

Classic Poetry Series

**Muriel Stuart**  
**- poems -**

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## Muriel Stuart(1889-1967)

Muriel Stuart (1885, Norbury, South London - 1967) The daughter of a Scottish barrister, was a poet, particularly concerned with the topic of sexual politics, though she first wrote poems about World War I. She later gave up poetry writing; her last work was published in the 1930s. She was born Muriel Stuart Irwin.

She was hailed by Hugh MacDiarmid as the best woman poet of the Scottish Renaissance although she was not Scottish, but English. Despite this, his comment led to her inclusion in many Scottish anthologies. Thomas Hardy described her poetry as "Superlatively good".

Her most famous poem "In the Orchard" is entirely dialogic and in no kind of verse form, which makes it innovative for its time. She does use rhyme: a mixture of half-rhyme and rhyming couplets (a,b,a,b form)

Other famous poems of hers are "The Seed Shop", "The Fools" and "Man and his Makers"

Muriel also wrote a gardening book called *Gardener's Nightcap* (1938) which was later reprinted by Persephone Books:.

She died on 18th December 1967.

# A Chicot

IN days of ancient history  
Who were you? Tell me if you know.  
Between your kisses answer me  
To-night, Chicot.

Were you a faun by Castaly  
Tracking Urania or Clio?  
Or a white boy in Arcady  
Astray, Chicot?

Were you a satin-supple page  
Swinging a curtain to and fro,  
Chanting some impudent addage  
Of love, Chicot?

Were you the subtlest cardinal  
That ever blessing did bestow?  
At Fontarabia did you fall,  
Fighting, Chicot?

Or at some monarch' table set,  
Did the bells twink at wrist and toe?  
Were you Brusquet or Dagonet,  
Or else, Chicot?

Something you were of all of these,  
Wise, gay, serene--that hid below,  
More sad for all your subtleties,  
Something, Chicot.

You brace your armor well tonight,--  
Too well for any blood to flow;  
You'd not betray in any fight  
A wound, Chicot!

I think you would not flinch beneath  
Life's whips, but after every blow  
Stand up again, and set your teeth  
And smile, Chicot.

Weariness waits on wariness,  
There's leaping flame beneath the snow--  
All sorts of things that none would guess  
Of you, Chicot!

Are you a lover? No and yes!  
Are you a comrade? Yes and no!  
What are you? Neither more nor less  
Than just Chicot!

Take what a passing poet sings  
Before to-morrow bids us go,  
In memory of--many things,  
And you, Chicot!

Muriel Stuart

# A Song For Old Love

There shall be a song for both of us that day  
Though fools say you have long outlived your songs,  
And when, perhaps, because your hair is grey,  
You go unsung, to whom all praise belongs,  
And no men kiss your hands--your fragile hands  
Folded like empty shells on sea-spurned sands.  
And you that were dawn whereat men shouted once  
Are sunset now, but with one worshipper,  
Then to your twilight heart this song shall be  
Sweeter than those that did your youth announce  
For your brave beautiful spirit is lovelier  
Than once your lovely body was to me.  
Your folded hands and your shut eyelids stir  
A passion that Time has crowned with sanctity.  
Young fools shall wonder why, your youth being over,  
You are so sung still, but your heart will know  
That he who loved your soul was your true lover  
And the last song alone was worthy you.

Muriel Stuart

## After

WHEN, on an empty night in later years  
Thou ponderest over sorrowful sweet things,  
While troubling with cold hands the muted strings  
Of Memory's lute now silent in thine ears,  
These words shall sweep with soft descent of tears--  
Shall wound the air with sudden thrust of wings  
Bringing the Past to thee as Winter brings  
To naked boughs the colour April wears.  
Thou shalt read over, in less fortunate days,  
Forgotten pages till thy heart be moved  
To sudden pity and to passionate praise  
Of what thou didst not heed nor understand;  
Letting the book drop from thy trembling hand,  
"Once," thou shalt say and pause . . . "How I was loved!"

Muriel Stuart

# Andromeda Unfettered

ANDROMEDA.

Chained to the years by the measureless wrong of man,  
Here I hang, here I suffer, here I cry,  
Since the light sprang forth from the dark, and the day began;  
Since the sky was sundered and saved from the sea,  
And the mouth of the beast was warm on the breast of the sod,  
And the bird's feed glimmered like rings on the blossoming tree,  
And the rivers ran silver with scales, and the earth was thronged  
With creatures lovely and sane and wild and free;  
Till the Image of God arose from the dust and trod  
Woman and beast and bird into slavery.  
Who has wronged me? Man who all earth has wronged:  
Who has mocked me? Man, who made mock of God.

CHORUS OF FIRST WOMEN.

Nay, what do you seek?  
If of men we be chained,  
Our chains be of gold,  
If the fetters we break  
What conquest is gained?  
Shall a hill-top out-spread a pavilion more safe than our palace hold?

Without toil, we are fed,  
We have gold to our hire,  
We have kings at our thrall,  
And made smooth is our bed  
For the fools of desire.  
We falter the world with our eyelids, at our laughter men scatter and fall.

What is freedom but danger,  
And death, and disaster?  
We are safe: Fool, to crave  
The unknown, the stranger!  
More fettered the back than the burden; man bows; he is slave to a slave!

ANDROMEDA.

Yes, in most bitter waters have they drowned  
My spirit, And my soul grows grey on sleep!  
What if with wreaths my empty hands are bound?  
I am slave for all their roses, and I keep  
A tryst with cunning, and a troth with tears.  
Time has kissed out my lips, and I am dumb.  
I am so long called fool, I am become  
That fool-of street or shrine. By body bears  
Burden of men and children. I have been  
All that man has desired or dreamed of me.  
I have trodden a double-weary way-with Sin,  
Or with Sin's pale, cold sister Chastity.  
I am a thing of twilight. I am afraid.  
Dull now and tame now; of myself so shamed.  
Fortressed against redemption; visited  
Of the old dream so seldom, as things tamed  
forget the life that their wild brother leads.  
I am a hurt beast flinching at the light.  
I have been palaced from sun, and night  
Runs in my blood, and all night's blushless deeds!

#### CHORUS OF SECOND WOMEN.

Oh world so blind, so dumb to our desiring,--  
To the vague cry and clamour of our being!  
Oh world so dark to our supreme aspiring,--  
To the pitiful strange travail of our freeing!--

We weary not for love and lips to love us;  
These have been ours too often and too long;  
We have been hived too close; too sweet above us  
Tastes the bees mouth to our honey-wearied tongue.

Not love, not love! Love was our first undoing,  
We have lived too long on heart-beats. None can tame  
The mind's new hunger, famished and pursuing,  
Unleashed, and crying its oppressor's name.

All that the world could give man's mind inherits:  
Two paths were set us. Baffled, weeping, yearning,  
Tossed between God and man, rebellious spirits,  
We wandered, now escaped and unreturning.



We are arming, waking, terribly unfolding,  
The spent world shudders in a new creation,  
A dread and pitiless flowering beholding,  
Burst from the dark root of our long frustration!

ANDROMEDA.

Did God but build this temple for desire  
That man defraud my birthright with a kiss?  
Did he not give me a spirit to aspire  
Beyond man's fortress and necessities?  
Man chains the thing he fears, who fears the free;  
No wildest beast was tamed as I was tamed,  
No prey has been so tracked, no flesh so shamed;  
Man hunts no quarry as he hunted me.  
Of all the things created, one alone  
Rose from the earth his equal; only the might  
Of his brute strength could bid my soul renounce  
Its claim-forswear its just, predestined right.  
To what poor shape of folly am I grown,  
In whom God breathed an equal spirit once!

CHORUS OF FIRST WOMEN.

Oh sheltering arms that have bound you,  
Oh hearts you have shaped to your will!  
The lordliest lovers have crowned you,  
They have knelt as they kneel to you still.

Why speak you so ill of such lovers,  
Why question the will of such lords?  
From your lips, from your laughter, Love offers  
The world on a litter of swords,

They have borne for you death and disasters,  
They have held you with kingdoms at stake.  
The kings of the earth and the masters  
Were poets and fools for your sake!

ANDROMEDA.

Was I made free for all their swords and songs?  
Do fairest songs sung to caged birds sound sweet?  
Did their spears hold the door whence came my wrongs?  
Did they sing my spirit and the hurt of it?  
There was no battle for my freedom's sake;  
They never sang pity of me. Not those  
Who laud it cage the eagle: not those who break  
The delicate stem most deeply love the rose.  
If we have taken the path towards the hills  
They have noosed our feet, they have kenneled us again.  
If we have dared for separate minds and wills,  
We have marched to men's laughter, and the mock of men.  
Oh lords, if you be strong why fear to raise  
Our groping, pitiful bodies from the dust?  
If you were pre-ordained to shape our ways,  
Why has your power shaped that way so ill?  
Only the hireling master wreaks his will  
On slaves, lest rulers they become at last,  
And his poor hour of pride is waned and passed:  
The rightful lord never fears to be just.

#### CHORUS OF SECOND WOMEN.

Stars, you run your course unhidden;  
Sun, the sky puts forth no hand  
To constrain you; unforbidden  
Clouds in aëry harness stand;  
And unchallenged comes the moon up, right and slow upon the land.

Dew, no shadow moves behind you  
To avert your glittering;  
Wind, your race is undenied you;  
Lightning, you have room to spring!  
For the great, free hand of Nature gives sweet leave to everything.

One great law controls their being,--  
To their utmost bids them rise;  
From the snowdrop, her bell freeing,  
To the bow that leaps the skies;  
For the universal order of the world in freedom lies.

But one lies here lost and driven

From the free primeval way,  
From the rights that she was given,  
That she asks of man to-day;  
For her soul has faced her masters, and her spirit stands at bay.

#### ANDROMEDA.

I am the Last Begotten. I am the Rose  
Flung for the bed of kings. I am the Cause  
Of this world's ills, its follies and its woes;  
I am the unclean, the carnal, I make men pause  
From God. I am Sex, and Il vain bodily Lust  
That men desire and spit on, and would not lose  
For the bride of Heaven. I am the little Dust  
Blown from their bitter mouths. I am the Way  
of death. I am the soiled and spotted One  
Bidden in silence to the Church's feast;  
Yea, of all bitterest foes, the crafty priest  
Is mine; no hand has flung a crueler stone;  
Of all oppressors him I most accuse.  
I m the Fool that led the world astray,  
My motherhood the fruits of my first sin.  
I am the Slave to whom sick masters pray.  
I am the Mother. I am Magdalen.  
I am the Dæmon, I drink at dead men's lips.  
My grail is blood at midnight. I am burned  
In which craft. I am the Weal of the world's whips.  
No age has risen that has not seen me scorned.  
I am the Harlot, the Accursed Thing, the Prey;  
Bartered for bread; like cattle willed away;  
Sold at the shambles. I am the Chastity  
Men breed for spoiling. I am the soul at bay.  
I am what men have made and marred of me.

#### CHORUS OF SECOND WOMEN.

Oh, behold, oh, beware,  
Andromeda! . . .  
A wing on the air,  
A step on the sands!  
Oh be silent lest he  
Who is master prepare,

As of old at your plea,  
A new chain for your hands.

Oh, behold, oh, beware,  
Andromeda!  
She hears not, her cries  
Still tremble the air.  
O sands, set a snare  
For him. Merciful skies,  
Uncradle your mist!  
O crag, beak your breast  
In murdering stone!  
O lightning, untwist  
Your fang from the cloud!  
O winds, shriek aloud  
Till the sea heave and groan,  
And unlock its white thunder  
Till its legions be hurled,  
And the beach quakes thereunder . . .  
Oh, Fool of the World!

(PERSEUS appears on the sands near ANDROMEDA.)

PERSEUS.

Who crieth with a cry long heard of me?

ANDROMEDA.

The rebel spirit of woman that would be free.

PERSEUS.

How is she named whose wild lips so crave?

ANDROMEDA.

This is the World's Fool. This is the Slave.

PERSEUS.

Who has wronged her?

ANDROMEDA.

The ancient spirit of man.

PERSEUS.

Long was she chained?

ANDROMEDA.

Since the world began.

PERSEUS.

Who are her masters?

ANDROMEDA.

The lords of pride and lust.

PERSEUS.

Whence comes she?

ANDROMEDA.

From dust.

PERSEUS.

Where goes she?

ANDROMEDA.

To dust!

CHORUS OF FIRST WOMEN.

Is he fooled by her hair,  
Is he tranced by her eyes,  
That he draweth him near,

That he speaketh him wise? . . .

He has spoken again,  
He has taken her hands,  
He has loosened her chain,  
Unfettered she stands!

PERSEUS.

Stand there! Behold the new, uncharted day-  
Not as a fool made sweet for fools to kiss;  
Not as a saint to whom sick masters pray;  
no more the sad shell singing of men's lust;  
No more the sum of priest's pale sophistries;  
But as men stand, unchallenged, equal, free,  
Each path to take and every race to run.  
Stand forth, O shining equal in the sun!  
Unfold, unspring, outblossom from the dust,  
O divinist playfellow even as we!

ANDROMEDA.

Where is he who chained me? I am weak.  
I crouch still, whom the years forbade to stand.  
The chain is still remembered on my neck,  
There are the marks of slaves still in this hand.

PERSEUS.

No more shall he who chained you forge that chain;  
He has looked upon Medusa, and has seen  
What he has made of woman. To him turned  
Is the last face (who shall never see again)  
With its hissing, furious hair, the eyelids burned  
With the eye's hate, slime where the lips have been,  
That tumbled death upon him like a stone;  
And in your name Medusa smiled and spurned  
A dying face more dreadful than her own.

ANDROMEDA.

The shackled feet of centuries cannot keep

Pace yet with feet that have outstripped the world.  
For the maimed even the riven way is steep.  
I am so strange to greatness, I am hurled  
Unsceptered to my glory! I am now  
Almost what you have called me, as things take  
The colour of names men give them; as things grow  
Fierce if dubbed fierce, and weak if branded weak,  
And fools if given no name but foolishness.  
I have been branded fool in life and art,--  
Always a little lower, always the less,  
Until the intolerable prompting has grown part  
Of all I do; my labouring brain and heart  
By that self-doubt are shadowed and undone.  
Let me walk long beside you in the sun,  
Race, wrestle with you, grow wise and swift and strong.  
For I shall speak but foolish words at first  
Who was hindered of wisdom since the world began.  
I shall blunder and be so wayward who was nursed  
On fear and folly by the laws of man.

PERSEUS.

You shall not be less sweet that you are wise,  
And not less beautiful that you are strong.

ANDROMEDA.

I shall not see the scorn leap in your eyes?  
Your wisdom will not make my weakness wrong?

PERSEUS.

To the freed soul of woman I make my vow!  
Hand in hand we will walk in the sunrise now,  
No more implacable foes, but face to face,  
As masters of the world, and it shall be  
Under an equal law, with equal grace-  
A world where life is proud and sane and free.

ANDROMEDA.

Life must be borne. Together let us bear it!

There is no other answer to the vexed,  
Sad problem of the world.

PERSEUS.

Together, free of spirit,  
Of body free, one minded, equal sexed.

ANDROMEDA.

I claim of man a thousand centuries!  
Shall one poor decade serve to make me wise  
When men have knelt so long at wisdom's knees?

PERSEUS.

Till the last day grows dim to the last eyes!

ANDROMEDA.

Let us go forth. Comrade and friend at last.

PERSEUS.

Comrade and friend! For me a new day lies,  
Splendid and strange. For you the night is passed.

CHORUS OF SECOND WOMEN.

They rise, they go forth, foot by foot, hand in hand.  
He goes not before, nor she after; together they stand.

He is no less though she be the more. Thus they meet,  
Long sundered, whom life made for union, now at rest, now complete.

They are separate and free, they are woven and one,  
And the world has grown quiet; between them the battle is done.

For this is the dream, the ideal, the designate plan,  
So slow of fulfillment, so sure, God's prevision of man.

Shared burden, shared wonder, shared vision and strife:



In their fellowship only is found the perfection, of life.

FINAL CHORUS.

From what clear wells of wonder  
Upspringing and upspringing,  
From what rock cleft asunder  
Leaps this stream cool and bright?  
What secret joy thereunder  
Melodiously uplinging  
Its heart in ceaseless music upon the lyre of light?

To what high aëry choiring  
This hour her way is winging,  
Her dewey troth to plight?  
This golden hour aspiring  
Above the glad bells ringing,  
More sweet than sweet bird's music, more fleet than fleet bird's flight?

What joy and hope here clinging,  
With gentle fingers twining,  
In wrapt and mystic rite?  
What love unblind is bringing  
Two mortals swift and shining,  
With faces to the morning, with footsteps from the night?

Muriel Stuart

# Annunciation

'The lord appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush and behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed.'-EXODOUS iii.2.

When to your virgin heart, unstirred, ungiven,  
Upon the quiet mountainside untrod,  
The sudden naked fire came down from heaven,  
Burning you with the very breath of God,

Was the sun lost? Were all the sweet stars dim  
While God raised round your head those walls of light?  
Were you locked dumbly, terribly with Him,  
Within that burning temple day and night?

What was it to have God there like a bird-  
God like a great, gold flower upon your breast-  
While He spake things that only one man heard,  
Face down before that glory manifest?

When that strange flame went up the mountain side,  
Were your forsaken lips so burned with gold  
That the creatures of the wild stood off and cried,  
And in your breast no blossom dared unfold?

Did you call back the startled birds to build,  
And put forth all your simple buds again,  
Forgetting how your branches once were filled,  
In sweet embrace of passing sun and rain?

Or were all other birds forbidden sing  
After those great, gold plumes had made their nest?  
Was, in its strange and awful blossoming,  
That great, gold flower the last upon your breast?

Muriel Stuart

# At A Life's End

COME here, rekindle the old fire,  
This last night leave no lamp unlit!  
In later days we twain shall sit,  
Remembering the joys of it,--  
The warmth and sweetness of desire.

Here, ere we part, again live o'er  
The way we went,--the hour,--the kiss;  
Let Love with magic hand of his  
Rebuild the mirage of our bliss  
In desert days that wend before.

Swart night of August! when we stood  
Heart-locked beside the window-pane!  
The thunder quickening again  
The laggard pulses of the rain,  
Wrung a few drops as hot as blood.

Outside we heard the passionate tune  
That wooing wind and water keep;  
The weft that silence keeps with sleep;  
While through the foam-blown silent deep  
Sailed the wan shallop of the moon.

Outside, the dark night and the sea!  
The sleepy and seductive speech  
Of water to the shrinking beach,  
The wind that odoured plum and peach,  
The white rose that regaled a bee.

Joy through our hand like water runs!  
Ah! dearest, could we keep those hours  
As some divine unfading flowers,  
Renewed by the eternal showers,  
And lit by everlasting suns!

But flowers and hours alike must fade;  
In the old book of Memory  
Seal up these hours for you and me,

As on some page of poetry,  
At glowing words a rose is laid.

Let the grape purple in the South,  
And let the wild red daisies blow!  
I shall not see, I shall not know;  
For me, alone the darnels grow,  
Only the hemlocks bruise my mouth.

To-night the world is stunned with gloom,  
The trees shake in a sudden fright,  
Wincing against the hailstones' spite,  
And the crape curtains of the night  
Hang heavy on the unfinished loom.

Fit hour for parting! Say 'farewell,'  
Clasp me no closer, ask no more!  
What word can ease--what kiss restore?  
The thunder's hearse is on the shore,  
And the sea tolls a passing bell.

Muriel Stuart

# Ave Et Vale

FAREWELL is said! Yea, but I cannot take  
All that my Greeting gave.  
In you hath Hope her doom and Joy her grave;  
Still you go crowned with old imaginings,  
Clad in the purple that young passion flings  
About the sorriest god that Love can make.

Ah! would you might forget, and so pass by  
Unwounded of my kiss,  
Made free of Youth's unmemorable bliss!  
Love's hand that speeds along his daisy chain  
Forgets in swift delight to tell again  
Old prayers upon a new-strung rosary.

For when I part from you I would not leave  
    One shadow that might be  
A ghost to haunt you, what you had of me  
I would fold by in Memory's lavender--  
Something my breath may very gently stir  
In the slow fading of a rainy eve.

When you drop cherries in the purple wine  
    For other lips to drain,  
Let not old nights betrayed leap up again,  
Throw down no murdering chalice at your feast  
To-night, nor find another woman's breast  
Less lovely with the sudden dream of mine.

Yet if a stranger bear my name, or one  
    With the same-coloured eyes  
Glance at you suddenly, lost dreams shall rise  
With unintelligible swift appeals,  
The broken images of old ideals  
Shall stare from corners where as gods they shone.

Farewell is on the lips of the first kiss  
    But speaks no word until  
The loud voice of Desire hath had its will.  
Greeting is swift and beautiful, Farewell

Is slow and patient and immutable,  
Knowing of old that love must lead to this.

Greeting! Farewell! The day's grown very old,  
My heart put out the light,  
Read no more pages of the Past to-night.  
There are no roses here to miss the sun;  
A soul hath looked on love and he hath flown;  
Ashes are on the wind; the tale is told.

Muriel Stuart

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Muriel Stuart



# Boys Bathing

Round them a fierce, wide, crazy noon  
Heaves with crushed lips and glowing sides  
Against the huge and drowsy sun.  
Beneath them turn the glittering tides  
Where dizzy waters reel with gold,  
And strange, rich trophies sink and rise  
From decks of sunken argosies.  
With shining arms they cleave the cold  
Far reaches of the sea, and beat  
The hissing foam with flash of feet  
Into bright fangs, while breathlessly  
Curls over them the amorous sea.

Naked they laugh and revel there.  
One shakes the sea-drops from his hair,  
Then, singing, takes the bubbles: one  
Lies couched among the shells, the sands  
Telling gold hours between his hands:  
One floats like sea-wrack in the sun.  
The gods of Youth, the lords of Love,  
Greeks of eternal Thessaly,  
Mocking the powers they know not of,  
Naked and unembraced and free!  
To whom the Siren sings in vain  
To-day, to-morrow who shall be  
The destined sport of gods and men.

Unseen, the immortal ones are here,  
Remembering their mortal loves-  
The strange, sweet flesh, the lips that were  
Frail and most perishably fair.  
Diana leaves her whispering groves,  
And of Actaeon dreams and sighs,  
And hears the hounds bay in the wood.  
Oh, Cythera, the trembling blood  
Upon one petal's paling mouth  
Before thee and this noon must rise  
While thou remember Adon's eyes!  
One mournful and complaining shade

Beyond Avernus shakes his head,  
Dreaming of one beloved youth  
Borne from him, lost and dazed and dead,  
Dragged by the nymphs avenging hair  
Into the sea-bed oozing dim,  
In that cold twilight unaware  
Of each great sunrise over him.

. . . . .

One day, while still these waters run,  
And noon still heaves beneath this sun,  
You shall creep, unremembering,  
Whom Life has humbled and subdued,  
Ruined your bodies, tamed your blood,  
No more the lords of anything.  
But spent and racked with mortal pains,  
The slow tide pushing through your veins,  
Coldly you face this magic shore;  
For you the disenchanting noon  
Scarce haunted is with ghosts that were  
Once, and were you, and are no more.

Faltering against the wind and sun  
That vainly seek your hair for gold,  
Stubborned with habit, grey and old,  
You know not why you wander here,  
Nor what vague dream pursues you still,  
For Life has taken fullest toll  
Of all your beauty; on each soul  
Love's hand has left his bitter mark,  
Has had of you his utmost will,  
And thrusts you headlong to the dark.

And colder than these waters are  
The stream that takes your limbs at last:  
Earth's vales and hills drift slowly past. . .  
One shore far off, and one more far

Muriel Stuart

# Change

CHANGE shall accustom me in after years  
To kingdom's builded on life's overthrow;  
Onward with other poets I shall go,  
Unpraised of thee. though praised of all my peers,  
Until the vine that thou hast quickened, bears  
Its fruit in others' hands; until I grow  
So different from myself I shall not know  
This poor young desperate heart, nor these wild tears.  
But though I change, thou shalt not change with me,  
Thy shrine shall stand unaltered and unmoved,  
And if we meet again I shall but see  
The features of a stranger, thou wilt be  
Wholly what once thou wert to me, Beloved  
And not what time and men have made of thee

Muriel Stuart

# Christ At Carnival

THE hand of carnival was at my door,  
I listened to its knocking, and sped down:  
Faith was forgotten, Duty led no more:  
I heard a wonton revelry in the town;  
The Carnival ran in my veins like fire!  
And some unfrustrable desire  
Goaded me on to catch the roses thrown  
From breast to breast, and with my own  
Fugitive kiss to snatch the fugitive kiss;  
I broke all faith for this  
One wild and worthless hour,  
To dance, to run, to beckon, as a flower  
Maddens the bee with half-surrendering,  
Then flies back in the air with petals shut.

Fainting with laughter and pursuit  
I heard shrill winds leap out and sink again,  
Tracking the green bed where the Spring hath lain,  
And vanished from, whose feet made audible  
Music among the tall trees on the hill.  
Above me leaned a nightingale  
Burdened and big with song, whose throat let fall  
Long notes, so poignant and so musical,  
I deemed his young mate, listening,  
Heard him less passionately sing  
Than I a-foot at Carnival!

Above the town, swart Night came rolling in  
Upon her couch of heliotrope:  
A new Moon, young and thin,  
Lay like a Columbine  
Teasing the spent hill, her old Harlequin,  
She, who of late waned on the bitter sky,  
Furtive and old, a woman without hope,  
Begging in long-familiar streets, where Sin  
Once seeking her, now shuddered and went by.

Caught in the meshes of a merry throng,  
I stumbled through the lighted Market Place;

The lanterns swung an undetermined rose  
In Night's convulsive face  
As we were swept along  
In crazy dance and song,--  
On through the mirth-mad alleys of the town,  
With shrill loud laughter tumbled roughly down,  
Whirled up in swift embrace.  
All, all went swinging, swaying in the revel,  
Laughing and reeling, kissing each and all--  
A crowd that wildest jesting did dishevel--  
O mad night of Carnival!

Racing along the last mean street that goes  
From house to house to find the mountain track,  
I loosed their hands to catch a rose  
Flung from some casement; swiftly they turned back  
With gusty laughter their wild mates to greet,  
Swift as the footless wind along the wheat!  
Fainter and fainter grew their revelling,  
Deserted of a sudden, lay the street,  
Silence fell on me like a famished thing,  
Making my soul aware of one who stood  
Beside me--one who wore a monkish hood.  
I stared, as one who sees  
Beneath the thin and settled sheet  
Over still mysteries  
Faint outline of belovèd hands and feet,  
Too little loved and now too dead to care,  
And suddenly becomes aware  
That more than Death lies there,  
That from this piteous and submissive change  
Something has risen, terrible and strange.

Why fell my roses? What fear drove me, then,  
To question him: "Who art thou, citizen?  
Fainter and fainter grows the Carnival.  
Wilt thou lock hands and turn with me again?"  
He answered not, but let the hood half-fall,  
Showing a thorn-plait on a forehead marred;  
Trembling I cried: "Who art thou, Lord?"  
"As thou sayest, I am He!  
How long upn my cross am I to bleed

For thee still to deny me utterly?  
Is not the hour yet come that I be freed,  
How long am I to listen at thy door?"

Stricken in soul, I fell against his feet,  
In rose-disorderd street,  
Weeping: "I have not heard Thy foot before."  
He answered: "He who hears  
Loud noise of Carnival about his ears,  
How shall he heed the foot with silence shod,  
Or listen for the small still voice of God?  
What is thy life?  
Is thy sword stained in any splended strife?  
Hast thou, in all thy safe, unshaken years,  
Once thrown thyself upon Night's ambushed spears,  
Or broken with thy tears  
Thy heart against the Dawn's feet any day?  
Hast thou spurned  
Any earthly perishable sweet thing  
To bear another's burden? Hast thou learned  
At any knee but Folly's, trafficking  
With every sweet delight that said thee 'yea'?  
Oft hast thy goaded men to kiss thy mouth,  
The flower of thy youth  
Thou hast rendered up to any wind that's fleet,  
But hast thou ever hastened to the Cross  
To kiss My saving feet?"

"Thou knowest, Lord, thou knowest, I have not striven,  
I made life easy, profitable, sweet,  
I have not loved much or been much forgiven;  
Of all a woman's vows the holiest--  
To children that were posies at my breast--  
I have forsworn, to-night, forsaking all  
The ways of God to dance at Carnival.  
What have I now to offer Thee Who deignest  
To seek for grape on such unfruitful vine;  
Who with such sinful head Thy bosom stainest!"  
He said: "The last allegiance will be Mine,  
Leave all and follow Me."

"Nay but my little children sleep at home

Beside their father, I would say good-bye."  
He answered: "Was there any time for Me  
To make My farewells in Gethsemane,  
Or any lips to take last kisses from?  
Knowest thou not that I can satisfy  
All creatures I make Mine, shall I not be  
Thy priest, blessing for thee the common bread,  
Till the white flesh divine  
Quicken against thy lip, and hallowèd,  
The blood beat through the wine?  
I would have all thou hast,  
Be all thou art,  
I would claim all thy present, future, past,  
For My dispisèd heart;  
For Me thou shalt all other creatures hate,  
My seven wounds thou shalt assuage  
With mouth inviolate."  
"O pardoning love," I wept, "O love divine,  
That such as thou shouldst ask of such!--  
I am Thine, all Thine,  
Casting here at Thy feet, despisèd Thou,  
All other loves that used to mean so much,  
All other hopes that mean so little now."

From a side-alley dumb to revelry,  
Came the low sound of weeping, then my name:  
A beggar came  
Out of the heaving dark and spake to me:  
"How knowest thou Christ?" I answered: "By the thorn";  
"Nay, but the thorn tree grows in every wood  
For any brow forsworn!"  
The other whispered: "Thou art tempted here  
For my sake," but the beggar's voice came fleet  
As pain: "Three crosses did that hillside bear,  
Not Christ alone hath wounded hands and feet;  
Dost thou believe  
That every pierced hand stretched to thee is Christ?  
Shall not some thief inpenitent deceive,  
At some strange shrine wilt thou be sacrificed?"  
The other whispered: "Shall thy faith be led  
So soon a traitor, child? For such as he  
Trample me every day." The beggar said:

"Nay, wast thou spit upon in Galilee?"

Wildly I cried: "Oh, from this hallowed street  
Go thy way, beggar, take thine apostate feet  
From this poor temple on whose pinnacle  
Christ in His Love doth not disdain to dwell,  
Who doth confer  
Glory on things inglorious, nor doth shun,  
But bids an angel to Him minister,  
Albeit a fallen one;  
And if thou canst not pray,  
Leave me my prayer at least and go thy way!"

Swift were Christ's feet the mountain road along;  
A swift as they my soul beside them fled,  
Keeping fleet measure to the strong  
Unshatterable music of His words,  
That in my hard heart made  
Exquisite wounds that sang the while they bled,  
Like little tamèd birds;  
"O Holy One, I break here at Thy feet  
The perfume of my soul like Magdalen's sweet  
Spilled ointment; knewest Thou who gatherèd  
Those holy spices? What dishevelled night,  
What lust, profaning every temple-rite  
To toss the gold of her sweet shameless head,  
Had eased from priestly hands the spikenard  
That made her soiled garments smell of God?  
Thou did accept that sweetness when she kneeled,--  
That holy myrrh, spilled from the soul and shard!  
Nor didst disdain by her to be unshod,  
Nay, Thy world-wounded feet her tresses healed.

"So here I gather sweets of all my life,  
Treasure for which sin waged unworthy strife,  
Holding as one who guilty pleasure wins--  
Yea, even all my sins, my little sins--  
My loves and penitences, foes no more  
At strife with Thee for me. Oh, bid me pour  
My spirit's perfume! I have wept and kissed  
Those feet grown weary following what men  
Caught up so easily; upon this brow



Be shed the glory of Love's pardon now,  
As once the tresses of a Magdalen  
became an aureole at the feet of Christ!"

Only the silence shook as we went on;  
Soon the last watching window-light was gone;  
No least star gleamed,  
And trembling-still it seemed,  
As if the mountain held its breath  
For fear that it should weep;  
A stopped stream smelled of Death;  
The moon was out, blown by God's breath asleep;  
The heavens turned  
Plunging and livid, choked with thunder-spume,  
Black driven clouds beneath whose eyelids burned  
A dreadful light, rushed forward in the gloom;  
There was no wind, but something seemed to stir  
In the thin grass, as if unquiet head  
On sleepless pillow moved--a listener  
To hideous word unsaid; until at last  
The narrow track was passed.  
Below us empty and wide  
The world was flung; the hill-top shivered bare,  
While fretful lightning dug a viscous spear  
Into her sweating side  
As she flinched, blind and stark . . .  
A thin hail ravened against the door of dark.

Against His feet I trembled, but no word  
Of peace or pity heard;  
The darkness shook as a dry leaf about,  
The world seemed to go out  
With a great groan along the sea . . .  
Silence . . . then words to me . . .  
"Child, what is it thou fearest?"  
I stared up: Oh, strange words did that implore! . . .  
His brow was no more wounded, and no more  
Were the hands, still outstretched to me, pierced.

"Lord, with this vision art thou tempting me,  
To show how poor a thing my worship is?  
Yet oh, be Christ, be Christ! I have for Thee

Forsaken all my loved, my lovely ones,  
As a wild stream breaks from maternal hill,  
Escaping the sweet fingers of the sedge  
Whose stinging hair doth all his bosom fill,  
Listens to some great voice far off, and runs  
To find the sea, the calling, crying sea . . .  
I ran to Thee!"

Then I heard human accents answering:  
"I am a god, made god by all thy prayers;  
Wach stone becomes a god by worshipping;  
I am a man who loves thee: in thy town  
Many have loved thee, I am one of these."

At those few words of horror Faith fell down,  
Yet scarcely understood such blasphemies;  
"What didst thou need?" I wept, still at his feet;  
"Thyself, thou lovely thing!"  
"Does thou yet love me as Christ loves albeit  
Thou are not He--some message thou dost bring?"  
"Nay, but I love thee as a night of Spring!  
I saw thee dance to-night at Carnival,  
I saw thee laugh, and spurn thy lovers all,  
And dreamed, 'No man's desire she will heed,  
Her lips are over-sworn and over-kissed,  
But she will shurely list  
If God but seem to speak, will list indeed.  
I will not weave, as other lovers weave,  
her garlands, she shall find, and grieve  
For the one last thorn found tangled in my hair;  
She shall forsake the world, she shall forswear,  
Gather the honey of her being sweet  
Into a vase of prayer  
To break here at my feet.'  
Since at the Carnival all men may wear  
What guise they will, I chose the holiest;  
Yea, when thy voice persuaded: 'Turn again'  
I dreamed to woo thee, not as other men--  
What faith hadst thou in any reveller?  
It seemed thy soul was brimmed for God to stir.  
Delight was impotent, and joy was old.

Of Christ I made a travesty of sin,  
Thy loveliness to win--  
To run my miser fingers through the gold,  
The shuddering sweetness of thy rebel hair,  
To sense the conflict of refusing lips,  
The slow surrender from thy finger tips  
Till thou wert all mine, utterly possessed,  
Mine as the Moon  
Is captive on a night's triumphant breast,  
Mine as May's burning bowl is full of June!"

I shrank away, the thin words fell like blood  
From my torn lips, I shuddered where I stood,  
Muttering: "Christ may come in stranger's guise  
To poor men's houses, may go humbly shod,  
Begging for broken meats, nor shall despise  
Those who give thus, knowing the cloak hides God.

But I and all my soul are sacrificed  
To a thief that hath put on the garb of Christ.  
Oh, at sin's feet to break my spirit's vase!  
Oh, that I dreamed to lie upon His breast  
While over me He brake the bread and blessed;--  
To feel the mighty stars  
Streaming to meet me; to have compassed all,  
Reached, overtaken, passed, Eternity,  
In one hour's glory, then to fall  
To Hell, at least with thee!  
Ah God, that Thou couldst let such horror be,  
Could let that veritable image HE--  
Travesty of Thy Son,  
Tear my weak soul in tatters, yea, that Thou  
Couldst lead Sin by Thy hand and by Thy brow  
To Thy poor foolish helpless little one!"

Then horror laid her hands on me--I fled:  
It seemed the world-end could not be too far  
For such a fugitive,  
Nor ramparts of the outer darkness give  
Shelter for such a head.  
The hideous night, with lips of a lazar,  
With a shrill scream pursued,

Till Dawn in seamless sky a tatter rent  
That oozing long lines of blood,  
Smearing the grey breast of the firmament . . .  
The whole world closed upon me, o'er my face  
Flinging an inescapable black hood.

As one half-drowned may feel above his head  
(After all sense of dread,  
And desperate fight for breath have died away),  
The heavy waters part, and sound and space  
And cold sky stare about him, which make melt  
Green water-worlds into familiar day.  
The light came groping to me, and I felt  
The morning on my brow, while over me  
An unaccustomed face leaned patiently,  
Until it grew to be  
The beggar I had scorned at Carnival.  
"O Child," the voice of pity spake: "for all  
Thy faith, Christ was not in those hands, that brow."  
"Nay a thief took my soul, but comest thou  
Beggar, to taunt me, as I taunted thee?"

"I come to none to chide or spurn:  
I come to plead with thee that thou return  
To thy forsaken Christ, rebellious one.  
God long hath sat beside thee in the sun,  
Thou knowing not." I said: "If thou be He,  
Trouble me not, I have nought left to give;  
I am drained utterly  
Of faith and worship. Can these dead bones live?  
What rose shall spread wing from this stricken tree?  
All, all is waste and scattered to the wind,  
All, all is dead and strangled in the dust!  
And no dew lies  
In the dead Morning's eyes;  
The sheeted Moon, unsepulchred, is thrust  
On the bare Night, another tomb to find!  
Earth, heaven, have passed away."  
"These are built up again." "But not for me."  
He answered: "Yea,  
Even for such as thou; oh, seek and find!  
Go back, thou hast two children in thy house;

Breaking thy holy vows,  
Didst think to find thy God in mummeries,  
Finding it not with whom Christ said: 'Of these'  
A child is but a shell upon Life's shore,  
Fragile, rose-kissed, yet holding for thine ears  
Raging of seas, and roaring of the spheres.  
Thou hadst no need too heavenward to look up,  
Thou discontented soul.  
Behold Christ's milky mouth in the china cup,  
Christ's hand that tips the blue-rimmed porridge bowl!"

"Ah, Lord, can such as I return  
To the grey paths of peace--re-live, re-learn?  
How can I feel my children's hands like flowers  
Anout my face? Assign me grimmer hours,  
Not the familiar stair, the to and fro  
Of duties slow,  
The little, dreadful paths of every day!"

"Am I not broken in the commonest bread,  
And spilled in the unconsecrated wine?  
Is not each man who loves, a priest,  
Albeit men lock Me in a sunless shrine,  
Spreading a special feast?  
Yet am I outside in the lilac-tree,  
beneath their feet, around them everywhere.  
Thou canst not chain Christ to a chapel-bell.  
From brothels thinkest thou I hear no prayer?  
Doth not the choking gutter sing Me well?  
Is not the whole sweet world my Sanctuary?  
Do they despise My feet, who do but lave  
The feet of strangers, in their bosoms nursed?  
Am I not fed on orphan's lips, My thirst  
Quenched in the beggar's platter? They who save  
One shipwrecked soul, or seek some heart forgot,  
Are Mine and love Me, though they know it not.  
They are too noble for escape of Me:  
Their lives more sing Me than a thousand psalms!  
They thrust aside My Everlasting Arms,  
Yet they are still beneath them--them and thee.

"What need hast thou of vows?"

Go back, thou hast two children in thy house."

I went by wood and waste toward the town:  
The whole world lay, a quiet emerald  
Set in a golden ring  
Upon God's finger, against His bosom thrall'd;  
Elusive airs were blown  
On elfin horns of Spring;  
Through the thin mist pale hawthorn trees peered out  
Like a dim, sick face from its frilled cap  
Upon infirmity pillow, turned about--  
Caught creatures in some vast, predestined trap.  
But with each step I took, the morning grew  
Gayer and younger, a full-throated thrush  
Woke, and from hidden bush  
Dimpled a note or two,  
Set the wood's side a-shake, as if it knew  
Answer to impudent jest; already bees  
Sought the dell's bosom all a-heave with blue,  
And girdled with the goldenest primroses.  
From every fold  
The young lamb's cough came softly down the lane;  
The cuckoo told  
His first few notes--as miser tells his gold,  
And counted them again.  
I pased along the unchanged, quiet street,  
At my own door unlatched I entered in  
Upon an atmosphere that seemed too sweet  
For me and all my sin.

I felt no agony of hope or loss,  
Treading the old paths that beside me lay;  
For me no one great lifting on the Cross,  
But small, slow crucifixions every day.  
I brought no prayers, I made no conscious vows,  
And though it seemed God never could confer  
Duty so simple, such a humble faith,  
And that no further life my soul could stir,  
I went back, meekly, trusting what he saith:  
"Go back, thou hast two children in thy house."

Muriel Stuart

# Enough

Did he forget? . . . I do not remember,  
All I had of him once I still have to-day;  
He was lovely to me as the word, 'amber,'  
As the taste of honey and the smell of hay.

What if he forget if I remember ?  
What more of love have you than I to say ?  
I have and hold him still in the word, 'amber,'  
Taste of honey brings him, he comes back with the hay.

Muriel Stuart



## For Fasting Days

Are you my songs, importunate of praise?  
Be still, remember for your comforting  
That sweeter birds have had less leave to sing  
Before men piped them from their lonely ways.

Greener leaves than yours are lost in every spring  
Rubies far redder thrust your eager rays  
Into the blindfold dark for many days  
Before men chose them for a finger-ring.

Sing as you dare, not as men choose, receive not  
The passing fashion's prize, for dole or due-  
Men's summer-sweet unrecognition-grieve not:  
Oh, stoop not to them! Better far that you  
Should go unsung than sing as you believe not,  
Should go uncrowned than to yourselves untrue.

Muriel Stuart

# Forgiveness

ASK not my pardon! For if one hath need  
Once to forgive the god that he hath raised,  
No further creed  
Can that god give; but 'neath the soul who praised  
Lies bruised like a reed.

Let your dark plume, in passing leave a stain  
On my plume's whiteness: call you bitter, sweet:  
Give plague, or pain:  
But cringe not, fallen and fawning at my feet,  
By that to rise again.

No! go your wild and mad way, and seem at least  
The god you were . . . assume your aureole:  
Make me no priest  
To wash hands in the waters of your soul,  
Before I go to feast!

Muriel Stuart

# Forgotten Dead, I Salute You

Dawn has flashed up the startled skies,  
Night has gone out beneath the hill  
Many sweet times; before our eyes  
Dawn makes and unmakes about us still  
The magic that we call the rose.  
The gentle history of the rain  
Has been unfolded, traced and lost  
By the sharp finger-tips of frost;  
Birds in the hawthorn build again;  
The hare makes soft her secret house;  
The wind at tourney comes and goes,  
Spurring the green, unharnessed boughs;  
The moon has waxed fierce and waned dim:  
He knew the beauty of all those  
Last year, and who remembers him?

Love sometimes walks the waters still,  
Laughter throws back her radiant head;  
Utterly beauty is not gone,  
And wonder is not wholly dead.  
The starry, mortal world rolls on;  
Between sweet sounds and silences,  
With new, strange wines her beakers brim:  
He lost his heritage with these  
Last year, and who remembers him?

None remember him: he lies  
In earth of some strange-sounding place,  
Nameless beneath the nameless skies,  
The wind his only chant, the rain  
The only tears upon his face;  
Far and forgotten utterly  
By living man. Yet such as he  
Have made it possible and sure  
For other lives to have, to be;  
For men to sleep content, secure.  
Lip touches lip and eyes meet eyes  
Because his heart beats not again:  
His rotting, fruitless body lies

That sons may grow from other men.

He gave, as Christ, the life he had  
The only life desired or known;  
The great, sad sacrifice was made  
For strangers; this forgotten dead  
Went out into the night alone.  
There was his body broken for you,  
There was his blood divinely shed  
That in the earth lie lost and dim.  
Eat, drink, and often as you do,  
For whom he died, remember him.

Muriel Stuart

# In Memory Of Douglas Vernon Cow

THIS POEM, DEDICATED TO HIS MOTHER.

To twilight heads comes Death as comes a friend.  
As with the gentle fading of the year  
Fades rose, folds leaf, falls fruit, and to their end  
Unquestioning draw near,  
Their flowering over, and their fruiting done,  
Fulfilled and finished and going down with the sun.

But for June's heart there is no comforting  
When her full-throated rose  
Still quick with buds, still thrilling to the air,  
By some stray wind is tossed,  
her swelling grain that goes  
Heavy to harvesting  
In a black gale is lost,  
And her round grape that purpled to the wine  
Is pinched by some chance frost.  
Ah, then cry out for that last, lovely rose,  
For the stricken wheat, and for the finished vine!  
Such were you who sleep now, who have foregone  
So many of Life's rich secrets almost learned;

Winning so much, so much yet unwon,  
Yet to be dared, to discover, to reveal.  
Quick still with ardour, hand still at the wheel  
On wide and unsailed seas, eyes turning still  
Towards the morning, while the keen brain burned  
To the imperative will.

Upon your summer Death seems to set his heel,  
Writes on the page 'No more.'  
And brings the sign of sunset, shuts the door  
And the house is dark and the tired mourners sleep.  
Yet says he too, 'Though quiet at last you lie,  
'And have done with laughter and strife and joy and care,  
'You have honour with your peace; and still you keep  
'Fullness of life and of felicity.  
'You have seen the grail. What need you of grey hair?

'There are those who daily die,  
'Who have long out lived their welcome in the world,  
'Who are old and sad and tired and fain to cease  
'From the crowded earth, and the hours in tumult whirled,  
'Urgent and vain. You are not such as these  
'Who have striven for laurels, and never knew the shade  
'Upon their brows, who would persuade the rose,  
'And never have come near it; till the head  
'Bows and the heart breaks, and the spirit knows  
'Only its failure, dim and featureless,--  
'Its weariness of all things dreamed and done,  
'When love and grief alike seem emptiness  
'And fame and unrecognition one.'

The full tide took you, you went out with the sun,  
Not in the cringing ebb, not in the grey  
And tremulous twilight, when each lonely one  
To its last loneliness must creep away.  
Your genius has won its rich repose,  
Full laurelled, wearing still the unfaded rose.  
And as those who bid goodbye at snowdrop time  
Bear with them broken promises of Spring,  
So you in triumph,--in the glory men had in you,  
In Love's full worshipping,--  
High summer thoughts, untouched of Winter's rime,  
Went forth with honour, having fulfilled your Spring.

The hands that built you felt you flower from her prayer,  
True to her vision true;  
Fearless and fine, shaped from her fashioning;  
Hands empty now, and yet not all unfilled,  
Having built and fired the generous heart and brain,  
Of the man you were; whose fervent spirit willed  
You to the service and healing and help of men.

These things are hers, not to be lost nor changed  
With changes of death; for though the body die  
The golden deed is stamped eternally  
With the head of God. The new and alien years  
Leave it still bright, unaltered, unestranged.  
Almost too proud, and too profound for tears  
Is the high memory that the desolate heart

Shrines and is dumb, yet may for ever keep  
Unforbidden, the imperishable part,  
And what Love held, awake, he holds asleep.

Muriel Stuart

# In Praise Of Mandragora

O, MANDRAGORA, many sing in praise  
Of life, and death, and immortality,--  
Of passion, that goes famished all her days,--  
Of Faith, or fantasy;  
Thou, all unpraised, unsung, I make this rhyme to thee.

The womby underworlds thy roots enclose,  
In human shape, sprung from abhorrent seed;  
But when through crumbling roof the daylight shows,  
And thou my breast hast freed  
Thou growest in the field as any flower or weed.

At many a cross-road bare thy leaves protrude,  
Upon the brow of lonely, moon-blanch'd heath,  
And from a loathly breast thou draggest food,  
That moulders far beneath . . .  
Whereon a crazy moon stares out and bares her teeth.

And sometimes, in the purblind face of morn  
The stealthy hinds slink out to gather thee,  
Then shudder, as thy shrieking roots are torn,  
And turn at last, and flee,  
Leaving a slimy pulp that bleedeth suddenly.

Ah!--well thou mayest shriek, for he who lies  
In clotted earth, with stones upon his breast,  
Feareth a victim who drags out his eyes  
In vengeance deadliest,  
While to thy loosened feet his screaming mouth is pressed!

O mystic one, thou hast a couch more dread  
Than Isabella's Basil ever knew;--  
Whose petals on gentle brow were fed,  
Whose leaves in fragrance grew,  
That Death, in sorrowful amend, made sweet with dew.

O Mandragora, though thy features dwell  
Beneath the earth in such ill company  
Far sweeter than that plant to Isabel,



Thy blossoms are to me.  
Thou Root of dreamless sleep, take this in praise of thee!

Close thou Pandora's casket by whose aid  
That goddess Discord queens the escapèd woes,  
She had no power to hinder or dissuade,  
Yet Mandragora shows  
A hope uncabined, and a peace that conquers those!

From the Nepenthe doth her pitcher fill,  
That barter with the merchandise of grief,  
And for all suffering and every ill  
Hath such a sweet relief,  
That sleep the haven seems, and pain the voyage brief.

Thou thro' still gardens in the timorous Dusk,  
When all the sky is purpled with the pain  
Of dying Day, dost walk, and myrrh and musk  
Fall from thy misty train,  
And totter all about, and are caught up again.

There the lulled world within the opiate blue  
Forgets her long-continued pain and falls  
Into an easy sleep; the winds pursue  
Each other round the walls;  
A night bird cries, then lists, then then answers its own calls.

The moon exhorts her yellow Lily-cup  
Above the rainy evening goldenly,  
The wan tent of her beauty foldeth up  
The frail Anemone,  
From whose white bosom spins the spent and touseled bee.

I would not proffer any highest god  
Praise for the poor gift of eternity.  
When sin has sucked the honey from its rod,  
And reason bows the knee,  
And Fame beats out her torch, what fire, what feast, for me?

When Sense is numb, and Song forgets her chant,  
And beauty swells the ashes of the dead,  
And Love's denied white breast forgets to pant

Beneath some lovely head.  
What Life shall I desire when Love and Youth are fled?

O Mandragora, when thy lips are laid  
On other paling lips, remember mine.  
Beneath thy kiss all other kisses fade;  
Let Life herself resign  
Her breath upon thy lip, her being unto thine.

Then all in vain my golden trump declare,  
No flickering lid shall Thracian music raise,  
And Pan in vain shall pipe his cunning air  
In secret woodland ways.  
My closed lips shall sing my triumph and my praise.

O Mandragora, we have pledged our vows,  
And I will spill for thee my cup of wine.  
Though poets few have woven for thy brows  
A coronet divine.  
Give thy immortal gift--these verses shall be thine!

Muriel Stuart

# In The Orchard

'I thought you loved me.' 'No, it was only fun.'  
'When we stood there, closer than all?' 'Well, the harvest moon  
Was shining and queer in your hair, and it turned my head.'  
'That made you?' 'Yes.' 'Just the moon and the light it made  
Under the tree?' 'Well, your mouth, too.' 'Yes, my mouth?'  
'And the quiet there that sang like the drum in the booth.  
You shouldn't have danced like that.' 'Like what?' 'So close,  
Whith your head turned up, and the flower in your hair, a rose  
That smelt all warm.' 'I loved you. I thought you knew  
I wouldn't have danced like that with any but you.'  
'I didn't know, I thought you knew it was fun.'  
'I thought it was love you meant.' 'Well, it's done.' 'Yes, it's done.  
I've seen boys stone a blackbird, and watched them drown  
A kitten... it clawed at the reeds, and they pushed it down  
Into the pool while it screamed. Is that fun, too?'  
'Well, boys are like that... Your brothers...' 'Yes, I know.  
But you, so lovely and strong! Not you! Not you!'  
'They don't understand it's cruel. It's only a game.'  
'And are girls fun, too?' 'No, still in a way it's the same.  
It's queer and lovely to have a girl...' 'Go on.'  
'It makes you mad for a bit to feel she's your own,  
And you laugh and kiss her, and maybe you give her a ring,  
But it's only in fun.' 'But I gave you everything.'  
'Well, you shouldn't have done it. You know what a fellow thinks  
When a girl does that.' 'Yes, he talks of her over his drinks  
And calles her a--' 'Stop that now, I thought you knew.'  
'But it wasn't with anyone else. It was only you.'  
'How did I know? I thought you wanted it too.  
I thought you were like the rest. Well, what's to be done?'  
'To be done' 'Is it all right?' 'Yes.' 'Sure?' 'Yes, but why?'  
'I don't know, I thought you where going to cry.  
You said you had something to tell me.' 'Yes, I know.  
It wasn't anything relly... I think I'll go.'  
'Yes, it's late. There's thunder about, a drop of rain  
Fell on my hand in the dark. I'll see you again  
At the dance next week. You're sure that everything's right?'  
'Yes,' 'Well, I'll be going.' 'Kiss me...' 'Good night.' ... 'Good night.'



# Lady Hamilton

Men wondered why I loved you, and none guessed  
How sweet your slow, divine stupidity,  
Your look of earth, your sense of drowsy rest,  
So rich, so strange, so all unlike my sea.  
After the temper of my sails, my lean  
Tall masts, you were the lure of harbour hours,--  
A sleepy landscape warm and very green,  
Where browsing creatures stare above still flowers.  
These salt hands holding sweetness, the leader led,  
A slave, too happy and crazed to rule,  
Sea land-locked, brine and honey in one bed,  
And England's man your servant and your fool!  
My banqueting eyes foreswore my waiting ships;  
I was a silly landsman at your lips.

Muriel Stuart

# Leda

Do you remember, Leda?

There are those who love, to whom Love brings  
Great gladness: such things have not I.  
Love looks and has no mercy, brings  
Long doom to others. Such was I.  
Heart breaking hand upon the lute  
Long last made musical by you?  
Sharp bird-beak in the swelling fruit,  
Or raise the eyelids of these flowers?

I dare not watch that hidden pool,  
Nor see the wild bird's sudden wing  
Lifting the wide, brown shaken pool,  
But round me falls that secret wing,  
And in that sharp, perverse, sweet pain  
That is half-terror and half-bliss  
My withered hands are curled on pain  
That were so wide once, after bliss.  
And gold is springing in my hair  
As my thought spring and flower with it,  
Though I sit hid in my grey hair,  
Without love or the pain of it.

Yet, oh my Swan, if love have wings,  
As the gods tell us, you were love  
Who took and broke me with those wings.  
I, weak, and being far gone in love  
Let blushless things be breathed and done-  
Things flowered out now in bitter fruit  
That once done are no more undone  
Than last year's frost and last year's fruit.

For what has come of love and me  
Who knew the first joy that loving is?  
Where has love led and beckoned me  
But to the end where nothing is?  
I have seen my blood beat out again  
Red in the hands of all my line,

My sin has swelled and flowered again  
Corrupt and fierce through Sparta's line.  
Bred through me-bred through delicate hands  
And wandering eyes and wanton lips,  
Sighing after strange flesh as sighed these lips,

Straying after new sin as strayed these hands.  
Mother of Helen! She whose breasts  
To new desires unshaped the world;  
Above Troy's summit towered these breasts  
Helen who wantoned with the world!  
Helen is dead (she had love enough  
To mock at doom and laugh at shrine)  
And Clytemnestra, quiet enough  
To-night beneath Apollo's shrine.  
And I am left, the source, the spring  
Of all their madness. They are dead  
While I still sit here, the old spring  
That fouled them flows above the dead.

But I have paid. I have borne enough.  
I am very old in love and woe.  
For all souls these things are enough-  
Who have known love are the friends of woe.  
There those who love, and who escape,  
There are those who love and do not die.  
I loved, and there was no escape,  
Long since I died and daily die.  
And death alone makes hate and love  
Friends with each other and with sleep . . .  
All's quiet here that once was love,  
This that is left belongs to sleep.

Muriel Stuart

# Madala Goes By The Orphanage

Unaware of its terror,  
And but half aware  
Of the world's beauty near her-  
Of sunlight on the stones,  
And trembling birds in the square,  
Lightly went Madala-  
A rose blown suddenly  
From Spring's gay mouth; part of the Spring was she.  
Warmed to her delicate bones,  
Cool in its linen her skin,  
her hair up-combed and circled,  
Lightly she flowered on the sin  
And pain of the Spring-struck world.  
Down the street went crazy men,  
The winter misery of their blood  
Budding in new pain  
While beggars whined beside her,  
While the street's daughters eyed her,--  
Poor flowers that kept midsummer  
With desperate bloom, and thrust  
Stale rose at each newcomer,  
And crime and hunger and lust  
Raged in the noisy dust.  
Lightly went Madala,  
Unshaken still of that spell,  
Coral beads and jade to buy,  
While her thoughts roamed easily-  
Thoughts like bees in lavender,--  
Thoughts gay and fragile as a robin's shell.  
Till suddenly she had come  
To grim age-stubborned wall  
Behind whose mask of bars  
Starts up in shame the Foundling's Hospital.\*  
At the gates to watch her pass  
A caged thing eyed her dumb,  
Most mercifully unaware of  
Its own hurt, but Madala  
Stopped short of Spring that day.  
The air grew pinched and wan,



A hand came over the sun,  
Birds huddled, stones went grey,  
Her lace and linen white  
Seemed but her body's sin,  
her flesh unscarred and bright  
Burnt like a leper's skin.  
Her mouth was stale with bread  
Flung her by strangers, she was fed,  
Housed, fathered by the State, and she had grown  
A thing belonged to, and loved, by none.  
Though the shut mouth said no word,  
from the caged thing she heard,  
'Who has wronged me, that this Spring  
'Gives me nothing and you everything,  
'Who alike were made,  
'Who beckon the same dream?  
'You buy coral and jade,  
'I sew long, hungry seams  
'To pay for charity . . .'

Then Madala's heart, afraid,  
Cried the first selfish cry;  
'Is it my fault? Can I  
'Help what the world has done?  
'Can the flower in the shade  
'Blame the flower in the sun?'  
Then quick the caged thing said,  
As if to ask pardon that its words had made  
Madala's Spring so spoiled for her that day:  
'But there's a way, a way!  
'If flowers would share their Spring  
'There's be sunshine enough for all the flowers.  
'Such sunshine you could bring,  
'Such joy that swings and flies  
'With posies your hours through,  
'So just beyond my hours.  
'If I could walk with you-  
'Not in pitiful two by two  
Flayed by free children's eyes,  
Your sister for an hour to be,  
It would double joy and woo  
Spring back to you, and more than Spring to me.'

Then something quaked in Madala,  
Quaked with magic, quaked with awe.  
Love-quickening, She became a part  
Of this caged thing, she was aware  
Of strange lips tugging at her heart.  
So clear the way was! Tenderer  
Grew her eyes, and as they grew,  
Back to the flowers rushed the dew,  
The earth filled out with the sun,  
The cold birds in the square  
Unbunched and preened upon  
Their twigs in the softening air;  
The cold wind dwindled and dropped,  
Nearer drew Madala,  
At the dumb thing she smiled,  
And Spring that a child had stopped  
Came back from the eyes of a child.

Muriel Stuart

# Man And His Makers

1.

I am one of the wind's stories,  
I am a fancy of the rain,-  
A memory of the high noon's glories,  
The hint the sunset had of pain.

2.

They dreamed me as they dreamed all other;  
Hawthorn and I, I and the grass,  
With sister shade and phantom brother  
Across their slumber glide and pass.

3.

Twilight is in my blood, my being  
Mingles with trees and ferns and stones;  
Thunder and stars my lips are freeing,  
And there is sea-rack in my bones.

4.

Those that have dreamed me shall out-wake me,  
But I go hence with flowers and weeds;  
I am no more to those who make me  
Than other drifting fruit and seeds.

5.

And though I love them -mourn to leave them-  
Sea, earth and sunset, stars and streams,  
My tears, my passing do not grieve them . . .  
Other dreams have they, other dreams.

Muriel Stuart

## Mrs. Effingham's Swan Song

I am growing old: I have kept youth too long,  
But I dare not let them know it now.  
I have done the heart of youth a grievous wrong,  
Danced it to dust, and drugged it with the rose,  
Forced its reluctant lips to one more vow.  
I have denied the lawful grey,  
So kind, so wise, to settle in my hair;  
I belong no more to April, but September has not taught me her repose.  
I wish I had let myself grow old in the quiet way  
That is so gracious . . . I wish I did not care.  
My faded mouth will never flower again,  
Under the paint, the wrinkles fret my eyes,  
My hair is dull beneath its henna stain,  
I have come to the last ramparts of disguise.  
And now the day draws on of my defeat.  
I shall not meet  
The swift, male glance across the crowded room,  
Where the chance contact of limbs in passing has  
Its answer in some future fierce embrace.  
I shall sit here in the corners looking on  
With the older women, withered and overblown,  
Who have grown old more graciously than I,  
In a sort of safe and comfortable tomb  
Knitting myself into Eternity.  
And men will talk to me because they are kind,  
Or as cunning or a courtesy demands;  
There will be no hidden question in their eyes  
And no subtle implication in their hands.  
And I shall be so grateful who have been  
So gracious, and so tyrannous, moving between  
Denial and surrender. To-morrow I shall find  
How women live who have no lovers and no answer for life's grey monotonies.  
Upon my table will be no more flowers,  
They will bring me no more flowers until I am dead;  
There will be no violent, sweet, exciting hours,  
No wild things done or said.

Yet sometimes I'm so tired of it all-  
This everlasting battle with the flesh,

This pitiful slavery to the body's thrall-  
And then I do not want to lure or charm,  
I want to wear  
Soft, easy things, be comfortable and warm;  
I want to drowse at leisure in my chair.  
I do not want to wear a veil with heavy mesh,  
Or sit in shaded rooms afraid to face the light;  
I do not want to go out every night,  
And be bright and vivid and intense,  
Nor be on the alert and the defense  
With other women, fierce and afraid as I,  
Drawing a knife unseen as each goes by.

I am so tired of men and making love,  
For every one's the same.  
There's nothing new in love under the sun;  
All love can say or do has long been said and done:  
I have eaten the fruit of knowledge long enough,  
Been over-kissed, over-praised and over-won.  
Why should I try to play still the old, foolish game?  
Because I have played the rose's part too long.  
Who plays the rose must pay the rose's price,  
And be a rose or nothing till it dies.  
And even then sometimes the blood will answer fierce and strong  
To the old hunger, to the old dance, old tune;  
I shall feel cruel and passionate and mad  
Though I have lost the look of June.  
The fever of the past will burn my hands  
A men who live long in intemperate lands  
Feel the old ague wring them, far removed  
From the old dreadful glitter of seas and sands.  
The rose dies hard in women who have had  
Lovers all their lives, and have been much loved.

I am afraid to grow old now even if I would.  
I have fought too well, too long, and what was once  
A foolish trick to make the rose more strangely gay  
Is now a close-locked, mortal conflict of brain and blood-  
A feud too old to settle or renounce.  
I shall grow too tired to struggle, and the fight will end,  
And they will enter in at last-  
Nature and Time, long thwarted of their prey,

Those old grey two, more cruel for the lips that said them 'Nay,'  
For the bitterest foe is he who in the past  
Has been repulsed when he fain would be friend.

I am sorry for women who are growing old,  
I do not blame them for holding youth with shameful hold,  
Or doing desperate things to lips and eyes.  
They have so pitifully short a flowering time,  
So suddenly sweet a story so soon told.  
They only strive to keep what men have taught them most to prize-  
Men who have longer, fuller lives to live,  
Who are not stopped and broken in their prime,  
With their faces still to summer, men do not know  
What Age says to a woman. They would not wait  
To feel slip from their hands without a throe,  
Without a struggle, futile and desperate,  
All that has given them wealth and love and power  
Doomed, without hope or rumour of reprieve.  
They would not smile into the eyes of that advancing hour  
Who had bent all summer to their bow, and had flung  
The widest rose, and kissed the keenest mouth  
And slept in the lordliest bed when they were young.  
That bitter twilight which sun-worshipping Youth  
Flies headlong keeps Age loitering on the hill,  
Uneager to fold such greyness to his breast,  
Knowing that none will thwart him of his will,  
None be before him on that quest.

I am growing old.  
I was not always kind when I was young  
To women who were old, for Youth is blind-  
A small, green, bitter thing beneath its fragrant rind,  
And fanged against the old with boisterous tongue-  
Those whose poor morning heads are touched with rime,  
Walking before their misery like kings.  
I did not feel that I should feel such stings,  
Nor flinch beneath such arrows. But now I know.  
One day I shall be stupid, and rather slow,  
And easily cowed and troubled in my mind,  
And tremulous, vaguely frightened, feeble and cold.  
I am growing old. . . My God! how old! how old! . . .  
I dare not tell them, but one day they will know. . .

I hope they will be kind.

Muriel Stuart

# Now

TAKE as you will, slake, solace, and possess  
While Youth, with laughter, scatters tears that fall  
Sudden and shaken sometimes at your call;  
Pledge me in passion and in gentleness,--  
In praise and prayer, I would not give you less,  
Be less unconquerably true in all,  
Take my young kisses,--my young spirit's thrall,  
Forbid not Now's imperishable "Yes"!  
When I am old, and cold, and wise, and grown  
As far beyond as you outstrip me now,--  
Nor plead, nor pant, nor challenge nor protest;  
Oh, come not then, all these years less your own;  
Too old to love, too wise to heed your vow,  
Too cold to feel your cold hand upon my breast.

Muriel Stuart



# Obsession

I will not have roses in my room again,  
Nor listen to sonnets of Michael Angelo  
To-night nor any night, nor fret my brain  
With all the trouble of things that I should know.  
I will be as other women-come and go  
Careless and free, my own self sure and sane,  
As I was once . . .then suddenly you were there  
With your old power . . . roses were everywhere  
And I was listening to Michael Angelo.

Muriel Stuart

# Possession

MOST blessed one, how can I let thee go?  
Canst thou forswear the nightingale its tune--  
Stay the young sea from following his moon--  
Bid hyacinth put out her blue light? Oh,  
Thou art not mine but Me! and being so  
How canst thou bid my year stop short of June,  
Or hold my feet from following thine so soon,  
Or bid me build on Heaven's overthrow?  
Nay, how can I put off thy presence? Where  
Should my soul serve without thy sanctities?  
I kneel beside thee, I who am a child  
In thy man's hand, cling to thee spent and wild  
Until my face is hidden in my hair,  
And I fall weeping, weeping, at thy knees!

Muriel Stuart

# Shrift

I am not true, but you would pardon this  
If you could see the tortured spirit take  
Its place beside you in the dark, and break  
Your daily food of love and kindness.  
You'd guess the bitter thing that treachery is,  
Furtive and on its guard, asleep, awake,  
Fearing to sin, yet fearing to forsake,  
And daily giving Christ the Judas kiss.

But piteous amends I make each day  
To recompense the evil with the good;  
With double pang I play the double part  
Of all you trust and all that I betray.  
What long atonement makes my penitent blood,  
To what sad tryst goes my unfaithful heart!

Muriel Stuart

# Sic Transit

'What did she leave?' . . .

Only these hungry miser-words, poor heart!

Not 'Did she love?' 'Did she suffer?' 'Was she sad

From this green, bright and tossing world to part?'

No word of 'Do they miss her? do they grieve?'

Only this wolf-thought for the gold she had . . .

'What did she leave?'

Muriel Stuart

# The Balcony

A STREET at night, a silent square  
That mirth forbids;  
Whose windows, with drawn lips and narrowed lids,  
Resent the intruder's stare.

Where winds are cautious in their play,  
Where only steals  
Some meager brougham on its muffled wheels  
Before the portals grey.

But suddenly a window swings,  
A hand is laid  
For one white moment on the balustrade,  
And benediction brings.

I linger . . . but, O influence malign  
I watch a snail  
Crawl casually along the painted rail,  
Where I had built a shrine!

Muriel Stuart

# The Bellman

BRING out your dead before you reap  
From lips beloved infection dread;  
Above such brows ye dare not weep!  
Bring out your dead

Into the street from breast or bed,  
Lest ye too sicken into sleep  
That recks not of the Bellman's tread.

Thrice foolish heart! Why do you heap  
Corpse upon corpse--conspire to spread  
Corruption on all else you keep?  
Bring out your dead!

Muriel Stuart

# The Chalice Of Circe

DRINK of our Cup--of the red wine that burns in it,  
All the wild shames that have crusted its mouth,  
Passion that twists in it, Madness that churns in it,  
Fever that yearns in it, Folly that turns in it,  
Drink of our Cup! It is Love, it is Youth!

"Amorous valleys have travailed to breed in it,  
Eden hath shaken one tree at its brim,  
Syria scattered an infamous seed in it,  
Paphos hath freed in it lovers, to bleed in it,  
Foam from Armida hath rusted its rim!

Chalice of gold with the bruised roses dying there,  
How the mad kisses have clustered and clung!  
All the sweet loves of the world, softly crying there,  
Longing and lying there, swooning and sighing there,  
Call to me: "Scatter our wine on thy tongue!"

Rim of it: poisoned with carrion kisses,  
Taints the fresh flower, and forbiddeth the sun:  
Doves never brood where the stirred serpent hisses  
At maddening kisses--mysterious blisses:  
Over its edges the spiders have spun.

Fierce wife of Philip her portion hath found in it,  
Messaline waits there, Aspasia woos:  
Helen and Egypt go vested and crowned in it,  
Phryne is bound in it, Faustine swings round in it,  
Crying: "Come down to us, watch us and choose!"

Voices are calling: "The revel begins with us,  
Run thou again in the race of delight!  
All the sweet chase and the capturing win with us,  
Enter thou in with us, gambol and sin with us,  
Fleet is the quarry and fair is the flight!"

Ere I could slake at the chalice's wonder  
Lips all a-fire for the taste of such bliss,  
Rose a great storm, sucked the white faces under,

And tore them asunder with fury and thunder,  
Crushed the last folly and choked the last kiss.

Fiercely it flung them and savagely shattered them,  
Burst the last breath in a bubble of blood!  
Fury and foam of it broke them and battered them,  
Scorched them and scattered them, tortured and tattered them,  
Hurling their limbs in the froth of the flood.

. . . . .

Perished their promise, their beauty forsaken;  
Silence alone walked the face of the deep:  
The whirlpool was stilled, and the surface with snaken  
Small ripples was shaken, as if did awaken  
Some sorrowful ghost from the margin of sleep.

Nothing was left of their beauty and 'plaining--  
Left of their magic and spared of their spell:  
Only the lip of the dark water, staining  
The roses, fast waning; and only the craning  
Of snakes' heads, disturbed by the petals that fell.

Muriel Stuart



# The Cloudberry

Give me no coil of daemon flowers-  
Pale Messalines that faint and brood  
Through the spent and secret twilight hours  
On their strange feasts of blood.

Five me wild things of moss and peat-  
The gipsy flower that bravely goes,  
The heather's little hard, brown feet,  
And the black eyes of sloes.

But most of all the cloudberry  
That offers in her clean, white cup  
The melting snows-the cloudberry!  
Where the great winds go up

To the hushed peak whose shadow fills  
The air with silence calm and wide-  
She lives, the Dian of the hills,  
And the streams course beside.

Muriel Stuart

# The Dead Moment

THE world is changed between us, never more  
Shall the dawn rise and seek another mate  
Over the hill-tops; never can the shore  
Spread out her ragged tresses to the roar  
Of the sea passionate,  
Moon-chained, and for a season love-forbid;  
Never shall shift the sullen thunder's lid  
At lightning-lash, and never shall the night  
Throw the wild stars about,  
Nor the day flicker out  
Against the evening's breath; but this shall creep--  
This moment on us, to make different  
The face of every day's intent,  
And change the brow of sleep.

What can we name it? Oh, the whitest word  
Would leave a stain upon that moment's mouth!  
The sweetest piping heard  
By wearying birds a-South  
Would shake its silence, let no word be said;  
What need of name or music hath the dead?  
Too far for call, too faint for song it is,  
This ghost of ours, that you have buried deep;  
Less earth than any violet nourishes  
Its fragile stem would keep;  
And we could lose it in the frailest shell,  
Or lily's wannest bell;  
In any rose's urn that dust might dwell.

Oh! to forsake it thus,  
Our only one, our starveling piteous!  
Even as men who garner and lock up  
Gold chasuble and cup,--  
Their alabaster and their tourmaline,--  
Their sandal-wood and wine,  
Will give their dearest to the earth to keep,  
Housed among strangers, and will let the clay  
Or oozing river-bed  
Rot all their wealth away,

While they go home to sleep!  
Will let the wild roots of the bramble clutch,  
And see the careless sod  
Trample it down, and bruise with common touch  
All that they knew of glory and of God!

(Who would not house a thief so house their dead!)  
In the blind dark with wolf-winds overhead.  
When night sucks honey from the hive of day  
They lie, while April, with her merry clout,  
Flings the white dust about;  
When the swift silences that ride the Spring  
Whip on their misty chariots, and wring  
Foam from the bridled lips of May;  
What time the sick moon looks up yellowly  
Out of the pillowed sky,  
Or when doth sing  
Some crazy bird, aslant upon a bough  
A song that makes him, just this time of year,  
A poet, and can never sing again;  
When the pale lips of rain  
Tremble above the eyelids of the plain.

Ah! would you hide our one dead moment, now,  
Even as they, my dear?  
Who into one grave hurdle grace and mirth,  
Beating down Beauty with a noisy spade,  
Nor dream that 'neath the stunned and senseless earth  
Are all their riches laid;--  
Such gold as they shall never see again,  
Such wine as shall not stain  
Their shallow cups! All beauty, all delight,  
Treasure, unbarterable and bright,  
All lie there in the cold, and in the night.

Nay, you will have it so?  
Let all its sweetness go,  
Brief, exquisite?  
Then take it hence; but make a wreath for it  
And let us sing for it a requiem,  
Not the few strangled words above the dead  
That those, whose hearts condemn,

Mutter, for having left so long unsaid,  
Pity or praise, to ears desiring them.  
Bury it not as something sick and shamed,  
Unfathered and unnamed.  
Nay, break sweet spices, myrrh and cedar bring,  
Bury it as a king,  
Or some beloved child that lies beneath  
The rose whose name he knew not, wondering  
Why his young mother wove it in a wreath.

For, look you, and remember what it gave,--  
Those gifts, that naught and none can take away!  
How it makes red as rose each pallid day,  
Each coward moment, brave;  
And how each wingless heel of Misery  
It sandals with a hope, and sends a-sky!  
While we await the hour that somewhere goes  
Unmatched, unmated . . . it shall not be yet:  
Night's heavy eyelids close  
On tears; and leave the Morning's pillow wet.  
Weep not, though said the requiem, flung the wreath;  
Only when you forget, and I forget,  
Weep for that moment's death.

Muriel Stuart

# The End Of Love

WHO shall forget till his last hour be come,--  
Until the useful service of the dust  
Hath drawn the emptying ceremonies in and in;--  
Until the Earth hath eaten love and lust,  
Mirth, Beauty, and their kin . . .  
Who shall forget that hour  
That night unstarred, that day ungarlanded;  
Where fell the petals of that fadeless flower?

When every word was said  
That long had bared frustrate and savage teeth,  
Leashed in the perishable thong of days,  
And whipped to words of praise!  
When every ill, and each ingratitude,  
Each joy misnamed,  
Each deed misunderstood,  
Was flogged into the daylight, halt, and maimed,  
Out of its bier, to bear the day's disgust--  
Out of its decent bed  
To beat Love's tortured head  
Into the troubled and uncertain dust.  
Who can forget the naked hour profane,  
When Love fled from us, shrieking through the dark,  
His torch blown backward by the hurricane  
Licking his dreadful features with its tongue,  
While his mouth spat a curse at every spark,  
And a scourged menace flung?

Thou wert that dreadful thing!  
O Beautiful, O Rare, O Breath of rose,  
O Spirit as impalpable as Spring!  
How have I held thee, then? Too long, too close?  
For it was thou, was thou, who left me thus,  
With each sweet thing, with all the lovely host  
That turning stared at us,  
And, shuddering, gave up their frailest ghost!

Oh! to remember! Oh! to hear the tune  
That Love first sang to us, that happy day;

When over us was furled his radiant wing.  
Oh! for that one May moment. Not to lose  
Its greenest leaf, or miss its singlest spray  
So that this hour by that forgotten day  
Might be all buried by the buds of Spring  
That soft winds beat,--not bruise,--  
To make a bridal bed for June  
From the pale shroud of May.  
O Love, O Love! There was not any need  
For thee to die, for me to be bereft,  
Our garden to be left  
To nettle and to weed,--  
To whips of rain when the chid wind was wroth.  
Surely by some word, some sigh, had saved us both?  
Could everything be lost,  
All torn and tossed  
Between thy speech and mine? Could all our vows,  
And all our lovely life be laid so low,  
And God fall on His face within the house  
At first marauder's blow?  
Yea, it was so:  
And all of pride and pleasure, peace and power,  
All Life's rich fruit and flower,  
Died, as least darnel dies, in that dread hour.

Muriel Stuart

# The Father

The evening found us whom the day had fled,  
Once more in bitter anger, you and I,  
Over some small, some foolish, trivial thing  
Our anger would not decently let die,  
But dragged between us, shamed and shivering  
Until each other's taunts we scarcely heard,  
Until we lost the sense of all we said,  
And knew not who first spoke the fatal word.  
It seemed that even every kiss we wrung  
We killed at birth with shuddering and hate,  
As if we feared a thing too passionate.  
However close we clung  
One hour the next hour found us separate,  
Estranged, and Love most bitter on our tongue.

To-night we quarrelled over one small head,  
Our fruit of last year's maying, the white bud  
Blown from our stormy kisses and the dead  
First rapture of our wild, estranging blood.  
You clutched him: there was panther in your eyes,  
We breathed like beasts in thickets, on the wall  
Our shadows in huge challenge seemed to rise,  
The room grew dark with anger. Yet through all  
The shame and hurt and pity of it you were  
Still strangely and imperishably dear,  
As one who loves the wild day none the less  
That breaks in bitter hands the buds of Spring,  
Whose cold hand stops the breath of loveliness,  
And drives the wailing ghost of beauty past,  
Making the rose, — even the rose, a thing  
For pain to be remembered by at last.

I said: 'My son shall wear his father's sword.'  
You said: 'Shall hands once blossoms at my breast  
Be stained with blood?' I answered with a word  
More bitter, and your own, the bitterest  
Stung me to sullen anger, and I said:  
'My son shall be no coward of his line  
Because his mother choose'; you turned your head

And your eyes grew implacable in mine.  
And like a trodden snake you turned to meet  
The foe with sudden hissing... then you smiled,  
And broke our life in pieces at my feet,  
'Your child?' you said: 'Your child?'

Muriel Stuart



# The Fools

BELOW, the street was hoarse with cries,  
With groan of carts and scuffling feet,  
With laughter worse than blasphemies,  
Was choked with dust and blind with heat,  
This room was still--too still for peace.

It heard the livid words we said  
Of hate and passion, watched us where  
I sat, as one beside the dead--  
You lay with all your glorious hair  
Flung on the crazy bed.

The moment's passion ended brought--  
Ah, child, to you what did it bring?  
What could it, but one hideous thought  
To us so tired of everything,  
And hating what we sought?

--So tired of all this grey room meant,  
Of life together, shackled cold,  
Or bound in flame so different  
From the swift, white desire of old,  
The old, divine consent.

Poor room, so meanly intimate!  
Our dirty clothes sprawled on a chair,  
Combs, candle-ends, and grimy plate  
Littered the table, paper and hair  
Forlornely choked the grate.

And I so passionate, you such  
A wild sweet plunderer of bliss  
Soon fallen in our own folly's clutch,  
Finding how wrong, how mad it is  
To know, to love, too much.

You rose, but with no woman's care  
For all the beauty that is hers,  
Pent up your out-burst storm of hair

And fetched your cloak and found your purse,  
And matched my sullen stare.

Wild words so often said before  
Escape us in the old fierce way.  
You cried, "I shall return no more!"  
I said, "I shall no longer stay!"  
You closed the grumbling door.

The mirror grinned, "They are still one."  
The cupboard gasped, "Their clothes are here."  
The ghastly bed said with a leer,  
"I shall not sleep alone!"

They knew what took us years to learn,  
That Habit terrible and slow  
Doth Love and Hate alike inurn.  
They knew too well I should not go,  
They knew you would return.

Muriel Stuart

# The Harebell

You give me no portent of impermanence  
Though before sun goes you are long gone hence,  
Your bright, inherited crown  
Withered and fallen down.

It seems that your blue immobility  
Has been for ever, and must for ever be.  
Man seems the unstable thing,  
Fevered and hurrying.

So free of joy, so prodigal of tears,  
Yet he can hold his fevers seventy years,  
Out-wear sun, rain and frost,  
By which you are soon lost.

Muriel Stuart

# The New Aspasia

If I have given myself to you, and you,  
And if these pale hands are not virginal,  
Nor these bright lips beneath your own lips true,  
What matters it? I do not stand nor fall  
By your old foolish judgments of desire:  
If this were Helen's way it is not mine;  
I bring you Beauty, but no Troys to fire:  
The cup I hold brims not with Borgia's wine.  
You, so sudden snared of brows and breasts,  
Lightly you think upon these lips, this hair.  
My thoughts are kinder: you are pity's guests:  
Compassion's bed you share.

It was not lust delivered me to you;  
I gave my wondering mouth for pity's sake,  
For your strange, sighing lips I did but break  
Many times this bread, and poured this wine anew.  
My body's woven sweetness and kindling hair  
Were given for heal of hurts unknown of me,  
For something I could slake but could not share.  
Sudden, and rough, and cruel I let you be,  
I gave my body for what the world calls sin,  
Even as for your souls the Nazarene  
Gave once. Long years in pity I and He  
Have served you-Jesus and the Magdalen.

As on the river in the fading light  
A rust-red sail across the evening creeps,  
Torching the gloom, and slowly sinks from sight,  
The blood may rise to some old face at night,  
Remembering old sins before it sleeps.  
So might you hence recall me, were I true  
To your sad violence. Were I not free  
So me you might remember now; but you  
Were no more loved by me than  
Than clouds at sunset, or the wild bird going  
About his pleasure on the apple tree,  
Or wide-blown roses swelling to the bee;  
No sweeter than flowers suddenly found growing

In frost-bound dells, or, on the bare, high hills,  
The gold, unlaced, dew-drunken daffodils  
Shouting the dawn, or the brown river flowing  
Down quietly to the sea;  
Or day in twilight's hair bound safe and dim,  
Stirless in lavender, or the wind blowing,  
Tumbling the poppy's turban after him.

I knew you as I knew these happy things,  
Passing, unwept, on wide and tranquil wings  
To their own place in nature; below, above  
Transient passion with its stains and stings.  
For this strange pity that you knew not of  
Was neither lust nor love.

Do not repent, nor pity, nor regret.  
I do not seek your pardon, nor give you mine.  
Pass by, be silent, drop no tears, forget.  
Return not, make no sign  
When I am dead, nor turn your lips away  
From Phyrne's silver limbs and Faustine's kiss.  
I need no pity. No word of pity say.  
I have given a new sweet name and crown to this  
That served men's lust and was Aspasia.

Muriel Stuart

# The Seed-Shop

Here in a quiet and dusty room they lie,  
Faded as crumbled stone or shifting sand,  
Forlorn as ashes, shrivelled, scentless, dry -  
Meadows and gardens running through my hand.

In this brown husk a dale of hawthorn dreams;  
A cedar in this narrow cell is thrust  
That will drink deeply of a century's streams;  
These lilies shall make summer on my dust.

Here in their safe and simple house of death,  
Sealed in their shells, a million roses leap;  
Here I can blow a garden with my breath,  
And in my hand a forest lies asleep.

Muriel Stuart

# The Thief Of Beauty

I

The mind is Beauty's thief, the poet takes  
The golden spendthrift's trail among the blooms  
Where she stands tossing silver in the lakes,  
And twisting bright swift threads on airy looms.  
Her ring the poppy snatches, and the rose  
With laughter plunders all her gusty plumes.  
The poet gleans and gathers as she goes  
Heedless of summer's end certain and soon,  
Of winter rattling at the door of June.

II

When Beauty lies hand-folded, pale and still,  
Forsaken of her lovers and her lords,  
And winter keeps cold watch upon the hill,  
Then he lets fall his bale of coloured words.  
At frosty midnight June shall rise in flame,  
Move at his magic with her bells and birds,  
The rose will redden as he speaks her name.  
He shall release earth's frozen bosom there,  
And with great words shall cuff the whining air.

Muriel Stuart

# The Tryst

I raised the veil, I loosed the bands,  
I took the dead thing from its place.  
Like a warm stream in frozen lands  
My lips went wandering on her face,  
My hands burnt in her hands.

She could not stay me, being dead;  
Her body here was mine to hold.  
What if her lips had lost their red?  
To me they always tasted cold  
With the cold words she said.

Did my breath run along her hair,  
And free the pulse, and fire the brain,  
My wild blood wake her wild blood there?  
Here eyelids lifted wide again  
In a blue, sudden stare.

Beneath my fierce, profane caress  
The whole white length of body moved;  
The drowsy bosom seemed to press  
As if against a breast beloved,  
Then fail for weariness.

No, not that anguish! Christ forbid  
That I should raise such dead! I rose,  
Stifled the mouth with lilies, hid  
Those eyes, And drew the long hair close,  
And shut the coffin lid.

My cold brow on the cold wood laid,  
Quiet and close to-night we lie.  
No cruel words her lips have said.  
I shall not take nor she deny.  
The dead is with the dead.

Muriel Stuart



# The Wood And The Shore

The low bay melts into a ring of silver,  
And slips it on the shore's reluctant finger  
Though in an hour the tide will turn, will tremble,  
Forsaking her because the moon persuades him.  
But the black wood that leans and sighs above her  
No tide can turn, no moon can slave nor summon.  
Then comes the dark: on sleepy, shell-strewn beaches,  
O'er long pale leagues of sand and cold, clear water  
She hears the tide go out towards the moonlight.  
The wood still leans... weeping she turns to seek him,  
And his black hair all night is on her bosom.

Muriel Stuart

# Thèlus Wood

I came by night to Thèlus wood,  
And though in dark and desperate places  
Stubborned with wire and brown with blood  
Undaunted April crept and sewed  
Her violets in dead men's faces,  
And in a soft and snowy shroud  
Drew the scarred fields with gentle stitch;  
Though in the valley where the ditch  
Was hoarse with nettles, blind with mud,  
She stroked the golden-headed bud,  
And loosed the fern, she dared not here  
To touch nor tend this murdered thing;  
The wind went wide of it, the year  
Upon this breast stopped short of Spring:  
Beauty turned back from Thèlus Wood.

From broken brows the dim eyes stared,  
Blistered and maimed the wide stumps grinned  
From the black mouth of Thèlus bared  
In laughter at some monstrous jest.  
No creature moved there, weed nor wind.  
Huge arms, half-torn from savage breast,  
Hung wide, and tangled limbs and faces  
Lay, as if giants blind and stark  
With violent, with perverse embraces  
Groped for each other in the dark.  
A moaning rose — not of the wind,  
— There was no wind, but hollowly  
From its dim bed of mud each tree  
Gave forth a sound, till trees and mud  
Seemed but a single, sighing mouth,  
A wound that spoke with lips uncouth,  
And cried to me from Thèlus Wood.

I heard one tree say: 'This was I  
Who drew great clouds across the sky  
To weep against me.' This one said:  
'I made a gloom where love might lie  
All day and dream it night, a bed

Secret and soft, the birds' song had  
A twilight sound the whole day there.'  
One said: 'Last night I shook my hair  
Before the mirror of the moon.'  
'I saw a corpse to-day,' said one  
'That was but buried yester-year.'  
And one, the smallest, sweetest thing —  
A fair child-tree made never stir,  
Dead before God had tended her  
In the green nurseries of Spring.  
She lay, the loveliest, loneliest,  
Among the old and ruined trees,  
And at each small and broken wrist  
The white flowers grew like bandages.

Then from the ruined churchyard where  
Old vaults and graves lay turned and tossed  
And earth from earth was shaken bare,  
Came murmurings of a tongueless host  
That to each ghastly brother said:  
'Who raised us from our sleep? Is this  
The resurrection of the dead?  
Upon our bodies no flesh grows,  
No bright blood through our temples springs,  
No glory spreads, no trumpet blows,  
The air is not white and blind with wings.  
And yet dragged up before us lie  
The woods of Thèlus at our feet,  
And strange hills sentinel the sky,  
And where the road went yawns a pit.  
The world is finished: let us sleep.  
God has forgotten: we shall keep  
Here a sweet, safe Eternity.  
There is no other end than this,  
And this is death, and that is peace.'  
But even as they ceased the stones  
Were loosed, the earth shook where I stood,  
And from far off the crouching guns  
Swung slowly round on Thèlus Wood.

Muriel Stuart

# Tintagel

DEAD man! will you ride with me,  
As you rode that night of yore,  
Will you ride with me, once more  
To Tintagel by the sea?

When those savage words were said--  
Words that challenged destiny--  
To Tintagel by the sea,  
Through the sweating night we fled!

Hearts, that raged with storm and sea,  
Thundered through the scream of rain;  
Laugh and ride with me again,  
Take my kisses thirstily!

Clutch the cloak that flies apart,  
Grip the stallion with your knee:  
Let my wild, black tresses be  
Once more pinioned on your heart.

Dream is dead, and dead are we:  
But the dead rise up again!  
Once more through the night and rain,  
Dead man! will you ride with me?

Muriel Stuart

To-----

Between two common days this day was hung  
When Love went to the ending that was his;  
His seamless robe was rent, his bow was wrong,  
He took at last the sponge's bitter kiss.

A simple day the dawn has watched unfold  
Before the night had borne the death of love;  
You took the bread I blessed, and love was sold  
Upon your lips, and paid the price thereof.

I changed then, as when soul from body slips,  
And casts its passion and its pain aside;  
I pledged you with most spiritual lips,  
And gave you hands that you had crucified.  
You who betrayed, kissed, crucified, forgot,  
You walked with Christ, poor fool, and knew it not!

Muriel Stuart

## To A Poet, Charles Bridges

THOU singest, thou, me seems,  
Coming from high Parnassus; where thy head  
Beside the silent streams,  
Among fast-fading blooms, hath fashioned  
A pillow of pale dreams;  
While from thee, sleeping, gods, of heart and soul,  
Have taken fullest toll.

Thou knowest at what cost  
Thy sleep was taken on those awful hills--  
What thou hast gained, and lost;  
Thou knowest, too, if what thou art fulfils  
The pledge of what thou wast;  
And if all compensates the poet's wreath  
That wounds the brow beneath.

Rememberest thou that night  
Incomparable? Thou in dreams wast laid,  
Where petals, rose and white,  
Above thy head a pale pavilion made;  
Where at unscalèd height  
The moon lay anchored in the heaving sky,  
And clouds went surging by.

Then came the gods unknown!--  
The plundering gods--to take thee unawares,  
While thou wast sleeping, thrown  
Upon the sacred mountain that is theirs.  
In vain sad flowers had blown  
A gale of petals o'er thee, on they came  
In a still sheet of flame!

They knew that those who dare  
To sleep one night beside Parnassus' streams  
The poet's crown must wear--  
Must lip the chalice of immortal dreams,  
And breathe the eternal air;  
Who, even unto trembling Ossa's hill,  
May walk the mount at will!

They killed thy happiness,  
And strangled all thy youth, with hands profane,  
They brake Love's rosaries,  
Tossing thy ravaged soul amid the slain,  
While thou wast weaponless;  
And left thee gibbeted 'twixt pain and peace,  
Forbidding thy release.

Then they augustly laid  
Their crippled gifts beside thee, and withdrew  
Into high Pelion's shade;  
Their tireless feet made fall no bead of dew,  
Their passing bent no blade,  
Though thunder muttered round each mighty plume,  
And crumbled into gloom.

They laid a fatal spell  
Of beauty on thine eyes, that made most fair  
The rose unpluckable;  
They bade thee thirst, yet find no Cup to bear  
Water from any well;  
They mocked thee with a vision passionate,  
And a soul celibate!

O friend, what thou hast known  
Thou givest me; what thou hast suffered, thou  
Wouldst calmly bear alone;  
Forbidding thorns to gather on my brow,--  
Accustomed on thine own;  
Thou lingerest at my side, to show and spare  
The pitfall and the snare.

For thou wouldst give to me  
The poet's pillow, who has suffered not  
The poet's penalty;  
A goodly heritage, a happy lot  
Wouldst have my portion be.  
With honey from the rod art fain to feed,  
Not from the galled reed.

Thou hast some rare reward!

The reed that gods have guided, in thine hand  
Becomes a dreadful sword;  
Their fingers on thy heartstrings still demand  
A loud, triumphant chord:  
They pass the ditch-delivered poets by,  
With wide contemptuous eye.

Poet: I take thy cup:  
But, from my coloured wreath of morning flowers  
Where bees wild honey sup,  
Upon thy sepulchre of buried hours  
Am fain to offer up  
Some bud, that spills upon thy brow anew  
Its fragile shell of dew.

And if at last I choose  
To make my pillow on some slope forlorn,  
And, in that slumber, lose  
My morning wreath, that must be tossed and torn  
To feed the jealous Muse,  
Remember the poor gifts that I resign . . .  
I shall remember thine!

Muriel Stuart



# To The Old Gods

O YE, who rode the gales of Sicily,  
Sandalled with flame,  
Spread on the pirate winds; o ye who broke  
No wind-flower as ye came--  
Though Pelion shivered when the thunder spoke  
The gods' decree!--

Into the twilight of the ancient days  
Have not ye flown!--  
Ye, whom the happy Greeks inspired hand  
Struck from the frenzied stone:  
That, ye withdrawn, your images should stand  
To take their praise.

Smear'd into clay, and frozen into stone!  
Ye, that do now  
Face eyes unworshipful in plunder's halls,  
Mutilate, with marred brow:  
Broken and maimed: couched along alien walls  
In lands unknown.

O gracious ones! No more, no more, shall ye  
Spread wing above  
Perilous Ossa! No more wring delight  
From pool and golden grove:  
No more beneath your fire-shod feet in flight  
Shall hiss the sea.

The thunder shall not groan between your breasts,  
Nor lightning writhe  
Barbed in your clutch; no worshippers shall trace  
Your steps in grove and hithe.  
No more 'thwart skies your golden stallions race  
On mighty quests.

And yet what fane, what column, rises now  
To save or shine:  
What temple travails at such quickening feet,  
What wing-tip seeds a shrine:

What god hath bid us build in wold or street,  
Such breast and brow?

What have our wisdom and our worship done  
To raise such gods?  
To quench the ruined eyes of Parthenon  
What newer beauty nods,  
And shames the wreckless brow that stares upon  
The amazed sun?

Held up in arms of columns white as flowers,  
You faced the sea,  
With your great breasts for glory passioning,--  
For mortal's victory;  
Not 'neath occasional thin spires that spring  
From streets of ours,

Hooding the dying god, whom men revile,--  
Who bears their sin.  
No great winds thunder over sun-splashed thrones,  
Our dusty shrines within,  
Where troubled feet make groan the weary stones,  
In hollow isle.

I, only I, kneel at forsaken shrine:  
The lamp I bring  
Scarce throws a shade beneath your eyelids there:  
Forlorn the song I sing  
To ears august, and these wrung berries bear  
A bitter wine.

Yet still I kneel, poor praise to offer up  
To each great name!  
And I shall feel upon my brow descend  
A sudden edge of flame.  
Your wings shall smear these words, even as ye bend  
To this poor cup.

Muriel Stuart

# White Magic

Is it not a wonderful thing to be able to force an astonished plant to bear rare flowers which are foreign to it. . . and to obtain a marvelous result from sap which, left to itself, would have produced corollas without beauty? -VIRGIL.

I stood forlorn and pale,  
Pressed by the cold sand, pinched by the thin grass,  
Last of my race and frail  
Who reigned in beauty once, when beauty was,  
Before the rich earth beckoned to the sea,  
Took his salt lips to taste,  
And spread this gradual waste-  
This ruin of lower, this doom of grass and tree.  
Each Spring could scarcely lift  
My brows from the sand drift  
To fill my lips with April as she went,  
Or force my weariness  
To its sad, summer dress:  
On the harsh beach, I heard the grey sea rise,  
The ragged grass made ceaseless, dim lament,  
And day and night scarce changed the mournful skies.

Foot on the sand, a shadow on the sea!  
A face leaned over me.  
Across each wasted limb  
Passed healingly a warm, great, god-like hand.  
I was drawn up to him,  
From my frail feet fell the last grains of sand.  
Then haste and darkness stooped and made me theirs;  
Deep handed me to deep; . . .  
I faded then as names fade from men's prayers,--  
As a sigh at last made friends with sleep.

But the same hand that bore me from the sea,  
Waking me tenderly,  
Bound me to a rough stranger of my race,--  
Me weary and pale to him, and him to me.  
I turned my piteous face  
Aside ashamed; I struggled to be free.

I slept, I dreamed, I woke to that embrace! . . .

Sweet tides stole through my veins,  
Strange fires and thrills and pains;  
To my cold lips the bloom crept back once more  
I glowed as a bride glows;  
I watched the day with delicate hands restore  
My kinship with the rose.  
About my throat my hair went like a flame,  
My brows were wreathed, in purple I was dressed,  
I bore my bride's name,  
A great star burned my breast.  
No longer bound, I leaned the same sweet way  
Towards her lover. Now astonished I  
Who was a beggar stand obediently  
Beside Cophetua.

Muriel Stuart

# Wild Geese Across The Moon

REEDS, snake-like, coiled in the mist  
Where the low fog drives:  
The muddy cough of the stream that strives  
To free its throat from the clot of reed,  
As they fight it out the water and the weed--  
While the fog, above, takes turn and twist:  
Men, these are your lives!

Wild Geese across the moon:  
As some hand that unrolls  
And scratches black names upon blood-red scrolls;  
So seem these shadows, dipping, dying,  
Black shapes on the red moon, screaming, flying,  
Till the fog blots out, or late or soon:  
Men, these are your souls!

Muriel Stuart

# Words

Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles,--  
Usumcasane and Theridamas,  
Is it not passing brave to be a king,  
And ride in triumph through Persepolis? --MARLOWE

Bring the great words that scourge the thundering line  
With lust and slaughter-words that reek of doom  
And the lost battle and the ruined shrine;--  
Words dire and black as midnight on a tomb;  
Hushed speech of waters on the lip of gloom;  
Huge sounds of death and plunder in the night;--  
Words whose vast plumes above the ages meet,  
Girdling the lost, dark centuries in their flight,  
The slave of their unfetterable feet.

Bring words as pure as rills of earliest Spring  
In some far cranny of the hillside born  
To stitch against the earth's green habiting;--  
Words lonely as the long, blue fields of morn;--  
Words on the wistful lyre of winds forlorn  
To the sad ear of grief from distance blown;  
Thin bleat of fawn and airy babble of birds;  
Sounds of bright water slipping on the stone  
Where the thrilled fountain pipes to woodland words.

Bring passionate words from noontide's slumber roused,  
To slake the amorous lips of love with fruit,  
Dripping with honey, and with syrups drowsed  
To draw bee-murmurs from the dreaming lute-  
Words gold and mad and headlong in pursuit  
Of laughter; words that are too sweet to say  
And fade, unsaid, upon some rose's mouth;--  
Words soft as winds that ever blow one way,  
The summer way, the long way from the south.

For such words have high lineage, and were known  
Of Milton once, whose heart on theirs still beats;  
Marlowe hurled forth huge stars to make them crown;

They are stained still with the dying lips of Keats;  
As queen they trod the cloak in Shakespeare's streets;  
Pale hands of Shelley gently guard their flame;  
Chatterton's heart was burst upon their spears:  
Their dynasty unbroken, and their name  
Music in men's mouths for all men's ears.

But now they are lost, their lordliest 'scutcheon stained;  
Upon their ruined walls no trumpet rings;  
Their shrines defiled, their sacraments profaned:  
Men crown the crow, they have given the jackal wings.  
Slaves wear the peplum, beggars ride as kings.  
They couple foolish words and look for birth  
Of mighty emperor, Christ or Avatar,  
They mate with slaves from whom no king comes forth;  
No child is theirs who follow not the Star.

Muriel Stuart