

V.

The Black Mass

I

Lord ! on love's altar lies the sacrament.  
    O willing victim, eager to be slain,  
    Lusting to feel the knife, the life-veil rent,  
    Assumption energized by death ! O fain  
To feel the murderous ardour of the priest  
    Clutch at his throat, theurgic frenzy fly  
    About the initiates of the Paschal feast  
    And know it centred in the dim dead I  
Loosed by the pang – even thus you know it is,  
    Even thus, when I invoke your harsh caress,  
    Put up my mouth to your immortal kiss,  
    Confess you for my lady and murderess –  
In mine own life-blood I exult to float  
    Even as your white fangs fasten in my throat.

## II

You stand away – to let your long lash curl  
About this aching body, fiery rings  
Of torture, o my hot enamoured girl  
Whose passion rides me like a steed and stings.  
Like to a wounded snake infuriated  
With pain, you drive your reeking kisses home  
Into my flesh, their poisonous frenzy mated  
With this delirious anguish, bitter foam  
Of storm on some innavigable sea.  
Whip, whip me till I burn ! Whip on ! Whip on !  
Is it not madness that you wake in me ?  
Is not this curse the devil's orison ?  
Ah, devil ! devil ! when you grip me and glare  
Into mine eyes, and answer all the prayer !

### III

A virgin with the lusts of Messaline,  
A goat-soul in the body of a saint,  
You writhe on me with cruel and epicene  
Phrenzy and agony of acute restraint.  
You ache — you burn — you dizzy me with blows — You  
call me coward and eunuch, who say No.  
Volcanic child ! upon your masking snows  
I will not raise my rod, that forth may flow  
Torrents of blazing lava, that shall hiss  
And roar, and ruin all the glad green world.  
I like the attack of your seducing kiss  
The lashes of your love about me curled,  
Better than slack delight and murmuring sigh —  
Flowers by the road to sad satiety.

#### IV

Spit in my face ! I love you. Clench your fists  
And beat me ! Still, I love you. Let your eyes  
Like fiery opals or mad amethysts  
Curse me ! I love you. Let your anger rise  
And with your teeth tear bleeding bits of flesh  
Out of my body – kill me if you can !  
I love you. I will have you fair and fresh,  
A maenad maiden maddening for a man.  
Ay ! you shall weary in the erotic craving !  
I'll have you panting – aching to the marrow –  
Exhausted, but a maiden (Lesbia raving :  
" Catullus brings a song and not a sparrow ")  
Famished with love, fed full with love, your soul  
Still on the threshold of the unenvied goal.

V

The goal of love is gotten not of these  
White-blooded fools that haste and marry and tire.  
They grasp and break their bubble ecstasies ;  
We know desire the secret of desire.  
We have the wisdom of the saints of old  
Who know that what divinely is begun  
Glow from dawn's grey to noon's deliberate gold  
Darkens to crimson – and day's race is run.  
For us the glamour of the dawn suborning,  
We escape the enervating heat of noon :  
We hear Astarte for Adonis mourning,  
And close our lover's calendar at June.  
Ah, Lola ! but we suffer. Hell's own worm  
Aches less than this, and hath an earlier term.

## VI

You grind your tiny shoes into my face ;  
    You roll upon the furs before the fire,  
    Smiting and cursing in the devil's race  
    Whose goal and prize is Unassuaged Desire.  
You rub your naked body against mine :  
    You madden me by blows and bites and kisses ;  
    You make me drunken with your stormy wine ;  
    We swoon, we roll into unguessed abysses  
Of torture and of bliss ; we wake and yearn,  
    Doing violence on ourselves – anon we are slain,  
    Slain and reborn again to ache and burn :  
    Aeon on aeon thunders through our brain.  
– At last you see, my maiden ? Kiss me ! Kiss !  
    There is no end – happy or not – to this !

## VII

There is a respite — we must part anon.

Short are the hours of sweetness : it is well.

Could such a bout of murder carry on

We should drink poison and awake in hell ;

Or being but mortal, or nearly mortal, yield

Exhausted spirit to the clamant flesh ;

The book of common love should be unsealed,

And we be caught within the common mesh

That catches common folk. O God ! bite hard !

Smite down rebellious flesh with hideous pain !

Bite hard ! Smite hard ! By bruises scarred and marred

Love this exultant face ! Again ! Again !

O Lola ! Lola ! Lola ! Kiss me, Kiss!

Nay — nay! Kiss not ! I cannot bear the bliss.



## VIII

You are a devil gloating on the pain  
    You suffer and I suffer ; you laugh shrill  
    Over the pangs of those pale fools, the twain  
    Whom we deceive, whom we shall surely kill  
Whispering a word of this. Ah ! joy it is  
    That false to faith is all the honied pressing;  
    A traitor triumphs in each stolen kiss,  
    Caligula and Cressida caressing.

You love yourself for stealing me away  
    From the proud lovely wife ; you love me more  
    That in my arms a prostitute you lay,  
    And to your troth-plight lover played the whore  
When mouth to mouth we clung, and breath for breath  
    Exchanged the royal accolade of death.

## IX

I love you for your cruelty to them ;  
I love you for your cruelty to me ;  
I see their blood glittering a diadem  
Upon your dazzling brows ; my blood I see  
Sucked deep into your body, curling round  
Like fire in every artery and vein  
Massed in your heart, colossal and profound.  
I am mad for you to brand me with the stain  
Of your own vice. Our souls, a murdering crew  
Of itching Mullahs, wallow, dervish-drunk.  
Love surges at the pang ! Our poisonous dew  
Of sweat and kisses blinds us. A mad monk  
Kissing fanatically the cross that had  
Devoured his vitals is not half as mad !

## X

Ay ! rub yourself, you big lascivious cat,  
On the electric soft, the wanton fur !  
Call upon Hera ! You've a furious gnat  
Worth any gadfly ever sent from her !  
Call upon Aphrodite ! she will send  
No sparrows from her prudish Paphian home !  
Call upon Artemis ! She will not bend  
To lift you from your seas of bitter foam !  
Nay ! wrap yourself and rub yourself in silk !  
Drink of my blood, engorge my fruitless sperm !  
For you were suckled on the poisonous milk  
That betrays virgins to the deathless worm.  
Are we not glad thereof? Kiss, Lola, kiss,  
Comrade of mine in the uttermost abyss !

## XI

Follow Iacchus from the Indian vales !  
Set him with song upon the milk-white ass !  
Follow Iacchus while the sunset pales !  
Revel it on the flower-enamelled grass  
While the moon lasts ; then plunge in trackless woods !  
Slay beasts unheard-of and blaspheming kings !  
Mingle in madness with strange sisterhoods !  
Dare black Aornos with Daedalian wings !  
All words ! words ! there's a hunger to express  
The infinite pangs, the infinite mighty blisses  
Stored in the house of rapture and distress  
Whose key is one of our blood-tainted kisses  
Whose fume arises from the accursed sod  
Where we lie burning and blaspheming God.

## XII

So in this agony of enforced silence  
The sober song breaks to a phrenzied scream ;  
The shattering brain admits the mad god's violence,  
And wild things course as in an evil dream :  
Devils and dancers, druid rites and dread,  
Horrible symbols scarred across the sky,  
Invisible terrors of the quick and dead,  
Impossible phantoms in mad revelry  
Conjoined in spinthrae of bestial form,  
Human-faced toads, and serpent-headed women,  
All lashed and slashed by the all-wandering storm  
Caricature of all things holy and human —  
Such are the discords that absolve the strain  
As this wild threnody dissolves the brain.

### XIII

Forgive me, o my holy and happy maid,  
Lola, sweet Lola, for the imagination  
Of all things monstrous that your soul dismayed  
Reads on the palimpsest of my elation.  
Simple and sweet and chaste our love is ever,  
And these its wild and mystic characters  
That rage and storm in impotent endeavour  
To unveil our glory to our worshippers.  
Lola, dear Lola, mystic maiden o' mine,  
Let us not mingle with the ribald rout  
That throng our temple. Close, Palladian shrine,  
With our reverberate glory rayed about !  
Abide within – with me ! Let silence sever  
This velvet 'now' from that unclothed 'for ever' !

## XIV

Though I adorn my thought with angel tresses  
Or pluck its pallium from the demon-kings,  
My spirit rests at ease in your caresses,  
And cares not for the song, so that it sings.  
Life is but one caress, one song of gladness,  
One infinite pulse of love in tune with you ;  
One infinite pulse, upsoaring into madness,  
Down sinking to content. O far and few  
The stars that follow our lofty pilgrimage  
Into the abyss of silence and delight  
Beyond the glamour of the world, the age,  
The illusions of the light and of the night.  
Wherefore accept these meteor flames that dance  
Pale coruscations to our brilliance !