

“The Garden of Proserpine” (1866) by Algernon Swinburne

Here, where the world is quiet;
 Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
 In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
 A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
 And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
 For men that sow to reap:
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
 And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,
 And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labour,
 Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
 And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
 No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies ,
 Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes

Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell ,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal ,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands ;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother ,
The life of fruits and corn;

And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
 And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
 The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
 And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
 Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow ,
 And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow;
 Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
 Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
 From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
 Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
 Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
 Nor any change of light:

Nor sound of waters shaken,
 Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
 In an eternal night.

“The Garden of Proserpine” (1869) by Dora Greenwell

AMARANTH and asphodel,
Methinks I know ye well,
And thou, frail wind-swept flower that in the dim
Green woods, unseen by him
Thou lovest best, must pass, beloved in vain!
Here blooms each flower whose leaf
Or petal hints at grief
And bears a mystic sign, a crimson stain;
The golden rod with fire
Stands tipp'd, the tuberose,
In its swift fading glows
And lights within its heart a funeral pyre.
No roses, white nor red, Glow here, the poppy's head
Droops drown'd in spells that keep
The keys of death and sleep,
Of anguish, ecstasy, and wild desire;
Here ever on the turf green twilight lies;
Here ever warm and fragrant is the air,
And all this place is desolate and fair,
Made by a King and meet for Love's delight;
Yet here joy comes not, but the exquisite
Brief thrill of rapture in a pang that dies.
Here walks a Queen with steadfast eyes unwet,
With white Narcissus garlanded, that still
Dreams of fair Enna's sunlit mead, and yet
Mourns for the fresh, ungather'd daffodil.