

For the Brains of Men to Prey Upon

by

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*as a certain bulk of Water was instituted at the Creation- so very likely a certain portion of  
intellect was spun forth into the thin Air for the brains of men to prey upon it.*  
from, Letter of 24 Mar. 1818 to James Rice.

Ode for Isis

I

Thou sensate bride and groom of humankind,  
Thou teenage boy and girl to dance belong,  
Flora and Fauna, who doest thus find  
Good salutations therewith all went wrong;  
The earth at rest is a deserving place,  
For deities or mortals, or of both,  
By Temples or the Liege of Head of State,  
What pray'rs or powers these? What peoples wroth?  
What sanctuary? What humankind of race?  
What keys and timpani? What good elate?

2

The passionate are great, but those unspoiled  
Are freer; therefore, moderate, stay with;  
Listen to the sensualist; but when unclear,  
Make authoritative pray'r; and sith  
Fair cast, draw near thy pond, thou hast thy dish,  
And spoon, soever canst thy locks hold sway,  
Friends forever, ever wouldst thou embrace;  
Those youthful are the clouds; for, make that wish,  
That thou not fade, and thou wouldst see thy boy;  
Who must needs gravitate for his own say.

3

Ah, trodden, trodden, place! that still wouldst shine  
As bright, as never wouldst that night last long;  
And, hearing of sensualists, unmarried,  
To meet another is that same old song;  
Make happy love! True happy, happy love!  
Forever late who wast his mother's best;  
Oh, his poor mother cared about a throng,  
Wouldst part those clouds ev'n as the night surrounds,  
This scalding thirst takes measure of the zest.  
And leadeth few temptations to some wrong.

4

How's a seamstress who sews more like a song?  
To have immediate, wouldst thou mediate:  
Once more a broth boiling in close sight,  
If those children spank, wouldst not penetrate.  
For delta dawn nor desert rose besieged,  
Nor mountain stone would raise ten more to come,  
But empty were thy walks, that scarcity;  
That Synagogue, those times wert over-sieged,  
Ev'n as wert desolate; so close to home,  
A new birth wouldst prove satiety.

5

Now ISIS war! Thou art childless! For brede  
Of mad men and thy maiden armory,  
Within this earth, wouldst make thy germful seed;  
For tillage - I reason statutory  
Makest for sobriety. A pastoral  
Of young refugees, looks on our footway,  
And wouldst go down, as John Keats said -  
And he would groan at ham – propose he'd say,  
How shouldst roast lamb be won over,  
For eight days, and leaven no bread.

4

Ode: For Fresh Parsley!

O Goddess! Take thy fresh green parsley, wrung  
In their emissions, for red roses dear,  
And pardon for that skeleton had sung,  
Even so, its own scarce partridge near –  
Surely, I slept last night, or did I free  
The conch'd ocean with my half-shut eyes?  
I wandered the streets more purposefully,  
Then, on a sudden, fainting at sunrise,  
Saw two naked children, side by side,  
Taking the hose, beneath the slanted roof,  
Of eaves and brass nail fittings, where they splashed  
In puddles; then wert denied:

Those leaves in kind are pupal eye'd,  
Speckl'd willow beauties, and yellow moth,  
That lay uncared for on the tarp,  
With hands out-wrung, and the fingers, too;  
Shouldst thou emboss, wouldst be brand new:  
As if knowing not that winter's slumber,  
Wouldst therefore plant kisses out of number.  
As ink-dye'd morn is neither rosy sky,  
Nor child that said adieu;  
And how wouldst he? O! struggle, struggle, cry?  
Fresh parsley, true!

O! yet second after cabbage thou wert,  
Ev'n in Elysian's heaven woodland!  
Fairer in Phoebe's blue-sky'd market cart,  
Or Vesper of dark factory brand;  
Fairer than these, thy temple long begun,  
And altar heap'd by growers;  
And cloven-foot that makes terrific groan,  
Upon the morning hours;  
Take Voice, take lute, take pipe, take incense sweet  
From chain-swung censer gleaning;  
For shrine, for grove, for oracle, for heat,  
Shall not mistake thy meaning.

O! Parsley. In good time for modern vows,  
Many, many play on this jarring lyre,  
And never near those orgiastic rows;  
Holy was air, and water, and the fire,  
Yet even in those days thus far retir'd  
Without satiety, nor full-hand spans,  
A child would find his fair Olympians:  
I ate, and slept, for my own horse attired;  
But, for once quit that choir, for I just groan  
Upon those morning hours:  
No Voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet  
Of chain-swung censer gleaming;  
No Shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat,  
For thou canst stake my meaning.

Yet who shall be our priest, to build that fane  
There of untrodden regions of the mind?  
Where memory, that's grown in some refrain,  
Hast led these leaves to scatter in the wind:  
Far, far around in these dark closet streets,  
Fledge wide-eyed dreamers, each step by step;  
And there no unions, clubs, or markets meet,  
Wouldst thou soaking naiad, be luld from sleep?  
For in the midst of mid-morn acquiesce,  
A scarlet-clad woman shouldst embarrass,  
For wreath'd in round roast, whereof flourish'd reign,  
Of pray'rs, of bells, of a light tak'n flame;  
And then for matters Reason canst explain;  
Since having no pheasant, for wouldst have that crane;  
Wast pit a thousand thunders in the night,  
Whence victory was wan,  
Candelabras in casements brought forth night,  
Thence fin-de-siècle began!

Ode: For May Day

I

Thou consummated spouse of happiness,  
Thou sacrament of law for all time,  
Pandora child, who wouldst thus express  
Thy chalice kept, in confidence of rhyme:  
What maid of town and vale couldst name thy make,  
Of Mistletoe or Mayday tide, forsooth?  
What mosque or church of that indigenous land?  
What friends or foes are we? What plight to troth?  
What ribbon bows? What tying round the nape?  
What births and birthstones? What passing bland?

2

Those melodies endure, and those unheard  
Are plenty; therefore, ye Klezmer, play on;  
Billowing those folds and valves sprightly tone:  
Fair maid, around that pole, canst not bereave  
Bygones- forever shall thou makest thy tree renew;  
Thy husband, ever, ever wouldst thou kiss,  
In walking, up and down- yet, only grieve,  
Who shall not fade, if thou couldst ever miss,  
Then always didst him love, for he wast true.

3

Ah soaking, soaking boughs! Elysian led  
For leaves, since bid their last adieu;  
And, future minstrelsy, unfurnished,  
However singing songs, however few;  
Good tidings love! Good tides of tidings love!  
However Love, that wert to be deploy'd,  
However wouldst thou be instead of young;  
That lesson'd cavalry, couldst not remove,  
For lifts a heart so dutiful alloy'd  
To mindfulness for a gold'n tongue.

7

4

Who art these that wouldst demand thy sacrifice?  
To what hard earth, O hardworking priest,  
Strip'st thou this plant for waking at sunrise,  
With all its ribbons made for Sunday drest?  
That tiny church in land or near seashore  
That Leonine makes well for Geraldine,  
Or mountain-top for nurse-maid Christabel,  
Wast gather'd of parishioners this morn.  
While, in the town, there was feasting sore,  
And that dressing! Yet not a soul couldst tell,  
Why wert thou desolate, mightst not return?

5

O sky cast! Troubled sea-shore! Instead  
Of happy men are maidens overwrought,  
That sticks and stones soon mightst thou take to bed;  
Unsettled form, doest time me out of thought -  
Wast thou eternity! May days come,  
Yet in wise would this generation waste,  
Who couldst proclaim, that once upon ago,  
And now, upon this time, for whom thee say  
'Day becomes night, becomes day,'-and then ev'n,  
'What's hard on earth' – sith, canst amount to woe.

8



Damuzi's Dream

O! Goddess, stay longer that I may dwell  
In thy plenteous netherworld, not to strive,  
Whence caravans transport the hops to hell,  
For I require once more to grow and thrive!  
O Goddess stay- faraway was Haysel Street,  
And there are plenty of long nights down here;  
I have outlast'd by-ways in this heat,  
Those deputies shan't stop me, do not fear!  
Yet I might even grow as rich as they,  
Since grapes that underarch beneath our feet –  
That back-breaking plenty, that abundance,  
That all the wolves shall not be kept at bay!  
Therefore, hast thou left - one takes no chance  
With a pack of wolves – a man wouldst not stay!

Tout Le Monde

Over the hill and over the dale,  
And over the moon with the dish –  
Where Devonshire brides read their daily mail  
And clotted-cream spoonsful are smallish –

For the price of a ham she ran up the hill  
And rang up the cut of a diamond;  
Says I – I'll be Jack if you will be Gill –  
So, we sat on the grass *tout le monde* –

Here's somebody coming! Here's somebody coming!  
Says I – 't is the world all around;  
So, with all the masses all hymning and humming  
We lay on the grass *tout le monde* –

Here's somebody here and here's somebody found!  
Says I - ring my bell – you, young fairy;  
So, she stuck out her tongue and lay plump and round  
As sweet as the Queen of the Dairy.

O who wouldst not hie over the moon,  
O who wouldn't throw-out their plastic,  
O who wouldst not run away with the spoon,  
To marry the fiddle fantastic –

Sirens

Wert Sirens thus encroach'd on womanhood:  
Close by a sleepy noon in maiden's nook,  
Who counts epistles in her polish'd wood,  
Turn'd with those pages of your homely book.  
Whether the harborage didst grow itself,  
If man should darest canvass for a plume,  
Whether in natural oils wouldst try herself,  
Or cast for shadow in a dusky room.  
But that horse therefore galloped for that briar  
Didst not furlough long– for was steed.  
If the ole china cozied 'round thy fire,  
Shouldst swallow all the tea-leaves, let down lace –  
For how doest womanhood all freckled-face,  
Let dowry down to mythical miscreed?

Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770)

Is Charity and Love among high elves?  
Ask Hope for her ethereal balm,  
Ask Palmers to read their myriad palm,  
Ask Ruby breasted warbler – tell yourselves.  
Is there a sun that rises calm and bright?  
Does Robin twee as the magpie chatters?  
Is air thus filled with pleasant noise of waters?  
Was welcom'd last the roaring wind all night?  
Recall a boy who counts among the stars –  
Dear child of sorrow was it not thy fate!  
At seventeen you died for hymning Mars,  
Proud of thy voice, majestic or elate.  
On earth the warlike self-destruction bars,  
Abuse, neglect, despondency, self-hate.

The End