

# Ode to Poesy

By Aleister Crowley

Unto what likeness shall I liken thee,  
O moon-wrought maiden of my dewy sleep?  
For thou art Queen of Thoughts, and unto me  
Sister and Bride; the worn earth's echoes leap  
Because thy holy name is Poesy.  
Whereto art thou most like?  
Thou art a Than, crescent o'er the sea  
That beats sonorous on the craggy shore,  
Or shakes the frail earth-dyke.  
So calm and still and far, that never more  
Thy silken song shall quiver through the land;  
Only by coral isle, by lonely strand  
Where no man dwells, thy voice re-wakens wild and grand.

Thou art an Aphrodite. From the foam  
Of golden grape and red thou risest up  
Immaculate; thou hast an ebon comb  
Of shade and silence, and a jasper cup  
Wherein are mingled all desires. Thine home  
Is in the forest shade.  
Thy pale feet kiss the daffodils; they roam  
By moss-grown springs, and shake the bluebell tips.  
Each flower of the deep glade  
Has whispered kisses for thy listening lips,  
While Eos blushes in the sky, to find  
A fairer, queenlier maiden, and as kind  
To man and maid, whose eyes are lit by the same mind.

Thou hast, as Pallas hath, a polished shield,  
Whose Gorgon-head is Hatred, and a sword  
Sharper than Love's. Thy wisdom is revealed  
To them who love, but thou hast aye abhorred  
The children of revenge, to them is sealed  
Thy book, so clear to me.  
Thy book where seven sins their sceptres wield,  
And seven sorrows track them, and one joy  
Cancels their infamy;  
Shame and regret are fused to an alloy,  
Whose drossy weight sinks down and is consumed,  
While o'er the ruddy metal is relumed  
A purer flame of peace, with knowledge now perfumed.

Thy ways are very bitter. Not one rose  
Twines in the crown of thorns thy spouse must wear;  
There is no Lethe for the scoffs, the blows,  
Nor find they a Cyrenian anywhere  
Amid the mob, to lift my cross, to share  
Its burden: not one friend  
Whose love were silence, whose affection knows  
To press my hand and close my dying eyes  
There, at the endless end.  
I am alone on earth, and from the skies  
Sometimes I seem so far—and yet, thy kiss  
Re-quickens Hope; through æther's emptiness  
Thou guidest me to touch the Hand of Him who Is

Thou hadst a torch to lume my lips to song;  
Thou hast a cooler fountain for my thirst,  
Lest my young love should work thy fame a wrong;  
So the grape's veins in purple ardour burst,  
And opiates in bloomless gardens throng,  
And Life, a moon, wanes fast;  
But to thy garden richer buds belong  
And hardier flowers, and Love, a deathless sun,  
Flames eager to the last,  
And young desires in fleeter revels run,  
And Life revives, and all the flowers rejoice,  
Bird and light butterfly have made their choice,  
Creation hymns its God with an united voice.

There is a storm without. The hoary trees  
Stagger, the foam is angry on the sea:  
I know the secret mountains are at ease,  
And in the deepest ice-embroidery  
Where great men's spirits linger there is peace.  
Heed not the unquiet wind;  
Dawn's finger shall be raised, its wrath shall cease,  
The sun shall rouse us whom the tempest lulled,  
And thy poor poet's mind  
For respite by its own deep anguish dulled  
Shall wake again to watch the cruel day  
Drift slowly on its chill and wasted way  
With but thy smile to inspire some sad melodious lay.

From whose rude caverns sweep these gusty wings  
That shake the steeples as they mock at God?  
Who reared the stallion wind? Whose foaling flings

The billows starward? Whose the steeds fire-shod  
That sweep throughout the world? What spearman sings  
The fearful chant of war  
That fires, and spurs, and maddens all the kings  
That rule o'er earth, and air, and ocean?  
Whose hand excites the star  
To shatter into fiery flakes? No man,  
No petty god, but One who governs all,  
Slips the sun's leash, perceives the sparrow's fall,  
Too high for man to fear, too near for man to call.

O virgin Poesy, the link is thine  
To bring us near; the suffering of thy path  
Hath its reward, desire that is divine  
Strengthens and gladdens, and thy beauty hath  
This joy moreover—It is strong as wine  
And sweet as honey is.  
For at the end, beyond the bitter brine,  
A fountain of sweet water! And thine arms  
Embrace me, and thy kiss  
Is ever on my lips, and all thy charms  
Burn in my blood till pain itself grows sweet,  
Reluctant sorrow and quick passion meet;  
We two one day will kneel in Heaven and touch God's feet.