

TRANSIT  
OF  
VENUS

POEMS  
by  
HARRY CROSBY

THE BLACK SUN PRESS  
RUE CARDINALE  
PARIS  
MCMXXIX



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“but occasionally at her  
inferior conjunction Venus passes  
directly across the disk of the Sun,  
the phenomenon being known as  
a Transit.”

(The Sun by Young)

“two fires that make one fire”

(Tristram by Robinson)

## FIRST MEETING

("lorsque Vénus est tout  
entière entrée dans le disque")

When you are the flower  
I am the shadow cast by the flower  
When I am the fire  
You are the mirror reflecting the fire  
And when Venus has entered the disk of the Sun  
Then you are that Venus and I am the Sun.

## INDUBITABLE

How little can be known  
How first I met you  
All words are common  
Of what were good to do  
Of how in silks and satins half undone  
Your fearless arms imparadised the sun.

## ALL THAT IS BEAUTIFUL

All that is beautiful shall  
Out of our garden grow  
All hope beyond all fear  
All gentle play  
All yes and never no  
All flowers of the night and day  
While deep within our hearts  
                    shall smoulder  
Strange fire growing young not older.



## A GIRL COMES FROM AFAR

A girl comes from afar  
In naked ignorance  
Ghost of defunct  
Unburied circumstance  
    One soul in two  
    Two with one soul  
To roll like a wheel  
From the one to the other  
Love to the lover.

## TESTAMENT OF PLEASURE

Testament of pleasure,  
The love of, for itself,  
The shy laugh of,  
The state of nature,  
The study of a rose,  
This is  
To be prepared for.

## ALTAZIMUTH

We know not what we may  
(Graves of princesses  
Green in our souls)  
By rockets and flashing of signals  
By trigonometrical surveys  
By the aid of chronometers  
By ultra-violet rays  
We know not what we may erect  
By transit observations of the moon,  
By culminating stars, soon,  
By the aid of an altazimuth  
We shall erect  
Perpendiculars enough.

## THORN IN THE FLESH

Thorn beneath the milk-white  
Crowned with  
In the flesh

Thorns beneath the  
Rose without  
On the ground  
On the stalk

Thousands at her bidding speed  
Countless mourn  
Die without

Sunbeam in a winter's day  
True as the dial to  
True as the dial to  
True as the dial  
To you.

## THE ROSE

To fame unknown  
To many a, and many a maid  
We are not naming  
To whom was given  
Virtue  
(Be as wax to flaming)  
We poets in our desire  
Wear the rose of what he steals from her  
Learning in the freshness of  
Ashes cold as fire.

## RITUAL

Venus is sleeping with Fire  
Because it is winter and cold.

With Echo  
(The sound of strange footsteps gold upon gold  
As they pass through the door)

With Love  
(As she goes to the Sun  
And is seen by the world no more)

Among lanterns and torches  
And flags unfurled  
She and the Sun  
Are not of this world.

## REQUISITES

Of the moon,  
Of the wind,  
Of the frozen sea,  
As ice, be thou,  
As evening dew,  
As the icicle,  
As unsunned snow,  
As orchids I shall bring to you —  
To me if you are not these  
What care I how you be  
I shall know tranquillity.

## SHADOWS

A shade,  
A starless night,  
Death,  
Of death, darkness and the  
Of some unseen power,  
Thy wings under the  
On the wall  
Of evening, let me call  
Shadows of a thought in green  
Shadows I have seen.

## PRIESTESS

The moon  
Lives in her arms  
Shows in her face  
Teaches such beauty  
That all the low  
And commonplace  
Imaginings have gone  
Leaving Aurora  
Daughter of the dawn.

## GODDESS OF MIRTH

Of the stars,  
Of the frayed moon,  
Of the sun will be dimmed,  
Of time,  
Of the birth of the world  
Vain pomp and power  
One shame and one flower,  
O goddess of mirth  
Hurled soon to the grave  
Rushed to and passed from the earth.

## YOU CAME TO ME

You came to me  
On all the winds of an ostrich,  
On winds of the desert,  
On evening wind  
Of night, falls from the  
Of silence, float upon the  
Of morning,  
On the wind, fly upon the  
Of winds came flying on,  
On wide-waving,  
Sailing on echo  
Of winds.

## POEM

The moon, as yon dead,  
The rolling,  
The whole kin  
The whole wide  
There is not in the wide  
This great roundabout  
This gross, hard-seeming,  
This my,  
This little  
This pendent  
This unintelligible,  
Thou art the whole wide,  
Three corners of the  
Tired of wandering orbit.

## NOR LOOK BEHIND

Remember Lot's wife  
How like a woman in a barren field  
No stronger than a flower  
Not born in shame  
Like the deaf adder  
Adding fuel to the flame  
Of virtue  
Of weak minds  
Of blame  
In naked beauty more  
The most when unadorned  
Spare not nor look behind  
Nor fear

Nor spare  
The scorned.

## MAGIC FORMULA

What heavens opened and blazed,  
What sisters virtuous,  
What arrows sprang to mark  
The trees so terrible and dark,  
What years, what hopes,  
What lions all amazed,  
What fears disguised,  
(These antelopes with frightened eyes)  
What things are these ?

These are the things that all day long  
On things made new  
After the sunset has merged with the dawn  
I bring to you.

These are the things that grow less and less  
As sleep devours our nakedness.

## YOUTH

Fair, all that is, by nature good,  
Crystal river  
Ever young and strong,  
Man that has his quiver full  
Ever young and strong,  
And good as she,  
And never wrong,  
He softly goes  
With unpolluted flesh  
To gather petals from the rose.

## YOUR KISS

I am —  
It was your kiss that made me  
Gather bright arrows  
For the day of death  
A death more beautiful than death  
A fire upon fire  
Behold your beauty carrying fire —  
Apparition seen and gone  
Cannot make the prospect less  
Summer with Autumn shall undress.



## MIRACLE

Abysm of time, dark  
Abysmal dark, or the  
Abyss, into this wild  
Accent of an angel's whisper  
Accents flow with artless ease  
That are ours,  
Accept a miracle instead of these.

## ARROW OF GOLD

O for a muse of  
O love O  
(One love burns out another)  
O  
In her eyes she smothers  
In her hands she holds  
The pillar of fire by night  
(Purge off the baser fright)  
O for the test of gold  
Slender and swift and warriorbold  
Arrow of gold.

## IT IS WELL

On my heart metallic  
Strives the past to throw  
Noble dust of centuries  
Noble dust of snow.

Were this needful to the flower  
Were this free from fear  
Were this immortality  
Sun beyond all fear.

Then would men be liars  
Then would men be lost  
It is well that we desire  
Fire chained to living frost.

Things all day long are lost  
Things are made new and lost  
Things can be born and lost  
Things work together and are lost  
Things to all men are lost.

It is well it is not love  
It is well that they are lost.

## WORLD MADE TO BE LOVED

A world made to be  
Loved long since and awhile  
All good to me is,  
All good to me is  
As her smile,  
Battles won and battles  
Gone before  
And battles lost  
Not gone before,  
In laws churches and creeds  
In wandering images  
Loved long since  
In deeds  
Praising what is silent  
Above the flowers  
The immortal daughters of the hours  
Her children  
Sleeping away the hours  
They are in the dorades' keeping.

## BE NOT IT IS I

Be not, it is I  
Whistling to keep from being  
On our dull side  
Fleeing to ocean  
Come never back  
Cut and come  
Flow gently sweet  
Looking before and  
Of her best days  
Sunshine asleep,  
Come never back  
Cut and come —  
Us the deluge  
Which has come.

## DAY-DREAMING

To lay her hand upon the  
Forever two are walking  
Though not alone man dwells.

To lay her hand upon the words  
Of earth unbroken  
Whereof it may be said  
Not every question  
Brings an answer spoken.

To lay her hand upon the cool-enfolding  
Take your last embrace  
Hunger is the teacher of  
The palaces of lace.

## BEYOND

Beyond the roofs of the world,  
Beyond the works of man,  
Beyond house and home,  
Beyond old books,  
Beyond the frying-pan,  
Beyond flags long furled  
(Out of sight out of mind),  
Beyond the everywhere into here,  
Beyond old fields (austere),  
Beyond the woods that I came through,  
I find (O sweetest place)  
Your mouth, O let me woo  
Your mouth  
That dark and purple fruit  
That trembles like a heart  
Irresolute.

## WERE IT NOT BETTER

Were it not better, not too soon,  
On even keel, though it be dark,  
On life's dark ocean, for us to sail  
On O ship of state (unmockingly)  
(We know not where we go)  
On O gold bark of the moon  
(O Bay of Biscay,  
O to be a wolf and bay the moon)  
On O Union strong and great  
Set every threadbare swan  
Upon the sea  
Mate with the many mermaids, go  
Loved by you and loved by me  
To and fro  
To love and not to  
Sink below.

## PRAYER

Day, from darkness to  
Day, lead me O Sun till  
Days, unto the  
Day, then if ever come  
Days which weigh upon the heart,  
Lead me quietly away  
Lead me quietly apart.

## ROOTS

Tall ancestral  
Tongues in  
Unto the root of  
Dark-fingered  
As the needle to the pole  
As the shadow to the sun  
Fungi and mushrooms  
And the root of a tree  
Dark-fingered  
Thrusting into  
Infinity.

## CŒUR DE JEUNE FEMME

Her heart  
Is of a number of things,  
Of whispered song  
Of comfort built with money  
Of dead men's bones  
Of necklaces and rings  
Of faith  
(he is fresh and funny  
of good intentions  
of good works  
of goodly prospect  
of grace force  
fascination youth)  
Her heart is of marble  
For defence  
Of sweet days, of roses,  
Of sweet indifference  
When he proposes.

## HANDS

In hand (the touch of a wanton hand)  
In hand the golden  
In hand with the sea-breeze  
White hands in a golden chain  
White hands on her knees  
White wonder upon a woman  
Of hands half open  
Or, if you please,  
Hand upon many a  
And hands both open  
Upon many a heart,  
Hands of the hours  
Draw us apart,  
Hands for the body  
Hands for the heart.

## THAT HARD WORD

That hard word  
That sore saying spoken  
The end —  
The poor creature, I do,  
The power of beauty, I,  
The way we parted  
Forget that I,  
I cannot, but that such things were,  
I remember (broken-hearted)  
Only Her.

## LAID UNDER

Laid under the root of a tree  
As a star  
As roses  
As she  
Darkness and silence agree.

Laid under the root of a heart  
As a hurt  
As ashes  
As a dart  
Passion and love break apart.

## MASK

We like, we figure the,  
We long for what we are,  
We are now as they are,  
All are the same  
All day long, on all  
Beyond all use  
All work together for the good  
All to all men  
All thinking all a dream  
All that are  
Are seldom as they seem.

## YOU WOULD NOT SCREAM

I wish to-night I were a cat  
That I might slink  
To where you sleep demurely  
(Sleeping above the brink of dream)  
And suck your breath  
Slowly and surely  
Into death.



## RECKON THE DAYS

Rekon the days you have not been  
Anticipate the past  
Ye evening tapers  
Reckon the days  
Fire shall cool at last  
Reckon the days in one word  
Reckon the past.

## LOST THINGS

Lost things  
Were warm with beauty  
Bird of the  
Birds of the have nests  
Her charming gestures and her breasts  
Hurtle in the darkened room,  
So soft, so hushed,  
So soft the birds in nests,  
So soft her breasts.

## VENUS

Made up of loveliness  
Looking in the looking-glass  
Ample room and verge enough  
Flesh in the grass.

Never anything can be  
Frail as her coquetry  
Analytic with a glance  
Venus rouges for the dance.

Anchors great and anchors small  
Hold her lovers fast in thrall  
Apparitions seen with scorn  
One has gone.

## EVENTUATE

I am here  
    (looking into your eyes)  
I am not the  
Je ne suis pas  
Just newly born  
That all are praising  
With leaves yet folded  
Waiting the dawn,  
But I shall remain here  
    (immortal behind this portal)  
I shall remain here  
    (as one shall see in a  
day at the end of a day  
    one golden languor)  
I say the world is in your hair  
(in dream the youngest princess lay  
most shy and ladylike  
in very gentleness of dream)  
    A very snare  
    Wherein agree  
    Five fathom deep  
    Miraculously  
    Darkness and sleep.

## BEAUTY IN BED

All her sorrow, all her  
All in vain,  
And ashes  
And laughter  
And smiles, kisses  
Are shed  
Beauty smiling in her bed.

## LITTLE GIRL

The little girl of the pink ring  
Penduluming  
And the stars were like notes of music  
Linked atoms  
Male and female  
Land and ocean  
Good and evil  
Rest and motion.

## NICER HANDS

Nicer hands  
Not well together  
Run to waste  
On things of love  
For some wretch's  
Friend of pleasure  
Those who with us  
On the stage  
Calm and pleasant  
When the weather  
Calm and pleasant  
In their cage.

## FEET OF THE SUN

His feet are nailed to desperate paths  
His feet are bruised  
His feet endure  
Contending with,  
Crossed with,  
A man he is  
What way to endure  
His feet because of hers are pure.

## KISS

This blessed fruit, this,  
This goodly red,  
This fire, this O, this,  
This is the last of  
This kiss.

## LITTLE POEMS

### I

Two dark little doors  
(Her eyes).

### II

Her ears  
Two little slippers  
For the feet of my voice.

## FIRE-EATERS

At every one in his castle  
(moonlight sleeps upon the  
bed of violets, breathes upon a  
shoal of time,  
better for being a little  
over-sublime)

At every one at his feasting  
At kings and queens at their feast  
We laugh on our bed of laughter  
Because we are least  
(the ruin lay, lovely in death  
the ruin lies, and  
lovers admire  
her naked eyes)  
Viler than vile esteemed  
Because we devour the fire  
Others have dreamed.

## PARALLEL

Of love's sweet poses,  
Of pleasures lovers contest for,  
Of hands and eyes and breasts and feet,  
Of roses,  
Of things unknown  
That once have been  
(Former times were sweet).  
Of forty days and forty nights  
In places that we knew not of  
Unheard our dirge was being sung  
Unseen our bodies hung —  
In places that we know full well  
Our souls are fleeting parallel  
To Sun.

## FORECAST

I care not  
If Fortune is blind, fickle,  
Is like glass,  
Has divers ways,  
Is unstable,  
Is on our side, when,  
Is false as brass,  
Leads on to,  
Leaves some door open,  
Favors bridegroom or bride,  
Sees love-words broken.

I only care  
Lest Fortune mar  
(then I shall be particular)  
Your bare, bright beauty  
Slings and arrows  
To make you common as the sparrows.

## AND MEMORY

And memory  
At which the soul grew pale —  
I thus leave thee  
Not what we would  
But what we live without —  
O nightingale  
We will not ask her  
Of her face,  
By man,  
By strangers,  
By the midnight place  
Where beauty rustles in the dark,  
Revered and honored,  
Loved and lost,  
Far-hidden in the heart  
Of gallant men,  
Of soldiers slain,  
Of shipwrecked poets  
In the rain.

## NEW EVERY MORNING

New every morning  
All brightness like an orchestra of swords  
All flashing messages of joy  
All gay as ladies with their lords  
Meteor with comet spinning spun  
New every morning with the sun.

## PANTHER

Pounce pounce O panther  
Pounce upon your mate  
Love and devour  
Love and hate  
For you no pale prosaic love  
No vulgar pigeon with his dove.



## EUDEMONISM

Lived and loved we have  
And loved together we have  
In abundance Dear,  
In the eye of nature,  
In the tide of times,  
In hearts long dead behind,  
In suns new centuries ahead,  
Through all things,  
To day we have  
With no other thought Dear  
As we often do  
You with me I with you.

## PHOENIX

Let beauty grow  
Let moonlight meet  
The noonday light  
In thee  
Let miracles of song prevail  
Let male and female  
In one clean fusion  
Rise like a phoenix  
From the world's confusion.

## UNFATHOMED

Nestle in the central fire  
Love has everywhere  
Deep unfathomed passions  
To lay bare  
Doors not yet discovered  
Semblances of noon  
Secrets half-uncovered  
Like the moon.

## GAY

Gay as the day is  
Before and after we  
Gay as the sun's  
Velocity  
Gay as our love is  
Silkiness and gold  
Gay as a colt  
New-foaled.

## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

Sounds of creep in my ears  
Of your voice  
Slumbers in the shell  
Of my ear  
Of humanity still sad,  
Of lost cries of war,  
Of the wild gulls of the sea  
Lost to the shore.  
Faint village bells,  
Faint stars with silver sound,  
Faint tintinnabulation  
For the drowned.

## ALCHEMY

O stallions of the wind  
O hurricanes and storms of fire  
O javelin for the moon to burn  
This is the madness we require  
This surf of rainbows  
Curving into sleep  
This sudden alchemy of splendor  
For us to reap.

## SHARING FIRE

White as a thought of  
Whiteness  
Pure in thought as are the eyes of  
Sad as said to be the speech of  
Those who sharing fire  
Teach us it is growing late  
Teach us to inquire  
At the heavy gate.

## YES

One little  
One golden  
Of bliss wingèd  
With flying feet  
One vision golden  
Of the sun and sea  
One precise moment  
Of clarity.

## AMOR

At sunrise the shadows divide  
(Young legs of the bride)  
And soon soon  
The fiery shadowless  
Blaze of noon  
Until the shadows fall together  
Beneath the crescent moon's white feather.

## WE ARE ONE

We are one  
As heaven and earth are  
    one in the rain  
As the heart and the body  
As pleasure and pain  
We are one  
Seed and blood  
Wood and fire  
Wind and the weathervane.

## LAST CONTACT

("lorsque Vénus va quitter  
définitivement le disque Solaire")

Cry in your sleep and implore  
Cry autumn's fire still small  
Cry as the door to the wind  
Cry for I call.

Cry for the touch of the snow upon snow  
Cry of the things that you fear  
Cry in the darkness a distant  
Dream in my ear.

Books By The Same Author

*Poetry*

Sonnets For Caresse

Chariot of the Sun  
(Introduction by D.H. Lawrence)

*Tirades*

Mad Queen

*Prose*

Shadows of the Sun

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