

World's Tragedy

by
Aleister Crowley

Master, I come, but ere the pregnant gloom
Lighten at last, I ask myself for whom
I take the pen, since English throbs and glows
Forth from its gold, like streams from sunny snows.
And if I write for England, who will read?
As if, when moons of Ramadan recede,
Some fatuous angel-porter should deposit
His perfect wine within the privy closet!
"What do they know, who only England know?"
Only what England paints its face to show.
Love mummied and relabelled "chaste affection,"
And lust excused as "natural selection".
Caligula upbraids the cruel cabby,
And Nero birches choir-boys in the Abbey;
Semiramis sandpapered to a simper,
And Clytemaestra whittled to a whimper!
The austerities of Loyola? to seek!
But—let us have a "self-denial week!"
The raptures of Teresa are hysteric,
But—let us giggle at some fulsome cleric!
"The age refines! You lag behind. "God knows!
Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.
That Crowley knows you as you are—that fret.
He buys no doctored dung for violets!
Your smug content, your Puritan surprise,
All lies, and lies; all lies, and lies, and lies!
Pathics from Eton, ever on their knees,
Amazed at their twin brothers the Chinese!
Pathics from Harrow, reeking of Patchouli,
Shocked at the vice of the Mongolian coolie!
Canons of Westminster, with boy-rape sterile,
Hope Christ may save us from the Yellow Peril!
To call forced labour slavery is rude,
"Terminologic inexactitude."
This from the masters of the winds and waves
Whose cotton-mills are crammed with British slaves!
Men pass their nights with German-Jewish whores,
Their days in keeping "aliens" from our shores.
They turn their eyes up at a Gautier's tale,
And run a maisonette in Maida Vale.

Murder poor Wakley—the assassin leaves
Escorted by the Yards's blackmailing thieves,
Lest dead men (or their papers) should tell tales
And maybe compromise the Prince of Wales.
Arrest poor Wilde—the creaking Channel tubs
Groan with the consternation of the Clubs.
Scared, hushed, and pale, our men of eminence
Wait the result in sickening suspense.
Announced, all Mayfair shrieks its decent joy;
And, feeling safe, goes out and hires a boy.
Your title—oh! how proud you are to wear them?
What about "homo quatuor literarum?"
The puissant all their time to vice devote;
The impotent (contented) pay to gloat.
The strumpet's carwheels splash the starving maiden
In Piccadilly, deadlier than Aden.
"England expects a man to do his duty."
He calls truth lies, and sneers at youth and beauty,
Pays cash for love and fancies he has won it—
Duty means church, where he thanks God he's done it!
Morley's Hotel is the one stance to see
Our Nelson from! --Oh God! that I should be
Alone among this slime! -- I saw Thy Graal:
Show me the men that have not bowed to Baal!
For as I love with spirit and with sense
I nauseate at this crawling crapulence,
Our whole state, summed in one supreme enigma,
Solved (in a second) by a simple
Monstrous conjunctions with black man and brute
Level our ladies with the prostitute:
Our spinsters chaste in criminal abortion,
And matron with the pox for marriage portion;
Husbands who pimp all day for their young wives,
Athletes from Oxford, pathic all their lives,
Who sport the "so" coat, the sotadic necktie,
And lisp their filthy pun "Mens conscia recti!"
Priest who are celibates—outside of choir!
Maidens who rave in Lesbian desire:
The buck of sixty, cunning as a trapper,
Stalking the pig-tailed, masturbating flapper;
The creeping Jesus—Caution! we may shock it!
With one hand through his torn-out breeches pocket;
Flagellates shrieking in our streets and schools,
Our men all hogs, and all our women ghouls:
This is our England, pious dame and prude,
Who calls me blasphemous, unchaste, and rude!

Come to sweet air, poor sirens of the stews!
A pox on all these yammering Yahoos!
My healthy sperm begets the Son of God
Winged with the dawn and with the star-stream shod!
Not on your purulence and ichorous itch,
O English girl, half baby and half bitch,
But on the glorious body and soul of her
Of whom I am the Lord and worshipper,
The brave gay cleanly maiden whose embrace
Flushes with shameless fervour the fair face,
Fills the whole leaping heaven with the light
Till all the world is drunken with delight.
You with your own authentic filth defiled
Robbed Keats of life, and Shelley of his child,
Corrupted Swinburne to your foul disease,
Denied Blake bread are you fed full on these?
You hate the wise, true, beautiful, and holy: --
Dogs! is there nothing you can do to Crowley?

.....
Therefore I see and speak, who would be dumb
And blind: but Thou dost call. Master, I come,

THE PERSONS OF THE PROLOGUE

SATYRS

MEN

Marsyas

Anaximander

Silenus

Lysander

Chiron

Anaxagoras

NYMPHSHERMAPHRODITES

Chrysis

Rhodon

Doris

Salmacis

Atthis

Erotion

GIRLSFAUNS

Rhodope

Heliorus

Erinna

Hyacinthus

Evadne

Olympas

YOUNG BOYS

Antinous

Giton

Hylas

OTHERS

Heracleitus, a philosopher

Chrysippus, his disciple

Yaugh Waugh, a man vulture

A lambkin

A dove

Alexander, a wise king, ruling Macedon, Babylonia, etc.

Two Satyrs

A fair man child

Two nymphs

Miriam, a Syrian Girl

A white robed youth

Legions of apes, worms, and monsters

Agrippa, a Roman Century

Publis, his lieutenant

A Roman guard

A hag
A blue faced baboon
An ox
Zakariah, an ass
Govinda, kind of the Indines
Chau, Son of Heaven, king of Tartary and China
A company of rats
A company of toads
A brass bottle containing a mannikin in blue
Issa, the grown man thereof
Magda, an odalisque
John, a young scribe
Bystanders

PROLOGUE THE GARDEN OF EROS

See, in a glade of green moss, watered by a spring, a merry company languidly playing. Flutes, and harps, and panpipes are there; and on wonderful chased silver, figured with the loves of the gods, are cups of beaded wine, and fruits, and honey, and cakes of divers sort. It is night, but the moon is exceeding bright; and the stars shine in the self-luminous blue of the vault. Around the glade are many trees; the ground is a mass of flowers, and gathered roses cover the white limbs of many of the players. One girl is standing, and a full nightingale song trills from the players, a vulture vast and vague in his black night of shadow. His face is human, of the ovine type, as that of a low-class Jew. He watches the scene throughout in silence, but with intense envy disguised as disgust.

DORIS

Praise the wine wittily!
...Praise the wine well!
Footing it prettily
...Down through the dell.
Are there not playmates
...Enough and to spare,
Gallant and gay to spare,
...Each one of us fair?
Bountiful measures of
...Beautiful wine:
Infinite treasures of
...Bacchus divine!
Hail to the Lord of us!
...Blithe is his reign.
Be thou adored of us,
...Soul without stain!

Fair are the faces, and
...Limbs of us light,
Tracing the paces, and
...Drunk with delight.
Io! let us tremble in
...Trance of the tune
Here that assemble in
...Joyaunce of June!

ATTHIS

Doris, our darling! How subtle and sweet
The throb of thy throat to the flit of our feet!
Come, I have chosen thee.

DORIS

Follow me then
Deep in the dance to the heart of the glen!

MARSYAS

Ho! you are rich, you are red, you are ripe!
Pace me your passions to plaint of my pipe!

OLYMPAS

Nay, I am with thee, my master, to match
Every my song to thy lyrical catch.

EROTION

Nay, let us follow you - all in a ring!
Wonder of wisdom and wit on the wing!

ANAXIMANDER

Come, my Giton, of the hyacinth hair!
Apollo, Apollo! indeed they are fair!

HYLAS

Kiss me again, my Lysander, my love!
Listen! Olympas is singing above.

LYSANDER

Ah! but Erotion beckons me yonder!
Beautiful curls on her bosom that wander
Tempt me to folly.

HYLAS

Indeed, let us press
The exquisite doubt in a certain Lysander

LYSANDER

Even as the feet of the maid on the grapes
Crush the wine of delight from ambiguous shapes!

OLYMPAS

Shrill, shrill the never-cloying
...Thirst of maid's enthusiasm!
Atthis with her Doris toying
...In the moonlight filled with laughter,

...Wrestling, kissing - follow after
...To the summit of the spasm!

CHIRON

Ho, shall we sit idle gazing
On such beauty spirit-crazing?
No, my ladies, I'm the song!

ATTHIS

We can sing you!

DORIS

Sweet and strong!

ANAXAGORAS

Laughter, laughter! I'm for thee,
Doris of the blue-black tresses!
Mine are musical caresses
Like the murmur of the sea.

HYCINTHOS

Chiron, shall we dance with these
Under the acacia trees?

CHIRON

Yes, if Rhodon there will lend us
Her red fleece-like sunset glowing,
With the doubtful venture showing
Where-what God shall there befriend us?

RHODON

Mocker! I shall come. Beware
Lest my manhood match you there!

SILENUS

Ha, you rouge, if Rhodon rage,
Poets earn a cynic page;
And our lips with laughter curl
If she treat you as a girl.

CHIRON

Brute, get back to wine, and leave us
In our flower-love to inweave us.
All we know the shameless chorus:
"Fie! Silenus-Heliorus!"

HELIORUS

I had better right to mock you,
Graceless Chiron, with the quip
(Girls, come close-the jest will shock you)
"Pine-tree with the drooping tip!"

CHIRON

Oh, you little toad of spite!
Come, and I will set you right.
All you year of wantonness
Shall not save you - much distress.

HELIORUS

Yes - the pain I had before.
"At the game that Chiron shouldn't,
Chiron would - and Chiron couldn't"

RHODON

Never heed the little whore!
Play a melody, Marsyas!

HELIORUS

He's at Anaxagoras!

RHODOPE

Where is Doris, then?

ERRINNA

By Zeus,
Where her ribs are all in use!

ANTINOUS

Sprinkle me with poppy-juice
From the flowers of Syracuse
...On the lips relaxed with pleasure
...Of their kisses overmeasure!
Let them suck the heavenly sleep!
Let me sink into the deep!
...Till the morning pale and fresh
...Find my flesh against his flesh,
And mine eyes within his eyes
Watch the sun of glory rise!
All my breath is like new wine.
I have flaxen hair and fine.
...From my shoulders to my feet
...Like the sunlight in the wheat!
...If I laugh, the moon-curved pearls
Match and master any weep,
If I weep, as joy may weep,
...One would say the fountain-steep
Of Dione dropped its dew
Through the vivid veil of blue.
I am limber like a snake.
I am soft, and slow to slake—
...For a curling, crimson fire
...Floods my lips and feeds desire.
I am passionate and pale;
Virile - and most faery frail.
...All diverse delights are mine.
...Kiss within me, and combine
To a languorous lyric lure
Sweet as pleasure, and as sure!

SILENUS

Tut, my lad, you do not mention
Modesty.

ANTINOUS...

'Twas mine intention,
But those loose lips wine-corrupt
Always itch to interrupt!

SILENUS

Nay, boy, all the song was true.
Come and frisk it once together!
Ah, the goodly Grecian Weather!
Ah, the heavenly haze of blue,
That must set an azure frame
Round the flaxen locks aflame!

CHRYSIS

Come, Evadne, let us fling
Flowers upon them gambolling!

EVADNE

Chrysis! could one weary of
All thine opulence of love?

CHRYSIS

I am fair; I cannot fear.
Was my tongue too eager, dear?

EVADNE

Never, never, never! Here,
Coil the roses close, a cluster
In the flax, the lyric lustre!

CHRYSIS

In the white waves that carouse
On the satyr's beetle brows,
Plait a wreath of laurustine
With the broad leaves of the vine!

SALMACIS

Sweet Lysander, now thou knowest
All the oracle obscure!

LYSANDER

In my soul - my soul! - thou flowest
Suave and sibylline and sure.
O the stream I launched this boat on!
O the pool my fancies float on!
I am drowned in bays of bliss—
Salmacis! - my Salmacis!

HYACINTHOS

Heliorus, siren!

...I have overmatched thee now;

From the bag of Chiron
...Drawn a luckier lot than thou!

SILENUS

Come, we have dallied long enough
With music and with love.
Set to the wine, and slide.
Each twined like vines, fair boy, fair bride,
Down the long glade of sleep,
At the sun's summoning.
We shall be carolling, upon the steep,
The happy dawn's return.
We shall wake - and bathe - and burn.

EROTION

Now the drowsy Lord unloose
All his store of poppy-juice!
...To the murmurous bell-clear fret
of the tremulous rivulet
Let us lisp the lullaby
Of Arcady - in Arcady!
Me ye know, the dazzling dream
Of the swimmer in the stream.
...Boy to girl and maid to man,
...Mine are all joys of Pan.
Chrysis seeks the darling dove,
Gets the eagle to her love.
...Hylas, trembling towards the pine,
...Finds the soft voluptuous vine.

RHODOPE

Curl ye close! Curl ye close!
Fold your petals like the rose!
All the satyr's lust of limb;
All the delicate and slim
Slenderness of laughing faun
Twine like serpents on the lawn;
All the boy's undulant grace
To the nymph's fantastic face;
All the maiden's chaste delight
To the flushed hermaphrodite;
While the balanced strength of man
Bears its witness unto Pan.

CHRYSIS

Ah, the purple vein that glows
Through the eyelids as they close!
Hush! the breeze that fans the fern
Bids the midnight moon to turn.
We must sleep

Soft and deep:

We must wake—and bathe—and burn.

...(The company being asleep, fallen lax in mid-caress, there enter a Philosopher
Heracleitus and his Disciple Chrysippus.)

HERACLEITUS

Look, my darling, and confess

Life one flame of loveliness!

CHRYSIPPUS

Master! Master! How fairy fond

Is yonder maid like a lily-frond!

Let us lie on the moss by the spring, let us share

In their silence serene, the languor rare!

So goodly a company.

HERACLITUS

Wait but a moment - stand apart,

Revolving the light in thine innermost heart!

Content not the soul with the skin of the grape!

But the truer sense than the eye and the ear

Make to appear!

CHRYSIPPUS

Verily, master, I obey.

I travel the exalted way.

I pierce the sense; I gain the goal,

Distill the essence of the soul—

HERACLEITUS

I shroud thee in the web of wool.

I lift the burden of the bull.

Lion and eagle! dart ye forth

Into the cold clime of the North,

Where past the star points the pole

Rest the unstirred axis of the soul.

CHRYSIPPUS

Hear then! By Abrasax! the bar

Of the unshifting star

Is broken - Io! Asar!

My spirit is wrapt in the wind of light;

It is whirled away on the wings of night,

Sable-plumed are the wonderful wings,

But the silver of moonlight subtly springs

Into the feathers that flash with the pace

Of our flight to the violatè bounds of space.

Time is dropt like a stone from the stars:

Space is a chaos of broken bars:

Being is merged in a furious flood

That rages and hisses and foams in the blood.

See! I am dead! I am passed, I am passed

Out of the sensible world at-last.
I am not. Yet I am, as I never was,
A drop in the sphere of molten glass
Whose radiance changes and shifts and drapes
The infinite soul in finite shapes.
There is light, there is life, there is love, there is sense
Beyond speech, beyond song, beyond evidence.
There is wonder intense, a miraculous sun,
As the many are molten and mixed into one
With the heat of its passion; the one hath invaded
The heights of its soul, and its laughter is braided
With comets whose plumes are the galaxies
Like winds on the night's inaccessible seas.
Oh master! my master! nay, bid me not ride
To the heaven beyond heaven; for I may not abide.
I faint: I am frail: not a mortal may bear
The invisible light, the abundance of air.
I fail: I am sinking: O Thou, be my friend!
Bear me up! Bear me up! Bear me up to the end!
Now! Now! In the heart of the bliss beyond being
The None is involved in the One that, unseeing,
Dashes its infinite splendour to death
Beyond light, beyond love, beyond thought, beyond breath.
Ah! but my master! the death of the sun—
Break, break, the last veil! It is done—It is done,
...(He falls, as one dead, upon the grass.)

HERACLEITUS

I bless these happy virgins, souls unstained,
Through whose delight my darling hath attained
Even to the uttermost silence that may be
Even in this vast circuit of eternity.
So, o my golden charioteer, I creep
Into thine arms, and dream the dream of sleep.
...(He sleeps. Upon the still beauty descends from his tree the man-vulture.)

THE VULTURE

Yaugh Waugh!
Butch! this is terrible
That all these people should be happy—Pss! --
Without a thought of Me!
Ga! Ga! the plague
Rot them in hell!
Cramp! Ague! Pox! Gout! Stone—Hoo!
What shall I do to stop it?
It's sin—sin—sin. I hate them. Oog!
I want them to go groaning
Over imaginary illls

With white eyes twisted up to Me,
Where I sit and croak
And snarl! Ugh! Faugh!
I'm Yaugh Waugh!
I'm Yaugh Waugh!
Ga! Oa! Hoo! Hoo!
Scratch!
I must invent a plan
To ruin all this gladness.
Ha! Plup! I have it.
There's nothing here
That would accept my favours—
Uck! Bulch! --
So I'll abuse myself to chaos
And see what comes of it.
Ha—Ba! Ha—Ba!
Ab—ab—ab—ab—ab!
Utch—what is this?
Coagulated yolk of the addled egg
Of chaos! Hatch it out!
That's why I AM. Hoo—hoo—hoo—hoo—hoo!
Oh! -- now the white of the old egg is curled
Into a ragged fleece.
Ga! Ga! I've got a son:
What will it be?
O heaven—a lamb!
I'm Yaugh Waugh, Yaugh Waugh.
I'll call it Yaugh Shaugh Waugh.
Good! Can you talk,
First born? -- I'll never have another,
I'm Yaugh Waugh, Yaugh Waugh.
Bow to me, you lumpy lambkin!
Haw! Haw! Haw!
Now at last a wooden thing
That will do my business for me.
Uck! Uck! The morning's carrion
Bubbles in my paunch.
I am belching dreadfully.
What? Uck? Uck? How strange!
For the windy vomit of me
Shapes itself into a sorry
And bedraggled pigeon.
Birdie, have you got religion?
Yes, he bows most properly.
Come then, let us take our counsel
How to stop this sad behaviour,

This gross impropriety,
Irreligion—Uck! it's awful.
Squat, then! Pigeon, you're the youngest:
You speak first.

THE DOVE

Almighty father!
I have magnificent
And sublime and noble scheme.
Listen! I will find a woman—

THE VULTURE

Oh! you dirty-minded rascal!

THE DOVE

Wait a moment—I will do it.
Find a virgin—if I can,
And on her beget this lambkin
In the image of a man.

THE VULTURE

That seems complicated, pigeon.
We've the lamb begotten here.

THE DOVE

Yes, I know; it seems absurd;
But in practice I am certain
It will work out splendidly.

THE VULTURE

Well, proceed!

THE DOVE

Of course I will;
I'm accustomed to "proceeding."
Let the lamb grow up to manhood
Then we'll have him whipped and tortured
And eventually killed.

THE VULTURE

That sounds lovely.

THE LAMB

Do you think so??
I record my vote against it.

THE DOVE

Stupid! in a day or so
We will have you rise again.

THE LAMB

Really! I may be a dullard;
But I cannot see the point
Of this most elaborate nonsense.

THE DOVE

Well, you will. We'll make a rule
That anyone who disbelieves it

Shall be strictly prosecuted
With the utmost rigour
Of the majesty of law.

THE LAMB

And if any fool believes it—

THE DOVE

He shall come to live with Us.

What a privilege!

THE VULTURE

Provided

He observe propriety,

Never laugh, never dance,

Never do the dreadful thing!

THE DOVE

Precisely so!

THE VULTURE

It's settled then,

Charmingly unanimously

Carried by a show of wings.

THE LAMB

I protest.

THE VULTURE

You did not vote.

THE LAMB

If I had a pair of wings—

THE DOVE

You might fly; and so might pigs!

THE VULTURE

Pray, sir, do not mention pigs!

Gru—utch! Scheme approved, and entered in

The Minutes. I declare the board

Quite indefinitely adjourned.

THE LAMB

I oppose; I wish to enter

A minority report.

THE VULTURE

You are out of order, sir.

THE LAMB

I shall get my own back later

In the Theatres of London

Where a show of legs decides.

THE DOVE

By the way—

THE VULTURE

These sleeping women

Are no good to us, of course?

THE DOVE

No indeed! I want a creature
Very different to that,

THE VULTURE

Well, you'll have a job to find one.

THE DOVE

Would you lend me your red star?

THE VULTURE

With the greatest pleasure, pigeon!

THE DOVE

I'll be off, then.

THE LAMB

So will I.

THE VULTURE

I shall know where I can find you.

THE LAMB

Would you had a moment's patience!

I had a much better scheme

One involving pigeon-pie!

THE VULTURE

Butch! be off with you. I'll hop

Up again to the tree-top.

Yaugh Waugh! That's me!

Always at the top of the tree!

(They depart separately, yet together. The old Philosopher wakes).

HERACLEITUS

Ah! but some evil things have brooded here

Over the sleepers. May it be indeed

The truth that some strange fate threatens the world?

That Art and Love and Beauty, to renew

Their glory, must be bathed in their own blood?

But who shall understand the Soul of Pan?

Involved in All and still apart from All!

For steeped therein as I am all my life,

I know but exquisite beatitude,

Knowing the whole, Then who shall know or care

What may befall the part? One must remain;

Many must change. Then all is well. The strife

Is but the ferment of the forward still

Immune from grief, intolerant of ill,

Fronting the double foe—of pain and joy—

With equal eye—in the meantime—

Dear boy,

Wake! Let us revel it the while we may,

Love dawning ever with the dawning day.

Wake, brothers, sisters! It is time to stir.

The owl, the night-hawk, sad and sinister,
Have fled, The first flush animates the hills,
Reddens the rushes, flashes on the rills.
Come while the breeze blows and the air is cool
Down through the forest to the Fairies' pool.
(All rise and follow the sage, singing:)

THE COMPANY

Praise Eros wittily!
...Praise Eros well!
Tripping it prettily
...Down through the dell!
Joyous and eager
...Our tresses adorning,
Away to beleaguer
...The city of morning!
Away to the leap to
...The soft-smiling pool
Whose kisses shall creep to
...Us virginal cool!
Race and bescatter
...The dew in the grass;
The nymph and her satyr!
...The lad and his lass!
O blest is the laughter
...Of Arcady's groves
That chases us after
...To delicate loves,
The frolics, the fancies,
...The fires, the desires,
The dives and the dances,
...The lutes and the lyres!
Follow, o follow,
...Sweet seed of the sun!
Through the wood, through the hollow,
...The race is begun
That shall fill the day up
...With the roses of pleasure,
The rod—and the cup—
...And the crown of our treasure!
Sweet are our voices;
...Our bodies are bare;
Their spirit rejoices
...Afloat in the air,
Coiling and curling
...In maze of aeons
Its vision unfurling

...A pageant of paeans!
Blessed be Love in his
...Palace of praise
Whom we follow above in his
...Wonderful ways!
Whom we follow above
...To the stars and the snows,
Immaculate Love! --
...We adore thee, Eros!
Praise Eros wittily!
...Praise Eros well!
Tripping it prettily
...Down through the dell!
Joyous and eager
...Our tresses adoring,
Away to beleaguer
...The city of morning!