



Karl Marx

Selected Poetry

Panic! Poet Series

THE FIDDLER

The Fiddler saws the strings,
His light brown hair he tosses and flings.
 He carries a sabre at his side,
 He wears a pleated habit wide.

"Fiddler, why that frantic sound?
Why do you gaze so wildly round?
 Why leaps your blood, like the surging sea?
 What drives your bow so desperately?"

"Why do I fiddle? Or the wild waves roar?
That they might pound the rocky shore,
 That eye be blinded, that bosom swell,
 That Soul's cry carry down to Hell."

"Fiddler, with scorn you rend your heart.
A radiant God lent you your art,
 To dazzle with waves of melody,
 To soar to the star-dance in the sky."

"How so! I plunge, plunge without fail
My blood-black sabre into your soul.
 That art God neither wants nor wists,
 It leaps to the brain from Hell's black mists.

"Till heart's bewitched, till senses reel:
With Satan I have struck my deal.
 He chalks the signs, beats time for me,
 I play the death march fast and free.

"I must play dark, I must play light,
Till bowstrings break my heart outright."

The Fiddler saws the strings,
His light brown hair he tosses and flings.
 He carries a sabre at his side,
 He wears a pleated habit wide.

NOCTURNAL LOVE

Frantic, he holds her near,
Darkly looks in her eye.
"Pain so burns you, Dear,
And at my breath you sigh.

"Oh, you have drunk my soul.
Mine is your glow, in truth.
My jewel, shine your fill.
Glow, blood of youth."

"Sweetest, so pale your face,
So wondrous strange your words.
See, rich in music's grace
The lofty gliding worlds."

"Gliding, dearest, gliding,
Glowing, stars, glowing.
Let us go heavenwards riding,
Our souls together flowing."

His voice is muffled, low.
Desperate, he looks about.
Glances of crackling flame
His hollow eyes shoot out.

"You have drunk poison, Love.
With me you must away.
The sky is dark above,
No more I see the day."

Shuddering, he pulls her close to him.
Death in the breast doth hover.
Pain stabs her, piercing deep within,
And eyes are closed forever.

CONCLUDING SONNETS TO JENNY

I

Take all, take all these songs from me
That Love at your feet humbly lays,
Where, in the Lyre's full melody,
Soul freely nears in shining rays.
Oh! if Song's echo potent be
To stir to longing with sweet lays,
To make the pulse throb passionately
That your proud heart sublimely sways,
Then shall I witness from afar
How Victory bears you light along,
Then shall I fight, more bold by far,
Then shall my music soar the higher;
Transformed, more free shall ring my song,
And in sweet woe shall weep my Lyre.

II

To me, no Fame terrestrial
That travels far through land and nation
To hold them thrillingly in thrall
With its far-flung reverberation
Is worth your eyes, when shining full,
Your heart, when warm with exultation,
Or two deep-welling tears that fall,
Wrung from your eyes by song's emotion.
Gladly I'd breathe my Soul away
In the Lyre's deep melodious sighs,
And would a very Master die,
Could I the exalted goal attain,
Could I but win the fairest prize --
To soothe in you both joy and pain.

III

Ah! Now these pages forth may fly,
Approach you, trembling, once again,
My spirits lowered utterly
By foolish fears and parting's pain.
My self-deluding fancies stray
Along the boldest paths in vain;
I cannot win what is most High,
And soon no more hope shall remain.
When I return from distant places
To that dear home, filled with desire,
A spouse holds you in his embraces,
And clasps you proudly, Fairest One.
Then o'er me rolls the lightning's fire
Of misery and oblivion.

IV

Forgive that, boldly risking scorn
The Soul's deep yearning to confess,
The singer's lips must hotly burn
To waft the flames of his distress.
Can I against myself then turn
And lose myself, dumb, comfortless,
The very name of singer spurn,
Not love you, having seen your face?
So high the Soul's illusions aspire,
O'er me you stand magnificent;
'Tis but your tears that I desire,
And that my songs you only enjoyed
To lend them grace and ornament;
Then may they flee into the Void!

*

TO JENNY

I

Words -- lies, hollow shadows, nothing more,
 Growding Life from all sides round!
In you, dead and tired, must I outpour
 Spirits that in me abound?
Yet Earth's envious Gods have scanned before
 Human fire with gaze profound;
And forever must the Earthling poor
 Mate his bosom's glow with sound.
For, if passion leaped up, vibrant, bold,
 In the Soul's sweet radiance,
Daringly it would your worlds enfold,
Would dethrone you, would bring you down low,
 Would outsoar the Zephyr-dance.
Ripe a world above you then would grow.

TO JENNY

I

Jenny! Teasingly you may inquire
 Why my songs "To Jenny" I address,
When for you alone my pulse beats higher,
When my songs for you alone despair,
When you only can their heart inspire,
 When your name each syllable must confess,
 When you lend each note melodiousness,
 When no breath would stray from the Goddess?
'Tis because so sweet the dear name sounds,
 And its cadence says so much to me,
And so full, so sonorous it resounds,
Like to vibrant Spirits in the distance,
 Like the gold-stringed Cithern's harmony,
Like some wondrous, magical existence.

II

See! I could a thousand volumes fill,
 Writing only "Jenny" in each line,
Still they would a world of thought conceal,
Deed eternal and unchanging Will,
Verses sweet that yearning gently still,
 All the glow and all the Aether's shine,
 Anguished sorrow's pain and joy divine,
 All of Life and Knowledge that is mine.
I can read it in the stars up yonder,
 From the Zephyr it comes back to me,
From the being of the wild waves' thunder.
Truly, I would write it down as a refrain,
 For the coming centuries to see --
LOVE IS JENNY, JENNY IS LOVE'S NAME.

MY WORLD

Worlds my longing cannot ever still,
 Nor yet Gods with magic blest;
Higher than them all is my own Will,
 Stormily wakeful in my breast.

Drank I all the stars' bright radiance,
 All the light by suns o'erspilled,
Still my pains would want for recompense,
 And my dreams be unfulfilled.

Hence! To endless battle, to the striving
 Like a Talisman out there,
Demon-wise into the far mists driving
 Towards a goal I cannot near.

But it's only ruins and dead stones
 That encompass all my yearning,
Where in shimmering Heavenly radiance
 All my hopes flow, ever-burning.
They are nothing more than narrow rooms

Ringed by timid people round,
Where it stands, the frontier of my dreams,
Where my hopes reach journey's end.

Jenny, can you ask what my words say,
And what meaning hides within?
Ah! 'Twere useless to speak anyway,
Futile even to begin.

Look into those eyes of yours so bright,
Deeper than the floor of Heaven,
Clearer than the sun's own beaming light,
And the answer shall be given.

Dare to joy in life and being fair,
Only press your own white hand;
You yourself shall find the answer there,
Know my distant Heaven-land.

Ah! When your lips only breathed to me,
Only one warm word to say,
Then I dived into mad ecstasy,
Helpless I was swept away.

Ha! In nerve and spirit I was stricken,
To the bottom of my soul,
As a Demon, when the High Magician
Strikes with lightning bolt and spell.
Yet why should words try to force in vain,
Being sound and misty pall,
What is infinite, like yearning's pain,
Like yourself, and like the All.

FEELINGS

Never can I do in peace
That with which my Soul's obsessed,
Never take things at my ease;
I must press on without rest.

Others only know elation
When things go their peaceful way,
Free with self-congratulation,
Giving thanks each time they pray.

I am caught in endless strife,
Endless ferment, endless dream;
I cannot conform to Life,
Will not travel with the stream.

Heaven I would comprehend,
I would draw the world to me;
Loving, hating, I intend
That my star shine brilliantly.

All things I would strive to win,
All the blessings Gods impart,
Grasp all knowledge deep within,
Plumb the depths of Song and Art.

Worlds I would destroy for ever,
Since I can create no world,
Since my call they notice never,
Coursing dumb in magic whirl.

Dead and dumb, they stare away
At our deeds with scorn up yonder;
We and all our works decay --
Heedless on their ways they wander.

Yet their lot I would share never --
Swept on by the flooding tide,

On through nothing rushing ever,
Fretful in their Pomp and Pride.

Swiftly fall and are destroyed
Halls and bastions in their turn;
As they fly into the Void,
Yet another Empire's born.

So it rolls from year to year,
From the Nothing to the All,
From the Cradle to the Bier,
Endless Rise and endless Fall.

So the spirits go their way
Till they are consumed outright,
Till their Lords and Masters they
Totally annihilate.

Then let us traverse with daring
That predestined God-drawn ring,
Joy and Sorrow fully sharing
As the scales of Fortune swing.

Therefore let us risk our all,
Never resting, never tiring;
Not in silence dismal, dull,
Without action or desiring;

Not in brooding introspection
Bowed beneath a yoke of pain,
So that yearning, dream and action
Unfulfilled to us remain.

TRANSFORMATION

Mine eyes are so confused,
My cheek it is so pale,
My head is so bemused,
A realm of fairy-tale.

I wanted, boldly daring,
Sea-going ways to follow,
Where a thousand crags rise soaring,
And Floods flow bleak and hollow.

I clung to Thought high-soaring,
On its two wings did ride,
And though storm winds were roaring,
All danger I defied.

I did not falter there,
But ever on did press
With the wild eagle's stare
On journeys limitless.

And though the Siren spins
Her music so endearing
Whereby the heart she wins --
I gave that sound no hearing.

I turned away mine ear
From the sweet sounds I heard,
My bosom did aspire
To a loftier reward.

Alas, the waves sped on,
At rest they would not be;
There swept by many a one
Too swift for me to see.

With magic power and word
I cast what spells I knew,

But forth the waves still roared,
Till they were gone from view.

And by the Flood sore pressed,
And dizzy at the sight,
I tumbled from that host
Into the misty night.

And when I rose again
From fruitless toil at last,
My powers all were gone,
And all the heart's glow lost

And trembling, pale, I long
Gazed into my own breast;
By no uplifting song
Was my affliction blessed.

My songs were flown, alack;
The sweetest Art was gone --
No God would give it back
Nor Grace of Deathless One.

The Fortress had sunk down
That once so bold did stand;
The fiery glow was drowned,
Void was the bosom's land.

Then shone your radiance,
The purest light of soul,
Where in a changing dance
Round Earth the Heavens roll.

Then was I captive bound,
Then was my vision clear,
For I had truly found
What my dark strivings were.

Soul rang more strong, more free,
Out of the deep-stirred breast

In triumph heavenly,
And in sheer happiness.

My spirits then and there
Soared, jubilant and gay,
And, like a sorcerer,
Their courses did I sway.

I left the waves that rush,
The floods that change and flow,
On the high cliff to crash,
But saved the inner glow.

And what my Soul, Fate-driven
Never in flight o'ertook,
That to my heart was given,
Was granted by your look.

CREATION

Creator Spirit uncreated
Sails on fleet waves far away,
Worlds heave, Lives are generated,
His Eye spans Eternity.
All inspiring reigns his Countenance,
In its burning magic, Forms condense.

Voids pulsate and Ages roll,
Deep in prayer before his Face;
Spheres resound and Sea-Floods swell,
Golden Stars ride on apace.
Fatherhead in blessing gives the sign,
And the All is bathed in Light divine.
In bounds self-perceived, the Eternal
Silent moves, reflectively,
Until holy Thought primordial

Dons Forms, Words of Poetry.
Then, like Thunder-lyres from far away
Like prescient Creation's Jubilee:

"Gentler shine the floating stars,
Worlds in primal Rock now rest;
O my Spirit's images,
Be by Spirit new embraced;
When to you the heaving bosoms move,
Be revealed in piety and love.

"Be unlocked only to Love;
Eternity's eternal seat,
As to you I gently gave,
Hurl you my Soul's lightning out.
'Harmony alone its like may find,
Only Soul another Soul may bind.'

Out of me your Spirits burn
Into Forms of lofty meaning;
To the Maker you return,
Images no more remaining,
By Man's look of Love ringed burningly,
You in him dissolved, and he in me."

POETRY

Flames Creator-like once poured
Streaming to me from your breast,
Clashing up on high they soared,
And I nursed them in my breast.
Shone your form like Aeolus-strains above,
Shielded soft the fire with wings of Love.
I saw glow and I heard sound,
Heavens onward sweeping far,
Rising up and sinking down,
Sinking but to soar the higher.
Then, when inner strife at last was quelled,
Grief and Joy made music I beheld.

Nestling close to forms so soft
Stands the Soul, by spells enchained,
From me images sailed aloft
By your very Love inflamed.
Limbs of Love, by Spirit once released,
Shine again within their Maker's breast.

THE FOREST SPRING

In flowery grove I lost my way
Where forest spring showers silver spray
In murmuring fall, o'erhead
The lofty bay trees spread.

They see it ever rushing fleet,
They see it flowing at their feet,
Burn in sweet shadows there
To mate with Sea and Air.

But when it flees the hard land's thrall,
Loud thundering smites the rocky wall.
Dizzy the flood spins round
In mist-rings with no sound.

Through flowery groves it roams again,
Swallowing deep draughts of Death's pain,
And then the tall bay trees
Waft down sweet reveries.

THE MAGIC HARP

A Ballad

So strangely in the ear it sings,
Like thrilling harp, like trembling strings,
It wakes the Minstrel sleeping.
"Why beats the heart so fearfully,
What are those sounds, like harmony
Of Stars and Spirits weeping?"

He rises, springs from off his bed,
Towards the shadows turns his head
And sees the cords of gold.
"Come, Minstrel, step you up and down,
High in the air, deep in the ground,
Those strings you cannot hold."

He sees it growing, branching wide,
His soul is troubled deep inside,
The sound swells in the air.
He follows, and it lures him on,
By ghostly stairways up and down,
Here, there and everywhere.

He stops. A gate swings open wide,
A burst of music from inside
Would carry him away.
A Lyre in golden splendour bright
Sounds forth in song all day and night,
But no one's there to play.

It grips him like desire, like pain,
His bosom swells, his heart within
Beats high beyond control.
"The Lyre plays from my own heart,
It is myself, its pangs--the Art
That gushes from my soul."

In ecstasy he plucks the strings,
The sound trills high as mountain springs,
Dives booming, like the abyss.
His blood leaps wild, far swells his song,
Was never yearning's pain so strong,
He saw the world no more.

THE ABDUCTION

A Ballad

The Knight, he stands at the iron gate,
The Maiden so sweet and fair looks out.
"Dear Knight, however can I come down?"
And silence and darkness reign all round.

"Catch this I throw, and it shall be
Your rescue's sweetest surety.
Up there you can firmly bind the end,
And by the rope you may descend."

"Ah, Knight, I fly like a thief to you,
Ah, Knight, for love what won't I do!"
"Dear love, you take but what's your own,
We'll flee like shadows that dance and are gone!"

"Ah, Knight, the darkness yawns below,
My senses reel, I dare not go!"
"Then you refuse; my life I'd stake,
And yet at empty terrors you quake!"

"Ah, Knight, ah, Knight, you play with fire,
Yet you alone are my heart's desire!
Farewell, ye Halls, forever and ay,
Where never again my feet shall stray.

"What lures me on I cannot fight;

Ye loved ones all, I bid good-night!"
No more she demurs and plays for time,
She clutches the rope for the downward climb.

No sooner has she slid halfway,
Than she takes fright, her glances stray.
Her arms grow weak, she must let go
To fall on the breast of Death below.

"Ah, Knight, warm me once more, and I
Blissfully in your arms may die,
Let me but breathe your every kiss,
And I'll fade into sweet nothingness."

The Knight embraces her trembling form,
And to his bosom he presses her, warm.
And as their souls together strain,
He too is pierced by mortal pain.

"Farewell, my Love, so true, so kind!"
"Stay, and I'll follow close behind!"
A flash, as of eternal fire,-
Their souls depart and they expire.

YEARNING

A Romance

"Why sighs your breast, why glows your gaze,
Why are your veins all burning,
As if Night weighs, as if Fate flays
Down into storm your yearning?"

"Show me the eyes, like ringing bells,
That glow in rainbows high,
Where brightness streams, where music swells,
Where stars go swimming by.

"I dreamed this dream, so troublesome,
Past all elucidating.
My head is void, my heart is numb,
My grave shall soon be waiting."

"What dream you here, what dream you there,
What lures to distant lands?
Here booms the Tide, here Hope rides fair,
Here's fire in True Love's bonds."

"Here naught rides fair, here is no fire,
But see what glimmers yonder,
I'm blinded, burning with desire,
And I would fain sink under."

He stares aloft, his eyes shine bright,
He shakes in every limb.
His sinews swell, his heart's alight,
His soul departs from him.

SIREN SONG

A Ballad

The wave, soft murmuring,
With the wind frolicking,
Leaps up into the air.
You see it tremble, hover,
Tumble and topple over,
It is the Sirens' lair.

They pluck the lyre to enthrall
In heavenly festival,
In melody divine.
They draw both near and far,
Earth and distant star
Into their song sublime.

Its charm is so profound
One cannot chide the sound
That soars so radiantly.
As if great spirits there
Would lure the listener
Into the dark blue sea.

As if there swells and grows
From waves a world that flows
Loftily, secretly.
As if in waters deep
The Gods are all asleep
Down in the dark blue sea.

A little boat draws near,
The waves are charmed to hear
A gentle bard exalted,
His looks so frank and free,
Image and melody
Like love and hope transfigured.

His lyre rules o'er the deep.
Naiads that were asleep
Lend him their song-charmed ear.
And all the waves resound
With song and lyre's sweet sound
And dance high in the air.

But hear the sad refrains,
The Sirens' far-off strains
Of sweet melodiousness.
The poet to enthrall,
The Goddesses shine all
In sound and loveliness.

"O youth, soar up and play,
Rule o'er the listening sea;
The goal you seek is high,
Your breast swells rapturously.

"Here, sumptuous water-halls
Your song alone surprises,
And as the great tide falls,
Ev'n so your music rises.

"Sportive waves bear it up
And send it surging high.
The eye, bright, full of hope,
Encompasses the sky.

"Enter our Spirit-Ring;
Magic your heart shall gain,
Hear the waves dance and sing,
They sound like True Love's pain.

"Worlds came from the Ocean,
Spirits were borne on the tide
Which dared to cradle the High Ones,
While the All was void.

"As Heaven and star-glow
Look downwards, ever glancing
Into the waves below,
Into the blue waves' dancing--

"As droplets, shivering, shaking,
Enfold the Worlds in pride,
The spirits' life, awaking,
Emerges from the tide.

"Seeking the All inspires you?
You'd burn in song away?
The lyre's sweet music stirs you?
You'd blaze in Heaven's ray?--

"Then come down to us all,
And tender us your hand;
Your limbs shall Spirit be,
You'll see the deep, deep Land."

They rise up from the sea,
Hair weaving in roundelay,
Heads resting on the air.
Their eyes flash blazing fires,
And, shooting sparks, their lyres
Glow through the waters fair.

The Youth yields to Delusion,
His tears flow in profusion,
His heart pounds in his breast.
He cannot turn away,
Held captive in Love's sway,
To burning passion lost.

Deep thoughts stir in his soul,
It fights to gain control,
Soars higher, ever higher,
Looks up with prideful bearing,
In God's own image daring,
And this the Sirens hear:

"In your cold depths below
Nothing that's High can go,
Nor God burn deathlessly.
You glitter but to ensnare,
For me you have no care,
Your songs are mockery.

"You lack the bosom's beat,
The heart's life-giving heat,
The soul's high flight so free.
The Gods in my breast rule,
And I obey them all;
I mean no treachery.

"You shall not captivate
Me, nor my love, nor hate,
Nor yet my yearning's glow.
It shoots like lightning shafts
That gentle power uplifts

In melodies that flow.

The Sirens all sink down
Before his blazing frown
In weeping springs of light.
They seek to follow him,
But ah, the Flood so grim
Engulfs them all from sight.

THE LITTLE OLD MAN OF THE WATER

A Ballad

The waters rush with an eerie sound,
The waves are swirling round and round.
They seem to feel no pain at all,
As they break and fall,
Cold of heart, cold of mind,
Rushing, rushing all the time.

But down in the depths where the waters rage
Sits a mannikin, white with age.
He dances about when the Moon appears,
When little star through cloudlet peers.
Eerily hopping and skipping, he'd try
To drink the little streamlet dry.
Waves are his murderers, every one,
They gnaw his ancient skeleton,
It cuts through his marrow and limb like ice
To see them gambol in this wise;
His face is a grimace of sorrow and gloom
Till sunshine stops the dance of the Moon.

The waters then rush with an eerie sound,
The waves are swirling round and round.
They seem to feel no pain at all,
As they break and fall,

Cold of heart, cold of mind,
Rushing, rushing all the time.

THE FIRST ELEGY

Ovid's Tristia
Freely Rendered

Go, little book, make haste away,
Go to the joyful victory seat.
I go not with you, I must stay,
For by Jove's lightning I was hit.

Go, poorly clad and indigent!
Put on your Master's mourning dress,
As is befitting banishment,
And as commands this time of stress.

On you must shine no purple veil
To make in violet's blood its show.
Longing and hope without avail
Cannot wear joy's exalted glow.
In shameful silence hide your name,
And let no scent of cedar waft,
Nor silver knob shine bright to shame
The blackness of your crooked staff.

To works by Fortune blessed is due
Such decoration, rare and bright.
Only my pain shall mate with you,
Only my sorrow's darkest night.

Shaggy and rough you may appear,
Like one whose hair unkempt hangs down,
Not rendered wondrous soft and fair
By smoothing block of pumice-stone.

If darker is your pallid face,
It is because by me 'twas stained.
Oh, how my tears have flown apace
And hotly down on you have rained.

Go, book, and greet those places, greet
The hallowed spot so dear to me.
Dreams take me there on pinions fleet
Of magic word and fantasy.

If someone, seeing you, at last
Should find his memory stirred, and pester
With questions flying thick and fast
Of him who sent you there, your Master;

I'm still alive--that you may say,
And that I hope for rescue soon,
And if my pulse still beats away,
It is a mercy, not a boon.

If someone asks you further questions,
Mind each and every spoken word.
Beware of thoughtless indiscretions,
In word and tone be on your guard.

Many will scold you and berate you,
Reminding you I was to blame.
As my accomplice they will rate you,
You will cast down your eyes in shame.

To insults and to condemnation
Listen, but keep your mouth closed tight.
Fire will not quench a conflagration,
Two wrongs will never make a right.

Yet some there'll be, as you will find,
Who speak to you with melting sighs.
A flow of gentle tears will blind
The light of longing in their eyes.

Then tender words will flow and mild
Forth from the bosom agitated.
"Could Caesar but be reconciled,
The punishment be mitigated...."

Who says with kind solicitude,
"May God be merciful on high,"
For him I pray with gratitude,
"May thunder ever pass him by!"

Would his desire might be fulfilled:
Oh, let me die there in that seat
Which the Gods in their keeping hold.
May Caesar's lightning lose its heat!

When thus my greetings you've conveyed.
They may lay charges at my door
That no sweet form has been displayed,
And that my spirit fails to soar.

But let the critic be aware
During what times the work was done,
And if his judgment's sound and fair,
You need not fear--the danger's gone.
For poetry's magic fullness flows
Out of a breast stirred with elation,
But oh, a pall of darkest woes
Covers the brow, kills inspiration.

And then his lyrics all bewail
The singer's exile, harsh and dread,
And storm, and sea, and winter flail
Around his all-unheeding head!

Fear must not clutch with icy grip
If splendid song is to be heard,
A lonely outcast here, I weep--
Look, yonder gleams the murder-sword!

Whatever I have so far done

Has won the fairer critic round,
And he will pass my message on,
Bearing my grievous plight in mind.

Give me Maeonides, for one, (Homer)
Plunge him in misery, like me,
His magic powers will be gone,
Danger is all his eyes will see.

Go, book, go forth upon your way,
Heed not the voice of evil fame.
If scornful folk cast you away,
Do not be overwhelmed by shame.

'Tis not that Fortune's gentle waves
Bear me so lovingly along
That praise or prize my spirit craves,
That I seek recompense for song.

When with desire I still was bedded,
Then inspiration welled in me,
To thirst for glory I was fettered,
The world's race for celebrity.
But if the Lyre sounds as before,
And if the urge still burns as strong,
Surely my heart need ask no more,
Seeing my downfall came from song?

Go--it is not prohibited
That you should see Rome's pomp for me.
If only I might go instead,
Watched by a God indulgently!

Do not imagine that you'll wend
Your way unrecognised through Rome,
That to the public you will bend
Your steps unheeded and unknown.

Though you lack title, witnesses,
Your colour will betray your name.

If you deny me nonetheless,
You'll show yourself up just the same.

Slip quietly through the gates and watch
My songs inflict on you no hurt.
No more they sing love's praises which
So much delight the drunken heart.

Who turns you cruelly away
Because you were born of my labours,
And sternly says you lead astray
Innocence with voluptuous dangers--

To him say, "Only read my name.
No longer do I teach sweet love.
Alas, the Gods to council came
And passed stern judgment from above."

Seek not to climb to that great hall
Which proudly dares to Heaven aspire.
Approach not Caesar's pack at all
There, where his column soars still higher.
Those sanctified and sacred spots
Your Lord and Master now disown.
The lightning from the castle shoots,
The Higher Judgment strikes me down!

Though Gods great, merciful and mild
Abide within those halls up there,
When the Spring's image comes with wild
And furious storms, we shrink with fear.

Alas, the dove with frightened sound
Will tremble, though but Zephyr stir,
While she is kissing dry the wound
Inflicted by the hawk on her.

The frightened lamb that gets away
From the wolf's fangs, will not again
Ever feel safe, unless it lie

Huddled inside the low-walled pen.

If Phaethon were alive today,
To Aether's vaults he would not soar,
Nor would he drive so recklessly
The coveted chariot team of four.

Jove's weapons I indeed do dread,
And from his sea of flame I flee.
When Heaven thunders overhead,
I think he hurls his spear at me.

No sailor of the Argive fleet
Who fled the Capharean shore,
Will ever turn his sails to meet
Euboea's surging flood once more.

My bark, tossed by the tempest's force,
Dares not draw nearer to that ground;
It veers off on a different course,
For much more distant places bound.
And so, my book, be wise and sane,
Mind how you go and take good care.
No need to seek the Higher Fame
When common people lend an ear.

Icarus dared to soar on high,
Audaciously he spread his wings.
His name was destined not to die,
In the swift ocean wave it sings.

Whether to pull hard on the oars,
Or leave the sails gently to swell-
Postpone it for another hour-
Time and the place will quickly tell.

And when his brow is clear at last,
When kindness beams upon his face,
When all his rage is of the past,
Quiescent, gone without a trace;

When you, that still in terror stand
And dare not yet approach from fright,
Are proffered friendly word and hand,
Then go--to day now yields the night.

More softly tolls the hour of Fate,
Unlike your Master you rejoice
The torments of your wound abate,
And Mercy speaks with gentle voice.

The hurt can only be made less
By him who caused it in his rage.
Achilles wounded Telephus;
The pain he caused he then assuaged.

Be sure not to spread any poison
When trying to set matters right.
Hope, ever bright and airy vision,
Terror can turn you into night!
Take care lest from its quiet repose
Wrath in a violent storm should rise,
Piling upon me yet more woes
That you have caused by deeds unwise.

But if within the Muses' shrine
A happy welcome should await,
Bright in that house then you may shine
Where Literature and Glory mate.

And there you may be sure to see
Drawn up in line the brothers, those
Whom I beget in ecstasy
After the day had reached its close.

All bear with open pride their names,
In consciousness of victory:
Like hope upon their brows it flames,
And like the joy of poetry.

Three only form a group apart,

On every side by darkness pressed.
They swell, luxurious with "Love's Art",
(ars amandi)
And gaiety bubbles in each breast.

Flee them, or bravely dare to call
For counsel fraught with curse and doom;
Remember Oedipus' dread fall,
Telegonus' appalling crime!

Songs lately granted their salvation
From violent death by fire and flame,
Tell you their tales of Transformation
(Metamorphosis)
And of worlds under Spirit-reign.

Now tell the story of the change
That's overcome my Fate at last,
How it's turned into something strange,
And how the form has been recast.

Once it was different, when I sucked
Warmth from the red lips of Success.
Where the Immortals sealed their pact,
The tears now flow of deep distress.

That you would ask what more I need
Is plainly written on your face.
Meanwhile, the graceful Horae speed
Onward their rushing waves apace.

And if with you I were to send
All that seethes in my bosom now,
Oh, I would never reach the end;
The weight would make the bearer bow.

The road is long. No time to spare,
O book. Remotest of all lands
Here with the Scythians I must share;
Estranged from all the rest it stands.

CONCLUDING SONNET TO JENNY

One more thing to you, Child, I must tell:
Gay this farewell poem, my singing's end;
These last waves of silver throb and swell
That my Jenny's breath its music lend.
Swift as over gulf and looming fell,
Through cascade and forest land,
Life's fleet hours shall hasten on until
Pure perfection's end in you they find.

Bravely clad in flowing robes of fire,
Proud uplifted heart transformed by light,
Master now, from bonds released entire,
Firmly do I tread through spaces free,
Shatter pain before your visage bright,
While the dreams flash out towards Life's Tree.

THE MADWOMAN

A Ballad

There dances a woman by moonlight,
She glimmers far into the night,
Robe fluttering wild, eyes glittering clear,
Like diamonds set in rock-face sheer.

"Come hither, O blue sea,
I'll kiss you tenderly.
Wreath me a willow crown,
Weave me a blue-green gown!

"I bring fine gold and rubies red
Wherein there beats my own heart's blood.
On warm breast 'twas by lover worn,
Into the ocean he was drawn.

"For you, my songs I'll sing,
That wind and wave must spring,
High in the dance I'll leap,
And wind and wave must weep!"

She grasps a willow with her hand
And binds it with a blue-green band.
She eyes it in the strangest way,
And bids it lightly step away.

"Now lend your wings to me
To echo down the sea:
Mother, have you not known
How fair I've wreathed your son?"

So nightly here and there went she,
Decked every willow by the sea.
Proudly she danced there up and down,
Until her magic course was run.

TWO SONGS TO JENNY

SOUGHT

A Song

I rose, broke free of all that bound me;
"Where would you go?" "A world I'd find me!"
"Are there not here lush meadows gay,
Below--the seas, above--star-play?"

"Know, fool, I Seek not to cross over,
There to strike rock, or sound the Aether.
They bind so dumb the foot in pain,
Their words of love become a chain.

"The world must rise out of myself

And to my breast incline itself.
From my life's blood its well-springs come,
My soul's breath--its aethereal dome."

I wandered far as I could go,
Returned, held worlds above, below.
Within there leaped the stars and sun;
The lightning flashed, and they sank down.

TWO SONGS TO JENNY

FOUND

A Song

Why do the bushes dance and swirl,
Why do the May-wreaths stray to heel,
Why arches Heaven forever higher,
And vales to cloudy peak aspire?

If I sail on my pinions there,
The echo falls from rock through air.
Do eye and starlight marry ever?
I look, my gaze is clouded over.

Roll forth, you waves of life, away,
Soar, smash those bridges in your way,
By golden liberty inspired
When you came from the void.

Again the glance in recklessness
Stirs, sparks to bless'd forgetfulness.
Where should it have sought worlds? In you,
Into a very world it grew.

FLOWER KING

A Fantastic Ballad

"You in the sunshine, Mannikin,
Will you be the Flower King?
Ever runs your courage high,
Tinge us with your blood's red dye!"

"Flower bright and flower pale,
You've drunk my blood and drunk it deep.
Now my kingdom without fail!
In calyx, in calyx let me steep!"

"Sweet your blood was, Little Man,
Show your deep little heart, if you can.
If our King you would become,
Your heart must glisten in the sun."

"My heart, my heart beats high and true,
shines forth fairly in my gaze.
If I gave up my heart to you,
Never again I'll feast my eyes."

"Mannikin, we'll jump and rest,
All of us, inside your breast.
Let your heart shine in the sun,
Flower King you shall become!"

He starts, he thinks, that Mannikin,
He tears his breast rose-red apart.
"Give me sceptre, give me crown,
Take, O take my deep little heart!"

"You in the sunshine, Mannikin,
Cannot be the Flower King.
No more your rose-red blood can spurt,
For us must glow your deep little heart."

The Mannikin plucks out his eyes,
Digs himself a hole deep down,
Digs his own deep grave, and lies
Buried, buried underground.

SEA ROCK

Marble pillar towers high,
Jagged summit saws the air,
Putrefaction, life's decay,
Boulders in the abyss down there.
Grim the cliff that upward climbs
Clamps the ground with iron limbs.

Round it spreads the radiance glowing
From its mad and fevered brain,
Sends the ocean surge a-flowing
Crazy, round and round again.
Weary moss shakes grey autumnal locks,
Blood seeps out from under laughing rocks.

Midnight comes, with voices roaring
Crazy from the marble womb,
Like a thousand years' life thawing,
Like remembrance howling doom.
Should the traveler dare to eavesdrop, he
Turns to stone and crashes in the sea.

THE AWAKENING

When your beaming eye breaks
Enraptured and trembling,
Like straying string music
That brooded, that slumbered,
Bound to the lyre,
Up through the veil
Of holiest night,
Then from above glitter
Eternal stars
Lovingly inwards.

Trembling, you sink
With heaving breast,
You see unending
Eternal worlds
Above you, below you,
Unattainable, endless,
Floating in dance-trains
Of restless eternity;
An atom, you fall
Through the Universe.

Your awakening
Is an endless rising,
Your rising
An endless falling.

When the rippling flame
Of your soul strikes
In its own depths,
Back into the breast,
There emerges unbounded,
Uplifted by spirits,
Borne by sweet-swelling
Magical tones,
The secret of soul
Rising out of the soul's

Daemonic abyss.

Your sinking down
Is an endless rising,
Your endless rising
Is with trembling lips-
The Aether-reddened,
Flaming, eternal
Lovekiss of the Godhead.

NIGHT THOUGHTS

A Dithyramb

See overhead the cloud sails, lowering,
Around its flanks roar eagle-wings.
Stormwards it rushes, fire-sparks showering,
Night thoughts from morning's realm it brings.

Thought blazes up, so heavy-stupendous,
Curse-frenzy batters the vaults of Aether.
Blood spurts from eyeball, terror-enormous,
Sea-waves spit up at Heaven's rafters.

The silent Aether, tranquil-tremendous,
Girdles the brow with blazing brands.
Clash of arms. In its womb--Ur-darkness,
Cloud swoops, howling woe to the land.

INVOCATION OF ONE IN DESPAIR

So a god has snatched from me my all
In the curse and rack of Destiny.
All his worlds are gone beyond recall!
Nothing but revenge is left to me!

On myself revenge I'll proudly wreak,
On that being, that enthroned Lord,
Make my strength a patchwork of what's weak,
Leave my better self without reward!

I shall build my throne high overhead,
Cold, tremendous shall its summit be.
For its bulwark-- superstitious dread,
For its Marshall--blackest agony.

Who looks on it with a healthy eye,
Shall turn back, struck deathly pale and dumb;
Clutched by blind and chill Mortality
May his happiness prepare its tomb.

And the Almighty's lightning shall rebound
From that massive iron giant.
If he bring my walls and towers down,
Eternity shall raise them up, defiant.

THREE LITTLE LIGHTS

Three distant lights gleam quietly,
They shine like starry eyes to see.
The storm may rage, the wind may shout,
The little lights are not blown out.

One sweetly struggles ever higher,
Trembling to Heaven it would aspire.
It blinks its eye so trustingly,
As if the All-Father it could see.

The other looks down on Earth's halls,
And hears the echoing victory calls,
Turns to its sisters in the sky,
Inspired with silent prophecy.

The last one burns with golden fire,
The flames shoot forth, it sinks entire,
The waves plunge in its heart and--see!--
Swell up into a flowering tree.

Then three small lights gleam quietly
In turn, like starry eyes to see.
The storm may rage, the wind may blow,
Two souls in one are happy now.

THE MAN IN THE MOON

See, breathed upon by starlight's glance,
Swift up and down a-hopping,
The Man in the Moon beats out his dance,
His lively limbs a-bobbing.

Soft weeping dew of Heaven shines
Tangled in curly hair,
Then trickles down on to the plains
Till blossoms tinkle there.

And now it sparkles, sprouts apace
In flakelets gold and pale.
The flowerbells tell the earthly place
The Moonman's grievous tale.

He waves in such a friendly way
But deep his sorrows smart.
He would be with the sinking ray,
Lean to the Sun's full heart.

He's tarried long, he's listened long
To hear the rising spheres.
He pines, he yearns to be a song,
To thaw in dancing flowers.

Earth's glade is covered with his pain
Till field and meadow ring;
Rapt with his own sweet shine, he then
Beats, reconciled, his wings.

LUCINDA

A Ballad

Life seems wed to gaiety
As the dancers tread the measure.
Each feels chosen specially
For the sacred vows to pleasure.

Rosy cheeks flush ever higher,
Faster still the heart's blood races,
And the longings of desire
Lift the soul to heavenly places.

Kiss fraternal and hearts' union
Close all in a circle round,
Gone the clash of rank, opinion,
Love is lord and in command.

But it is an idle dream
That enfolds warm hearts, and flies
From this dust and earthly scene,
Surging to aethereal skies.

Gods can never bear to see
Man, to his own folly blind,
Blissfully believing he
May span Heaven with an Earth-born mind.

Through the lines a sombre guest
Creeps with sword and knife, apart,
Envy's fire consumes his breast,
And disdain his wretched heart.

She, now in the bridal wreath,
Once was love and life to him;
Pledged him once her solemn troth,
And her heart she gave to him.
So, to battle for the Good,

Trusting her, he went away,
And his quest was crowned by Gods;
Deed and valour won the day.

Wreathed in glory, he returns
To the township, quiet and still,
Where his lovely jewel burns,
Where desire and bliss do call.

Now he sees the battlements,
And his heart beats violently,
Soon he shall win all he wants,
Dream shall turn reality.

To the threshold now he races
Of the house that he loves so.
Bright with many lamps it blazes,
Guests are streaming to and fro.

But the footman there, aloof,
Halts him with restraining hand.
"Stranger, would you climb the roof?
Whither leads this rush so blind?"

"Man, I seek Lucinda fair!"
Then the footman, open-eyed:
"Anyone may find her here,
For Lucinda is the bride!"

Stunned, the stranger stands and sways
In his full athletic height,
Stands with wide and staring eyes,
Staggers up towards the gate.

"You should look your festive best
For this gay and brilliant place,
If you want to be a guest!"
Calls the footman's uncouth voice.
Proud and grim, he turns in haste,
Takes the long-familiar way.

Heart with rage and grief obsessed,
Fury darting from his eye.

To the place of his abode
Flies he like the storm wind rushing,
And the door bursts open wide
At his kicking and his pushing.

Grabs the candle from the maid,
Stays his hand, lest tremor show;
With cold sweat the brow's bedewed
That beats in silent woe.

On his shoulders lets unfold
Cape of purple, wondrous fair,
Decks himself with clasps of gold,
Loosens and lets fall his hair.

To his bosom's sanctuary
Presses he the gold-chased sword
That he wielded to the glory
Of the one whom he adored.

Back he flies on wings of wind
To the place of revelry,
Heart beyond all bridling,
Deadly lightning in his eye.

Trembling, steps he through the door
To the brilliant hall within.
Parcae name their victim, pour
Curses hissing after him.

Draws he nearer, sad and bowed,
Prideful in his stately cloak.
All the guests are frightened, cowed,
By his awe-inspiring look.
Like a ghost he seems to stride
Lonely through the crowded hall.
Onward still the partners glide,

Foams the festive goblet full.

Many dancers throng the rows,
But Lucinda shines the best.
From the filmy froth of gauze
Swells voluptuous her breast.

Each is filled with silent yearning,
Gripped by power all-pervading,
Longing all their eyes are turning
On that form in beauty gliding.

And her eyes, full of caprice,
Laugh in undimmed radiance;
On she moves with body's grace
In the many-coloured dance.

Past the man she lightly dances,
Neither does he yield nor quail;
Clouded are her glowing glances,
And her rosy cheeks turn pale.

She would mingle with the crowd,
From the stranger turn away,
But a scornful hiss is heard
And a God holds her in sway.

Grim, he looks her up and down,
Ominously closes on her.
All the dancers, turned to stone,
Questioningly eye each other.

But Lucinda's throat and breathing
Seem as if by Gods pressed tight.
With her soul for respite striving,
Clutches she her maid in fright.
"Ha! So I must find you faithless,
Who once pledged yourself to me,
You, Lucinda, you a traitress,
You another's bride I see!"

Then the crowd would rush upon him
For his conduct in that place,
But he hurls the assailants from him,
And like thunder sounds his voice.

"Let no one dare interfere!"
Menace in his eyes is plain.
And all present, cowed, must hear,
Listen to the voice of pain.

"Never fear, I shall not harm her,
She shall not be hurt this night.
She need only watch the drama
That I stage for her delight.

"Let the dancing not be over,
Carry on your revelry.
Soon you shall embrace your lover,
Soon you shall be free of me.

"I, too, shall the nuptial bond
Celebrate this eventide.
But another way I've found-
Night and Blade shall be my bride.

"From your eyes but let me suck
Sensuous passion, sensuous glow.
Ah! Now I have seen your look;
You shall watch my life's blood flow!"

Swiftly through him go the blades
Long held ready in his hands,
Snapped are all life's quivering threads,
Darkness on his eyes descends.
With a heavy crash he falls,
Every muscle breaks in twain.
Death his prideful limbs enfolds,
And no God wakes him again.

Then without a word she seizes

Sword and dagger, quivering.
With the iron her skin she pierces,
And the purple life's blood springs.

In a trice, the watchful maid,
Shuddering at the bloody spray,
Wrests from her the deadly blade,
Pulls the fatal steel away.

Then in pain Lucinda sinks
On the corpse with grievous moan.
From his heart the blood she drinks,
To his heart lets flow her own.

And the drapes of gauzy white
That her slender body cover,
Redden now with bloodstains bright,
Frothing, bubbling all over.

Long she moans there, hanging, clinging
On to him who lies in death.
He might live, if only longing
Soul back into clay could breathe.

Pale and bloody then she rises
From the one she chose at last.
Slowly back the whole crowd presses,
Murmuring, horror-struck, aghast.

And a Goddess, tall, uprearing,
Her own doom's artificer,
Turns her gaze, destructive, searing,
On the man who married her.
And a smile, ice-cold and mocking,
On the pale lips starts to play.
Anguished wailing tells its shocking
Tale of madness on the way.

Broken up the merry revels,
Fled the dancers, one and all,

Silent now the clashing cymbals,
Desolate the empty hall.

DIALOGUE WITH....

A Singer stands in festive attire,
Clasps to his bosom warm a lyre,
And plucks the strings, enraptured.
"How play you my tunes, how sing my refrains,
How swell you, O Lyre, with soul that strains
As if by your own fires captured?"

"Singer, think you that I am cold
To bosom's light, to yearning soul,
To images upwards striving?
They shine as clear as the Land of Stars,
They surge, they soar like streaming fires,
They lead to a Loftier Living.

"I knew with prescience profound
When called by your Word's sparkling sound,
Twas not your fingers touching.
It was a breath from sweeter lips
Uprising from the heart's own depths,
A subtler music teaching.

"There shone a visage wondrous fair,
Haloed in song, in golden hair,
That flashed forth rarest lays.
High beat her heart, eyes glowed sublime,
You were no more, you sank in dream,
And I must honour and praise.

"Her image in me sank silently,
Like flower-shine rose out of me,
As melting into sound.
But say, it falls, it soars again,

And yet for you cloud-veiled remain
The sun and stars all round."

"O wondrous Lyre of magic skill,
Your joy's like bubbling founts that well,
Ringed round with May-wreaths fair.
Her breath inspires, her eyes invite,
Your tones vibrate, your light beams bright,
And rolls with the dancing spheres.

"One drinks, one sings of raptures blest,
Then Love flees echoing from the breast,
One's spirits no more sound.
Yours was the dream, yours was the life,
You shine in her, afar I strive,
You soar, I must bow down."

"Singer, though lulled by flower-dream,
I too reach out to Heaven's hem
With golden stars to bind it.
The music sounds, life is in tears,
The music sounds, the sun shines clear,
And distances are blended."

THE LAST JUDGMENT

A Jest

Ah! that life of all the dead,
Hallelujahs that I hear,
Make my hair stand on my head,
And my soul is sick with fear.

For, when everything is severed
And the play of forces done,
When our sufferings fade for ever.
And the final goal is won,

God Eternal we must praise,
Endless hallelujahs whine,
Endless hymns of glory raise,
Know no more delight or pain.

Ha! I shudder on the stair
Leading to perfection's goal,
And I shudder when I hear,
Urging me, that death-bed call.

There can only be one Heaven,
That one's fully occupied,
We must share it with old women
Whom the teeth of Time have gnawed.

While their flesh lies underground
With decay and stones o'ershovelled,
Brightly hued, their souls hop round
In a spider-dance enravelled.

All so skinny, all so thin,
So aethereal, so chaste,
Never were their forms so lean,
Even when most tightly laced.
But I ruin the proceedings

As my hymns of praise I holler.
And the Lord God hears my screamings,
And gets hot under the collar;

Calls the highest Angel out,
Gabriel, the tall and skinny,
Who expels the noisy lout
Without further ceremony.

I just dreamed it all, you see,
Thought I faced the Court Supreme.
Good folk, don't be cross with me,
It was never sin to dream.

TWO SINGERS ACCOMPANYING THEMSELVES ON THE HARP

A Ballad

"What brings you to this Castle here
To breathe Song's radiant aureole?
Seek you a loving comrade dear
For whom in longing yearns your soul?"

"Know you him who soulful dwells therein,
Ask you if he set my heart a-burning?
Can you tell me if the sight of him
Ever favoured mortals drawn by yearning?"

"Never have I seen that shine of his,
Yet the gleam of precious stone
Burning on that splendid edifice
Surely needs must lure me on.

"Truly, it might be my place of birth,
Here might be my native land.
Ah! 'twas chosen by the gentle South,
Turned towards the glow it stands.

"Here my melody more free resounds,
And my breast the higher swells.
Sweet the golden Lyre's music sounds,
As in joy of grief it wells.

"And I do not know that High Master,
Him who strikes the heart-strings powerfully,
Nor the heavenly spirits that the Castle
Harbours in its womb so secretly.

"And in vain is my desire's hot burning,
Not for me the fair gates opening.
I lean on the columns, sadly yearning,
Here Love's tribute I must sing!"

In despair her jet black hair she shakes,
Bursts into a flood of tears,
And the other kisses dry her cheeks,
Clasps her to her bosom's warming fires.

"I too am drawn by secret bonds
To this divine and holy fane.
I quested wandering through the lands,
Was pierced, as if by lightning's flame.

"But why the burning dew so spill,
The tears of bitter sorrow weep?
We may enjoy the view at will,
On flowery meadow dance and leap!

"The heart may glow more full in us,
And sorrow may more sweetly come.
The looks may shine more luminous,
Here the Most Beautiful's soon won!

"A humble cottage let us find
Where we our songs of praise may sing,
Where the sweet West may play around
In spirits' secret struggling."

Full many a day they lingered there,
At eventide the strings were heard
That held entranced with sad allure
Full many a flower and many a bird.

Once, as they both lay fast asleep,
Arms clasped the gentle bodies round
On bed of moss full soft and deep,
A Demon wondrous tall was found.

He bore them up on wings of gold;
They were as bound in magic bonds,
And where that cottage stood of old
A wondrous melody resounds.

EPIGRAMS

In its armchair, stupid and dumb,
The German public watches it come.
Hither and thither rumbles the storm,
Heaven clouds over, more dark and forlorn.

Lightning hisses, snakes out of sight,
Feelings remain inviolate.
But when the sun comes out in greeting,
The winds soft sighing, the storm abating,
It stirs itself, makes a fuss at last,
And writes a book: The Commotion Is Past;
Is seized with an urge for fantasy,
Would plumb the whole thing thoroughly;
Believes it's extremely wrong of Heaven
To play such jokes, though brilliant even,
It should the All systematically treat;
First rub the head and then the feet;
Just like a baby it carries on
Looking for things which are dead and gone;
Should get the Present in proper perspective,

Let Heaven and Earth go their ways respective;
They've followed their courses as before,
And the wave laps quiet on the rocky shore.

ON HEGEL

Since I have found the Highest of things and the Depths of them
also, rude am I as a God, cloaked by the dark like a God.
Long have I searched and sailed on Thought's deep billowing
ocean ; there I found me the Word: now I hold on to it fast.

Words I teach all mixed up into a devilish muddle,
Thus, anyone may think just what he chooses to think;
Never, at least, is he hemmed in by strict limitations.
Bubbling out of the flood, plummeting down from the cliff,
So are his Beloved's words and thoughts that the Poet devises;
He understands what he thinks, freely invents what he feels.
Thus, each may for himself suck wisdom's nourishing nectar;
Now you know all, since I've said plenty of nothing to you!

Kant and Fichte soar to heavens blue
Seeking for some distant land,
I but seek to grasp profound and true
That which--in the street I find.

Forgive us epigrammatists
For singing songs with nasty twists.
In Hegel we're all so completely submerged,
But with his Aesthetics we've yet to be purged.

The Germans once actually stirred their stumps,
With a People's Victory turned up trumps.
And when all that was over and done,
On every corner, everyone
Read: "Wonderful things are in store for you
Three legs for all instead of two!"
This shook them badly, and in due course
They were all smitten by deep remorse.

"Too much has happened at once, it's plain.
We'll have to behave ourselves again.
The rest it were better to print and bind,
And buyers will not be hard to find."

Pull down the stars for them at night,
They burn too pale or far too bright.
The sun's rays either scorch the eye
Or shine from much too far away.

Of Schiller there's reason to complain,
Who couldn't more humanly entertain.
Endowed with an elevating mind,
He didn't stick to the daily grind.
He played with Thunder and Lightning much,
But totally lacked the common touch.

But Goethe's taste was too nicely ordered;
He'd rather see Venus than something sordid.
Although he grasped things, as one should, from below,
It was for the Highest he made us go.
He wanted to make things so sublime
That Soul-grip evaded him most of the time.
Schiller was surely nearer the mark,
You can read his ideas in letters stark.
His thoughts are there in black and white,
Though it's hard to fathom the meaning aright.

ON A CERTAIN BALD-HEAD

As lightning born of radiancy
Sparkles from cloud-realms far away,
Pallas Athena victorious
Sprang from the thought-filled head of Zeus.
Even so, in sportiveness unbounded,
On to his head she's likewise bounded,
And what in depth he could never plumb
Visibly shines on his cranium.

PUSTKUCHEN (FALSE WANDERING YEARS)

Schiller, thinks he, had been less of a bore
If only he'd read the Bible more.
One could have nothing but praise for The Bell
If it featured the Resurrection as well,
Or told how, on a little ass,
Christ into the town did pass;
While David's defeat of the Philistine
Would have added something to Wallenstein.

Goethe can give the ladies a fright,
For elderly women he's not quite right.
He understood Nature, but this is the quarrel,
He wouldn't round Nature off with a moral.
He should have got Luther's doctrine off pat
And made up his poetry out of that.
He had beautiful thoughts, if sometimes odd,
But omitted to mention--"Made by God"

Extremely strange is this desire
To elevate Goethe higher and higher.
How low in actual fact his reach-
Did he ever give us a sermon to preach?
Show me in Goethe solid ground
For Peasant or Pedagogue to expound.
Such a genius marked with the stamp of the Lord
That a sum in arithmetic had him floored.

Hear Faust in the full authentic version;
The Poet's account is sheer perversion.
Faust was up to his ears in debts,
Was dissolute, played at cards for bets.
No offer of help from above was extended,
So he wanted it all ignominiously ended.
But was overwhelmed by a fearful sensation
Of Hell and the anguish of desperation.
He then devoted due reflection
To Knowledge, Deed, Life, Death, and Perdition;

And on these topics had much to say
In a darkly mystical sort of way.
Couldn't the Poet have managed to tell
How debts lead man to the Devil and Hell.
Who loses his credit may well conceivably
Forfeit redemption quite irretrievably.

Since Faust at Easter had the gall
To think, why trouble the Devil at all?
Who dares to think on Easter Day
Is doomed to Hell-fire anyway.

Credibility too is defied.
The Police would soon have had enough!
They'd surely have had him clapped inside
For running up debts and making off!

Vice alone could elevate Faust,
Who really loved himself the most.
God and the World he dared to doubt,
Moses thought they'd both worked out.
Silly young Gretchen had to adore him
Instead of getting his conscience to gnaw him,
Telling him he was the Devil's prey,
And the Day of Judgment was well on the way.

There's use for the "Beautiful Soul" It's simple:
Just trim it with specs and a nun's wimple.
"What God hath done is right well done,"
Thus the true Poet hath begun.

CONCLUDING EPIGRAM ON THE PUFF-PASTRY COOK

So knead your cake as well as you can,
You'll never be more than a baker's man.
And, after all, whoever asked you
To emulate Goethe the way you do?
As he knew nothing of your profession,
Whence came his genius and perception?

HARMONY

Know you that magic image sweet
When souls into each other go,
And then in one soft breath outflow,
Melodious, loving, mild, replete?
They flame up in one rose-bloom, blushing red,
And coyly hide deep in some mossy bed.

Roam far and wide throughout the land,
The magic image you'll not find
That talisman can never bind,
Nor sun's fierce rays portend.
The light of no sun ever gave it birth,
It never knew the nourishment of Earth.

Ever resplendent there it stays,
Though Time its rapid pinions beats,
Though bright Apollo guides his steeds,
Though worlds fade into nothingness.
Alone its own true power did it create
That neither world nor God can dominate.

Perhaps 'tis like the Cithern sounding,
As played on one eternal Lyre,
In endless glow, in endless fire,
In yearning's lofty urge resounding.
Once hear within yourself those strings that play
Your steps to wander shall not further stray.

DISTRAUGHT

A Ballad

All decked with finery
She stands, in purple dressed;
A satin ribbon coy
Is hidden in her breast.

And playfully there glow
Sweet roses in her hair,
Some are like flakes of snow,
The others--blood and fire.

But never a rose is playing
Upon her pallid face.
She sinks, distressful, bowing,
As hart shot in the chase.

Tremulous, pale she looks
In diamonds' full display.
The blood drains from her cheeks
Into her heart away.

"I have been driven again
To gaiety's false allure,
My heart oppressed with pain,
My wavering steps unsure.

"O'er soul's high-billowing sea
Other desires have called.
Enough of this display,
So loveless and so cold.

"I cannot understand it,
Within my breast this flame;
Heaven alone can grant it,
No mortal speak its name.

"I would bear suffering even,
Willingly I would die,
That I might merit Heaven,
A better land might see."

She lifts her tearful gaze
To Heaven's radiance,
Her bosom's fantasies
In sighs give utterance.

Quietly she lays her down
And says a heartfelt prayer.
Sleep folds her gently round,
An angel watches her.

Years have flown swiftly by,
Hollow her cheeks have grown.
Quieter, sadder she,
More distant, more withdrawn.

She struggles, but in vain,
Fighting great agony,
Those mighty powers to tame;
Her heart leaps violently.

Dreaming, one day she lies
In bed, but not asleep,
Drowning in nothingness...
The blow has struck full deep.

Her look becomes a stare,
Hollow, and void, and numb.
She raves, all unaware,
In wild delirium.

And from her eye there streams
The blood that nothing stays.
The pain now quieter seems,
Now flash the Spirit's rays.

"The gates of Heaven yield,
And I am moved with awe.
My hopes shall be fulfilled,
Nearer the stars I'll draw."

Trembling on lips so pale,
The soul would seek to roam.
The gentle spirits sail
To their aethereal home.

Striving profound has drawn her,
Lured by a magic bond.
Too cold has life been for her,
Too poor this earthly land.

MAN AND DRUM

A Fable

A Drum it is no Man, and a Man he is no Drum,
The Drum is very clever, and the Man is very dumb.

The Drum is tied with straps, but the Man is on his own,
And the Drum sits firm when the Man falls down.

The angry Man he beats it, and the Drum goes bippety-bop,
Yes, the merry Drum it rattles, and the Man goes hippety-hop.

And then the Man pulls faces, and the Drum it laughs at him,
And the Man shouts up and down the house and makes an
awful din.

"Hey, Drum, he, Drum, why laugh so mockingly?
You take me for a fool and you stick out your tongue at me!

"Damn you, Drum, you shame me, you jeer and you deride!
Why d'you rattle when I beat, why d'you hang where you were tied?"

"You think I raised you from a tree into a Drum full-grown
To carry on like that as if you'd done it on your own?"

"You shall dance when I beat, you shall beat when I sing,
You shall cry when I laugh, you shall laugh when I spring."

The Man scowls at the Drum all in a sudden furious bout,
He bangs and bangs and bangs it till its blood comes gushing out

So the Drum it has no Man, and the Man he has no Drum,
And the Man takes holy orders for a friar to become.

HUMAN PRIDE

When these stately Halls I scan
And the giant burden of these Houses,
And the stormy pilgrimage of Man
And the frenzied race that never ceases,

Pulse's throbbing do I sense
And the giant flame of Soul so proud?
Shall the Waves then bear you hence
Into Life, into the Ocean's flood?

Shall I then revere these forms
Heavenward soaring, proud, inviolate?
Should I yield before the Life that storms
Towards the Indeterminate?

No! You pigmy-giants so wretched,
And you ice-cold stone Monstrosity,
See how in these eyes averted
Burns the Soul's impetuosity.

Swift eye scans the circles round,
Hastens through them all exploringly,
Yearning, as on fire, resounds,
Mocking through the vast Halls and away.

When you all go down and sink,
Fragment-world shall lie around,
Even though cold Splendour blink,
Even though grim Ruin stand its ground.

There is drawn no boundary,
No hard, wretched earth-clod bars our way,
And we sail across the sea,
And we wander countries far away.

Nothing bids to stay our going,
Nothing locks our hopes inside;
Swift away go fancies fleeing,
And the bosom's joy and pain abide.

All those monstrous shapes so vast
Tower aloft in fearfulness,
Feeling not love's fiery blast
That creates them out of nothingness.

No giant column soars to Heaven
In a single block, victorious;
One stone on the other meanly woven
Emulates the timid snail laborious.

But the Soul embraces all,
Is a lofty giant flame that glows,
Even in its very Fall
Dragging Suns in its destructive throes.

And out of itself it swells
Up to Heaven's realms on high;
Gods within its depths it lulls,
Thunderous lightning flashes in its eye.

And it wavers not a whit
Where the very God-Thought fares,
On its breast will cherish it;
Soul's own greatness is its lofty Prayer.

Soul its greatness must devour,
In its greatness must go down;
Then volcanoes seethe and roar,
And lamenting Demons gather round.

Soul, succumbing haughtily,
Raises up a throne to giant derision;
Downfall turns to Victory,
Hero's prize is proud renunciation.
But when two are bound together,
When two souls together flow,
Each one softly tells the other
No more need alone through space to go.

Then all Worlds hear melodies
Like the Aeolian harp full sighing,
In eternal Beauty's rays
Wish and Soul's desire together flowing.

Jenny! Do I dare avow
That in love we have exchanged our Souls,
That as one they throb and glow,
And that through their waves one current rolls?

Then the gauntlet do I fling
Scornful in the World's wide open face.
Down the giant She-Dwarf, whimpering,
Plunges, cannot crush my happiness.

Like unto a God I dare
Through that ruined realm in triumph roam.
Every word is Deed and Fire,
And my bosom like the Maker's own.

EVENING STROLL

"Why gaze you towards the cliff-wall there,
What do you softly sigh?"
"The sun sinks glowing through the air,
Kissing the cliff good-bye.

"And this before you've never seen
The sun's orb slowly scale
The morning sky, and then from noon
Sink down into the vale?"

"Indeed I have, indeed that glow
In crimson folds throbb'd burning,
Until its Eye, being loth to go,
Dwelt on her in its yearning.

"We walked in peace. By her footfall
The echoing cliffs were captured.
The light wind gently kissed her shawl,
Soft spoke her eyes, enraptured.

"And sick with love, I lisped a-sighing;
She trembled, rosy red.
I pressed her heart, down sank the dying
Sun, star-cosseted.

"That draws me to the cliff-wall there,
That's what I softly sigh.
She waves far off as evening fire,
She bows as from on high."

Oulanem: Act I

A Tragedy

Characters:

Oulanem, a German traveller

Lucindo, his companion

Pertini, a citizen of a mountain town in Italy

Alwander, a citizen of the same town

Beatrice, his foster-daughter

Wierin

Perto, a monk

The action takes place inside or before Pertini's house, Alwander's house, and in the mountains.

ACT I

A mountain town

Scene 1

A street. Oulanem, Lucindo; Pertini before his house.

Pertini. Sirs, the whole town is crowded out with strangers,
Attracted to the spot by fame, to see
The wonders of the neighbourhood. In short,
I offer you my home. For at no inn
Will you find room. So all I can provide
With my small means I shall be glad to place
At your disposal. Truly, I am drawn
To friendship with you. That's no flattery.

Oulanem. We thank you, stranger, and I only fear
Lest your opinion of us be too high.

Pertini. Good ... good.... Then let us leave the compliments.

Oulanem. But we intend to make a lengthy stay.

Pertini. Each day the less you spend in pleasure here
Will be my loss.

Oulanem. Once more we thank you warmly.

Pertini (calling a servant).

Boy! See the gentlemen up to their room.
They wish to take some rest after their journey;
They also want to be alone and change
Their heavy travelling clothes for lighter wear.

Oulanem. We take our leave, but we shall soon return.

(Oulanem and Lucindo go out with the servant.)

Pertini (alone, cautiously looking round).

It's he, by God, it's he; the day has come;
He, the old friend I never could forget,
Any more than my conscience gives me rest.
That's excellent! Now I'll exchange my conscience;
He shall be it henceforth, yes, he, Oulanem.
So, conscience, now may it go well with you.
For every night you stood before my bed,
You went to sleep when I did, rose with me--
We know each other, man, my eyes upon it!
What's more, I know that there are others here;
They are Oulanem also, also Oulanem!
There's death rings in that name. Well, let it ring
Till in its owner vile it rings its last.
But wait, I have it now! As clear as air,
Firm as my bones, it comes up from my soul.
His oath stands up in arms before my eyes!
I've found it, and I'll see he finds it too!
My plan is made--you are its very soul,
Yes, you, Oulanem, are its very life.
Would you work Destiny as 'twere a puppet?
Make Heaven a plaything for your calculations?
Fabricate Gods out of your old spent loins?

Now, play your part off pat, my little God;
But wait--wait for your cue--leave that to me!

(Enter Lucindo.)

Scene 2

Pertini. Pray, why so much alone, my dear young sir?

Lucindo. Curiosity. The old find nothing new.

Pertini. Indeed! Your time of life!

Lucindo. No, but if ever
My soul cherished a strong desire, if ever
My heart was moved by a presentient yearning,
It was to call him Father, be his son,
That one's whose manly and impassioned spirit
Can drink in worlds entire; whose heart streams forth
The radiance of the Gods. Did you not know him,
Then you might not conceive that such a man
Could be.

Pertini. It sounds indeed most fine and tender,
When from the warm voluptuous lips of youth
The praise of Age streams forth like tongues of fire.
It sounds so moral, like a Bible sermon,
Just like the story of the Dame Susannah,
Or like that tale about the Prodigal Son.
But dare I ask you if you know this man
With whom your heart would seem so closely bound?

Lucindo. Seem? Only semblance-- semblance and delusion?
You hate mankind?

Pertini. Well, at the very least I am a man!

Lucindo. Forgive if I've offended.
You are full well disposed towards the Stranger,
And he who goes in friendship to the Wanderer,

His spirit is not locked within itself.
You seek an answer. Answer you shall have.
We are together bound in a strange union
Deep woven in the bottom of our hearts
Which, even as bright blazing brands of fire,
The spirits of his breast weave round with radiance,
As if well-wishing Demons of the Light
With thoughtful tenderness had matched us both.
Thus have I known him since long, long ago--
So long ago, that Memory scarcely whispers
Of our first meeting. How we found each other,
I know it not.

Pertini. It sounds indeed romantic.
And yet, my dear young sir, it is but sound
That sounds only to parry a request.

Lucindo. I swear to it.

Pertini. What do you swear to, sir?

Lucindo. I do not know him, yet indeed I know him.
He hides some mystery deep within his breast,
Which I may not yet know--not now ... not yet.....
These words repeat themselves each day, each hour.
For see, I do not know myself!

Pertini. That's bad!

Lucindo. I stand here so cut off, so separate.
The poorest wretch takes pride in what he is
When, smiling, he tells of the line that bore him,
Cherishing in his heart each little detail.
I cannot do this. Men call me Lucindo,
But they could call me gallows too, or tree.

Pertini. What do you want, then? Friendship with the gallows?
Kinship, even? Well, I can help you there!

Lucindo (earnestly). Play not with empty syllables and sounds

When I rage inwardly.

Pertini. Rage on, my friend,
Till rage is spent.

Lucindo (indignantly). What do you mean?

Pertini. Mean? Nothing! I am a dry house philistine, no more,
A man who simply calls each hour an hour,
Who goes to sleep at night-time, just to rise
When morning comes again; who counts the hours
Until he's counted out and the clock stops,
And worms become the hands that show the time;
And so on till the final Judgment Day
When Jesus, with the Angel Gabriel,
Pronouncing sentence on his wrathful trumpet,
Reads out the list of our recorded sins,
And stands us on the right or on the left,
And runs his God-fist over all our hides
To find out whether we are lambs or wolves.

Lucindo. He'll not name me, because I have no name.

Pertini. Well said! That's how I like to hear you speak!
But since I'm just a plain house philistine,
My thoughts are homely, and I handle thoughts
As you do stones and sand. So if a man
Cannot name his own family, but turns
Up with another, he's an off-shoot--born
On the wrong side of the blanket.

Lucindo. What was that?
Think sooner black the sun and flat the moon,
And neither sending forth one shaft of light,
But here a sound--a surmise--and Life weighs it.

Pertini. My friend, you must not improvise so wildly.
Believe me, I'm not prone to nervous fits!
But off-shoots are quite often green and messy,
Yes, yes, they take their own luxuriant way

And shoot up shining towards the very Heavens,
As if they knew that they had sprung from joy,
Begotten by no dull and slavish union.
For look you, off-shoots of this kind are satires;
Nature's a Poet, Marriage sits in a chair,
Its cap on, and with all the accessories,
Its sullen face with grimacing distorted,
And, lying at its feet, a dusty parchment
Scrawled over with the parson's blasphemies,
The church's dismal halls to give perspective,
The churlish rabble gaping in the background-
Give me off-shoots!

Lucindo (incensed). For God's sake, that's enough!
What is it, man? What do you mean? Speak out;
But by the Eternal I shall speak with you
What do I ask? Lies it not clear before me,
Grins not Hell out of it, does it not rise
Before my look like Death's own withered shape,
To glare at me and mutter threats of storm?
But, man, not easily, believe you me,
Have you hurled from your withered devil's fist
This blazing brand of fire into my breast:
For do not think you play dice with a boy,
Flinging the dice with shattering force straight at
His childish head. You've played too fast with me.
So now--and mark you this--we're gaming comrades.
You've quickly made yourself familiar. Out
With all that's heaving in your vile snake's bosom!
And be it mistrust only, or derision,
Then I shall throw it back into your throat,
And you yourself shall choke your poison down,
And then I'll play with you! But speak! I wish it!

Pertini. You do? You think of Faust and Mephistopheles.
You've brooded on them deeply, I dare say.
I tell you, no. Keep your wish to yourself,
And I'll throw dust into its silly eyes.

Lucindo. Take care. Don't blow upon the glowing embers

Until the flames blaze up and you yourself
Are burnt to cinders!

Pertini. A phrase! An empty phrase!
The only one they burn will be yourself!

Lucindo. Myself! So be it! To myself I'm nothing!
But you, oh, you my youthful arms enfold
And twine themselves in frenzy round your breast.
The abyss yawns gaping night to both of us,
If you sink down, smiling, I'll follow you,
And whisper to you, "Down! Come with me! Comrade!"

Pertini. It seems you're gifted with imagination.
You have dreamed much already in your life?

Lucindo. Just so. I am a dreamer, yes, a dreamer.
What knowledge do I want from you who have none?
You've only seen us, but you know us not,
Yet hurl against me scorn and blasphemy.
What am I waiting for? Still more of you?
You have no more ... but I have more for you.
For me--guilt, poison, shame--you must redeem it.
You've drawn the circle, and it leaves no room
For two of us. Now use your jumping skill.
As Fate draws, so it draws. So let it be.

Pertini. You must have read that ending out in class
From some dry, dusty hook of tragedies.

Lucindo. True, this is tragedy that we are playing.
Come on, now. Where and how you want. You choose.

Pertini. And when, and everywhere, and any time,
And none!

Lucindo. Coward, don't make a mockery of my words,
Or I'll write coward across your very face,
And shout it out through each and every street
And thrash you publicly, if you'll not follow,

If you dare crack your feeble hackneyed jokes
When my heart's blood runs cold within my veins.
Not one word more; follow or do not follow,
Your sentence is pronounced, you coward, you knave!

Pertini (incensed). Say that again, boy! Say those words again!

Lucindo. Why, if it brings you joy--a thousand times;
If it stirs up your gall and sets it flowing
Until the blood starts furious from your eyeballs,
Then here it is again: you knave, you coward!

Pertini. We'll have this out. Write that upon your brain.
There's still one place to knit us two together,
And that is Hell--Hell not for me, but you!

Lucindo. Why count the syllables, if it can be settled
Here on the spot. Then fly away to Hell,
And tell the Devils it was I that sent you!

Pertini. Just one more word.

Lucindo. What is the use of words?
I hear them not. Blow bubbles in the wind,
Draw lineaments on your face to match your words,
I see them not. Bring weapons, let them speak,
I'll put my whole heart into them, and if
It breaks not, then-

Pertini (interrupting him).
Not quite so bold, my lad, and not so callow!
You, you have not a thing to lose, no, nothing!
You are a stone that's fallen from the moon,
That someone somewhere scratched one single word
You spelled the letters out: they read "Lucindo".
See! On that empty tablet I'll not dare
Wager myself, my life, my honour, all.
You want to use my blood for artist's colour?
Am I to be the brush that lends you tone?
We are too far removed in rank and station.

Am I to stand against you as you are?
I know what I am. Tell me, what are you?
You know not, are not, you have naught to lose!
Thief-like, you seek to pledge to me an honour
That never in your bastard's bosom glowed?
You seek to swindle, lay your empty ticket
Against my sterling worth, my friend?
Not so! First get you honour, name and life-
You are still nothing--then I'll gladly stake
My honour, name and life against your own!

Lucindo. So that's it, coward! You want to save your skin?
You've worked the sum out so ingeniously,
Oh, so ingeniously, in your dull brain?
Do not deceive yourself: I'll change your answer,
And I shall write down "coward" in its place.
I'll scorn you as I would a maddened beast;
I'll shame you, yes, shame you before the world,
And then you can explain, with all the details,
To aunts and uncles, children, everyone,
I call myself Lucindo, yes, Lucindo,
That is my name; it might have been some other;
I go by it, though it could have been different.
What men call being, I do not possess;
But you are what you are, and that's a coward!

Pertini. That's nice, that's very pretty. But supposing
I could give you a name--you hear, a name?

Lucindo. You have no name yourself, and yet you'd give one,
You who have never seen me, save this once;
And seeing's a lie, the eternal mockery
That hounds us down: we see, and that is all.

Pertini. Good. But who grasps more than is seen?

Lucindo. Not you.
You've seen in all things what you are: a scoundrel.

Pertini. True; I'm not easily fooled by the first glance.

But that man--he was not born yesterday!
Believe me, he has seen a thing or two.
What if we knew each other?

Lucindo. I don't believe it.

Pertini. But is there not a poet, wondrous strange,
A gloomy aesthete, butt of ridicule,
Who spends his hours in subtle meditation,
Who would make rhymes of Life, and would most gladly
Himself be author of the poem of Life?

Lucindo. Ha! It might well be chance. You don't deceive me!

Pertini. Chance! Such is the language of philosophers
When reason doesn't come to rescue them.
Chance--it's so easily said--one syllable,
A name is also chance. Anyone's name
Might be Oulanem if he had no other.
And so it is pure chance if I so call him.

Lucindo. You know him? Heavens! Speak! In Heaven's name!

Pertini. You know the boys' reward? Its name is--silence.

Lucindo. It sickens me to ask of you a favour,
But I beseech you, by all you hold dear!

Pertini. Dear? You think that I am going to bargain?
A coward, you know, is deaf to all entreaty.

Lucindo. You must, then, if you would wipe out the taunt
Of coward, you must speak without delay.

Pertini. Let's duel now, I'll fight you as you are.
You're good enough for me, so let us fight.

Lucindo. Don't drive me to the extreme, not to that verge
Where there are no more bounds, where all things end.

Pertini. Listen to him! We want to try extremes,
As Fate draws, so it draws. So let it be!

Lucindo. Ha! Is there no way out, no hope at all?
His breast as hard as iron, all feeling withered,
Cankered and dried with scorn, he mixes poison
And rubs it in for balsam. And he smiles.
This may be your last hour, man, yes, your last,
Seize it, absorb it, for in less than no time
You'll stand before your Judge; so break the chain
Of your life's vicious actions with one last,
One last good deed, one solitary word,
As lightly breathed as air!

Pertini. 'Twas chance, good friend.
Believe me, I believe in chance myself.

Lucindo. In Vain! -- all-- all -- But stop, you shallow fool,
It won't be settled that way, no, by God!
Your sharp eye has deceived you once again.
I'll call him here in person. Then you may stand,
Before him, face to face and eye to eye,
Just like a little boy caught doing wrong.
You cannot hold me, man! Out of my way!

(He rushes off.)

Pertini. A greater plan now rescues you, my lad;
Pertini can't forget, believe you me!

Pertini (calls). Lucindo, ho! In Heaven's name, come back!

(Lucindo returns.)

Lucindo. What would you? Off with you!

Pertini. There's honour for you!
Go, tell the worthy gentleman we quarrelled;
You challenged me, but being a good boy
A good boy and a very pious child!-

Repented, begged forgiveness, were forgiven.
Then shed a pious tear, and kiss his hand,
And cut the rod for your repentant back!

Lucindo. You drive me to it.

Pertini. You let yourself be driven.
This sounds as moral as a children's primer.
Do you believe in God?

Lucindo. Confess to you?

Pertini. Don't you demand that I confess to you?
I shall. But say, do you believe in God?

Lucindo. What's that to you?

Pertini. It's hardly fashionable,
So I'd much like to hear you tell me plainly.

Lucindo. I don't believe with what is called belief,
And yet I know Him as I know myself.

Pertini. We'll talk of that when mood and moment suit;
How you believe is all the same to me,
At least you do believe. Good. Swear by Him.

Lucindo. What? Swear to you?

Pertini. Yes, swear you must that never
Will your tongue blab a single syllable.

Lucindo. By God, I swear it.

Pertini. Then swear you'll cherish only friendship for me.
See, I am not so bad--only outspoken.

Lucindo. By God, I would not swear it for a world
That I loved you or held you in esteem.
I cannot and I will not ever swear it,

But what is past, let that be all wiped out
As if it were a loathsome, evil dream.
I'll plunge it down where all dreams disappear to,
Deep in the rolling waves of oblivion.
That I will swear to you by Him that's holy,
From whom the worlds come whirling up through space,
Who with His glance brings forth Eternity,
I swear! But now the guerdon for my oath.

Pertini. Come! I will lead you to a quiet place,
And show you many a sight: rocky ravines,
Where lakes have welled up from volcanic Earth,
Cradling in quietude their rounded waters;
And where the years rush past in silent sequence,
Then will the storm indeed subside, and then-

Lucindo. What's this? You speak of stones, bays, worms and mud?
But rocks and crags tower upwards everywhere,
In every spot a spring comes bubbling forth:
Whether impetuous, low, high--what matter?
Mysterious places still are to be found
Where we are held enraptured and spellbound.
To see them wakes excitement in my breast,
And if it bursts, why, it is jest, no more.
So take me where you will, yes, to that goal!
Waver and falter not, but let's away!

Pertini. The rolling thunder first must cease its din
Ere the pure lightning cleanse your breast within.
So to a spot I'll make myself your guide
Where, I much fear, you'll wish too long to abide.

Lucindo. Oh, let our journey's goal lie where it may,
I'll follow you, if you will lead the way.

Pertini. Mistrustful! (They both go out.)

Scene 3

A room in Pertini's house.

Oulanem is alone, seated at a table, writing. Papers lie about. Suddenly he springs up, walks zip and down, then stops abruptly and stands with folded arms.

Oulanem. All lost! The hour is now expired, and time
Stands still. This pigmy universe collapses.
Soon I shall clasp Eternity and howl
Humanity's giant curse into its ear.
Eternity! It is eternal pain,
Death inconceivable, immeasurable!
An evil artifice contrived to taunt us,
Who are but clockwork, blind machines wound up
To be the calendar-fools of Time; to be,
Only that something thus at least might happen;
And to decay, that there might be decay!
The worlds must have had need of one thing more-
Dumb, searing agony to send them whirling.
Death comes to life and puts on shoes and stockings;
The sorrowing plant, the stone's inert erosion,
The birds that find no song to tell the pain
Of their aethereal life, the general discord
And the blind striving of the All to shake
Itself out of itself, be crushed in quarrel-
This now stands up and has a pair of legs,
And has a breast to feel the curse of life!
Ha, I must twine me on the wheel of flame,
And in Eternity's ring I'll dance my frenzy!
If aught besides that frenzy could devour,
I'd leap therein, though I must smash a world
That towered high between myself and it!
It would be shattered by my long-drawn curse,
And I would ding my arms around cruel Being,
Embracing me, 'twould silent pass away.
Then silent would I sink into the void.
Wholly to sink, not be--oh, this were Life,
But swept along high on Eternity's current

To roar out threnodies for the Creator,
Scorn on the brow! Can Sun burn it away?
Bound in compulsion's sway, curse in defiance!
Let the envenomed eye flash forth destruction-
Does it hurl off the ponderous worlds that bind?
Bound in eternal fear, splintered and void,
Bound to the very marble block of Being,
Bound, bound forever, and forever bound!
The worlds, they see it and go rolling on
And howl the burial song of their own death.
And we, we Apes of a cold God, still cherish
With frenzied pain upon our loving breast
The viper so voluptuously warm,
That it as Universal Form rears up
And from its place on high grins down on us!
And in our ear, till loathing's all consumed,
The weary wave roars onward, ever onward!
Now quick, the die is cast, and all is ready;
Destroy what only poetry's lie contrived,
A curse shall finish what a curse conceived.

(He sits down at the table and writes.)

Scene 4

Alwander's house; first-before the house. Lucindo, Pertini.

Lucindo. Why bring me here?

Pertini. For a succulent piece of woman,
That's all! See for yourself, and if she softly
Breathes a melodious peace into your soul,
Then forward!

Lucindo. What! You're taking me to whores?
And at the very time when all of Life
Comes down with crushing force upon my shoulders,
And when my breast swells irresistibly
In a mad frenzy craving self-destruction;

When each breath breathes a thousand deaths for me,
And now a woman!

Pertini. Ha! Rave on, young man,
Breathe hellfire and destruction, breathe away!
What whores? Did I misunderstand your meaning?
See, there's the house. Does it look like a brothel?
You think I want to play the pimp for you,
And use the very daylight for a lantern?
That's rich. But enter first and there, perhaps,
You'll learn what you desire.

Lucindo. I see your trick.
The stuff you made it of is very cheap.
You really seek to slip the hand that holds you.
Be grateful that this moment I must hear you;
But temporising will cost you your life.

(They go into the house. The curtain falls and another is raised.
A modern, elegant room.
Beatrice is sitting on the sofa, a guitar beside her.
Lucindo, Pertini, Beatrice.)

Pertini. Beatrice, a young traveller I bring,
A pleasant gentleman, my distant kinsman.

Beatrice (to Lucindo). Welcome!

Lucindo. Forgive me if I find no words,
No speech to express my heart's astonishment.
Beauty so rare quite overwhelms the spirits;
The blood leaps high, but not a word will come.

Beatrice. Fair words, young sir. You are in a pleasant mood.
I thank your disposition, not the favour
That Nature has denied me so unkindly,
When 'tis your tongue that speaks, and not your heart.

Lucindo. Oh, if my heart might speak, if it might only
Pour forth what you have quickened in its depths,

The words would all be flames of melody,
And every breath a whole eternity,
A Heaven, an Empire infinitely vast,
In which all lives would sparkle bright with thoughts
Full of soft yearning, full of harmonies,
Locking the World so sweetly in its breast,
Streaming with radiance of pure loveliness,
Since every word would only bear your name!

Pertini. You will not take it in bad part, young lady,
If I explain to you that he is German
And always raves of Melody and Soul.

Beatrice. A German! But I like the Germans well,
And I am proud to be of that same stock.
Come, sit here, German sir.

(She offers him a place on the sofa.)

Lucindo. Thank you, my lady.

(Aside to Pertini.)

Away! There is still time; here I am lost!

Beatrice (abashed). Did I speak out of place?

(Lucindo wants to speak, but Pertini cuts in.)

Pertini. Spare us your flourishes and your flattery!
Twas nothing, Beatrice; merely some business
That I must still arrange for him in haste.

Lucindo (confused, in a low voice).
By God, Pertini, you are playing with me!

Pertini (aloud). Take it not so to heart, don't be so scared!
The lady trusts my word, is it not so?
Beatrice, he may stay, is it not so,
Till I am back. And please remember--prudence;

You are a stranger, so no foolishness.

Beatrice. Oh, come, young sir, was then my welcome such
That you could think I'd banish you, a stranger,
Friend of Pertini, an old friend of ours,
Unceremoniously from this house,
Whose hospitable doors are open to all?
You need not flatter, but you must be fair.

Lucindo. By God, your gracious kindness overwhelms me!
You speak as gently as the angels speak.
Forgive if overawed and overcome
By the wild stream of passion long forgotten,
The lips spoke what they ought to have concealed.
Yet see the sky all clear and luminous
Smile down upon us from the clouds' blue realm,
And see the colours throb so sweet and bright,
Now wrapped in shade and now in gentle light,
Mingling in harmonies so soft and full,
One lovely picture, one inspired soul.
See this, and then be silent if your lips
Obey. But no! your heart enchanted leaps,
Prudence and circumspection vanished all.
The lips must speak what holds your heart in thrall.
Even as the Aeolian lyre is stirred to sound
When Zephyr wraps his fluttering pinions round.

Beatrice. Reproof I cannot find within my heart,
You dress the poison, sir, with such sweet art.

Lucindo (aside to Pertini).
Confounded villain, yet good villain too,
What shall I do? Get out of here, by God!

Pertini (aloud).
It rankles in his mind, remembering how
I took the words out of his mouth just now.
In language beautiful he would have talked,
When by my interruption he was balked.
But never mind, 'tis Beatrice's belief

You kindly wished to afford her some relief
From your grand talk; like any German jest,
Once swallowed, it's not easy to digest.
I go.

Lucindo (in a low voice). But man!

Pertini (aloud). Think of the sympathies
That from the stomach to the heart soon rise;
I'll soon be back to fetch you swift away,
Or else in this sweet place too long you'll stay.
(Aside.) I must be gone. And while he pays his court,
I'll see the old man brings it all to naught.

(Exit Pertini. Lucindo is in confusion.)
Beatrice. And must I yet once more bid you be seated?

Lucindo. I'll gladly sit here if you truly wish it.

(Sits down.)

Beatrice. Our friend Pertini's often strangely moody.

Lucindo. Yes, strangely so! Most strangely! Very strangely!

(Pause.)

Forgive me, lady--you esteem this man!

Beatrice. He has long been a true friend of the household,
And always treated me most amiably.
And yet -- I know not why -- I cannot bear him.
He's often violent. Often from his breast-
Forgive me, he's your friend--some secret spirit
Calls strangely, in a voice I do not like.
It is as though some inner turbulent darkness
Shrank from the daylight's open look of love
And feared to make response, as if he harboured
An evil worse than his tongue speaks, worse even
Than his heart dares to think. This is but surmise,

And I do wrong, confiding it so soon;
It is suspicion; suspicion is a viper.

Lucindo. Do you regret confiding in me, then?

Beatrice. Were it a secret that concerned myself-
But oh, what am I saying! Have you won
My trust already? Yet it is not wrong
That I should tell you everything I know;
I could confide it all to anyone,
Since I know nothing that's not known to all.

Lucindo. To all? Well said! You would be kind to all?

Beatrice. Would you not too?

Lucindo. O angel, O sweet being!

Beatrice. You make me fearful, sir. What mean these words?
You jump so suddenly from theme to theme!

Lucindo. I must act quickly, for the hour is striking.
Why hesitate? Death is in every minute.
Can I conceal it? It's a miracle,
I have just met you; strange though it appears,
We might have known each other many years.
It is as if the music I heard sound
Within my own heart, living form had found,
And into vibrant, warm reality
The spirit-bond uniting us breaks free.

Beatrice. I won't deny it: you are not to me
A stranger, yet still strange you are, unknown.
But as dark spirits would not let us see
Each other till this hour, so we must own
There may be other spirits whose deceit
Binds us with treacherous bonds, however sweet.
Foresight and wisdom we must not despise;
The strongest lightning strikes not from dark skies.

Lucindo. O fair philosopher of the heart! O God,
I can resist no more, for you compel me!
Do not imagine that I do not hold
You in respect because my heart grows bold.
It throbs to bursting, all my nerves are tense.
I can resist no more. Soon I'll be gone,
Far, far away from here, from you divided.
Then, worlds, plunge down, plunge down into the abyss!
Forgive me, sweet my child, forgive the hour
That drives me onward with such violent power.
I love you, Beatrice, by God I swear it,
And Love and Beatrice make but one word
That I can utter only in one breath,
And in this thought I'd go to meet my death.

Beatrice. Since good can never come of it, I pray
Speak no more thus. If--but this cannot be--
You were to win my heart, now, straightaway,
Surely you would no longer honour me.
You'd say that I was just a common thing,
Ready, as thousands are, to have her fling.
If for a moment such a notion crossed
Your mind, then love and honour would be lost.
Twould mean that you cared for me not a jot,
And self-reproach would have to be my lot.

Lucindo. Tender and lovely being, hear me plead!
If only in my bosom you could read,
I never loved till now, by God above,
And your reproaches make a mock of love.
Let the base merchant haggle over flaws,
By shrewd delays more profit still he draws.
Love brings the union of the worlds about,
Naught is beyond, and naught else to desire.
Let those who bind themselves in hatred doubt.
Love is a flashing spark from Life's own fire,
Magic that holds us in an open ring,
So yield to it--this is the only thing
That counts in love, not prudent carefulness;
For love is quick to kindle, quick to bless.

Beatrice. Shall I be modest? Coy? No, I must dare,
However high may leap the flames' fierce flare.
Yet my breast tightens under fearful strain
As if delight were mixed with searing pain,
As if between our union there came floating
A hissing sound mixed in by devils gloating.

Lucindo. It is the fire which you do not yet know,
And the old life, which now has turned to go
Away from us, is speaking its last word;
Then its reproaches will no more be heard.
But tell me, Beatrice, how will you be mine!

Beatrice. My father wants to tie me to a man
Whom I would hate if I could hate my fellows.
But be assured you soon will hear from me.
Where are you staying, sweet friend of my heart?

Lucindo. Why, at Pertini's house.

Beatrice. I'll send a courier.
But now your name? Most surely it must sound
As does the music of the circling spheres.

Lucindo (in a serious voice). Lucindo is my name.

Beatrice. Lucindo! Sweet,
Sweet rings that name to me. Ah, my Lucindo,
He is my world, my God, my heart, my all.

Lucindo. Beatrice, that's yourself, and you are more,
You are yet more than all, for you are Beatrice.

(He presses her ardently to his breast. The door bursts open and Wierin enters.)

Wierin. A pretty sight! O Beatrice! O snake!
Puppet of virtue, are you, cold as marble!

Lucindo. What do you mean by this? What do you seek?

By God, no ape could ever look so sleek.

Wierin. Damned boy, you'll soon enough learn what I mean.
We'll speak together, you and I, O rival
Fashioned in human form to make it loathsome,
Creature puffed up with impudent conceit,
A piece of blotting-paper to wipe pens on,
A comic hero of some wretched jape.

Lucindo. And as remarked, behold the complete ape!
Shame on you thus to bandy words with me!
Such courage is like barrel-organ music
Played to a painted picture of a battle.
Soon the real thing will count.

Wierin. Soon? Now boy, now we'll have this matter out!
B-b-by God--my very blood runs cold!
Beatrice, I'll finish off this paramour.

Lucindo. Silence, fellow, I'll follow you this instant.

(Pertini enters.)

Pertini. What's all this noise? You think you're on the street?

(To Wierin.)

Why do you screech, you crow? I'll stop your mouth!
(Aside.)

I've come just in the nick of time. The fellow
Has somewhat misinterpreted my meaning.

(Beatrice falls in a faint.)

Lucindo. Help! She swoons! O God!

(He bends over her.)
Come to yourself, angel, sweet spirit, speak!

(He kisses her.)

Feel you the warmth? Her eyelids flutter, she breathes!
Beatrice, why are you so? Oh, tell me, why?
You want to kill me? Can I see you thus?

(He raises her up, embracing her. Wierin wants to rush upon him. Pertini holds him back.)

Pertini. Come, friend Crow, just a few words in your ear.

Beatrice (in a faint voice). Lucindo, my Lucindo, ah, my lost one,
And lost to me, my heart, before I won you.

Lucindo. Be calm, my angel, nothing shall be lost,
And soon I'll see this fellow breathe his last.

(He carries her to the sofa.)

Lie there a while; we cannot long remain,
This holy place must bear no evil stain.

Wierin. Come, we shall speak together.

Pertini. I'll come too.
One second at a duel is something new.

Lucindo. Compose yourself, sweet child, be of good cheer.

Beatrice. Farewell.

Lucindo. Angel, farewell.

Beatrice (with a deep sigh). I'm full of fear.

(Curtain. End of Act I)

SONG TO THE STARS

You dance round and around
In shimmering rays of light,
Your soaring shapes abound
In number infinite.

Here breaks the noblest Soul,
The full heart bursts in twain,
And like a jewel in gold
Is clasped by mortal pain.

It turns on you its look
Darkly, compellingly,
From you, babe-like, would suck
Hope and Eternity.

Alas, your light is never
More than aethereally rare.
No divine being ever
Cast into you his fire.

You are false images,
Faces of radiant flame;
Heart's warmth and tenderness
And Soul you cannot claim.

A mockery is your shining
Of Action, Pain, Desire.
On you is dashed all yearning
And the heart's song of fire.

Grieving, we must turn grey,
End in despair and pain,
Then see the mockery
That Earth and Heaven remain;

That, as we tremble even,
And worlds within us drown,

No tree trunk's ever riven,
No star goes plunging down.

Dead you'd be otherwise,
Your grave the ocean blue,
All gone, the shining rays,
And all fire spent in you.

Truth you'd speak silently,
Not dazzle with dead light,
Nor shine in clarity;
And all round would be Night.

DREAM VISION

A Dithyramb

From my dreamings I would coax
Soft an image in scent-woven web;
I would weave rings passing fair
From the locks of my own hair;
Night-encompassed, heart's blood I would swell
That, from waves of dream, fire-image well,
Image, ebbing and a-flowing,
Fair in love, Aeolian music sighing.

It would soar, all golden shining,
And the little house would arch up higher,
And my locks would wander, curling,
Divinest girl in darkness furling,
Forth in pearly songs my blood would flow,
Streaming round the marble shoulders' glow,
And the lamp would flicker Suns,
My heart would flood Heaven's dome.

Down would shake the rooms all round,
But for me, grown into Giant-Hero,
In his mighty gaze high festal fire,

World-great would be storm's lyre,
Thunder-song my heart would beat amain
Suns would be its love and rock its pain,
Proudly-humble, I'd sink down,
Proud-audacious, rush unto the breast.

THE SONG OF A SAILOR AT SEA

You may frolic and beat and roll
Round my boat just as you will,
You must carry me to my goal;
For you are my subjects still.

Blue waves beneath that now,
My little brother's there.
You dragged him down below,
His bones became your fare.

I was a boy, no more;
Once rashly he cast off,
He seized hold of the oar,
Sank by a sandy reef.

I vowed a vow so true
By the waves of the briny sea,
I'd be revenged on you,
Lash you relentlessly.

Soul's oath and word I've kept,
Them I have not betrayed.
I've whipped you and I've whipped,
On land have seldom stayed.

When booms the stormy main,
The bell rocks in the tower,
When blows the hurricane,
When raging winds do roar,

I'm driven from my bed,
From seat secure and warm,
From cosy quiet homestead,
To sail through wind and storm.

With wind and wave I fight,
To the Lord God I pray,
And let the sails fill out;
A true star guides my way.

New strength comes, with the breath
Of joy and ecstasy,
And in the game of death
Song from the breast bursts free.

You may frolic and beat and roll
Round my boat just as you will,
You must carry me to my goal;
For you are my subjects still.

THE MAGIC SHIP

A Romance

Without sails or lights there flees
A ship round the world without rest.
The moon shines down on the seas,
And weathered stands the mast.

A sinister Helmsman steers,
No blood flows in his veins,
No light shines from his eyes,
No thought stirs in his brain.

The waves beat, wild and savage;
She strikes a cliff, to founder,
But rides aloft, undamaged,

As swift as she went under.

Till raging sea-flood swells
In blood-bath weltering.
Troubled, the Helmsman quails;
This proves an evil thing.

The Spirits scream vengeful doom
Below and up on high.
The Helmsman's plunged in gloom,
The ship goes shooting by.

To far-off lands she fares,
Where coasts and bays she sees,
Then flashes in mirror-fire,
Till kissed down by the seas.

THE PALE MAIDEN

A Ballad

The maiden stands so pale,
So silent, withdrawn,
Her sweet angelic soul
Is misery-torn.

Therein can shine no ray,
The waves tumble over;
There, love and pain both play,
Each cheating the other.

Gentle was she, demure,
Devoted to Heaven,
An image ever pure
The Graces had woven.

Then came a noble knight,

A grand charger he rode;
And in his eyes so bright
A sea of love flowed.

Love smote deep in her breast,
But he galloped away,
For battle-triumph athirst;
Naught made him stay.

All peace of mind is flown,
The Heavens have sunk.
The heart, now sorrow's throne,
Is yearning-drunk.

And when the day is past,
She kneels on the floor,
Before the holy Christ
A-praying once more.
But then upon that form
Another encroaches,
To take her heart by storm,
'Gainst her self reproaches.

"To me your love is given
For Time unending.
To show your soul to Heaven
Is merely pretending."

She trembles in her terror
Icy and stark,
She rushes out in horror,
Into the dark.

She wrings her lily-white hands,
The tear-drops start.
"Thus fire the bosom brands
And longing, the heart.

"Thus Heaven I've forfeited,
I know it full well.

My soul, once true to God,
Is chosen for Hell.

He was so tall, alas,
Of stature divine.
His eyes so fathomless,
So noble, so fine.

"He never bestowed on me
His glances at all;
Lets me pine hopelessly
Till the end of the Soul.

"Another his arm may press,
May share his pleasure;
Unwitting, he gives me distress
Beyond all measure.

"With my soul willingly,
With my hopes I'd part,
Would he but look towards me
And open his heart.

"How cold must the Heavens be
Where he doesn't shine,
A land full of misery
And burning with pain.

"But here the surging flood
May deliver me, cooling
The hot fire of heart's blood,
The bosom's feeling."

She leaps with all her might
Into the spray.
Into the cold dark night
She's carried away.

Her heart, that burning brand,
Is quenched forever;
Her look, that luminous land,

Is clouded over.

Her lips, so sweet and tender,
Are pale and colourless;
Her form, aethereal, slender,
Drifts into nothingness.

And not a withered leaf
Falls from the bough;
Heaven and Earth are deaf,
Won't wake her now.

By mountain, valley, on
The quiet waves race,
To dash her skeleton
On a rocky place.
The Knight so tall and proud
Embraces his new love,
The cithern sings about
The joys of True Love!