

PROSE POEMS BY
KAHLIL GIBRAN



"His power came from some great reservoir of spiritual life else it could not have been so universal and so potent, but the majesty and beauty of the language with which he clothed it were all his own."

— CLAUDE BRAGDON

THE BOOKS OF
KAHLIL GIBRAN

The Madman . 1918

Twenty Drawings . 1919

The Forerunner . 1920

The Prophet . 1923

Sand and Foam . 1926

Jesus the Son of Man . 1928

The Earth Gods . 1931

The Wanderer . 1932

The Garden of the Prophet . 1933

Prose Poems . 1934

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Translated from the Arabic for the first time by

ANDREW GHAREEB

With a foreword by

BARBARA YOUNG



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FOREWORD

KAHLIL GIBRAN has said: " Translation is an art in itself; it is the re-creative process of transforming the magic of one language into the magic of another."

To approach the works of a recognized master of any language is to face a task that presents peculiar difficulties; when such works have been inscribed with a heavenly informed wisdom and power, the difficulties become well-nigh insuperable.

This volume of prose poems, now presented for the first time in English, was undertaken by the translator as a labour of sincere devotion and with an earnest conviction of the power and importance of the original Arabic writings of Gibran Kahlil Gibran.

This poet, native to Becharre, born of Lebanese parents fifty-one years ago,

lived a strangely single and separate life, notwithstanding his multitude of contacts with people in every station of existence, from beggars to royalty. There was a sense, impossible to define clearly, in which he was always and forever alone as a few and only a few of the men who have walked this planet have also been. And there now remains here a handful of those persons who recognized Gibran for what he was, one of the Titans of world history.

The richness of his inheritance from remote Phœnician-Chaldean forefathers, enhanced by a long line of brilliant and cultured men and women, had woven for the ancient spirit a fitting garment which he wore with dignity and beneficence. Every stroke of his pen, every sweep of his brush, was a gesture of informed power. He has not written a meaningless, hardly a superfluous line, and he has left a store of peculiar treasure on parchment and canvas.

To the very close of his life Gibran wrote fertileley in Arabic, notwithstanding his mastery of English which served to set his

name, several years ago, as one of the six men writing the most notable English.

This recognition of his pre-eminence with the language of his adoption was a gratification to Gibran, who smiled and said: " I who am but a guest to this language must needs treat it with deference. I may not take the liberties which its own sons may take."

With what immeasurable meed of deference, then, must the translator approach the great adventure of translating Gibran into English. The profound scholarship as well as the boldness and nobility of spiritual vision and power presents a vast emprise. I do not hesitate to say that this will never be done as Gibran himself would have done it. There is a Gibran English even as there is a Gibran Arabic, and both are definitely and subtly different from any other English and Arabic.

The present translation is an attempt to bring to the English-speaking world some of the earlier of this poet's Arabic prose

poems, a form of which he was distinctly the originator in that ancient tongue. He has created a school of writing which has caught the vivid and sensitive imagination of the poetic and scholarly East, and of which he is recognized as father throughout the great Arabic-speaking race of three hundred million people.

This translation has been rendered with earnestness and devotion by a young countryman of Gibran's, a disciple who has felt in the original the appeal of a poignant mysticism and who has sedulously sought to invest the English version with the rare beauty of its Arabic prototype. To his efforts has been added the touch of an American writer who has spent years with Gibran English — one who has many times heard the poet himself speak these very poems, giving to them, in his translation, the fullness of his free, flowing English.

Perhaps some small measure of the heat from that deep fire of which the original poems were the flame may be felt herein;
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perhaps some rushlight of the poet's profound realization — the tragic beauty and rightness of life, and the supreme assurance that " We have eternity " — may be found and followed; perhaps there may beat through the succeeding rhythms some echo of the poet's own heart-beat. That these things may be so is the hope of Andrew Ghareeb and myself.

And if they be so, then the work has been good work, and not a vain gesture to be lost in a world of futile gesturing.

BARBARA YOUNG

For permission to reprint certain of the prose poems contained in this volume the translators make grateful acknowledgment to the *Springfield Republican* for "My Soul Counselling Me" (May 9, 1926), "Night" (October 7, 1928), and "Song of the Night" (March 9, 1930); to the *Syrian World* for "Fame" (April 1929) and "Revelation" (June 1931); to the *Golden Book* for "Earth" (January 1930); and to Mr. Edwin Valentine Mitchell and his *Literary Observer* for "The Soul."

The original Arabic versions of the poems appeared as follows: in *Al-Funoon*: "Night" (April 1913), "At the Door of the Temple" (May 1913), "The Poet" (November 1913), "Revelation" (March 1916), "Song of the Night" (March 1917), "Fame" (October 1917), and "Earth"; in *Tear and Laughter* (1914): "The Soul," "My Birthday," and "In the City of the Dead"; in *Es-Sayeh* (January 12, 1922): "My Soul Counselling Me"; and in *The Tempests*: "Be Still, My Heart."

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PROSE POEMS
BY
KAHLIL GIBRAN

THE FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN THIS VOLUME ARE RE-
PRODUCED FROM ORIGINAL
DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR

AT THE DOOR OF THE TEMPLE

I purified my lips with the sacred fire to
speak of love,

But when I opened my lips I found myself
speechless.

Before I knew love, I was wont to chant
the songs of love,

But when I learned to know, the words
in my mouth became naught save
breath,

And the tunes within my breast fell into
deep silence.

In the past, when you would question me
concerning the secrets and the mys-
teries of love,

I would speak and answer you with assur-
ance.

But now that love has adorned me with
vestments,

I come, in my turn, to question you of all
the ways of love, and all its wonders.
Who among you can answer me?
I come to question you about my self and
that which is in me.
Who among you can reveal my heart to my
heart,
And disclose my self to my self?
Tell me now, what flame is this that burns
within my bosom,
Consuming my strength, and melting my
hopes and my desires?
What hands are these, light, gentle, and
alluring,
Which enfold my spirit in its hours of
loneliness
And pour into the vessel of my heart a
wine mixed of the bitterness of joy
And the sweetness of pain?
What wings are these beating around my
bed in the long silence of the night,
So that I am wakeful, watching — I know
not what;
Listening to that I do not hear, and gazing
upon that I do not see;

Meditating on that I do not comprehend,
and possessing that I have not at-
tained.

Ay, wakeful am I, sighing,
For to me sighs and griefs are lovelier than
the ring of joy and laughter;
Wakeful am I in the hand of an unseen
power that slays me and then quick-
ens me,
Even until the day dawns and fills the
corners of my house with light.
Then do I sleep, while between my with-
ered eyelids the shadows of my wake-
fulness still quiver,
And above my bed of stone hovers the
figure of a dream.



And what is this that we call love?
Tell me, what is this mystic secret hid-
ing behind the semblance of our
life,
And living in the heart of our existence?
What is this vast release coming as a cause
to all effects, and as an effect unto all
causes?

What is this quickening that gathers death
and life and from them creates a
dream

More strange than life, and deeper far
than death?

Tell me, my brothers, tell me, which of
you would not awake from this sleep
of life

When your spirit feels the touch of love's
white fingers?

Which of you would not forsake his father
and his mother and his birthplace

When the maiden his heart loves calls out
to him?

Which of you would not cross the desert
and climb the mountain and sail the
seas

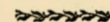
To seek her to whom your spirit yearns?

What youth, indeed, would not follow to
the earth's uttermost bounds,

If one awaits him there whose breath and
voice and touch he shall find sweet
and wholesome?

What man would not thus burn his soul
as incense

Before a god who regards his craving and
grants him his petition?



It was but yesterday that I stood at the
door of the temple

Questioning the passers-by concerning
the mysteries and the benefits of
love.

And a man passed by, of middle age,
wasted and with a scowling counte-
nance, and he said:

“ Love is an inborn weakness which we
have inherited from the first man.”

Then a youth, strong and stalwart of body
and arm, came chanting:

“ Love is a resolution which accompanies
our being, and binds this present
with the ages past and future.”

And now a sad-faced woman, passing,
sighed and said:

“ Love is a deadly venom which dark and
fearful vipers diffuse in space from
the abyss of hell,

So that it descends in dew upon the thirsty
soul,

And the soul therefrom becomes for a moment drunken, then sobered for a year, and dead an æon."

But a young maiden, rosy, and with laughing lips, said:

" See, love is a nectar which the brides of dawn pour for the strong
So that they rise glorified before the stars of night, and joyous before the sun of day."

Thereafter came a man in a garment of sombre black, and a loose beard that fell upon his breast, and he said sternly:

" Love is a stupidity which comes with the dawn of youth and is gone with its eventide."

And one followed him with face radiant and serene, saying in tranquil joy:

" Love is a heavenly wisdom that lights our inner and outer eye
So that we may behold all things even as the gods."

Then passed by a blind man questioning the ground with his old staff, and

there was a wailing in his voice as he said:

" Love is a dense fog to enshroud the soul, and veil from it the shows of life,

So that the soul sees naught but the shadows of its desires

Lost among rocky steeps,

And hears naught but the echo of its voice shouting from the valleys of desolation."

Then passed by a young man playing upon a lyre and singing:

" Love is a celestial light shining from the innermost of the sensitive self to illumine all about it,

That it may behold the worlds as a procession moving in green meadows,

And life as a dream of beauty between awakening and awakening."

And after the young man followed one decrepit, and with dragging feet, trembling, and he said:

" Love is the repose of the sad body in the silent grave,

And it is the security of the soul in the
fastnesses of eternity."

Then came a young child whose years
were but five, and he ran and
shouted:

"Love is my father, and love is my mother,
And no one knows of love but my mother
and my father."



And now the day was done and all the
people were passed by before the
temple,

And each and every one had spoken of
love,

And in each word he had revealed his own
longing and desire

And had disclosed the secret mysteries of
life.

When evening was fully come, and the
moving throng had gone their ways,

And all was hushed,

I heard a voice within the temple say-
ing:

"All life is twain, the one a frozen stream,
the other a burning flame,
And the burning flame is love."

Thereupon I entered into the temple and
bowed myself, kneeling in supplica-
tion

And chanting a prayer in my secret heart:

"Make me, O Lord, food for the burning
flame,

And make me, O God, fuel for the sacred
fire.

Amen."

REVELATION

When the night waxed deep and slumber
cast its cloak upon the face of the
earth,

I left my bed and sought the sea, saying
to myself:

“The sea never sleeps, and the wakeful-
ness of the sea brings comfort to a
sleepless soul.”

When I reached the shore, the mist had
already descended from the moun-
tain tops

And covered the world as a veil adorns the
face of a maiden.

There I stood gazing at the waves, listen-
ing to their singing, and considering
the power that lies behind them —
The power that travels with the storm,
and rages with the volcano, that

smiles with smiling flowers and
makes melody with murmuring
brooks.

After a while I turned, and lo,
I beheld three figures sitting upon a rock
near by,
And I saw that the mist veiled them, and
yet it veiled them not.

Slowly I walked toward the rock whereon
they sat, drawn by some power which
I know not.

A few paces off I stood and gazed upon
them, for there was magic in the place
Which crystallized my purpose and be-
stirred my fancy.

And at that moment one of the three arose,
and with a voice that seemed to come
from the sea depths he said:

“Life without love is like a tree without
blossoms or fruit.

And love without beauty is like flowers
without fragrance, and fruit without
seeds.

Life, Love, and Beauty are three entities
in one self, free and boundless,
Which know neither change nor separation.”

This he said, and sat again in his place.

Then the second figure arose, and with a
voice like the roar of rushing waters
he said:

“Life without rebellion is like the seasons
without a spring.

And rebellion without right is like spring
in an arid and barren desert.

Life, Rebellion, and Right are three entities
in one self,

And in them is neither change nor separation.”

This he said, and sat again in his place.

Then the third figure arose, and spoke
with a voice like the peal of the thunder,
saying:

“Life without freedom is like a body without
a spirit.

And freedom without thought is like a
spirit confounded.

Life, Freedom, and Thought are three entities
in one eternal self,
Which neither vanish nor pass away.”

Then the three arose and with voices of
majesty and awe they spoke:

“Love and all that it begets,
Rebellion and all that it creates,
Freedom and all that it generates,
These three are aspects of God . . .

And God is the infinite mind of the finite
and conscious world.”

Then silence followed, filled with the stirring
of invisible wings and the tremor
of the ethereal bodies.

And I closed my eyes, listening to the echo
of the saying which I heard.

When I opened my eyes, I beheld naught
but the sea hidden beneath a blanket
of mist;

And I moved closer toward that rock

And I beheld naught but a pillar of incense
rising unto the sky.

THE SOUL

. . . And the God of Gods created the soul, fashioning it for beauty.

He gave unto it the gentleness of a breeze at dawn, the scent of flowers, the loveliness of moonlight.

He gave unto it also the cup of joy, and He said:

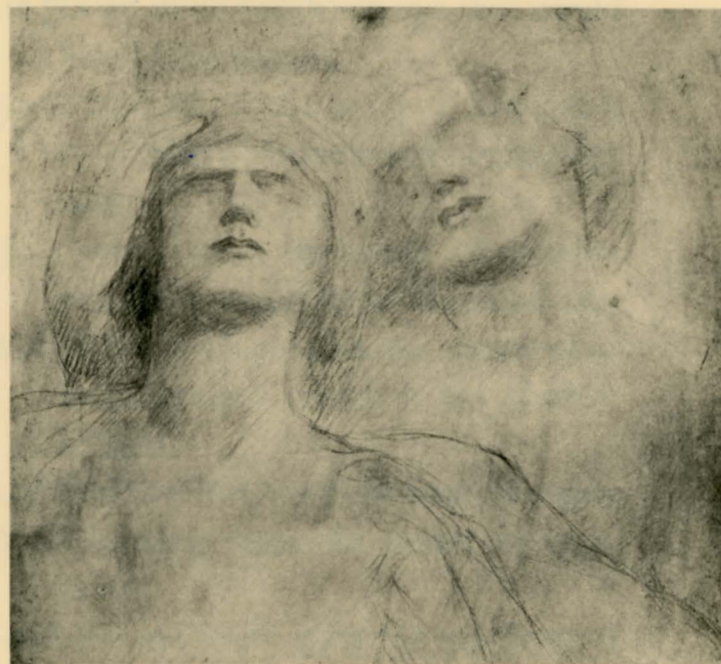
“ You shall not drink of this cup save that you have forgotten the past and renounced the future.”

He gave unto it also the cup of sorrow, saying:

“ Drink that you may understand the meaning of joy.”

Then God bestowed within the soul love that would depart with the first sigh of content,

And sweetness that would flee from the first word of arrogance.



He made a heavenly sign to guide it in the
path of truth.

He placed in its depths an eye that would
behold the unseen.

He created within it a fancy to flow like a
river with phantoms and moving fig-
ures.

He clothed it in garments of longing
woven by angels, from the rainbow.

Within it He placed also the darkness of
bewilderment, which is the shadow
of light.

And God took fire from the forge of anger,
Wind blowing from the desert of igno-
rance;

Sand He gathered from the seashore of
selffulness

And dust from beneath the feet of the
ages;

Thus He fashioned man.

And unto man He gave blind strength that
leaps into a flame in moments of mad
passion, and lies down before desire.

God gave him life which is the shadow of
death.

And the God of Gods smiled and wept,
and He knew a love which hath no
bound nor end;
Thus He united man and his soul.

SONG OF THE NIGHT

The night is hushed,
And the dreams hide in silence.
The moon is rising —
She has eyes to watch the day.

Come, daughter of the fields,
And let us go
Into the vineyards
Where the lovers meet.
For it may be
That there we, too, may quench
With love's good vintage
The drouth of our desire.

Hearken, the nightingale
Pours forth his song
Into the valleys
Which the hills have filled
With the green scent of mint.

Fear not, beloved,
The stars will keep the secret of our meet-
ing,
And the soft mist of night
Veil our embrace.

Fear not —
The young bride of the djinns
In her enchanted cave
Lies sleeping, drunk with love,
And well-nigh hidden
From the houri's eyes.

And even should the king of the djinns
pass by,
Then love will turn him back.
For is he not a lover as I am,
And shall he disclose
That which his own heart suffers?

MY SOUL COUNSELLED ME

My soul spoke unto me and counselled me
to love all that others hate,
And to befriend those whom others de-
fame.
My soul counselled me and revealed unto
me that love dignifies not alone the
one who loves, but also the beloved.
Unto that day love was for me a thread of
cobweb between two flowers, close
to one another;
But now it has become a halo with neither
beginning nor end,
Encircling all that has been, and waxing
eternally to embrace all that shall be.



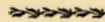
My soul counselled me and taught me to
see beauty veiled by form and colour.

My soul charged me to gaze steadfastly
upon all that is deemed ugly until it
appears lovely.

Before my soul had thus charged and
counselled me,

I had seemed to see beauty like unto wa-
vering torches between pillars of
smoke;

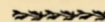
But now the smoke has dispersed and
vanished and I see naught but the
burning.



My soul counselled me and charged me to
listen for voices that rise neither from
the tongue nor the throat.

Before that day I heard but dully, and
naught save clamour and loud cries
came to my ears;

But now I have learned to listen to silence,
To hear its choirs singing the songs of ages,
Chanting the hymns of space, and disclos-
ing the secrets of eternity.



My soul spoke unto me and counselled me
to quench my thirst with that wine

which may not be poured into
cups,

Nor lifted by hands, nor touched by lips.

Unto that day my thirst was like a dim
spark laid in ashes

To be put out by a draught from any
spring;

But now my strong yearning has become
my cup,

Love has become my wine, and loneliness
my joy.



My soul counselled me and charged me to
seek that which is unseen;

And my soul revealed unto me that the
thing we grasp is the thing we desire.


In other days I was content with warmth
in winter, and with a cooling zephyr
in the summer season;

But now my fingers are become as mist,
Letting fall all that they have held, to min-
gle with the unseen that I now desire.




My soul spoke to me and invited me to
breathe the fragrance from a plant

That has neither root nor stalk nor blossom,
and that no eye has seen.
Before my soul counselled me thus, I
sought perfumes in the gardens,
In jars of sweet-smelling herbs and vessels
of incense;
But now I am aware only of an incense
that may not be burned,
I breathe an air more fragrant than all
earth's gardens and all the winds of
space.



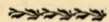
My soul counselled me and charged me to
answer and say: "I follow," when
the unknown and the adventurous
call unto me.
Hitherto I had answered naught but the
voice of the crier in the market-place,
Nor did I pursue aught save roads charted
and well trodden;
But now the known has become a steed
that I mount to seek the unknown,
And the road has become a ladder by
which I may climb to the perilous
summit.

My soul counselled me and admonished
me to measure time with this saying:
"There was a yesterday and there shall
be a tomorrow."
Unto that hour I deemed the past an epoch
that is lost and shall be forgotten,
And the future I deemed an era that I may
not attain;
But now I have learned this:
That in the brief present all time, with all
that is in time,
Is achieved and come true.



My soul spoke and revealed unto me that
I am not bound in space by the
words:
"Here, there, and over there."
Hitherto I stood upon my hill, and every
other hill seemed distant and far
away;
But now I know that the hill whereon I
dwell is indeed all hills,
And the valley whereunto I descend com-
prehends all valleys.

My soul counselled me and besought me
to watch while others sleep
And to seek my pillow while they are
wakeful,
For in all my years I had not perceived
their dreams, nor they mine.
But now I am winged by day in my dream-
ing,
And when they sleep I behold them free
upon the night,
And I rejoice in their freedom.



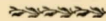
My soul counselled me and charged me
lest I be exalted because of overpraise
And lest I be distressed for fear of blame.
Until that day I doubted the worth of my
own handiwork;
But now I have learned this:
That the trees blossom in spring, and bear
fruit in summer,
And drop their leaves in autumn to become
utterly naked in winter
Without exaltation and without fear or
shame.

My soul counselled me and assured me
That I am neither higher than the pygmy
nor lower than the giant.
Before that day I beheld mankind as two
men,
The one a weakling whom I derided or
pitied,
And the other a mighty man whom I would
either follow, or oppose in rebellion.
But now I know that I was formed even
from the same dust of which all men
are created,
That my elements are their elements, and
my inner self is their inner self.
My struggle is their struggle, and their
pilgrimage is mine own.
If they transgress, I am also the transgres-
sor,
And if they do well, then I have a share in
their well-doing.
If they arise, I too arise with them; if they
stay behind, I also, to company them.



My soul counselled me and instructed me

to see that the light which I carry is
not my light,
That my song was not created within me;
For though I travel with the light, I am
not the light,
And though I am a lute fastened with
strings,
I am not the lute-player.



My soul counselled me, my brother, and
enlightened me.
And oftentimes has your soul counselled
and enlightened you.
For you are like me, and there is no dif-
ference between us
Save that I speak of what is within me in
words that I have heard in my silence,
And you guard what is within you, and
your guardianship is as goodly as my
much speaking.

MY BIRTHDAY

(Written while studying art in Paris, January 6, 1908)

On the day my mother gave me birth,
On that day five-and-twenty years ago,
Silence placed me in the vast hands of life,
abounding with struggle and conflict.
Lo, five-and-twenty times have I jour-
neyed round the sun.
How many times the moon has journeyed
round me I do not know.
But this I know, that I have not yet
learned the secrets of light,
Nor have I understood the mysteries of
darkness.

Five-and-twenty times have I journeyed
with the earth, the moon, the sun and
stars encircling the universe.
Lo, now my soul whispers the names of
cosmic systems

Even as the caverns of the sea resound to
the waves,
For the soul exists, a current in the cos-
mos, but does not know its power.
And the soul chants the cosmic rhythm,
high and low,
Yet attains not the fullness of its har-
monies.

Five-and-twenty years ago Time wrote me
down in the book of this strange and
awful life.
Lo, a word am I, signifying now nothing
and now many things.
On that day of every year what thoughts
and what memories throng my
soul!
They halt before me — the procession of
the days gone by,
The parade of the phantoms of the
night —
Then are they swept away, even as the
wind sweeps clouds from the hori-
zon;
They vanish in the darkness of my house

as the songs of the rivulets in deso-
late and distant valleys.

On that day, every year, those spirits
which have shaped my spirit
Come seeking me from the far ends of the
worlds,
And chanting words of sorrowful remem-
brance.
Then they are gone, to hide behind the
semblance of this life,
Even as birds descending to a threshing-
floor and finding no seeds to feast
upon,
Hover but a moment and fly hence to seek
another place.

Ever upon that day the meanings of my
past life stand before me, like dim
mirrors
Wherein I look for a while and see naught
but the pallid corpse-like faces of the
years,
Naught but the wrinkled and aged visages
of hopes and dreams long lost.

Once more I look upon those mirrors, and
there behold only my own still face.
I gaze thereon beholding naught but sad-
ness.

I question sadness and I find it has no
speech;
Yet could sadness speak, methinks it
would utter a sweeter word than joy.

For five-and-twenty years I have loved
much,
And oftentimes have I loved what others
hate.

Yet what I loved as a child I love now,
And what I now love I shall love unto the
end of life;
For love is all I have, and none shall make
me lose it.

Oftentimes have I loved death,
Called death sweet names and spoken of
it in loving words both openly and
secretly.

Yet though I have not forgotten, nor
broken the vows of death,

I have learned to love life also.
For death and life have become equal to
me in beauty and in joy;
They have shared in the growth of my
yearning and desire,
And they have divided my love and ten-
derness.

Freedom also have I loved, even as life and
death.

And as my love grew, so grew also my
knowledge of men's slavery to tyr-
anny and contempt,

The while I beheld their submission to
idols hewn by the dark ages,
Reared in ignorance and polished by the
lips of slaves.

But I loved these slaves as I loved free-
dom, and I pitied them, for they are
blind men

Kissing the jaws of foul bloodthirsty
beasts, and seeing not;

Sucking the venom of malignant vipers,
and feeling not;

Digging their graves with their own hands,
and knowing not.
Freedom have I loved more than aught
else,
For I have found freedom like unto a
maiden wasted from privation and
seclusion
Till she became a ghost that moves
among the houses in the lonely
streets,
And when she calls out to the passers-by,
they neither hear nor look.

Like all men, during these five-and-twenty
years I have loved happiness;
I have learned to awake at every dawn and
seek it, even as they.
But never have I found it in their ways,
Nor seen the trace of the footsteps of hap-
piness on the sand near their man-
sions,
Nor have I heard the echo of its voice from
the windows of their temples.
I sought alone to find it.
I heard my soul whisper in my ear:

“Happiness is a maiden born and reared
in the fastness of the heart;
She comes never from beyond its walls.”
Yet when I opened the portal of my heart
to find happiness,
I saw therein her mirror and her bed and
her garments, but herself I could not
find.

Mankind have I loved. Ay, much have I
loved men,
And men in my opinion are three:
The one who curses life, the one who
blesses it, and the one who contem-
plates it.
The first I have loved for his misery, the
second for his beneficence, and the
third for his wisdom.



Thus passed the five-and-twenty years,
And thus my days and nights, pursuing
each other down my life
As the leaves of trees scatter before the
winds of autumn.
And today I pause remembering, even as

a weary climber half-way to the summit,
And I look backward, and to right and left,
but I see no treasure anywhere
Which I may claim and say: "This is mine own."

Nor do I find in the seasons of my years
any harvest
Save only sheets of fair white paper traced
over with markings of black ink,
And strange and fragmentary canvases
filled in with lines and colours, both
harmonious and inharmonious.
In these have I shrouded and buried the
loveliness and the freedom that I
have thought and dreamed,
Even as the ploughman who goes to the
field to sow his seeds in furrows
Returns to his house at eventide hoping
and waiting.
But I, though I have sowed well the seeds
of my heart,
Yet I have neither hoped nor waited.

And now that I have reached this season
of my life,
The past seems hidden behind a mist of
sighs and grief,
And the future revealed through the veil
of the past.

I pause and gaze at life from my small
window;
I behold the faces of men, and I hear their
shouting rise into the sky.
I heed their footsteps falling among the
streets of houses,
And I perceive the communion of their
spirits, the eagerness of their desires,
the yearning of their hearts.
I pause and behold the children throwing
dust upon each other with laughter
and loud cries.
I behold boys with their faces upward
lifted as though they were reading
an ode to youth written upon the
margins of a cloud
Lined with the gleaming radiance of the
sun.

I behold young maidens swaying to and
fro, like branches of a tree,
Smiling like flowers, and gazing at the
youths from behind eyelids
Quivering with love and soft desire.
I behold the aged walking slowly, with
their low-bent backs,
Leaning upon their staffs and gazing fix-
edly at the earth
As if their old dim eyes were searching in
the dust for lost bright jewels.
I pause beside my window and I gaze at
all these shapes and shadows
Moving and creeping silently about the
city.

Then I look afar beyond the city to the
wilderness,
And I behold all that is therein of dreadful
beauty and of calling silence,
Its lofty mounds and little valleys, its
springing trees and tremulous
grasses,
Its flowers with perfume laden, and its
whispering rivers,

Its wild birds singing, and all its humming
wingèd life.

I gaze beyond the wilderness, and there,
behold, the ocean —
With its deep wonders and mysterious se-
crets, its hid treasures;
There I behold all that is upon the face of
the raging, rushing, foaming waters,
And the spray that rises and the vapours
that descend.

I peer far beyond the ocean and behold
the infinity of space,
The drifting worlds, the glimmering con-
stellations, the suns and moons, the
fixed and the shooting stars;
And I behold the evidence of forces for-
ever attracting and repelling, the
wars of elements, creating, changing,
and withal held prisoned within a law
of no beginning and no end.

These things I contemplate through my
small window, and I forget my five-
and-twenty years,

And all the centuries which have preceded
them,
And all the ages that shall follow.
Then my life, with its revelations and its
mysteries, seems to me like the sigh-
ing of a child
That trembles in the void of the eternal
depths and heights.
Yet this atom, this self that I call *I*, makes
ever a stirring and a clamour,
Lifting its wings toward the vast firma-
ment,
Reaching its hands toward the four cor-
ners of the earth,
Its being poised upon the point of time
which gave it conscious life.

Then from the holy of holies where this
living spark abides, a voice arises
crying:

“ Peace be with you, life!
Peace be with you, awakening!
Peace be with you, realization!
Peace be with you, day, whose abundant
light enfolds the darkness of earth!

Peace be with you, night, whose darkness
reveals the light of heaven!
Peace be with you, seasons!
Peace be with you, spring, that renews the
youth of the earth!
Peace be with you, summer, that enriches
the glory of the sun!
Peace be with you, autumn, that bestows
the fruits of labour and the harvest
of toil!
Peace be with you, winter, that restores
with tempests the wasted strength of
nature!
Peace be with you, years, which disclose
what the years have hidden!
Peace be with you, ages, which restore
what the centuries have destroyed!
Peace be with you, time, which moves
with us unto the perfect day!
Peace be with you, spirit, that guards with
prudence the reins of life, hidden
from us by the sun!
Peace be with you, heart, that you are
moved to acclaim peace
The while you bathe in tears!

Peace be with you, lips, that you utter
peace
The while you taste the bread of bitter-
ness! ”

BE STILL, MY HEART

Be still, my heart. Space does not hear
you.
Be still, my heart. The ether, heavy with
mourning and with lamentation, will
not bear your songs.
Be still, for the phantoms of night will
not heed the whisper of your mys-
teries,
And the procession of darkness will not
halt before your dreams.
Be still, my heart, be still until dawn.
For whoso waits the morning patiently
will greet the morning with strength,
And whoso loves the light, by light shall he
be loved.
Be still, my heart, and listen to my words.

In dreams I heard a blackbird singing
above the mouth of a raging volcano,

And saw a lily lifting its head above the
snow;
I saw a naked houri dancing among tomb-
stones,
And a babe laughing the while it played
with skulls.
All this I saw in a dream.

When I waked and looked about me, lo,
I saw the volcano pouring forth its
fury,
But I could not hear the blackbird singing.
I saw the heavens scattering snow over the
hills and valleys,
Garmenting with its white shroud the si-
lent lilies.
I saw the graves, row upon row, standing
before the tranquillity of ages, but
none amongst them dancing or pray-
ing.

Then I beheld hills of skulls, but no
laughter was there save the laughing
wind.
Waking I saw naught but grief and sor-
row.



Where, then, have the joys of dreams departed?

Where hides the splendour of our sleep,
And how has its image vanished?

How can the soul bear patiently until the
shadow of its yearning shall return
with sleep?



Be still, my heart, and attend unto my
words.

It was but yesterday that my soul was a
tree, old and strong,

Whose roots penetrated to the depths of
the earth and whose branches
reached toward the infinite, bloom-
ing in spring and bearing fruit in
summer.

When autumn was come, I gathered the
fruit on trays of silver and placed
them at the cross-roads,
And the passers-by reached for the fruit
and ate of it and walked their way.

When autumn was passed and its song was
turned to wailing and a dirge,

I looked upon my trays and saw that men
had left there but a single fruit;
And when I tasted, I found it bitter as
aloes and sour as a green grape.

Then I said to myself:

“ Woe unto me, for I have placed a curse
upon the lips of men, and hostility in
their bowels.

What then, my soul, have you done with
the sweetness that your roots had
sucked from the bosom of earth,
And with fragrance that your boughs had
drunk from the light of the sun? ”

Thereupon I uprooted the old and strong
tree of my soul.

I severed it from its past and dismantled
it of the memories of a thousand
springs and a thousand autumns.

And I planted the tree of my soul in an-
other place.

I set it in a field far from the roads of time,
and I passed the night in wakefulness
beside it, giving it to drink of my
tears and my blood, and saying:

“ There is a savour in blood, and a sweet-
ness in tears.”

When spring returned, the tree of my soul
bloomed again, and bore fruit in the
summer season.

And when the autumn was come, I gath-
ered the ripe fruit once more, and I
placed it upon trays of gold at the
meeting-place of the roads.

And men passed by, but no one reached to
take of the fruit.

Then I took and ate, and I found the fruit
as sweet as honey, as luscious as nec-
tar, perfumed as the breath of jas-
mine, and mellow as the wine of
Babylon.

And I cried aloud, saying:

“ Men do not desire blessedness upon
their lips, nor truth in their
bowels;

For blessedness is the daughter of tears,
and truth is but the son of pain.”

Then I returned and sat down under the
shade of the lonely tree of my soul,

and in the field far from the roads of
time.



Be still, my heart, be still until dawn.
Be still, for space is heavy with the odour
of dead things and cannot inhale
your living breath.
Be still, my heart, and listen to my voice.
It was but yesterday that my thought was
like a ship, rocked upon the waves of
the sea, and moving with the winds
from shore to shore.
And the ship of my thought was empty
save only for seven phials filled to the
brim with seven colours, even the
seven colours of the rainbow.

There came a time when I grew weary of
drifting upon the face of the waters,
and I said:
“ I will return with the empty ship of my
thought to the harbour of the town
where I was born.”
And as I sailed, I began to paint the sides
of my ship with the seven colours;

And it shone yellow as the sunset, azure
like the sky, and red as a blood-red
anemone;
And upon its sails and rudder I traced
sketches to allure and delight the eye.
And when it was done, the ship of my
thought appeared like the vision of a
prophet
Floating betwixt the two infinities, the sea
and the sky.

Now, when my ship reached port, behold,
all the people came to meet me;
With shout and joy they welcomed me and
they took me into the city,
Beating their tambourines and blowing
upon their reed flutes.
All this they did because my ship ap-
peared enchanting to their eyes;
But none boarded the ship of my thought,
Nor did any perceive that I had brought
my ship empty into port.

Then I said to myself:
“ I have misled the people, and with seven

phials of colours have I deceived
their inner and their outer eye.”

And when a year was passed, again I
boarded the ship of my thought and
put out to sea.

I sailed to the isles of the East, and there
I gathered myrrh and frankincense
and sandalwood and brought them to
my ship.

I sailed to the isles of the South, and
from thence I brought gold, jade,
and emerald, and every precious
stone;

To the isles of the North I sailed, and
found rare silks and velvets and
broideries of every kind;

Thence to the isles of the West and got me
coats of mail, and spears and swords,
and divers weapons.

Thus I filled the ship of my thought with
the costly and strange things of the
earth,

And I turned back to the harbour of my
own city, saying in my heart:

“ Now shall my people praise me as a man
worthy of praise.

And now shall they indeed lead me into
the market-place with singing and
piping.”

But, behold, when I reached the port, no
man came to meet and welcome me.
Alone I entered the streets of my city, but
no man looked upon me.

Even in the market-squares I stood, tell-
ing of all that I had brought of the
earth's fruit and goodly things.

But the people looked upon me with
laughter on their faces, and derision
on their lips.

And they turned from me.

Thus was I troubled and cast down, and I
turned me to the harbour.

No sooner did my eyes fall upon my ship
than I became aware of a certain
thing to which, in my voyaging and
seeking for good cargoes, I had paid
no heed;

So I cried out in humiliation:

“ Behold, the waves of the sea have
washed the seven colours from my
ship

And now it appears but as a skeleton of
bones.

And the winds and the storms and the heat
of the sun have effaced from the sails
the images of wonder and delight,

And they seem now but as a faded and tat-
tered garment.

Truly I have gathered the earth's costly
treasures in a casket floating upon
the surface of the waters,

And returned unto my people, but they
turn from me,

For their eyes see naught but outward
show.”

At that very moment I abandoned the
ship of my thought and sought the
city of the dead,

Where I sat amid the whitened graves and
pondered their secrets.

Be still, my heart. Be still until dawn.

Be still, though the tempest mock the
whispering of your depths.

Be still, my heart, until dawn.

For whoso awaits the morning patiently,
The morning shall embrace him tenderly.

Behold, my heart, the dawn is come;

Speak, then, if you have yet the power of
words.

Behold, my heart, the procession of the
morning.

Did not the silence of the night stir in your
depths a song wherewith to greet the
morn?

Behold, the flight of doves and blackbirds
above the valley;

Did not the awe of night strengthen your
wings to fly with them?

Behold, the shepherds leading their flocks
from the folds.

Did not the shadows of night urge your
desire to follow also into the green
meadows?

Behold, the young men and the maidens
hastening toward the vineyard.
Would you not rise and join them?

Arise, my heart. Arise and move with the
dawn.
For night is passed and the fears of night
have vanished with their black
dreams.
Arise, my heart, and lift your voice in
song;
For he who joins not the dawn with his
singing is but a child of darkness.

NIGHT

O Night, abiding-place of poets and of
lovers and of singers,
O Night, where shadows dwell with spirits
and with visions,
O Night, enfolder of our longing, our de-
sire, our memory,
Vast giant standing betwixt the dwarfed
evening clouds and the brides of
dawn,
Girt with the sword of awe, crowned with
the moon, and garmented with si-
lence;
Who gazes with a thousand eyes into the
depths of life,
And listens with a thousand ears to the
sighs of desolation and of death!



It is your darkness that reveals to us the
light of heaven,

For the light of day has enshrouded us
with the darkness of earth.

It is your promise that opens our eyes to
eternity,

For the vanity of day had held us like
blind men in the world of time and
space.

It is your tranquil silence that unveils the
secret of ever wakeful, ever restless
spirits;

For day is a turbulent clamour wherein
souls lie beneath the sharp hooves of
ambition and desire.

O Night, you are a shepherd who gathers
unto the fold of sleep the dreams of
the weak and the hopes of the strong.

You are a seer who closes with his mystic
fingers the eyelids of the wretched
and lifts their hearts to a world more
kindly than this world.

In the folds of your grey garments lovers
have found their bower,

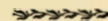
And upon your feet, wet with the dew of
heaven, have the lonely-hearted wept
their tears;

In the palms of your hands, fragrant with
the scent of field and vineyard, stran-
gers have laid down their longing and
despair;

To lovers you are a friend; to the lonely, a
comforter; to the desolate, a host.

In your deep shade the poet's fancies stir;
on your bosom the prophetic heart
awakes; upon your brow imagination
writes.

For to the poet you are a sovereign, to the
prophet a vision, and to the thinker
an intimate.



When my soul became weary of man, and
my eyes were tired of gazing upon
the face of the day,

I sought the distant fields where the shad-
ows of bygone ages sleep.

There I stood before a dark and silent be-
ing moving with a thousand feet over
the mountain, and over the valley
and the plain.

There I gazed into the eyes of darkness

and listened to the murmuring of invisible wings.

There I felt the touch of formless garments and was shaken by the terrors of the unseen.

There I saw you, Night, tragic and beautiful and awesome,
Standing between the heaven and the earth, with clouds for your garment, girdled with the fog,
Laughing at the light of the sun and mocking the supremacy of the day,
Deriding the multitude of slaves who kneel sleepless before their idols, and contemptuous of kings who lie asleep and dreaming in their beds of silk;
There I beheld you gazing into the eyes of thieves, and I beheld you keeping guard above the babe in slumber;
I saw you weeping before the smiles of prostitutes, and smiling at the tears of lovers,
And lifting with your right hand the great-



hearted, and with your feet tram-
pling the mean-spirited.

There I saw you, Night, and you saw me;
You, in your awful beauty, were to me a
father, and I, in my dreams, was a
son;

For the curtains of being were drawn
away, and the veil of doubt was rent;
You revealed your secret purposes unto
me, and I told you all my hopes and
my desires.

Then was your majesty turned into mel-
ody more beautiful than the gentle
whisper of flowers,

And my fears were transformed into trust
more than the trust of birds;

And you lifted me and placed me on your
shoulders,

And you taught my eyes to see, my ears to
hear, my lips to speak, and my heart
to love;

With your magic fingers you touched my
thought,

And my thought poured forth like a flow-

ing, singing stream, bearing away all
that was withered grass.

And with your lips you kissed my spirit,
and it kindled into flames
Devouring every dead and dying thing.



I followed you, O Night, until I became
like unto you;

I went as your companion until your de-
sires became mine;

I loved you until my whole being was in-
deed a lesser image of your own.

For within my dark self are glowing stars
which passion scatters at evening and
doubt gathers at dawn;

And within my heart is a moon that strug-
gles, now with thick clouds, and now
with a procession of dreams that fills
all space.

Now within my awakened soul dwells a
peace that reveals the lover's secret
and the worshipper's prayer;

And upon my head rests a veil of mystery
which the agony of death may rend,

but the songs of youth shall weave
again.

I am like you, O Night, and if men shall
deem me boastful,
Do they not boast of their resemblance to
the day?

I am like you, and like you I am accused
of much that I am not.

I am like you with all my dreams and all
my hopes and being.

I am like you, even though dusk does not
crown me with its golden fleece.

I am like you, though morn does not adorn
my trailing raiment with pearl and
rose.

I am like you, though I am not yet belted
with the milky way.

I too am a night, vast and calm, yet fet-
tered and rebellious.

There is no beginning to my darkness and
no end to my depths.

When the souls of the departed rise to
pride themselves upon the light of
joy,

My night soul shall descend glorified by
the darkness of its sorrow.

I am like you, O Night, and when my
dawn comes, then also shall come my
end.

IN THE CITY OF THE DEAD

It was but yesterday I escaped the tumult
of the city

And went forth to walk in the silent fields;
And I came unto a lofty hill
Where nature had bestowed the gifts of
her bountiful hand.

I ascended the hill and looked back upon
the city.

And lo, the city appeared, with all its tow-
ers and temples,

To lie beneath a cloud of thick dark smoke
that rose up from its forges and its
factories.

As I sat contemplating from afar the
works of man,

It seemed that most of them are vain and
futile.

And heartily I turned my mind away from
all that the sons of Adam have
wrought,
And looked upon the fields, the seat of
God's great glory.
And in their midst I beheld a graveyard
with tombstones of fair marble, and
with cypress trees.

There, between the city of the living and
the city of the dead, I sat
And mused upon the endless struggle and
the ceaseless turbulence in life,
And the enveloping silence and vast dig-
nity in death.
On the one side I beheld hope and despair,
love and hate, riches and poverty, be-
lief and unbelief;
And on the other, dust in dust which na-
ture intermingles,
Fashioning therefrom its world of green
and growing things that thrive in the
deep silence of the night.

While thus I pondered, behold, a great
crowd, marching slowly, caught my
vision,
And I heard music filling the air with
dreary tunes.
Before my eyes passed a procession of the
great and the lowly of mankind,
Walking together in procession at the fu-
neral of a man who had been rich and
powerful,
The dead followed by the living.
And these wept and cried aloud, filling
the day with their wailings and their
lamentations,
Even unto the burial-place.
And here the priests offered up prayers
and swung their censers,
And the pipers blew mournfully upon
their pipes.
The orators stood forth with sounding
words of eulogy,
And the poets, bemoaning with their
studied verses,
Until all had come unto a weary end.

And then the crowd dispersed, revealing a
proud tombstone which the stone-
cutters had vied in making,
And many wreaths of flowers, and gar-
lands woven by deft and skilful
fingers.
Then the procession returned toward the
city, while I sat watching from afar,
and musing.

And now the sun was sinking toward the
west, and the shadows of the rocks
and trees began to lengthen and dis-
card their raiment of light.
At that moment I looked, and lo, two men
bearing upon their shoulders a coffin
of plain wood;
And after them a woman came in ragged
garments,
A babe at her breast, and at her feet a dog
that looked now to the woman, now
to the wooden casket.
Only these, in the procession at the fu-
neral of a man who had been poor
and humble —



The wife whose silent tears bespoke her
sorrow,

A baby crying because his mother wept,
and a faithful beast who would fol-
low also in his dumb grief.

And when these reached the place of
graves,

They lowered the coffin down into a pit in
the far corner, well removed from the
lofty marble tombs.

Then they turned back in silence and in
desolation,

And the dog's eyes looked oftentimes to-
ward the last dwelling-place of his
friend and master,

Until they had disappeared from sight
behind the trees.

Thereupon I bent my eyes first upon the
city of the living, and said to myself:

“ This is for the rich and powerful men ”;

Then I looked upon the city of the dead,
saying:

“ And this is for the rich and powerful
men.”

And I cried aloud: " Where, then, is the
abiding-place of those who are weak
and poor, O Lord? "

This I said, and gazed up toward the
heaven of clouds, glorious with the
golden rays of the great sun.

And I heard a voice within me saying: " It
is there! "

THE POET

An exile am I in this world.

An exile am I and alone, tormented by my
aloneness, which ever directs my
thought to a magic and unknown
realm

And fills my dreams with shadows of a
region distant and unseen.

An exile am I from my kinsmen and my
countrymen, and should I meet one
of them, I would say to myself:

" Who, then, is this one? Where is it I
have known him?

What bond unites me to him, and why do
I draw near to sit beside him? "

An exile am I from myself, and should I
hear my own tongue speak, my ear
finds the voice strange.

Sometimes I look within and behold my
secret self, a hidden self that laughs
and weeps, that dares and fears.
Then my being marvels at my being, and
my spirit questions mine own spirit.
Yet I remain an exile, unknown, lost in the
mist, clothed with the silence.

An exile am I from my body; and when I
pause before a mirror, behold, in my
face is that which my soul has not
conceived, and in my eyes that which
my depths do not contain.

When I walk upon the streets of the city,
the children follow after me, shout-
ing:

“ Behold the blind man! Let us give him a
staff to lean upon.”

And in haste I flee from them.

If I meet a bevy of maidens, they cleave to
my garments, singing:

“ He is deaf as a rock! Let us fill his ears
with harmonies of love and passion.”

And from them I flee also.

Whenever I approach the middle-aged in

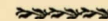
the market-place, they gather about
me, crying:

“ He is as mute as a tomb! Let us
straighten his twisted tongue.”

And I hasten from them in fear.

And if I pass by a company of elders, they
point their trembling fingers toward
me, saying:

“ He is a madman who has lost his reason
in the land of the Djinns and
Ghouls! ”



An exile am I in this world.

An exile am I, for I have traversed the
earth both East and West,

Yet I found not my birthplace, nor one
who knew me or had heard my name.

In the morning I awake to find myself
imprisoned in a darkened cavern

Where vipers threaten from above, and
every crawling thing infests the walls
and ground.

When I seek the outer light, the shadows
of my body march ahead of me —

Whereto I know not, seeking that I do not

understand, grasping that for which
I have no need.

When eventide is come and I return and
lie upon my bed of thorn and feather,
Strange thoughts beguile me, both fear-
some and joyous, and desires be-
sieve me with their pains and their
delights.

When it is midnight, the shades of bygone
ages fall upon me, and spirits of for-
gotten regions visit me and look upon
me,

And I gaze also upon them, and speak to
them and ask of ancient things,
And with kindness and smiles they an-
swer me.

But when I would hold them and keep
them, they escape me
And fade as they were but smoke upon
the air.



An exile am I in this world.
An exile am I, and no man understands
the language of my soul.
I pace the wilderness and I behold the



rivulets climbing from the depths of
the valley to the mountain top;
Before my eyes the naked trees come into
bloom and bear their fruit and scat-
ter their dead leaves, all in one mo-
ment.

And before my eyes their boughs fall to
the lowland and are turned into dark
serpents.

Ay, strange are my visions, like unto the
visions of no man,

For I see birds lifting their wings unto the
morning with songs, and then with
lamentation;

I see them alight and change before my
eyes into nude women with long,
loosened hair

Who gaze at me from behind eyelids
painted for love, and who smile upon
me with lips dipped in honey,

And who stretch white hands to me, per-
fumed with frankincense and myrrh.

And even as I gaze, they vanish like a
shaken mist,

Leaving in space the echo of their mock-
ing laughter.



An exile am I in this world.
A poet am I who gathers in verse what life
scatters in prose;
And scatters in prose what life gathers in
verse.
And hence an exile am I, and an exile I
shall remain until death lifts me up
and bears me even unto my country.

FAME

I walked upon the sand at ebb-tide.
And bending down, I wrote a line upon the
sand.
And in that line I wrote what my mind
thought
And what my soul desired.

And when the tide was high,
I returned to that very shore,
And of that which I had written I found
naught.
I found only the staff-marks of one who
had walked blindly.

EARTH

With might and power earth springs forth
out of earth;
Then earth moves over earth with dignity
and pride;
And earth from earth builds palaces for
kings,
And lofty towers and goodly temples for
all people,
And weaves strange myths, strict laws,
and subtle dogmas.

When all these things are done, earth
wearies of earth's labour,
And from its light and darkness it creates
grey shadows, and soft drowsy fan-
cies, and enchanting dreams.
Earth's slumber then beguiles earth's
heavy eyelids,
And they close upon all things in deep and
quiet slumber.

And earth calls out unto earth, saying:
“ Behold, a womb am I, and I am a tomb;
A womb and a tomb I shall remain forever,
Ay, even until the stars are no more,
And until the suns are turned into dead
ashes.”

A NOTE ON THE TYPE
IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET



This book is set (on the linotype) in Original Old Style. Of the history of it very little is known; in practically its present form, it has been used for many years for fine book and magazine work. Original Old Style possesses in a high degree those two qualities by which a book type must be judged; first legibility, and second, the ability to impart a definite character to a page without intruding itself upon the reader's consciousness.



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