

ANTINOUS. A POEM
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ANTINOUS

A POEM

Under his wet locks Death's blue paleness wages
Now war upon our pity with sad smile».

Even as he thinks, the lust that is no more
Than a memory of lust revives and takes
His senses by the hand, and his flesh quakes
Till all becomes again what 'twas before.
The dead body on the bed gets up and lives
Along his every nerve ripped up and twanged,
And a love-o'er-wise and invisible hand
At every body-entrance to his lust
Utters caresses which flit off, yet just
Remain enough to bleed his last nerve's strand,
O sweet and cruel Parthian fugitives!

He rises, mad, and looks upon his lover,
That now can love nothing but what none know.
Then his cold lips run all the body over —
His lips that scarce remember their warmth, now
So blent with feeling the death they behold;
And so ice-senseless are his lips that, lo!,
He scarce tastes death from the dead body's cold,
But it seems both are dead or living both
And love is still the Presence and the Mover.
Then his lips cease on the other lips' cold sloth.

But there the wanting breath reminds his lips
That between him and his boy-love the mist
That comes out of the gods has crept. The tips
Of his fingers, still idly tickling, list
To some flesh-response to their purple mood.
But their love-orison is not understood.
The god is dead whose cult was to be kissed!

He lifts his hand up to where heaven should be
And cries on the mute gods to know his pain.
Lo, list!, o divine watchers of our glee

And sorrow !, list !, he will yield up his reign.
He will live in the deserts and be parched
On the hot sands, he will be beggar and slave ;
But give again the boy to be arm-reached !
Forego that space ye meant to be his grave !

Take all the female beauties of the earth !
Take all afar and rend them if ye will !
But, by sweet Ganymede, that Jove found worth
And above Hebe did elect to fill
His cup at his high festivals, and spill
His fairer vice wherefrom comes newer birth —,
The clod of female embraces resolve
To dust, o father of the gods !, but spare
This boy and his white body and golden hair.
Maybe thy newer Ganymede thou meanst
That he should be, and out of jealous care
From Hadrian's arms to thine his beauty steal'st.

He was a kitten playing with lust, playing
With his own and with Hadrian's, sometimes one
And sometimes two, now splitting, now one grown,
Now leaving lust, now lust's high lusts delaying,
Now eyeing lust not wide, but from askance
Jumping round on lust's half-unexpectance ;
Then softly gripping, then with fury holding,
Now playfully playing, now seriously, now lying
By the side of lust looking at it, now spying
Which way to take lust in his lust's withholding.

Thus did the hours slide from their tangled hands
And from their mixed limbs the moments slip.
Now were his arms dead leaves, now iron bands,
Now were his lips cups, now the things that sip,
Now were his eyes too closed, and now too open,
Now were his ways such as none thought might happen,
Now were his arts a feather and now a whip.

Out of the falling darkness the wind rose
And fell. A voice swooned in the courts below.
And the Emperor slept.

The gods came now
And bore something away, no sense knows how,
On unseen arms of power and repose.

LISBON, 1915.

