguish -- then I suffered a balk.

I knew your pain, and it broke
My fine, craftsman's nerve;
Your body quailed at my stroke,
And my courage failed to give you the last
Fine torture you did deserve.

You are shapely, you are adorned,
But opaque and dull in the flesh,
Who, had I but pierced with the thorned
Fire-threshing anguish, were fused and cast
In a lovely illumined mesh.

Like a painted window: the best
Suffering burnt through your flesh,
Undrossed it and left it blest
With a quivering sweet wisdom of grace: but now
Who shall take you afresh?

Now who will burn you free
From your body's terrors and dross,
Since the fire has failed in me?
What man will stoop in your flesh to plough
The shrieking cross?

A mute, nearly beautiful thing
Is your face, that fills me with shame
As I see it hardening,
Warping the perfect image of God,
And darkening my eternal fame.

David Herbert Lawrence

Liaison

A big bud of moon hangs out of the twilight,
 Star-spiders spinning their thread
Hang high suspended, withouten respite
 Watching us overhead.

Come then under the trees, where the leaf-cloths
 Curtain us in so dark
That here we're safe from even the ermin-moth's
 Flitting remark.

Here in this swarthy, secret tent,
 Where black boughs flap the ground,
You shall draw the thorn from my discontent,
 Surgeon me sound.

This rare, rich night! For in here
 Under the yew-tree tent
The darkness is loveliest where I could sear
 You like frankincense into scent.

Here not even the stars can spy us,
 Not even the white moths write
With their little pale signs on the wall, to try us
 And set us affright.

Kiss but then the dust from off my lips,
 But draw the turgid pain
From my breast to your bosom, eclipse
 My soul again.

Waste me not, I beg you, waste
 Not the inner night:
Taste, oh taste and let me taste
 The core of delight.

David Herbert Lawrence

Lies About Love

We are a liars, because
the truth of yesterday becomes a lie tomorrow,
whereas letters are fixed,
and we live by the letter of truth.
The love I feel for my friend, this year,
is different from the love I felt last year.
If it were not so, it would be a lie.
Yet we reiterate love! love! love!
as if it were a coin with a fixed value
instead of a flower that dies, and opens a different bud.

David Herbert Lawrence

Listening

I listen to the stillness of you,
 My dear, among it all;
I feel your silence touch my words as I talk,
 And take them in thrall.

My words fly off a forge
 The length of a spark;
I see the night-sky easily sip them
 Up in the dark.

The lark sings loud and glad,
 Yet I am not loth
That silence should take the song and the bird
 And lose them both.

A train goes roaring south,
 The steam-flag flying;
I see the stealthy shadow of silence
 Alongside going.

And off the forge of the world,
 Whirling in the draught of life,
Go sparks of myriad people, filling
 The night with strife.

Yet they never change the darkness
 Or blench it with noise;
Alone on the perfect silence
 The stars are buoys.

David Herbert Lawrence

Lotus Hurt by the Cold

How many times, like lotus lilies risen
 Upon the surface of a river, there
 Have risen floating on my blood the rare
Soft glimmers of my hope escaped from prison.

So I am clothed all over with the light
 And sensitive beautiful blossoming of passion;
 Till naked for her in the finest fashion
The flowers of all my mud swim into sight.

And then I offer all myself unto
 This woman who likes to love me: but she turns
 A look of hate upon the flower that burns
To break and pour her out its precious dew.

And slowly all the blossom shuts in pain,
 And all the lotus buds of love sink over
 To die unopened: when my moon-faced lover,
Kind on the weight of suffering, smiles again.

David Herbert Lawrence

Lui et Elle

She is large and matronly
And rather dirty,
A little sardonic-looking, as if domesticity had driven her to it.
Though what she does, except lay four eggs at random in the garden once a year
And put up with her husband,
I don't know.

She likes to eat.
She hurries up, striding reared on long uncanny legs
When food is going.
Oh yes, she can make haste when she likes.
She snaps the soft bread from my hand in great mouthfuls,
Opening her rather pretty wedge of an iron, pristine face
Into an enormously wide-beaked mouth
Like sudden curved scissors,
And gulping at more than she can swallow, and working her thick, soft tongue,
And having the bread hanging over her chin.

O Mistress, Mistress,
Reptile mistress,
Your eye is very dark, very bright,
And it never softens
Although you watch.

She knows,
She knows well enough to come for food,
Yet she sees me not;
Her bright eye sees, but not me, not anything,
Sightful, sightless, seeing and visionless,
Reptile mistress.

Taking bread in her curved, gaping, toothless mouth,
She has no qualm when she catches my finger in her steel overlapping gums,
But she hangs on, and my shout and my shrinking are nothing to her.
She does not even know she is nipping me with her curved beak.
Snake-like she draws at my finger, while I drag it in horror away.

Mistress, reptile mistress,
You are almost too large, I am almost frightened.

He is much smaller,
Dapper beside her,
And ridiculously small.

Her laconic eye has an earthy, materialistic look,
His, poor darling, is almost fiery.
His wimple, his blunt-prowed face,
His low forehead, his skinny neck, his long, scaled, striving legs,
So striving, striving,
Are all more delicate than she,
And he has a cruel scar on his shell.

Poor darling, biting at her feet,
Running beside her like a dog, biting her earthy, splay feet,
Nipping her ankles,
Which she drags apathetic away, though without retreating into her shell.

Agelessly silent,
And with a grim, reptile determination,
Cold, voiceless age-after-age behind him, serpents' long obstinacy
Of horizontal persistence.

Little old man
Scuffling beside her, bending down, catching his opportunity,
Parting his steel-trap face, so suddenly, and seizing her scaly ankle,
And hanging grimly on,
Letting go at last as she drags away,
And closing his steel-trap face.

His steel-trap, stoic, ageless, handsome face.
Alas, what a fool he looks in this scuffle.

And how he feels it!
The lonely rambler, the stoic, dignified stalker through chaos,
The immune, the animate,
Enveloped in isolation,
Fore-runner.
Now look at him!

Alas, the spear is through the side of his isolation.
His adolescence saw him crucified into sex,
Doomed, in the long crucifixion of desire, to seek his consummation beyond himself.
Divided into passionate duality,
He, so finished and immune, now broken into desirous fragmentariness,
Doomed to make an intolerable fool of himself
In his effort toward completion again.

Poor little earthy house-inhabiting Osiris,
The mysterious bull tore him at adolescence into pieces,
And he must struggle after reconstruction, ignominiously.

And so behold him following the tail
Of that mud-hovel of his slowly rambling spouse,
Like some unhappy bull at the tail of a cow,
But with more than bovine, grim, earth-dank persistence.

Suddenly seizing the ugly ankle as she stretches out to walk,
Roaming over the sods,
Or, if it happen to show, at her pointed, heavy tail
Beneath the low-dropping back-board of her shell.

Their two shells like domed boats bumping,
Hers huge, his small;
Their splay feet rambling and rowing like paddles,

And stumbling mixed up in one another,
In the race of love --
Two tortoises,
She huge, he small.

She seems earthily apathetic,
And he has a reptile's awful persistence.

I heard a woman pitying her, pitying the Mère Tortue.
While I, I pity Monsieur.
'He pesters her and torments her,' said the woman.
How much more is he pestered and tormented, say I.

What can he do?
He is dumb, he is visionless,
Conceptionless.
His black, sad-lidded eye sees but beholds not
As her earthen mound moves on,
But he catches the folds of vulnerable, leathery skin,
Nail-studded, that shake beneath her shell,
And drags at these with his beak,
Drags and drags and bites,
While she pulls herself free, and rows her dull mound along.

David Herbert Lawrence

Malade

The sick grapes on the chair by the bed lie prone; at the window
The tassel of the blind swings gently, tapping the pane,
As a little wind comes in.
The room is the hollow rind of a fruit, a gourd
Scooped out and dry, where a spider,
Folded in its legs as in a bed,
Lies on the dust, watching where is nothing to see but twilight and walls.

And if the day outside were mine! What is the day
But a grey cave, with great grey spider-cloths hanging
Low from the roof, and the wet dust falling softly from them
Over the wet dark rocks, the houses, and over
The spiders with white faces, that scuttle on the floor of the cave!
I am choking with creeping, grey confinedness.

But somewhere birds, beside a lake of light, spread wings
Larger than the largest fans, and rise in a stream upwards
And upwards on the sunlight that rains invisible,
So that the birds are like one wafted feather,
Small and ecstatic suspended over a vast spread country.

David Herbert Lawrence

Mating

Round clouds roll in the arms of the wind,
The round earth rolls in a clasp of blue sky,
And see, where the budding hazels are thinned,
   The wild anemones lie
In undulating shivers beneath the wind.

Over the blue of the waters ply
White ducks, a living flotilla of cloud;
And, look you, floating just thereby,
   The blue-gleamed drake stems proud
Like Abraham, whose seed should multiply.

In the lustrous gleam of the water, there
Scramble seven toads across the silk, obscure leaves,
Seven toads that meet in the dusk to share
   The darkness that interweaves
The sky and earth and water and live things everywhere.

Look now, through the woods where the beech-green spurts
Like a storm of emerald snow, look, see
 A great bay stallion dances, skirts
   The bushes sumptuously,
Going outward now in the spring to his brief deserts.

Ah love, with your rich, warm face aglow,
What sudden expectation opens you
 So wide as you watch the catkins blow
   Their dust from the birch on the blue
Lift of the pulsing wind—ah, tell me you know!

Ah, surely! Ah, sure from the golden sun
A quickening, masculine gleam floats in to all
 Us creatures, people and flowers undone,
   Lying open under his thrall,
As he begets the year in us. What, then, would you shun?

Why, I should think that from the earth there fly
Fine thrills to the neighbour stars, fine yellow beams
 Thrown lustily off from our full-blown, high
   Bursting globe of dreams,
To quicken the spheres that are virgin still in the sky.

Do you not hear each morsel thrill
With joy at travelling to plant itself within
 The expectant one, therein to instil
   New rapture, new shape to win,
From the thick of life wake up another will?

Surely, and if that I would spill
The vivid, ah, the fiery surplus of life,
 From off my brimming measure, to fill
   You, and flush you rife

With increase, do you call it evil, and always evil?

David Herbert Lawrence

Meeting Among the Mountains

The little pansies by the road have turned
Away their purple faces and their gold,
And evening has taken all the bees from the thyme,
And all the scent is shed away by the cold.

Against the hard and pale blue evening sky
The mountain's new-dropped summer snow is clear
Glistening in steadfast stillness: like transcendent
Clean pain sending on us a chill down here.

Chirst on the Cross! -- his beautiful young man's body
Has fallen dead upon the nails, and hangs
White and loose at last, with all the pain
Drawn on his mouth, eyes broken at last by his pangs.

And slowly down the mountain road, belated,
A bullock wagon comes; so I am ashamed
To gaze any more at the Christ, whom the mountain snows
Whitely confront; I wait on the grass, am lamed.

The breath of the bullock stains the hard, chill air,
The band is across its brow, and it scarcely seems
To draw the load, so still and slow it moves,
While the driver on the shaft sits crouched in dreams.

Surely about his sunburnt face is something
That vexes me with wonder. He sits so still
Here among all this silence, crouching forward,
Dreaming and letting the bullock take its will.

I stand aside on the grass to let them go;
-- And Christ, I have met his accusing eyes again,
The brown eyes black with misery and hate, that look
Full in my own, and the torment starts again.

One moment the hate leaps at me standing there,
One moment I see the stillness of agony,
Something frozen in the silence that dare not be
Loosed, one moment the darkness frightens me.

Then among the averted pansies, beneath the high
White peaks of snow, at the foot of the sunken Christ
I stand in a chill of anguish, trying to say
The joy I bought was not too highly priced.

But he has gone, motionless, hating me,
Living as the mountains do, because they are strong,
With a pale, dead Christ on the crucifix of his heart,
And breathing the frozen memory of his wrong.

Still in his nostrils the frozen breath of despair,
And heart like a cross that bears dead agony

Of naked love, clenched in his fists the shame,
And in his belly the smouldering hate of me.

And I, as I stand in the cold, averted flowers,
Feel the shame-wounds in his hands pierce through my own,
And breathe despair that turns my lungs to stone
And know the dead Christ weighing on my bone.

David Herbert Lawrence

Monologue of a Mother

This is the last of all, this is the last!
I must hold my hands, and turn my face to the fire,
I must watch my dead days fusing together in dross,
Shape after shape, and scene after scene from my past
Fusing to one dead mass in the sinking fire
Where the ash on the dying coals grows swiftly, like heavy moss.

Strange he is, my son, whom I have awaited like a loyer,
Strange to me like a captive in a foreign country, haunting
The confines and gazing out on the land where the wind is free;
White and gaunt, with wistful eyes that hover
Always on the distance, as if his soul were chaunting
The monotonous weird of departure away from me.

Like a strange white bird blown out of the frozen seas,
Like a bird from the far north blown with a broken wing
Into our sooty garden, he drags and beats
From place to place perpetually, seeking release
From me, from the hand of my love which creeps up, needing
His happiness, whilst he in displeasure retreats.

I must look away from him, for my faded eyes
Like a cringing dog at his heels offend him now,
Like a toothless hound pursuing him with my will,
Till he chafes at my crouching persistence, and a sharp spark flies
In my soul from under the sudden frown of his brow,
As he blenches and turns away, and my heart stands still.

This is the last, it will not be any more.
All my life I have borne the burden of myself,
All the long years of sitting in my husband's house,
Never have I said to myself as he closed the door:
"Now I am caught!—You are hopelessly lost, O Self,
You are frightened with joy, my heart, like a frightened mouse."

Three times have I offered myself, three times rejected.
It will not be any more. No more, my son, my son!
Never to know the glad freedom of obedience, since long ago
The angel of childhood kissed me and went. I expected
Another would take me,—and now, my son, O my son,
I must sit awhile and wait, and never know
The loss of myself, till death comes, who cannot fail.

Death, in whose service is nothing of gladness, takes me:
For the lips and the eyes of God are behind a veil.
And the thought of the lipless voice of the Father shakes me
With fear, and fills my eyes with the tears of desire,
And my heart rebels with anguish as night draws nigher.

David Herbert Lawrence

Mystery

Now I am all
One bowl of kisses,
Such as the tall
Slim votaresses
Of Egypt filled
For a God's excesses.

I lift to you
My bowl of kisses,
And through the temple's
Blue recesses
Cry out to you
In wild caresses.

And to my lips'
Bright crimson rim
The passion slips,
And down my slim
White body drips
The shining hymn.

And still before
The altar I
Exult the bowl
Brimful, and cry
To you to stoop
And drink, Most High.

Oh drink me up
That I may be
Within your cup
Like a Mystery,
Like wine that is still
In ecstasy.

Glimmering still
In ecstasy,
Commingled wines
Of you and me
In One fulfill,...
The Mystery.

David Herbert Lawrence

New Year's Eve

There are only two things now,
The great black night scooped out
And this fireglow.

This fireglow, the core,
And we the two ripe pips
That are held in store.

Listen, the darkness rings
As it circulates round our fire.
Take off your things.

Your shoulders, your bruised throat!
You breasts, your nakedness!
This fiery coat!

As the darkness flickers and dips,
As the firelight falls and leaps
From your feet to your lips!

David Herbert Lawrence

Nothing to Save

There is nothing to save, now all is lost,
but a tiny core of stillness in the heart
like the eye of a violet.

David Herbert Lawrence

Patience

A wind comes from the north
Blowing little flocks of birds
Like spray across the town,
And a train, roaring forth,
Rushes stampeding down
With cries and flying curds
Of steam, out of the darkening north.

Whither I turn and set
Like a needle steadfastly,
Waiting ever to get
The news that she is free;
But ever fixed, as yet,
To the lode of her agony.

David Herbert Lawrence

Perfidy

Hollow rang the house when I knocked on the door,
And I lingered on the threshold with my hand
Upraised to knock and knock once more:
Listening for the sound of her feet across the floor,
Hollow re-echoed my heart.

The low-hung lamps stretched down the road
With shadows drifting underneath,
With a music of soft, melodious feet
Quickening my hope as I hastened to meet
The low-hung light of her eyes.

The golden lamps down the street went out,
The last car trailed the night behind;
And I in the darkness wandered about
With a flutter of hope and of dark-shut doubt
In the dying lamp of my love.

Two brown ponies trotting slowly
Stopped at a dim-lit trough to drink:
The dark van drummed down the distance slowly;
While the city stars so dim and holy
Drew nearer to search through the streets.

A hastening car swept shameful past,
I saw her hid in the shadow,
I saw her step to the curb, and fast
Run to the silent door, where last
I had stood with my hand uplifted.
She clung to the door in her haste to enter,
Entered, and quickly cast
It shut behind her, leaving the street aghast.

David Herbert Lawrence

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

David Herbert Lawrence

Reproach

Had I but known yesterday,
Helen, you could discharge the ache
   Out of the cloud;
Had I known yesterday you could take
The turgid electric ache away,
   Drink it up with your proud
White body, as lovely white lightning
Is drunk from an agonised sky by the earth,
I might have hated you, Helen.

But since my limbs gushed full of fire,
Since from out of my blood and bone
   Poured a heavy flame
To you, earth of my atmosphere, stone
Of my steel, lovely white flint of desire,
   You have no name.
Earth of my swaying atmosphere,
Substance of my inconstant breath,
I cannot but cleave to you.

Since you have drunken up the drear
Painful electric storm, and death
   Is washed from the blue
Of my eyes, I see you beautiful.
You are strong and passive and beautiful,
I come like winds that uncertain hover;
   But you
Are the earth I hover over.

David Herbert Lawrence

Restlessness

At the open door of the room I stand and look at the night,
Hold my hand to catch the raindrops, that slant into sight,
Arriving grey from the darkness above suddenly into the light of the room.
I will escape from the hollow room, the box of light,
And be out in the bewildering darkness, which is always fecund, which might
Mate my hungry soul with a germ of its womb.

I will go out to the night, as a man goes down to the shore
To draw his net through the surf's thin line, at the dawn before
The sun warms the sea, little, lonely and sad, sifting the sobbing tide.
I will sift the surf that edges the night, with my net, the four
Strands of my eyes and my lips and my hands and my feet, sifting the store
Of flotsam until my soul is tired or satisfied.

I will catch in my eyes' quick net
The faces of all the women as they go past,
Bend over them with my soul, to cherish the wet
Cheeks and wet hair a moment, saying: "Is it you?"
Looking earnestly under the dark umbrellas, held fast
Against the wind; and if, where the lamplight blew
Its rainy swill about us, she answered me
With a laugh and a merry wildness that it was she
Who was seeking me, and had found me at last to free
Me now from the stunting bonds of my chastity,
How glad I should be!

Moving along in the mysterious ebb of the night
Pass the men whose eyes are shut like anemones in a dark pool;
Why don't they open with vision and speak to me, what have they in sight?
Why do I wander aimless among them, desirous fool?
I can always linger over the huddled books on the stalls,
Always gladden my amorous fingers with the touch of their leaves,
Always kneel in courtship to the shelves in the doorways, where falls
The shadow, always offer myself to one mistress, who always receives.

But oh, it is not enough, it is all no good.
There is something I want to feel in my running blood,
Something I want to touch; I must hold my face to the rain,
I must hold my face to the wind, and let it explain
Me its life as it hurries in secret.
I will trail my hands again through the drenched, cold leaves
Till my hands are full of the chillness and touch of leaves,
Till at length they induce me to sleep, and to forget.

David Herbert Lawrence

Scent of Irises

A faint, sickening scent of irises
Persists all morning. Here in a jar on the table
A fine proud spike of purple irises
Rising above the class-room litter, makes me unable
To see the class's lifted and bended faces
Save in a broken pattern, amid purple and gold and sable.

I can smell the gorgeous bog-end, in its breathless
Dazzle of may-blobs, when the marigold glare overcast you
With fire on your cheeks and your brow and your chin as you dipped
Your face in the marigold bunch, to touch and contrast you,
Your own dark mouth with the bridal faint lady-smocks,
Dissolved on the golden sorcery you should not outlast.

You amid the bog-end's yellow incantation,
You sitting in the cowslips of the meadow above,
Me, your shadow on the bog-flame, flowery may-blobs,
Me full length in the cowslips, muttering you love;
You, your soul like a lady-smock, lost, evanescent,
You with your face all rich, like the sheen of a dove.

You are always asking, do I remember, remember
The butter-cup bog-end where the flowers rose up
And kindled you over deep with a cast of gold?
You ask again, do the healing days close up
The open darkness which then drew us in,
The dark which then drank up our brimming cup.

You upon the dry, dead beech-leaves, in the fire of night
Burnt like a sacrifice; you invisible;
Only the fire of darkness, and the scent of you!
—And yes, thank God, it still is possible
The healing days shall close the darkness up
Wherein we fainted like a smoke or dew.

Like vapour, dew, or poison. Now, thank God,
The fire of night is gone, and your face is ash
Indistinguishable on the grey, chill day;
The night had burst us out, at last the good
Dark fire burns on untroubled, without clash
Of you upon the dead leaves saying me Yea.

David Herbert Lawrence

Search for Truth

Search for nothing any more, nothing
except truth.
Be very still, and try and get at the truth.

And the first question to ask yourself is:
How great a liar am I?

David Herbert Lawrence

Self-pity

I never saw a wild thing
sorry for itself.
A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough
without ever having felt sorry for itself.

David Herbert Lawrence

Service of all the Dead

Between the avenues of cypresses,
All in their scarlet cloaks, and surplices
Of linen, go the chaunting choristers,
The priests in gold and black, the villagers.

And all along the path to the cemetery
The round, dark heads of men crowd silently
And black-scarved faces of women-folk, wistfully
Watch at the banner of death, and the mystery.

And at the foot of a grave a father stands
With sunken head, and forgotten, folded hands;
And at the foot of a grave a woman kneels
With pale shut face, and neither hears not feels

The coming of the chaunting choristers
Between the avenues of cypresses,
The silence of the many villagers,
The candle-flames beside the surplices.

David Herbert Lawrence

Silence

Since I lost you I am silence-haunted,
 Sounds wave their little wings
A moment, then in weariness settle
 On the flood that soundless swings.

Whether the people in the street
 Like pattering ripples go by,
Or whether the theatre sighs and sighs
 With a loud, hoarse sigh:

Or the wind shakes a ravel of light
 Over the dead-black river,
Or night’s last echoing
 Makes the daybreak shiver:

I feel the silence waiting
 To take them all up again
In its vast completeness, enfolding
 The sound of men.

David Herbert Lawrence

Snake

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.
In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.
The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him? Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him? Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid, But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,

Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste.
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

David Herbert Lawrence

Snap-Dragon

She bade me follow to her garden where
The mellow sunlight stood as in a cup
Between the old grey walls; I did not dare
To raise my face, I did not dare look up
Lest her bright eyes like sparrows should fly in
My windows of discovery and shrill 'Sin!'

So with a downcast mien and laughing voice
I followed, followed the swing of her white dress
That rocked in a lilt along: I watched the poise
Of her feet as they flew for a space, then paused to press
The grass deep down with the royal burden of her:
And gladly I'd offered my breast to the tread of her.

'I like to see,' she said, and she crouched her down,
She sunk into my sight like a settling bird;
And her bosom crouched in the confines of her gown
Like heavy birds at rest there, softly stirred
By her measured breaths: 'I like to see,' said she,
'The snap-dragon put out his tongue at me.'

She laughed, she reached her hand out to the flower
Closing its crimson throat: my own throat in her power
Strangled, my heart swelled up so full
As if it would burst its wineskin in my throat,
Choke me in my own crimson; I watched her pull
The gorge of the gaping flower, till the blood did float

Over my eyes and I was blind --
Her large brown hand stretched over
The windows of my mind,
And in the dark I did discover
Things I was out to find:

My grail, a brown bowl twined
With swollen veins that met in the wrist,
Under whose brown the amethyst
I longed to taste: and I longed to turn
My heart's red measure in her cup,
I longed to feel my hot blood burn
With the lambent amethyst in her cup.

Then suddenly she looked up
And I was blind in a tawny-gold day
Till she took her eyes away. So she came down from above
And emptied my heart of love . . .
So I helf my heart aloft
To the cuckoo that fluttered above,
And she settled soft.

It seemed that I and the morning world
Were pressed cup-shape to take this reiver

Bird who was weary to have furled
Her wings on us,
As we were weary to receive her:

This bird, this rich
Sumptuous central grain,
This mutable witch,
This one refrain,
This laugh in the fight,
This clot of light,
This core of night.

She spoke, and I closed my eyes
To shut hallucinations out.
I echoed with surprise
Hearing my mere lips shout
The answer they did devise.

Again, I saw a brown bird hover
Over the flowers at my feet;
I felt a brown bird hover
Over my heart, and sweet
Its shadow lay on my heart.
I thought I saw on the clover
A brown bee pulling apart
The closed flesh of the clover
And burrowing into its heart.

She moved her hand, and again
I felt the brown bird hover
Over my heart . . . and then
The bird came down on my heart,
As on a nest the rover
Cuckoo comes, and shoves over
The brim each careful part
Of love, takes possession and settles down,
With her wings and her feathers does drown
The nest in a heat of love.

She turned her flushed face to me for the glint
Of a moment. 'See,' she laughed, 'if you also
Can make them yawn.' I put my hand to the dint
In the flower's throat, and the flower gaped wide with woe.
She watched, she went of a sudden intensely still,
She watched my hand, and I let her watch her fill.

I pressed the wretched, throttled flower between
My fingers, till its head lay back, its fangs
Poised at her: like a weapon my hand stood white and keen,
And I held the choked flower-serpent in its pangs
Of mordant anguish till she ceased to laugh,
Until her pride's flag, smitten, cleaved down to the staff.

She hid her face, she murmured between her lips
The low word 'Don't!' I let the flower fall,
But held my hand afloat still towards the slips
Of blossom she fingered, and my crisp fingers all
Put forth to her: she did not move, nor I,
For my hand like a snake watched hers that could not fly.
Then I laughed in the dark of my heart, I did exult
Like a sudden chuckling of music: I bade her eyes
Meet mine, I opened her helpless eyes to consult
Their fear, their shame, their joy that underlies
Defeat in such a battle: in the dark of her eyes
My heart was fierce to make her laughter rise . . .
Till her dark deeps shook with convulsive thrills, and the dark
Of her spirit wavered like water thrilled with light,
And my heart leaped up in longing to plunge its stark
Fervour within the pool of her twilight:
Within her spacious gloom, in the mystery
Of her barbarous soul, to grope with ecstasy.

And I do not care though the large hands of revenge
Shall get my throat at last -- shall get it soon,
If the joy that they are lifted to avenge
Have risen red on my night as a harvest moon,
Which even Death can only put out for me,
And death I know is beter than not-to-be.

David Herbert Lawrence

Sorrow

Why does the thin grey strand
Floating up from the forgotten
Cigarette between my fingers,
Why does it trouble me?

Ah, you will understand;
When I carried my mother downstairs,
A few times only, at the beginning
Of her soft-foot malady,

I should find, for a reprimand
To my gaiety, a few long grey hairs
On the breast of my coat; and one by one
I let them float up the dark chimney.

David Herbert Lawrence

Study

Somewhere the long mellow note of the blackbird
Quickens the unclasping hands of hazel,
Somewhere the wind-flowers fling their heads back,
Stirred by an impetuous wind. Some ways'll
All be sweet with white and blue violet.
(Hush now, hush. Where am I?—Biuret—)

On the green wood's edge a shy girl hovers
From out of the hazel-screen on to the grass,
Where wheeling and screaming the petulant plovers
Wave frighted. Who comes? A labourer, alas!
Oh the sunset swims in her eyes' swift pool.
(Work, work, you fool——!)

Somewhere the lamp hanging low from the ceiling
Lights the soft hair of a girl as she reads,
And the red firelight steadily wheeling
Weaves the hard hands of my friend in sleep.
And the white dog snuffs the warmth, appealing
For the man to heed lest the girl shall weep.
(Tears and dreams for them; for me
  Bitter science—the exams are near.
  I wish I bore it more patiently.
  I wish you did not wait, my dear,
  For me to come: since work I must:
  Though it's all the same when we are dead.—
  I wish I was only a bust,
    All head.)

David Herbert Lawrence

Submergence

When along the pavement,
Palpitating flames of life,
People flicker round me,
I forget my bereavement,
The gap in the great constellation,
The place where a star used to be.

Nay, though the pole-star
Is blown out like a candle,
And all the heavens are wandering in disarray,
Yet when pleiads of people are
Deployed around me, and I see
The street’s long outstretched Milky Way,

When people flicker down the pavement,
I forget my bereavement.

David Herbert Lawrence

Tease

I will give you all my keys,
You shall be my châtelaine,
You shall enter as you please,
As you please shall go again.

When I hear you jingling through
All the chambers of my soul,
How I sit and laugh at you
In your vain housekeeping rôle.

Jealous of the smallest cover,
Angry at the simplest door;
Well, you anxious, inquisitive lover,
Are you pleased with what's in store?

You have fingered all my treasures,
Have you not, most curiously,
Handled all my tools and measures
And masculine machinery?

Over every single beauty
You have had your little rapture;
You have slain, as was your duty,
Every sin-mouse you could capture.

Still you are not satisfied,
Still you tremble faint reproach;
Challenge me I keep aside
Secrets that you may not broach.

Maybe yes, and maybe no,
Maybe there are secret places,
Altars barbarous below,
Elsewhere halls of high disgraces.

Maybe yes, and maybe no,
You may have it as you please,
Since I choose to keep you so,
Suppliant on your curious knees.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Bride

My love looks like a girl to-night,
But she is old.
The plaits that lie along her pillow
Are not gold,
But threaded with filigree silver,
And uncanny cold.

She looks like a young maiden, since her brow
Is smooth and fair,
Her cheeks are very smooth, her eyes are closed.
She sleeps a rare
Still winsome sleep, so still, and so composed.

Nay, but she sleeps like a bride, and dreams her dreams
Of perfect things.
She lies at last, the darling, in the shape of her dream,
And her dead mouth sings
By its shape, like the thrushes in clear evenings.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Deepest Sensuality

The profoundest of all sensualities
is the sense of truth
and the next deepest sensual experience
is the sense of justice.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Elephant Is Slow to Mate

The elephant, the huge old beast,
is slow to mate;
he finds a female, they show no haste
they wait

for the sympathy in their vast shy hearts
slowly, slowly to rouse
as they loiter along the river-beds
and drink and browse

and dash in panic through the brake
of forest with the herd,
and sleep in massive silence, and wake
together, without a word.

So slowly the great hot elephant hearts
grow full of desire,
and the great beasts mate in secret at last,
hiding their fire.

Oldest they are and the wisest of beasts
so they know at last
how to wait for the loneliest of feasts
for the full repast.

They do not snatch, they do not tear;
their massive blood
moves as the moon-tides, near, more near
till they touch in flood.

David Herbert Lawrence

The End

If I could have put you in my heart,
If but I could have wrapped you in myself,
How glad I should have been!
And now the chart
Of memory unrolls again to me
The course of our journey here, before we had to part.

And oh, that you had never, never been
Some of your selves, my love, that some
Of your several faces I had never seen!
And still they come before me, and they go,
And I cry aloud in the moments that intervene.

And oh, my love, as I rock for you to-night,
And have not any longer any hope
To heal the suffering, or make requite
For all your life of asking and despair,
I own that some of me is dead to-night.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Enkindled Spring

This spring as it comes bursts up in bonfires green,
Wild puffing of emerald trees, and flame-filled bushes,
Thorn-blossom lifting in wreaths of smoke between
Where the wood fumes up and the watery, flickering rushes.

I am amazed at this spring, this conflagration
Of green fires lit on the soil of the earth, this blaze
Of growing, and sparks that puff in wild gyration,
Faces of people streaming across my gaze.

And I, what fountain of fire am I among
This leaping combustion of spring? My spirit is tossed
About like a shadow buffeted in the throng
Of flames, a shadow that’s gone astray, and is lost.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Gods! The Gods!

People were bathing and posturing themselves on the beach,
and all was dreary, great robot limbs, robot breasts,
robot voices, robot even the gay umbrellas.

But a woman, shy and alone, was washing herself under a tap and the glimmer of the presence of the gods was like
lilies, and like water-lilies.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Hands of the Betrothed

Her tawny eyes are onyx of thoughtlessness,
Hardened they are like gems in ancient modesty;
Yea, and her mouth's prudent and crude caress
Means even less than her many words to me.

Though her kiss betrays me also this, this only
Consolation, that in her lips her blood at climax clips
Two wild, dumb paws in anguish on the lonely
Fruit of my heart, ere down, rebuked, it slips.

I know from her hardened lips that still her heart is
Hungry for me, yet if I put my hand in her breast
She puts me away, like a saleswoman whose mart is
Endangered by the pilferer on his quest.

But her hands are still the woman, the large, strong hands
Heavier than mine, yet like leverets caught in steel
When I hold them; my still soul understands
Their dumb confession of what her sort must feel.

For never her hands come nigh me but they lift
Like heavy birds from the morning stubble, to settle
Upon me like sleeping birds, like birds that shift
Uneasily in their sleep, disturbing my mettle.

How caressingly she lays her hand on my knee,
How strangely she tries to disown it, as it sinks
In my flesh and bone and forages into me,
How it stirs like a subtle stoat, whatever she thinks!

And often I see her clench her fingers tight
And thrust her fists suppressed in the folds of her skirt;
And sometimes, how she grasps her arms with her bright
Big hands, as if surely her arms did hurt.

And I have seen her stand all unaware
Pressing her spread hands over her breasts, as she
Would crush their mounds on her heart, to kill in there
The pain that is her simple ache for me.

Her strong hands take my part, the part of a man
To her; she crushes them into her bosom deep
Where I should lie, and with her own strong span
Closes her arms, that should fold me in sleep.

Ah, and she puts her hands upon the wall,
Presses them there, and kisses her bright hands,
Then lets her black hair loose, the darkness fall
About her from her maiden-folded bands.

And sits in her own dark night of her bitter hair
Dreaming—God knows of what, for to me she's the same

Betrothed young lady who loves me, and takes care
Of her womanly virtue and of my good name.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Inheritance

Since you did depart
Out of my reach, my darling,
Into the hidden,
I see each shadow start
With recognition, and I
Am wonder-ridden.

I am dazed with the farewell,
But I scarcely feel your loss.
You left me a gift
Of tongues, so the shadows tell
Me things, and silences toss
Me their drift.

You sent me a cloven fire
Out of death, and it burns in the draught
Of the breathing hosts,
Kindles the darkening pyre
For the sorrowful, till strange brands waft
Like candid ghosts.

Form after form, in the streets
Waves like a ghost along,
Kindled to me;
The star above the house-top greets
Me every eve with a long
Song fierily.

All day long, the town
Glimmers with subtle ghosts
Going up and down
In a common, prison-like dress;
But their daunted looking flickers
To me, and I answer, Yes!

So I am not lonely nor sad
Although bereaved of you,
My little love.
I move among a kinsfolk clad
With words, but the dream shows through
As they move.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Mystic Blue

Out of the darkness, fretted sometimes in its sleeping,
Jets of sparks in fountains of blue come leaping
To sight, revealing a secret, numberless secrets keeping.

Sometimes the darkness trapped within a wheel
Runs into speed like a dream, the blue of the steel
Showing the rocking darkness now a-reel.

And out of the invisible, streams of bright blue drops
Rain from the showery heavens, and bright blue crops
Surge from the under-dark to their ladder-tops.

And all the manifold blue and joyous eyes,
The rainbow arching over in the skies,
New sparks of wonder opening in surprise.

All these pure things come foam and spray of the sea
Of Darkness abundant, which shaken mysteriously,
Breaks into dazzle of living, as dolphins that leap from the sea
Of midnight shake it to fire, so the secret of death we see.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Prophet

Ah, my darling, when over the purple horizon shall loom
The shrouded mother of a new idea, men hide their faces,
Cry out and fend her off, as she seeks her procreant groom,
Wounding themselves against her, denying her fecund embraces.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Punisher

I have fetched the tears up out of the little wells,
Scooped them up with small, iron words,
   Dripping over the runnels.

The harsh, cold wind of my words drove on, and still
I watched the tears on the guilty cheek of the boys
   Glitter and spill.

Cringing Pity, and Love, white-handed, came
Hovering about the Judgment which stood in my eyes,
   Whirling a flame.

   . . . .

The tears are dry, and the cheeks' young fruits are fresh
With laughter, and clear the exonerated eyes, since pain
   Beat through the flesh.

The Angel of Judgment has departed again to the Nearness.
Desolate I am as a church whose lights are put out.
   And night enters in drearness.

The fire rose up in the bush and blazed apace,
The thorn-leaves crackled and twisted and sweated in anguish;
   Then God left the place.

Like a flower that the frost has hugged and let go, my head
Is heavy, and my heart beats slowly, laboriously,
   My strength is shed.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Revolutionary

Look at them standing there in authority
The pale-faces,
As if it could have any effect any more.

Pale-face authority,
Caryatids,
Pillars of white bronze standing rigid, lest the skies fall.

What a job they've got to keep it up.
Their poor, idealist foreheads naked capitals
To the entablature of clouded heaven.

When the skies are going to fall, fall they will
In a great chute and rush of débâcle downwards.

Oh and I wish the high and super-gothic heavens would come down now,
The heavens above, that we yearn to and aspire to.

I do not yearn, nor aspire, for I am a blind Samson.
And what is daylight to me that I should look skyward?
Only I grope among you, pale-faces, caryatids, as among a forest of pillars that hold up the dome of high ideal heaven
Which is my prison,
And all these human pillars of loftiness, going stiff, metallic-stunned with the weight of their responsibility
I stumble against them.
Stumbling-blocks, painful ones.

To keep on holding up this ideal civilisation
Must be excruciating: unless you stiffen into metal, when it is easier to stand stock rigid than to move.

This is why I tug at them, individually, with my arm round their waist
The human pillars.
They are not stronger than I am, blind Samson.
The house sways.

I shall be so glad when it comes down.
I am so tired of the limitations of their Infinite.
I am so sick of the pretensions of the Spirit.
I am so weary of pale-face importance.

Am I not blind, at the round-turning mill?
Then why should I fear their pale faces?
Or love the effulgence of their holy light,
The sun of their righteousness?

To me, all faces are dark,
All lips are dusky and valved.

Save your lips, O pale-faces,
Which are slips of metal,

Like slits in an automatic-machine, you columns of give-and-take.

To me, the earth rolls ponderously, superbly
Coming my way without forethought or afterthought.
To me, men's footfalls fall with a dull, soft rumble, ominous and lovely,
Coming my way.

But not your foot-falls, pale-faces,
They are a clicketing of bits of disjointed metal
Working in motion.

To me, men are palpable, invisible nearnesses in the dark
Sending out magnetic vibrations of warning, pitch-dark throbs of invitation.

But you, pale-faces,
You are painful, harsh-surfaced pillars that give off nothing except rigidity,
And I jut against you if I try to move, for you are everywhere, and I am blind,
Sightless among all your visuality,
You staring caryatids.

See if I don't bring you down, and all your high opinion
And all your ponderous roofed-in erection of right and wrong
Your particular heavens,
With a smash.

See if your skies aren't falling!
And my head, at least, is thick enough to stand it, the smash.

See if I don't move under a dark and nude, vast heaven
When your world is in ruins, under your fallen skies.
Caryatids, pale-faces.
See if I am not Lord of the dark and moving hosts
Before I die.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Ship of Death

I

Now it is autumn and the falling fruit
and the long journey towards oblivion.

The apples falling like great drops of dew
to bruise themselves an exit from themselves.

And it is time to go, to bid farewell
to one's own self, and find an exit
from the fallen self.

II

Have you built your ship of death, O have you?
O build your ship of death, for you will need it.

The grim frost is at hand, when the apples will fall
thick, almost thundrous, on the hardened earth.

And death is on the air like a smell of ashes!
Ah! can't you smell it?
And in the bruised body, the frightened soul
finds itself shrinking, wincing from the cold
that blows upon it through the orifices.

III

And can a man his own quietus make
with a bare bodkin?

With daggers, bodkins, bullets, man can make
a bruise or break of exit for his life;
but is that a quietus, O tell me, is it quietus?

Surely not so! for how could murder, even self-murder
ever a quietus make?

IV

O let us talk of quiet that we know,
that we can know, the deep and lovely quiet
of a strong heart at peace!

How can we this, our own quietus, make?

V

Build then the ship of death, for you must take
the longest journey, to oblivion.

And die the death, the long and painful death

that lies between the old self and the new.

Already our bodies are fallen, bruised, badly bruised,
already our souls are oozing through the exit
of the cruel bruise.

Already the dark and endless ocean of the end
is washing in through the breaches of our wounds,
Already the flood is upon us.

Oh build your ship of death, your little ark
and furnish it with food, with little cakes, and wine
for the dark flight down oblivion.

VI

Piecemeal the body dies, and the timid soul
has her footing washed away, as the dark flood rises.

We are dying, we are dying, we are all of us dying
and nothing will stay the death-flood rising within us
and soon it will rise on the world, on the outside world.

We are dying, we are dying, piecemeal our bodies are dying
and our strength leaves us,
and our soul cowers naked in the dark rain over the flood,
cowering in the last branches of the tree of our life.

VII

We are dying, we are dying, so all we can do
is now to be willing to die, and to build the ship
of death to carry the soul on the longest journey.

A little ship, with oars and food
and little dishes, and all accoutrements
fitting and ready for the departing soul.

Now launch the small ship, now as the body dies
and life departs, launch out, the fragile soul
in the fragile ship of courage, the ark of faith
with its store of food and little cooking pans
and change of clothes,
upon the flood's black waste
upon the waters of the end
upon the sea of death, where still we sail
darkly, for we cannot steer, and have no port.

There is no port, there is nowhere to go
only the deepening blackness darkening still
blacker upon the soundless, ungurgling flood
darkness at one with darkness, up and down

and sideways utterly dark, so there is no direction any more
and the little ship is there; yet she is gone.
She is not seen, for there is nothing to see her by.
She is gone! gone! and yet
somewhere she is there.
Nowhere!

VIII

And everything is gone, the body is gone
completely under, gone, entirely gone.
The upper darkness is heavy as the lower,
between them the little ship
is gone

It is the end, it is oblivion.

IX

And yet out of eternity a thread
separates itself on the blackness,
a horizontal thread
that fumes a little with pallor upon the dark.

Is it illusion? or does the pallor fume
A little higher?
Ah wait, wait, for there's the dawn
the cruel dawn of coming back to life
out of oblivion

Wait, wait, the little ship
drifting, beneath the deathly ashy grey
of a flood-dawn.

Wait, wait! even so, a flush of yellow
and strangely, O chilled wan soul, a flush of rose.

A flush of rose, and the whole thing starts again.

X

The flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell
emerges strange and lovely.
And the little ship wings home, faltering and lapsing
on the pink flood,
and the frail soul steps out, into the house again
filling the heart with peace.

Swings the heart renewed with peace
even of oblivion.

Oh build your ship of death. Oh build it!

for you will need it.
For the voyage of oblivion awaits you.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Song of a Man Who has Come Through

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!
If only I am sensitive, subtle, oh, delicate, a winged gift!
If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
By the fine, fine wind that takes its course though the chaos of the world
Like a fine, and exquisite chisel, a wedge-blade inserted;
If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge
Diven by invisible split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the Hesperides.

Oh, for the wonder that bubbles into my soul,
I would be a good fountain, a good well-head,
Would blur no whisper, spoil no expression.

What is the knocking?
What is the knocking at the door in the night?
It's somebody wants to do us harm.

No, no, it is the three strange angels.
Admit them, admit them.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Virgin Mother

My little love, my darling,
You were a doorway to me;
You let me out of the confines
Into this strange countrie,
Where people are crowded like thistles,
Yet are shapely and comely to see.

My little love, my dearest
Twice have you issued me,
Once from your womb, sweet mother,
Once from myself, to be
Free of all hearts, my darling,
Of each heart's home-life free.

And so, my love, my mother,
I shall always be true to you;
Twice I am born, my dearest,
To life, and to death, in you;
And this is the life hereafter
Wherein I am true.

I kiss you good-bye, my darling,
Our ways are different now;
You are a seed in the night-time,
I am a man, to plough
The difficult glebe of the future
For God to endow.

I kiss you good-bye, my dearest,
It is finished between us here.
Oh, if I were calm as you are,
Sweet and still on your bier!
O God, if I had not to leave you
Alone, my dear!

Let the last word be uttered,
Oh grant the farewell is said!
Spare me the strength to leave you
Now you are dead.
I must go, but my soul lies helpless
Beside your bed.

David Herbert Lawrence

The Wild Common

The quick sparks on the gorse bushes are leaping,
Little jets of sunlight-texture imitating flame;
Above them, exultant, the peewits are sweeping:
They are lords of the desolate wastes of sadness their screamings proclaim.

Rabbits, handfuls of brown earth, lie
Low-rounded on the mournful grass they have bitten down to the quick.
Are they asleep? -- Are they alive? -- Now see, when I
Move my arms the hill bursts and heaves under their spurting kick.

The common flaunts bravely; but below, from the rushes
Crowds of glittering king-cups surge to challenge the blossoming bushes;
There the lazy streamlet pushes
Its curious course mildly; here it wakes again, leaps, laughs, and gushes.

Into a deep pond, an old sheep-dip,
Dark, overgrown with willows, cool, with the brook ebbing through so slow,
Naked on the steep, soft lip
Of the bank I stand watching my own white shadow quivering to and fro.

What if the gorse flowers shrivelled and kissing were lost?
Without the pulsing waters, where were the marigolds and the songs of the brook!
If my veins and my breasts with love embossed
Withered, my insolent soul would be gone like flowers that the hot wind took.

So my soul like a passionate woman turns,
Filled with remorseful terror to the man she scorned, and her love
For myself in my own eyes' laughter burns,
Runs ecstatic over the pliant folds rippling down to my belly from the breast-lights above.

Over my sunlit skin the warm, clinging air,
Rich with the songs of seven larks singing at once, goes kissing me glad.
And the soul of the wind and my blood compare
Their wandering happiness, and the wind, wasted in liberty, drifts on and is sad.

Oh but the water loves me and folds me,
Plays with me, sways me, lifts me and sinks me as though it were living blood,
Blood of a heaving woman who holds me,
Owning my supple body a rare glad thing, supremely good.

David Herbert Lawrence

Thought

Thought, I love thought.
But not the juggling and twisting of already existent ideas
I despise that self-important game.
Thought is the welling up of unknown life into consciousness,
Thought is the testing of statements on the touchstone of consciousness,
Thought is gazing onto the face of life, and reading what can be read,
Thought is pondering over experience, and coming to conclusion.
Thought is not a trick, or an exercise, or a set of dodges,
Thought is a man in his wholeness, wholly attending.

David Herbert Lawrence

To Women As Far As I'm Concerned

The feelings I don't have I don't have.
The feeling I don't have, I won't say I have.
The feelings you say you have, you don't have.
The feelings you would like us both to have, we neither of us have.
The feelings people ought to have, they never have.
If people say they've got feelings, you may be pretty sure they haven't got them.
So if you want either of us to feel anything at all
You'd better abandon all ideas of feelings altogether.

David Herbert Lawrence

Tortoise Family Connections

On he goes, the little one,
Bud of the universe,
Pediment of life.
Setting off somewhere, apparently.
Whither away, brisk egg?

His mother deposited him on the soil as if he were no more than droppings,
And now he scuffles tinily past her as if she were an old rusty tin.

A mere obstacle,
He veers round the slow great mound of her --
Tortoises always foresee obstacles.

It is no use my saying to him in an emotional voice:
'This is your Mother, she laid you when you were an egg.'

He does not even trouble to answer: 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'
He wearily looks the other way,
And she even more wearily looks another way still,
Each with the utmost apathy,
Incognisant,
Unaware,
Nothing.

As for papa,
He snaps when I offer him his offspring,
Just as he snaps when I poke a bit of stick at him,
Because he is irascible this morning, an irascible tortoise
Being touched with love, and devoid of fatherliness.

Father and mother,
And three little brothers,
And all rambling aimless, like little perambulating pebbles scattered in the garden,
Not knowing each other from bits of earth or old tins.

Except that papa and mama are old acquaintances, of course,
Though family feeling there is none, not even the beginnings.

Fatherless, motherless, brotherless, sisterless
Little tortoise.

Row on then, small pebble,
Over the clods of the autumn, wind-chilled sunshine,
Young gaiety.

Does he look for a companion?

No, no, don't think it.
He doesn't know he is alone;
Isolation is his birthright,
This atom.

To row forward, and reach himself tall on spiny toes,
To travel, to burrow into a little loose earth, afraid of the night,
To crop a little substance,
To move, and to be quite sure that he is moving:
Basta!
To be a tortoise!
Think of it, in a garden of inert clods
A brisk, brindled little tortoise, all to himself --
Adam!

In a garden of pebbles and insects
To roam, and feel the slow heart beat
Tortoise-wise, the first bell sounding
From the warm blood, in the dark-creation morning.

Moving, and being himself,
Slow, and unquestioned,
And inordinately there, O stoic!
Wandering in the slow triumph of his own existence,
Ringing the soundless bell of his presence in chaos,
And biting the frail grass arrogantly,
Decidedly arrogantly.

David Herbert Lawrence

Tortoise Gallantry

Making his advances
He does not look at her, nor sniff at her,
No, not even sniff at her, his nose is blank.
Only he senses the vulnerable folds of skin
That work beneath her while she sprawls along
In her ungainly pace,
Her folds of skin that work and row
Beneath the earth-soiled hovel in which she moves.

And so he strains beneath her housey wall,
And catches her trouser-legs in his beak
Suddenly, or her skinny limb,
And strange and grimly drags at her
Like a dog,
Only agelessly silent, with a reptile's awful persistency.

Grim, gruesome gallantry, to which he is doomed.
Dragged out of an eternity of silent isolation
And doomed to partiality, partial being,
Ache, and want of being,
Want,
Self-exposure, hard humiliation, need to add himself on to her.

Born to walk alone,
Fore-runner,
Now suddenly distracted into this mazy side-track,
This awkward, harrowing pursuit,
This grim necessity from within.

Does she know
As she moves eternally slowly away?
Or is he driven against her with a bang, like a bird flying in the dark against a window,
All knowledgeless?

The awful concussion,
And the still more awful need to persist, to follow, follow, continue,

Driven, after aeons of pristine, fore-god-like singleness and oneness,
At the end of some mysterious, red-hot iron,
Driven away from himself into her tracks,
Forced to crash against her.

Stiff, gallant, irascible, crook-legged reptile,
Little gentleman,
Sorry plight,
We ought to look the other way.

Save that, having come with you so far,
We will go on to the end.

David Herbert Lawrence

Tortoise Shell

The Cross, the Cross
Goes deeper in than we know,
Deeper into life;
Right into the marrow
And through the bone.
Along the back of the baby tortoise
The scales are locked in an arch like a bridge,
Scale-lapping, like a lobster's sections
Or a bee's.

Then crossways down his sides
Tiger-stripes and wasp-bands.

Five, and five again, and five again,
And round the edges twenty-five little ones,
The sections of the baby tortoise shell.

Four, and a keystone;
Four, and a keystone;
Four, and a keystone;
Then twenty-four, and a tiny little keystone.

It needed Pythagoras to see life playing with counters on the living back
Of the baby tortoise;
Life establishing the first eternal mathematical tablet,
Not in stone, like the Judean Lord, or bronze, but in life-clouded, life-rosy tortoise shell.

The first little mathematical gentleman
Stepping, wee mite, in his loose trousers
Under all the eternal dome of mathematical law.

Fives, and tens,
Threes and fours and twelves,
All the volte face of decimals,
The whirligig of dozens and the pinnacle of seven.

Turn him on his back,
The kicking little beetle,
And there again, on his shell-tender, earth-touching belly,
The long cleavage of division, upright of the eternal cross
And on either side count five,
On each side, two above, on each side, two below
The dark bar horizontal.

The Cross!
It goes right through him, the sprottling insect,
Through his cross-wise cloven psyche,
Through his five-fold complex-nature.

So turn him over on his toes again;
Four pin-point toes, and a problematical thumb-piece,
Four rowing limbs, and one wedge-balancing head,

Four and one makes five, which is the clue to all mathematics.

The Lord wrote it all down on the little slate
Of the baby tortoise.
Outward and visible indication of the plan within,
The complex, manifold involvednes,s of an individual creature
Plotted out
On this small bird, this rudiment,
This little dome, this pediment
Of all creation,
This slow one.

David Herbert Lawrence

Tortoise Shout

I thought he was dumb,
I said he was dumb,
Yet I've heard him cry.

First faint scream,
Out of life's unfathomable dawn,
Far off, so far, like a madness, under the horizon's dawning rim,
Far, far off, far scream.

Tortoise in extremis.

Why were we crucified into sex?
Why were we not left rounded off, and finished in ourselves,
As we began,
As he certainly began, so perfectly alone?

A far, was-it-audible scream,
Or did it sound on the plasm direct?

Worse than the cry of the new-born,
A scream,
A yell,
A shout,
A pæan,
A death-agony,
A birth-cry,
A submission,
All tiny, tiny, far away, reptile under the first dawn.

War-cry, triumph, acute-delight, death-scream reptilian,
Why was the veil torn?
The silken shriek of the soul's torn membrane?
The male soul's membrane
Torn with a shriek half music, half horror.

Crucifixion.
Male tortoise, cleaving behind the hovel-wall of that dense female,
Mounted and tense, spread-eagle, out-reaching out of the shell
In tortoise-nakedness,
Long neck, and long vulnerable limbs extruded, spread-eagle over her house-roof,
And the deep, secret, all-penetrating tail curved beneath her walls,
Reaching and gripping tense, more reaching anguish in uttermost tension
Till suddenly, in the spasm of coition, tupping like a jerking leap, and oh!
Opening its clenched face from his outstretched neck
And giving that fragile yell, that scream,
Super-audible,
From his pink, cleft, old-man's mouth,
Giving up the ghost,
Or screaming in Pentecost, receiving the ghost.

His scream, and his moment's subsidence,
The moment of eternal silence,

Yet unreleased, and after the moment, the sudden, startling jerk of coition, and at once
The inexpressible faint yell --
And so on, till the last plasm of my body was melted back
To the primeval rudiments of life, and the secret.

So he tups, and screams
Time after time that frail, torn scream
After each jerk, the longish interval,
The tortoise eternity,
Agelong, reptilian persistence,
Heart-throb, slow heart-throb, persistent for the next spasm.

I remember, when I was a boy,
I heard the scream of a frog, which was caught with his foot in the mouth of an up-starting snake;
I remember when I first heard bull-frogs break into sound in the spring;
I remember hearing a wild goose out of the throat of night
Cry loudly, beyond the lake of waters;
I remember the first time, out of a bush in the darkness, a nightingale's piercing cries and gurgles startled the depths of my soul;
I remember the scream of a rabbit as I went through a wood at midnight;
I remember the heifer in her heat, blorting and blorting through the hours, persistent and irrepressible;
I remember my first terror hearing the howl of weird, amorous cats;
I remember the scream of a terrified, injured horse, the sheet-lightning
And running away from the sound of a woman in labor, something like an owl whooing,
And listening inwardly to the first bleat of a lamb,
The first wail of an infant,
And my mother singing to herself,
And the first tenor singing of the passionate throat of a young collier, who has long since drunk himself to death,
The first elements of foreign speech
On wild dark lips.

And more than all these,
And less than all these,
This last,
Strange, faint coition yell
Of the male tortoise at extremity,
Tiny from under the very edge of the farthest far-off horizon of life.

The cross,
The wheel on which our silence first is broken,
Sex, which breaks up our integrity, our single inviolability, our deep silence
Tearing a cry from us.

Sex, which breaks us into voice, sets us calling across the deeps, calling, calling for the complement,
Singing, and calling, and singing again, being answered, having found.

Torn, to become whole again, after long seeking for what is lost,
The same cry from the tortoise as from Christ, the Osiris-cry of abandonment,

That which is whole, torn asunder,
That which is in part, finding its whole again throughout the universe.

David Herbert Lawrence

Trees in the Garden

Ah in the thunder air
how still the trees are!

And the lime-tree, lovely and tall, every leaf silent
hardly looses even a last breath of perfume.

And the ghostly, creamy coloured little tree of leaves
white, ivory white among the rambling greens
how evanescent, variegated elder, she hesitates on the green grass
as if, in another moment, she would disappear
with all her grace of foam!

And the larch that is only a column, it goes up too tall to see:
and the balsam-pines that are blue with the grey-blue blueness of
things from the sea,
and the young copper beech, its leaves red-rosy at the ends
how still they are together, they stand so still
in the thunder air, all strangers to one another
as the green grass glows upwards, strangers in the silent garden.

David Herbert Lawrence

Troth with the Dead

The moon is broken in twain, and half a moon
Before me lies on the still, pale floor of the sky;
The other half of the broken coin of troth
Is buried away in the dark, where the still dead lie.
They buried her half in the grave when they laid her away;
I had pushed it gently in among the thick of her hair
Where it gathered towards the plait, on that very last day;
And like a moon in secret it is shining there.

My half shines in the sky, for a general sign
Of the troth with the dead I pledged myself to keep;
Turning its broken edge to the dark, it shines indeed
Like the sign of a lover who turns to the dark of sleep.
Against my heart the inviolate sleep breaks still
In darkened waves whose breaking echoes o'er
The wondering world of my wakeful day, till I'm lost
In the midst of the places I knew so well before.

David Herbert Lawrence

Virgin Youth

Now and again
All my body springs alive,
And the life that is polarised in my eyes,
That quivers between my eyes and mouth,
Flies like a wild thing across my body,
Leaving my eyes half-empty, and clamorous,
Filling my still breasts with a flush and a flame,
Gathering the soft ripples below my breast
Into urgent, passionate waves,
And my soft, slumbering belly
Quivering awake with one impulse of desire,
Gathers itself fiercely together;
And my docile, fluent arms
Knotting themselves with wild strength
To clasp—what they have never clasped.
Then I tremble, and go trembling
Under the wild, strange tyranny of my body,
Till it has spent itself,
And the relentless nodality of my eyes reasserts itself,
Till the bursten flood of life ebbs back to my eyes,
Back from my beautiful, lonely body
Tired and unsatisfied.

David Herbert Lawrence

We are Transmitters

As we live, we are transmitters of life.
And when we fail to transmit life, life fails to flow through us.

That is part of the mystery of sex, it is a flow onwards.
Sexless people transmit nothing.

And if, as we work, we can transmit life into our work,
life, still more life, rushes into us to compensate, to be ready
and we ripple with life through the days.

Even if it is a woman making an apple dumpling, or a man a stool,
if life goes into the pudding, good is the pudding
good is the stool,
content is the woman, with fresh life rippling in to her,
content is the man.

Give, and it shall be given unto you
is still the truth about life.
But giving life is not so easy.
It doesn't mean handing it out to some mean fool, or letting the living dead eat you up.
It means kindling the life-quality where it was not,
even if it's only in the whiteness of a washed pocket-handkerchief.

David Herbert Lawrence

Week-Night Service

The five old bells
Are hurrying and eagerly calling,
Imploring, protesting
They know, but clamorously falling
Into gabbling incoherence, never resting,
Like spattering showers from a bursten sky-rocket dropping
In splashes of sound, endlessly, never stopping.

The silver moon
That somebody has spun so high
To settle the question, yes or no, has caught
In the net of the night's balloon,
And sits with a smooth bland smile up there in the sky
Smiling at naught,
Unless the winking star that keeps her company
Makes little jests at the bells' insanity,
As if he knew aught!

The patient Night
Sits indifferent, hugged in her rags,
She neither knows nor cares
Why the old church sobs and brags;
The light distresses her eyes, and tears
Her old blue cloak, as she crouches and covers her face,
Smiling, perhaps, if we knew it, at the bells' loud clattering disgrace.

The wise old trees
Drop their leaves with a faint, sharp hiss of contempt,
While a car at the end of the street goes by with a laugh;
As by degrees
The poor bells cease, and the Night is exempt,
And the stars can chaff
The ironic moon at their ease, while the dim old church
Is peopled with shadows and sounds and ghosts that lurch
In its cenotaph.

David Herbert Lawrence

Whales Weep Not!

They say the sea is cold, but the sea contains
the hottest blood of all, and the wildest, the most urgent.

All the whales in the wider deeps, hot are they, as they urge
on and on, and dive beneath the icebergs.
The right whales, the sperm-whales, the hammer-heads, the killers
there they blow, there they blow, hot wild white breath out of the sea!

And they rock, and they rock, through the sensual ageless ages
on the depths of the seven seas,
and through the salt they reel with drunk delight
and in the tropics tremble they with love
and roll with massive, strong desire, like gods.
Then the great bull lies up against his bride
in the blue deep of the sea

as mountain pressing on mountain, in the zest of life:
and out of the inward roaring of the inner red ocean of whale blood
the long tip reaches strong, intense, like the maelstrom-tip, and comes to rest
in the clasp and the soft, wild clutch of a she-whale's fathomless body.

And over the bridge of the whale's strong phallus, linking the wonder of whales
the burning archangels under the sea keep passing, back and forth,
keep passing archangels of bliss
from him to her, from her to him, great Cherubim
that wait on whales in mid-ocean, suspended in the waves of the sea
great heaven of whales in the waters, old hierarchies.
And enormous mother whales lie dreaming suckling their whale-tender young
and dreaming with strange whale eyes wide open in the waters of the beginning and
the end.

And bull-whales gather their women and whale-calves in a ring
when danger threatens, on the surface of the ceaseless flood
and range themselves like great fierce Seraphim facing the threat
encircling their huddled monsters of love.
and all this happiness in the sea, in the salt
where God is also love, but without words:
and Aphrodite is the wife of whales
most happy, happy she!

and Venus among the fishes skips and is a she-dolphin
she is the gay, delighted porpoise sporting with love and the sea
she is the female tunny-fish, round and happy among the males
and dense with happy blood, dark rainbow bliss in the sea.

David Herbert Lawrence

Willy Wet-Leg

I can’t stand Willy Wet-Leg,
  Can’t stand him at any price.
  He’s resigned, and when you hit him
  he lets you hit him twice.

David Herbert Lawrence

Worm Either Way

If you live along with all the other people
and are just like them, and conform, and are nice
you're just a worm --

and if you live with all the other people
and you don't like them and won't be like them and won't conform
then you're just the worm that has turned,
in either case, a worm.

The conforming worm stays just inside the skin
respectably unseen, and cheerfully gnaws away at the heart of life,
making it all rotten inside.

The unconforming worm -- that is, the worm that has turned --
gnaws just the same, gnawing the substance out of life,
but he insists on gnawing a little hole in the social epidermis
and poking his head out and waving himself
and saying: Look at me, I am not respectable,
I do all the things the bourgeois daren't do,
I booze and fornicate and use foul language and despise your honest man.--

But why should the worm that has turned protest so much?
The bonnie bonnie bourgeois goes a-whoring up back streets just the same.
The busy busy bourgeois imbibes his little share
just the same
if not more.
The pretty pretty bourgeois pinks his language just as pink
if not pinker,
and in private boasts his exploits even louder, if you ask me,
than the other.
While as to honesty, Oh look where the money lies!

So I can't see where the worm that has turned puts anything over
the worm that is too cunning to turn.
On the contrary, he merely gives himself away.
The turned worm shouts. I bravely booze!
the other says. Have one with me!
The turned worm boasts: I copulate!
the unturned says: You look it.
You're a d----- b----- b----- p----- bb-----, says the worm that's turned.
Quite! says the other. Cuckoo!

David Herbert Lawrence