

## Golgotha

Mary:

And what is left? This flesh of sky hath bled  
Drear blood of clouds – toward night it drains; and o'er  
Dim rocks, dim hills, the shadows slowly strain  
Unto the ninth hour. Waters of the vault  
And winds below the violet dome: Oh, wash  
This red effulgence! so gloom might the world  
Sleep corpse-like under, swathed in empty dreams  
While silence of high spheres undoes my heart –  
For death lives here, and only silence lasts  
Past grief, past life.

How cold blow the winds.  
From out their graves crawl saints and holy men  
Toward towns to wander... All such grasps my soul,  
But naught else showeth. What see ye, besides?

The Magdalene:

Ten thousand years beyond the flood, again  
Great welkin looks to birth another sea –  
Yet only faintest drops fall on the gale.  
Now soft creeks slip between the jutting stones,  
Feed roots such slightest drips of chilly drink,  
And sink from sight. The carobs shake with puffs  
Breathed by the vaporous empires...

Oh, I fail:

I nothing view but wetness, and the land.

Salome:

By darkness show our souls what they contain:  
Now drop vast shadows, closing plain and vale  
From flitting eyes – but summoning broad dreams.  
I know of worlds beyond our simple sense:  
I know of worlds, strange riddles, and the blasts.

The Magdalene:

But look, such figures – animals and birds!  
Of many colors, passing in a row,  
The cruel cliffs and the scree leaving behind,  
Hobbling or stalking down some weary trail,  
As from the mountains... down to gorgeous sea –  
Some rich flesh traveling low, from air to wave,  
From sharp serene to salt that beats and throws:  
To gather there, and pass upon blue boats  
Each ferried by a smiling man of bone.  
What forms of breath slow travel from the sky!  
And 'side a brick wall runs the gathered rain  
To edge of earth, to drop, and spray in gloom.  
In slumber do I look?

Salome:

All seems a light  
That lives within, and never harms, the dark.  
It dwells in nowhere – yet below a hill  
Rise towers of gold, and ramparts: windowed world  
Of dimless shine.

The Magdalene:

See, fruits as sparkle-rich  
As every breed of rose!

Salome:

In orchards drowse  
The falcon and the hen; and weathervanes  
Spin as the gales shift.

The Magdalene:

This sweet earth is bread,  
This air is water, sleep is conscious life;  
And lovers intertwine where lattice locks  
Their bed from sight... The stork hath curled his neck;  
Great cedars sleep, bear stars along their boughs  
Like diamonds on the arm.

Mary:  
My eyes are yet  
Shut darkness; speak ye more.

The Magdalene:  
No sooner asked –  
But all these things depart. The ear is now  
Keen roving eye: Wild winds and thunderclaps  
Break robin's egg of heaven... Voices hushed  
Breathe 'neath the lightning: woman... man... a child.

Salome:  
They speak of nothing one might understand,  
But sorrowful enigmas of this place.

The Magdalene:  
The sky looms yellow – so calm, evening waits.  
Again, the light...

Mary:  
I watch a people tread  
To far-off fields, beneath the glowing hills.  
They clutch their cloaks, like weak things in the breeze.  
I look – the cold land stretches: empty, bare.