

# ROSA COELI

A POEM

BY

H. D. CARR

WITH AN ORIGINAL COMPOSITION BY

AUGUSTE RODIN



## ROSA COELI

ROSE of the World!  
Ruby with blood from the bright veins of God  
Caught in the chalice of your heart, and pearled  
With dew at many a melting period  
When the amethyst lustre of your eyes dissolves  
The veil that hides your naked splendour  
From these infirm resolves  
And halting loves of your poor poet's soul  
With radiance mild and tender,  
So that I see awhile the golden goal!  
Yea! all your light involves  
Me, me tenebrous, me too cold and base  
Ever to kindle to the maiden face  
(Three years my wife, three years of me unwon!)  
That would be mine, be mine,  
Were I but man enough  
To endure the rapture of that sudden sun  
The knowledge of your love,  
The assumption of me into that sweet shrine

Whose godhead duly knows  
Only the one wind of the utmost heaven  
Through hyacinthine deeps  
Down from the sapphirine steeps  
And azure abyss that blows;  
Only the one sun on the steppéd snows;  
Only the one star of the sister seven;  
Only the one moon in the orchard close  
In the one hour that unto love is given  
Of all the hours of bliss;  
Only the one joy in a world of woes;  
Only the one spark in the storm-cloud riven;  
Only the one shaft through the rose-dawn driven,  
Thy shaft, Eros!  
Not as Apollo or as Artemis  
Loosing gray death from golden thong  
To slay the poet in a song,  
The lover in a kiss;  
But to divide the inmost marrow  
With that ensanguine arrow;  
But to unite each bleeding part  
Of that most universal heart;  
Leaving us slaves, and kings;  
Bound, and with eagle's wings;  
One soul, comprising all that may be thought,  
One soul, conscious of nought.

## II

**R**OSE of the World! Your mystic petals spread  
Like wings over my head.  
The tide of burning blood upon my face  
Drowns all the floating images  
That danced their spectre saraband  
In Bacchic race, phantastical embrace,  
Upon the sepulchres, the dizzy seas  
Of this my mind, Sabbatic rout that spanned  
These straits my soul! Ay, they are dead and drowned  
(And damned, I doubt!) Ah God! I am exhaust  
In the red moon's holocaust!  
God! God! The chasms secret and profound  
Suck down the porphyry flood  
Of your maniacal, ensorcelled blood  
That maddens and bewitches.  
My life is suffocated—now I swoon—  
I die! I am in hell, red hell, red hell,  
And all the immortal in me itches  
To grip the immortal; now the spell  
Circles me closer; all the soul's afire  
As if the Boreal moon  
With all the icy Lapland hags  
That shiver on's hibernal crags  
Were but a thin white shell  
Hoarding the seed of many a million suns,  
Giving its life up unto its desire—  
Out bursts the womb of my unguessed-at godhead;

The rose flames out in the flood; and all at once,  
A brilliance disembodied,  
I am shattered like the dew upon your leaves;  
So that the lampless hour  
Strikes, and an unborn universe perceives  
Its lonely mother-flower,  
Us, in our love's arcane Briatic bower.  
We scatter light, a music-tingling shower;  
We breathe out life, a crimson whisper;  
We radiate love, a velvet-soft complaint,  
Most like the echo of a chime at vesper  
Rung far across narcissus-haunted leas,  
Lilied lagoons, and moon-enchanted seas,  
By the high-bosomed boy, large-eyed, with fasting faint,  
That shares an hermitage with some devoutest saint.

### III

AS, in our life, I passed the awful gate  
Where like a Cerberus sate  
The triform silence, Fate,  
And bade the red blood bloom  
Within that Palace of untasted gloom;  
As, in our life, confronting the black forms—  
Colossal ghosts, like storms!—  
I did abide in the most holy hall  
And let the dread word fall,  
Nor bade the red axe falter

There as I bowed mine head  
Upon the amber altar,  
And shed my life out there before ye all,  
Careless if I had summoned from the skies  
Some young true God, or spoiled the sacrifice,  
And were but dead as any man is dead!  
So I have given up my inmost life  
Even unto you, sweet wife,  
Careless—yet conscious of the babe-stirred womb  
Of some dread Mother older than the 'Tomb,  
Wiser than Life, more pitiful than Death.

#### IV

**Y**OUR wine-stained and wine-coloured hair unloosing,  
Mingle your wine-wise breath,  
Spiritual siren! with the scent seducing  
Your body sheds, scarred with the bleeding kisses  
My tenderness bit in,  
Like to a lion feeding in wild white wildernesses,  
My spirit sensible to your skin:  
Mingle them to a crescent character  
That shall set shimmering all the parchment fine  
And send a steam like wine  
Laden with ecstasy and pain  
Choral through all the passion-stained and passion-  
trembling air.  
Inspire a closer strain

Such as strange orchids give and hyacinths  
Among the broken pedestals and plinths  
Where the gray Lords of Time, of Time forgotten,  
Lie in the herbage rotten  
Of the unpeopled forest.

V

○ SONG! O amorous and seducing,  
I see thee as thou soarest,  
So that, the girders of the soul unloosing,  
That Child of you and me, O rose of roses,  
That Child whose life encloses  
Our lives, is therefore I, may wander ever  
By the fritillary-fringéd river,  
Through lotus gardens of the sleepy gods,  
On hills where every timid oread tries  
Blue gentian as disguise  
From holier (though she think profaner) eyes,  
On seas where, it may be, (to even the odds!)  
Each nymph and undine issues from the foam  
Armed with a pearly mirror and with a coral comb  
To tire her beauty, lure me to the lakes  
Of light where strikes the day to hyaline floors  
Whereon blithe fish and emerald water snakes  
Play all the day, and all their innocence adores  
Is some old anchor with its rusty flakes  
Fallen from God knows what forgotten ship.



No! not in Fancy's palace will I play,  
Nor in imagination's deep will dip  
The timid foot; but rather will I strip  
Each rag of thought, and leap  
Into the sunset deep  
Still glowing with the glamour  
Of your life's blood, and ashen gold  
With floating gossamer your hair, that might enfold  
A giant god, and strangle him anon  
With starry serpents like Laocoon,  
A stoic god that might enamour  
And draw him with its tendrils into time.

## VII

MY mouth was wet with the delicious crime  
Of kissing you, one night, when in a vision  
Your hair was like a forest of tall pines  
In winter; black strange dwarfs with crooked spines  
And elfin eyes, and bleating mouths that worked  
All manner of grimace and bleak derision  
Bore them away; hollow-eyed ghosts that lurked  
About the sea made thereof masts; they fitted  
Tall ships and goodly, furrowing the deep  
To harvest merchandise; strong and keen-witted  
The mariners; oho! the breezes leap  
Like lovers on them; lo! they faréd forth

To South, East, West and North,  
Iceland, the Indies, Sicily, and Spain. . . . .  
Lo! men have heard of all these ships not one, not one  
for ever more again.

### VIII

SEEING your naked body in the bed  
Against the jetty silk, I thought you lay  
Just as the Milky Way  
Lies in the unkenne'd hollows of the sky.  
One swarthy ray of red  
Leapt from your hither eye,  
And straight my dream began  
To map that heaven—your eye, Aldeboran!  
I launched the magic boat, and early found  
The Pirate's cave and the Enchaunted Ground;  
The cedared Lebanon,  
The Wizard's Grot, the well of spice,  
The Hanging Gardens of great Babylon:—  
All these then did I visit in a trice,  
And even did confirm the Bible tale  
By playing Jonah to your Jonah's whale.  
So, to the stars!

## IX

A POET is at ease  
In all such voyages:  
Why, as a boy, I steered  
Up to the Scorpion and tweaked his tail,  
Plucked foolish Capricornus by the beard  
And kissed the Blessed Damozel that leaned upon the  
golden rail,  
Drank from the glad rim of the grail  
Or soothed the squally Twins (for they would weep!)  
And while I smiled "In Heaven how safe I am!"  
Found myself in my little bed asleep,  
Having been butted thither by the Ram.

## X

BUT in the dream of you, my starry sweet,  
It is my earth I lose six times in seven.  
I have the Freedom of the City of Heaven;  
But strange (though fair) are all the stars I meet.  
The dull familiar and the homely drear  
Are lost for ever. Being asleep, I fear.  
Wake! Let me cut the cable of my mind!  
My harbour lies before, and not behind.  
Dreams are all lies; those jetty shadows lie  
When the full moon doth crown the midnight sky.  
But shadows image truth, and dreams come true,  
For when I wake my arms are full of you.

## XI

A NOTHER time, through tides from chaos rolled  
I was upborne by this my scarabee  
With scales like plates of porphyry and gold  
And wings like flakes of the green light that pours  
Through the blue heart of the Hawaian sea.  
So to the hollow shores  
We came, and did behold a silver avenue  
That wound through cypress groves and woods of yew  
Unto the hills; hideous hyaenas laughed,  
Mean jackals snarled and screamed, and wild dogs bayed:  
Bayed at the waning moon that lapsed above  
Out of all light (had I not been in love  
And drunken on the quintessential draught)  
So that the forest folk were sore afraid.  
But when I came upon the open space  
I might perceive my lady's face  
And knew she waned because that I was late.  
Twin hills like ivory glinted; on their slopes  
Blue rivers coursed, and many a nightingale  
Told all its tremulous tale  
To viewless dryads, or elate  
Trilled out its bleeding hopes  
Into the mist of light that hid (I know)  
Bassarids, Bassarids Dionysus-mad.  
Then, in that vision glad,  
I saw twin towers of crimson ruby rise  
Into the scented snow

That fell like dew from the heart-hungry skies.  
But when I came between the hills, behold  
The moon's silver and gold  
Stood in the zenith, that I lost my guide.  
There stood I passion-pale  
Like a lost lamb that seeks the starry fold  
Within that warm and scented vale  
Clothed with narcissus, hyacinth, tuberoses,  
Snowdrop and lily, all white, all cream, all gold,  
With never a blush like dawn's to flush or fail  
Upon their garden-close.  
O wide is the world, wide, wide!  
Be sure that I was lost,  
Lost, lost for ever; are there palimpsests  
Wherein a man might study at great cost  
His journey thence? O Rose of gramarye,  
My riddle you shall see.  
My head was happy, laid betwixt your breasts.

## XII

**A** NOTHER time I passed the holy well  
And plunged (as Phoebus in the western ocean)  
Into a forest of fine flame that crowned  
The holy hill; all was enchanted ground,  
The flames like scented tendrils of a vine  
Or sensitive rays that spell  
Strange curves to match their master-god's emotion.

And ever nearer to the scarlet slash  
I clomb, where the strange perfumes struck me like  
    a lash,  
And the dread fires scorched up my life.  
There, O insufferable delight  
I mock with the weak word of wife,  
I was sucked down into the crater rim,  
Into the crimson damask dim  
Candescant cave of night—  
O then I mock myself with words!  
They are like cardinal-coloured birds  
And honey-coloured doves;  
Yet one thing mortal serves to name another  
As mortal as itself.  
Why must our deathless loves  
Be stained by the black-hearted mother  
That called things by dead names?  
The sunny elf  
Language shall play with the ethereal flames  
But never dare approach  
The central and volcanic fire,  
The inmost Force, nor, like a glittering army  
Send forth its scouts to encroach  
Upon our citadel desire.  
Ay! though these flaming sentences  
Eat like strong acid in my vitals, char me,  
Blast me like lightning, smash me like black seas  
Towering above the lofty ship  
Whose masts did menace to the skies,

They are but plaisters of cool leaves that dip  
In pleasant water to the white-hot wise.  
Terrible flames of hell that would devour me,  
Did not the raptures of thy love embower me  
In meads Elysian, fields of foamless fire,  
Nights of invincible desire,  
Things beyond words, beyond the want of them,  
Beyond the pauses and the ecstasies . . . .  
Where should my dream get such a diadem  
Of voiceless thoughts as these?

### XIII

THESE dreams reform  
Themselves into a rainbow to the storm  
Of simple passion; let me from the string  
Take many-coloured wing  
As a swift-thoughted arrow  
Vertically shot against the sun!  
I would you were a sow  
And these my verses were your squealing farrow  
So they might suck the milk of your perfection  
Unto them, that the world's ear might be won,  
The world's heart melted now,  
The world's mind drawn from its dejection,  
By the sure fact that not in idle dream  
But sole in sense supreme  
Certainly visible and tangible

Were you, O Rose, whose root remotest hell  
Nourishes, and whose top flowers higher than the Throne  
Of the Eternal one.  
Thou shouldst not leave me alone  
To gaze upon the sun  
And take the glory of his excellence—  
Not unto me close curled  
And on my body's beauty crucified  
In silver spirit clad with gold of sense,  
But sending forth thy rays life-pearled  
As a bridegroom squandering his strength upon the bride  
—Thou art sufficient to redeem the world.

#### XIV

○! IS the secret of the starry deep  
Nothing but pain and pleasure, grief and joy?  
Is God a wanton boy  
To play with us so bitter cheap  
By such a jewelled light? Be thine the power,  
Rose of the Stars, in this thy tortured hour  
When the wee lips that clung to thee are cold,  
To give the world a light of other gold  
From that men hoard, from that the suns afford  
In their implacable cars  
As they roll on impassive; bid thy Lord  
(O Rose, Rose of the Stars!)  
And slave make known thy beauty and thy passion



In his imperfect fashion,  
So that thy wisdom and thy strength are sold  
In every mart of earth;  
So that thine eyes enfold  
The universe in one great look of love.  
Bring this, bring this to birth!  
And neither hate below, nor hate above,  
Nor chance, nor force, nor cunning shall deprive  
Man of thy gift, a love alive  
With more than men to-day can understand.

## XV

**G**IVE me thine hand,  
Rose of the Stars, and we will soar above  
Wisdom and Strength and Love,  
Into the sphere where all delight retires  
In azure flames and silver-edgéd fires.  
Now through the veil we shoot  
Like snaky lightning through a thundercloud  
Up to the awful precipice-skirted place  
Where deaf, blind, palsied, mute  
There sits the leprous God; we laugh aloud  
Seeing him face to face,  
Blowing him like a shaken sheaf of snow  
With a brief gust of wind  
Over the cliffs of his ensanguine throne;  
Seating ourselves thereon, as men shall know,

Above soul, spirit, heart, thought, being, mind,  
All—but most irrevocably entwined  
And irrevocably alone.

## XVI

THERE was a boy with O! the face of dawn,  
The mother-of-pearl that shimmered on his skin,  
The breasts like golden roses circling red,  
The limbs like limbs of a young fawn  
For litheness—O! for innocence of sin  
His eyes burned wondrous bright, his sun-crowned head  
Danced with its sweet and sacred hopes,  
So that he paced the enamelled slopes  
Laughing upon the laughing lake below,  
Expectant of some strange experience  
Worth all the woes of sense,  
Some drop of nectar worth a world of wine,  
Some grace of One divine  
Worth more than all life's grace, and more than life  
intense,  
Was there a wonder if the silken boy  
Found her a-playing on the bluebell marge  
And drank from golden vats the wine of joy;  
Hot, eager, overcoming in her breath,  
As she would draw him to those large  
And firm white breasts and mix her liquid life  
With his in pagan strife?

Or with a grace like God, a stealth like love,  
Pour on him from above  
Wine from the purple vats of death?  
Nay! 'tis no wonder—shall they wonder then,  
These bat-eyed newspaper-besotted men,  
If thou and I have found the Elixir rare  
That giveth Life to whoso drinketh it,  
The Stone beyond compare,  
The harmony of the Circle and the Square,  
All that surpasseth mortal wit  
Even to imagine? we have found it, Rose,  
Rose of the Stars, Rose of the utmost snows!  
Where? Where Love knows.

# ROSA INFERNI

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## ROSA INFERNI

Ha ha! John plucketh now at his rose  
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart.  
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;  
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;  
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;  
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell.  
And lo, he is horribly in the toils  
Of a coal-black giant flower of hell!  
BROWNING, *Heretic's Tragedy*, ix.

### I

ROSE of the world! Ay, love, in that warm hour  
Wet with your kisses, the bewitching bud  
Flamed in the starlight; then our bed your bower  
Heaved like the breast of some alluring flood  
Whereon a man might sleep for ever, until  
Death should surprise him, kiss his weary will  
Into the last repose, profounder power  
Than life could compass. Now I tax my skill  
To find another holier name, some flower  
Still red, but red with the ecstacy of blood.  
Dear love, dear wife, dear mother of the child  
Whose fair faint features are a match for mine,  
Lurks there no secret where your body smiled,

No serpent in the generous draught of wine?  
Did I guess all, who guessed your life well given  
Up to my kiss? Aha! the veil is riven!  
Beneath the smiling mask of a young bride  
Languorous, luscious, melancholy-eyed;  
Beneath the gentle raptures, hints celestial  
Of holy secrets, kisses like soft dew,  
Beneath the amorous mystery, I view  
The surer shape, a visage grim and bestial,  
A purpose sly and deadly, a black shape,  
A tiger snarling, or a grinning ape  
Resolved by every devilish device  
Upon my murder. This I clearly see  
Now you are—for an hour—away from me.  
I see it once; no need to tell me twice!

## II

SOME Yankee yelled—I tag it to a rime—  
“You can’t fool all the people all the time.”  
So he of politics; so I of love.  
I am a-many folk (let Buddha prove!)  
And many a month you fooled the lot of us—  
Your spell is cracked within the ring! Behold  
How Christ with clay worth more than any gold  
Cleared the man’s eyes! So the blind amorous  
Is blinded with the horror of the truth  
He sees this moment. Foolish prostitute!

You slacked your kiss upon the sodden youth  
In some excess of confidence, decay  
Of care to hold him—can I tell you which?  
Down goes the moon—one sees the howling bitch!  
The salmon you had hooked in fin and gill  
You reel unskilfully—he darts away.  
Alas! you devil, but you hold me still!

### III

○ FIRST and fairest of Earth's darling daughters!  
How could I sing you?—you have always seemed  
Unto the saucy driveller as he dreamed  
Like a rich sunset seen on tropic waters—  
(Your eyes effulgent from a thousand slaughters  
Looked tenderly upon me!) all the red  
Raving round you like a glory shed  
Upon the excellent wonder of your head;  
The blue all massed within your marvellous eyes;  
The gold a curtain of their harmonies  
As in a master canvas of de Ryn;  
But ever central glowed the royal sun,  
A miracle cartouche upon the edge  
Of the opalescent waters slantwise seen.  
This oval sealed with grave magnificence  
Stamped you my queen. Thus looked your lips to one  
Who stood a casual on life's slippery ledge,  
A blind bat hanging from the tree of sense



Head downward, gorged with sweet banana juice,  
Indifferent to—incapable of—aught  
Beyond these simple reflexes. Is thought,  
Even the highest thought, of any use?

#### IV

**W**E are not discussing metaphysics now.  
I see below the beautiful low brow  
(Low too for cunning, like enough!) your lips,  
A scarlet splash of murder. From them drips  
This heart's blood; you have fed your fill on me.  
I am exhaust, a pale, wan phantom floating  
Aimless in air, than which I am thinner. You  
I see, more brilliant, of that sanguine hue  
(If anything be true that I can see)  
Full fed; you smile, a smile obscenely gloating  
On the voluptuous wreck your lust hath wrought.  
See the loose languor of precipitate thought  
These versicles exhale! How rude the rime!  
There is no melody; the tune and time  
Are broken. Thirteen centuries ago  
They would have said, "Alas! the youth! We know  
This devil hath from him plucked the immortal soul."  
*I say: you have dulled my centres of control!*

V

IF you were with me, I were blind to this:  
Ready to drain my arteries for your kiss,  
Feel your grasp tighten round my ribs until  
You crush me in the ecstasies that kill.  
Being away and breathing icy air  
I am half-lover, caring not to care;  
Half-man again—a mere terrestrial ball  
Thus breaking up a spiritual thrall—  
Eh, my philosophers?—half-man may yet determine  
To get back manhood, shake the tree from bats:  
To change the trope a shade—get rid of vermin  
By using William Shakespeare's "Rough on Rats."

VI

AH, love, dear love, sole queen of my affection,  
Guess you not yet what wheel of thought is spun?  
How out of dawn's tumultuous dejection  
And not from noon springs up the splendid sun?  
Not till the house is swept and garnished well  
Rise seven other devils out of hell.

## VII

THIS is the circle; as the manhood rises  
And laughter and rude rime engage my pen;  
As I stalk forth, a Man among mere men,  
The balance changes; all my wit surprises  
That I who saw the goblins in your face,  
That I who cursed you for the murderous whore  
Licking up life as a cat laps its milk,  
Now see you for a dream of youth and grace,  
Relume the magic aura that begirt you,  
Bless you for purity and life—a store!  
An ever-running fountain-head of virtue  
To heal my soul and buckler it and harden!  
Your body is like ivory and silk!  
Your lips are like the poppies in the garden!  
Your face is like a wreath of flowers to crown me!  
Your eyes are wells wherein I long to drown me!  
Your hair is like a waterfall above me,  
A waterfall of sunset! In your bosom  
I hear the racing of a heart to love me.  
Your blood is beating like a wind-blown blossom  
With rapture that you mingle it in mine!  
Your breath is fresh as foam and keen as wine!  
Intoxicating glories are your glances!  
Your bodily beauty grips my soul and dances

Its maddening measures in my heart and brain!  
Is it that so the wheel may whirl again,  
That some dull devil in my ear may show me:  
“For John the Baptist’s head—so danced Salome!”?

### VIII

**T**HEN, in God’s name forbear! It does not matter.  
Life, death, strength, weakness, are but idle chatter.  
Nothing is lost or gained, we know too well.  
For heaven they balance us an equal hell.  
We discard both; an infinite Universe  
Remains; we sum it up—an infinite curse.  
So—am I a man? I lack my wife’s embrace.  
Am I outworn? I see the harlot’s face.  
Is the love better and the knowledge worse?  
Shall I seek knowledge and count love disgrace?  
Where is the profit in so idle a strife?  
The love of knowledge is the hate of life.

# ROSA MUNDI

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*mi*

1. Rose of the World!  
Red glory of the secret heart of Love!  
Red flame, rose-red, most subtly curled  
Into its own infinite flower, all flowers above!  
Its flower in its own perfumed passion,  
Its faint sweet passion, folded and furred  
In flower fashion;  
And my deep spirit taking its pure part  
In that voluptuous heart  
Of hidden happiness!
2. Arise, strong bow of the young child Eros!  
(While the maddening moonlight, the memoried caress  
Stolen of the scented rose  
Stirs me and bids each racing pulse ache, ache!)  
Bend into an agony of art  
Whose cry is ever rapture, and whose tears  
For their own purity's undivided sake

Are molten dew, as, on the lotus leaves  
Silver-coiled in the Sun  
Into green-girdled spheres  
Purer than all a maiden's dream enweaves,  
Lies the unutterable Beauty of  
The waters. Yea, arise, divinest dove  
Of the Idalian, on your crimson wings  
And soft grey plumes, bear me to yonder shrine  
Of that most softly-spoken one,  
Mine Aphrodite! Touch the imperfect strings,  
Oh thou, immortal, throned above the moon!  
Inspire a holy tune  
Lighter and lovelier than flowers and wine  
Offered in gracious gardens unto Pan  
By any soul of man!

- 3 In vain the solemn stars pour their pale dews  
Upon my trembling spirit; their caress  
Leaves me moon-rapt in waves of loveliness  
All thine, O rose, O wrought of many a muse  
In Music, O thou strength of ecstacy  
Incarnate in a woman-form, create  
Of her own rapture, infinite, ultimate,  
Not to be seen, not grasped, not even imaginable,  
But known of one, by virtue of that spell  
Of thy sweet will toward him : thou, unknown,  
Untouched, grave mistress of the sunlight throne  
Of thine own nature; known not even of me,



But of some spark of woven eternity  
Immortal in this bosom. Phosphor paled  
And in the grey upstarted the dread veiled  
Rose light of dawn. Sunshapen shone thy spears  
Of love forth darting into myriad spheres,  
Which I the poet called this light, that flower,  
This knowledge, that illumination, power  
This and love that, in vain, in vain, until  
Thy beauty dawned, all beauty to distil  
Into one drop of utmost dew, one name  
Choral as floral, one thin, subtle flame  
Fitted to a shaft of love. O bear me far  
Up and up yet to where thy sacred star  
Burns in its brilliance! Thence the storm be shed  
A passion of great calm about this head,  
This head no more a poet's. Ay! the dream  
Of beauty clustered close into a stream  
Of tingling light, and, gathering ever force  
From thine own love, its unextended source,  
Became the magic utterance that makes Me,  
Dissolving self into the starless sea  
That makes one lake of molten joy, one pond  
Steady as light and hard as diamond;  
One drop, one atom of constraint intense,  
Of elemental passion scorning sense,  
All the concentrated music that is I.  
O! hear me not! I die;  
I am borne away in misery of dumb life

That would in words flash forth the holiest heaven  
That to the immortal God of Gods is given,  
And, tongue-tied, stammers forth — my wife!

4 I am dumb with rapture of thy loveliness.  
All metres match and mingle; all words tire;  
All lights, all sounds, all perfumes, all gold stress  
Of the honey-palate, all soft strokes expire  
In abject agony of broken sense  
To hymn the emotion tense  
Of somewhat higher — O! how highest! — than all  
Their mystery : fall, O fall,  
Ye unavailing eagle-flights of song!  
O wife! these do thee wrong.

5 Thou knowest how I was blind;  
How for mere minutes thy pure presence  
Was nought; was ill-defined;  
A smudge across the mind,  
Drivelling in its brutal essence,  
Hog-wallowing in poetry,  
Incapable of thee.

6 Ah! when the minutes grew to hours,  
And yet the beast, the fool, saw flowers  
And loved them, watched the moon rise, took delight  
In perfumes of the summer night,

Caught in the glamour of the sun  
Thought all the woe well won.  
How hours were days, and all the misery  
Abode, all mine : O thou! didst thou regret?  
Wast thou asleep as I?  
Didst thou not love me yet?  
For, know! the moon is not the moon until  
She hath the knowledge to fulfil  
Her music, till she know herself the moon.  
So thou, so I! The stone unhewn,  
Foursquare, the sphere, of human hands immune,  
Was not yet chosen for the corner-piece  
And key-stone of the Royal Arch of Sex;  
Unsolved the ultimate x;  
The virginal breeding breeze  
Was yet of either unstirred;  
Unspoken the Great Word.

7 Then on a sudden, we knew. From deep to deep  
Reverberating, lightning unto lightning  
Across the sundering brightening  
Abyss of sorrow's sleep,  
There shone the sword of love and struck, and clove  
The intolerable veil,  
The woven chain of mail  
Prudence self-called, and folly known to who  
May know. Then, O sweet drop of dew,  
Thy limpid light rolled over and was lost

In mine, and mine in thine.  
 Peace, ye who praise! ye but disturb the shrine!  
 This voice is evil over against the peace  
 Here in the West, the holiest. Shaken and crossed  
 The threads Lachesis wove fell from her hands.  
 The pale divided strands  
 Were taken by thy master-hand, Eros!  
 Her evil thinkings cease,  
 Thy miracles begin.  
 Eros! Eros! — Be silent! It is sin  
 Thus to invoke the oracles of order  
 Their iron gates to unclose.  
 The gross, inhospitable warder  
 Of Love's green garden of spice is well awake.  
 Hell hath enough of Her three-headed hound;  
 But Love's severer bound  
 Knows for His watcher a more fearful shape,  
 A formidable ape  
 Skilled by black art to mock the Gods profound  
 In their abyss of under ground.  
 Beware! Who hath entered hath no boast to make,  
 And conscious Eden surelier breeds the snake.  
 Be silent! O! for silence' sake!

8 That asks the impossible. Smite! Smite!  
 Profaned adytum of pure light,  
 Smite! but I must sing on.  
 Nay! can the orison

Of myriad fools provoke the Crowned-with-Night  
Hidden beyond sound and sight  
In the mystery of His own high essence?  
Lo, Rose of all the gardens of the world,  
Did thy most sacred presence  
Not fill the Real, then this voice were whirled  
Away in the wind of its own folly, thrown  
Into forgotten places and unknown.  
So I sing on!

Sister and wife, dear wife,  
Light of my love and lady of my life,  
Answer if thou canst from the unsullied place,  
Unveiling for one star-wink thy bright face!  
Did we leave then, once cognisant,  
Time for some Fear to implant  
His poison? Did we hesitate?  
Leave but one little chance to Fate?  
For one swift second did we wait?  
There is no need to answer : God is God,  
A jealous God and evil; with His rod  
He smiteth fair and foul, and with His sword  
Divideth tiniest atoms of intangible time,  
That men may know he is the Lord.  
Then, with that sharp division,  
Did He divide our wit sublime?  
Our knowledge bring to nought?  
We had no need of thought.  
We brought His malice in derision.

So thine eternal petals shall enclose  
Me, O most wonderful lady of delight,  
Immaculate, indivisible circle of night,  
Inviolata, invulnerable Rose!

- 9 The sound of my own voice carries me on.  
I am as a ship whose anchors are all gone,  
Whose rudder is held by Love the indomitable —  
Purposeful helmsman! Were his port high Hell,  
Who should be fool enough to care? Suppose  
Hell's waters wash the memory of this rose  
Out of my mind, what misery matters then?  
Or, if they leave it, all the woes of men  
Are as pale shadows in the glory of  
That passionate splendour of Love.  
Ay! my own voice, my own thoughts. These, then, must be  
The mutiny of some worm's misery,  
Some chained despair knotted into my flesh,  
Some chance companion, some soul damned afresh  
Since my redemption, that is vocal at all;  
For I am wrapt away from light and call  
In the sweet heart of the red rose.  
My spirit only knows  
This woman and no more; who would know more?  
I, I am concentrate  
In the unshakeable state  
Of constant rapture. Who should pour  
His ravings in the air for winds to whirl,

Far from the central pearl  
Of all the diadem of the universe?  
Let God take pen, rehearse  
Dull nursery tales; then, not before, O rose,  
Red rose! shall the belov'd of thee,  
Infinite rose! pen puerile poetry  
That turns in writing to vile prose.

10 Were this the quintessential plume of Keats  
And Shelley and Swinburne and Verlaine,  
Could I outsoar them, all their lyric feats,  
Excel their utterance vain  
With one convincing rapture, beat them hollow  
As an ass's skin; wert thou, Apollo,  
Mere slave to me, not Lord — thy fieriest flight  
And stateliest shaft of light  
Thyself thyself surpassing; all were dull,  
And thou, O rose, sole, sacred, wonderful,  
Informing all, in all most beautiful,  
Circle and sphere, perfect in every part,  
High above hope of Art :  
Though, be it said! thou art nowhere now,  
Save in the secret chamber of my heart,  
Behind the brass of my anonymous brow.

11 Ay! let the coward and slave who writes write on!  
He is no more harm to Love than the grey snake  
Who lurks in the dusk brake

For the bare-legged village boy, is to the Sun,  
The Sire of Life.

The Lover and the Wife,  
Sun-canopied, ignore. The people hear;  
Then, be the people smitten of grey Fear,  
It is no odds!

- 12 I have seen the eternal Gods  
Sit, star-wed, in old Egypt by the Nile;  
The same calm pose, the inscrutable, wan smile,  
On every lip alike.  
Time hath not had his will to strike  
At them; they abide, they pass through all.  
Though their most ancient names may fall,  
They stir not nor are weary of  
Life, for with them, even as with us, Life is but Love.  
They know, we know; let, then, the writing go!  
That, in the very truth, we do not know.

- 13 It may be in the centuries of our life  
Since we were man and wife  
There stirs some incarnation of that love.  
Some rosebud in the garden of beauty blows,  
Some offshoot from the Rose  
Of the World, the Rose of all Delight,  
The Rose of Dew, the Rose of Love and Night,  
The Rose of Silence, covering as with a vesture  
The solemn unity of things



Beheld in the mirror of truth,  
The Rose indifferent to God's gesture,  
The Rose on moonlight wings  
That flies to the House of Fire,  
The Rose of Honey-in-Youth!  
Ah! No dim mystery of desire  
Fathoms this gulph! No light invades  
The mystical musical shades  
*Of a faith in the future, a dream of the day  
When athwart the dim glades  
Of the forest a ray  
Of sunlight shall flash and the dew die away!*

<sup>14</sup> Let there then be obscurity in this!  
There is an after rapture in the kiss.  
The fire, flesh, perfume, music, that outpaced  
All time, fly off; they are subtle : there abides  
A secret and most maiden taste;  
Salt, as of the invisible tides  
Of the molten sea of gold  
Men may at times behold  
In the rayless scarab of the sinking sun;  
And out of that is won  
Hardly, with labour and pain that are as pleasure,  
The first flower of the garden, the stored treasure  
That lies at the heart's heart of eternity.  
This treasure is for thee.

15 O! but shall hope arise in happiness?  
That may not be.  
My love is like a golden grape; the veins  
Peep through the ecstasy  
Of the essence of ivory and silk,  
Pearl, moonlight, mother-milk  
That is her skin;  
Its swift caress  
Flits like an angel's kiss in a dream; remains  
The healing virtue; from all sin,  
All ill, one touch sets free.  
My love is like a star — oh fool! oh fool!  
Is not thy back yet tender from the rod?  
Is there no learning in the poet's school?  
Wilt thou achieve what were too hard for God?  
I call Him to the battle; ask of me  
When the hinds calve? What of eternity  
When he built chaos? Shall Leviathan  
Be drawn out with an hook? Enough; I see  
This I can answer — or Ernst Haeckel can!  
Now, God Almighty, rede this mystery!  
What of the love that is the heart of man?  
Take stars and airs, and write it down!  
Fill all the interstices of space  
With myriad verse — own Thy disgrace!  
Diminish Thy renown!  
Approve my riddle! This Thou canst not do.

16 O living Rose! O dowered with subtle dew  
Of love. The tiny eternities of time,  
Caught between flying seconds, are well filled  
With these futilities of fragrant rhyme;  
In Love's retort distilled,  
In sunrays of fierce loathing purified,  
In moonrays of pure longing tried,  
And gathered after many moons of labour  
Into the compass of a single day :  
So, wrought into continuous tune,  
One laughter with one languor for its neighbour,  
One thought of winter with one word of June,  
Muddled and mixed in mere dismay,  
Chiselled with the cunning chisel of despair,  
Found wanting, well aware  
Of its own fault, even insistent  
Thereon; some fragrance rare  
Stolen from my lady's hair  
Perchance redeeming now and then the distant  
Fugitive tunes; — Ah! Love! the hour is over!  
The moon is up, the vigil overpast.

17 Call me to thee at last,  
O Rose, O perfect miracle lover,  
Call me! I hear thee, though it be across  
The abyss of the whole universe,  
Though not a sigh escape, delicious loss!  
Though hardly a wish rehearse

The imperfection underlying ever  
The perfect happiness.  
Thou knowest that not in flesh  
Lies the fair fresh  
Delight of Love; not in mere lips and eyes  
The secret of these bridal ecstasies,  
Since thou art everywhere,  
Rose of the World, Rose of the Uttermost  
Abode of Glory, Rose of the High Host  
Of Heaven, mystic, rapturous Rose!  
The extreme passion glows  
Deep in this breast; thou knowest (and love knows)  
How every word awakes its own reward  
In a thought akin to thee, a shadow of thee;  
And every tune evokes its musical Lord;  
And every rhyme tingles and shakes in me  
The filaments of the great web of Love.

18 O Rose all roses far above  
In the garden of God's roses,  
Sorrowless, thornless, passionate Rose, that lies  
Full in the flood of its own sympathies  
And makes my life one tune that curls and closes  
On its own self delight;  
A circle, never a line! Safe from all wind,  
Secure in its own pleasure-house confined,  
Sure lord of its own rapture, deaf and blind  
To aught but its own mastery of song

And light, shewn ever as silence and deep night  
Secret as death and final. Let me long  
Never again for aught! This great delight  
Involves me, weaves me in its pattern of bliss,  
Seals me with its own kiss,  
Draws me to thee with every dream that glows,  
Poet, each word; maiden, each burden of snows  
Extending beyond sunset, beyond dawn!  
O Rose, inviolate, utterly withdrawn  
In the truth : — for this is truth; Love knows!  
Ah! Rose o the World! Rose! Rose!