

Melusine.

To M. M. M.

Hangs over me the fine false gold
Above the bosom epicene
That hides my head that hungereth.
The steady eyes of steel behold,
When on a sudden the fierce and thin
Curled subtle mouth swoops on my breath,
And like a serpent's mouth is cold,
And like a serpent's mouth is keen,
And like a serpent's mouth is death.

Lithe arms, wan with love's mysteries,
Creep round and close me in, as Thule
Wraps Arctic oceans ultimate;
Some deathly swoon or sacrifice,
This love—a red hypnotic jewel
Worn in the forehead of a Fate!
And like a devil-fish is ice,
And like a devil-fish is cruel,
And like a devil-fish is hate.

Beneath those kisses songs of sadness
Sob, in the pulses of desire,
Seeking some secret in the deep;
Low melodies of stolen gladness,
The bitterness of death; the lyre
Broken to bid the viol weep:
And like a Maenad's chants are madness,
And like a Maenad's chants are fire,
And like a Maenad's chants are sleep.

A house of pain is her bedchamber.
Her skin electric clings to mine,
Shakes for pure passion, moves and hisses ;
Whose subtle perfumes half remember
Old loves, and desolate divine
Wailings among the wildernesses ;
And like a Hathor's skin is amber,
And like a Hathor's skin is wine,
And like a Hathor's skin is kisses.

Gray steel self-kindled shine her eyes.
They rede strange runes of time defiled,
And ruined souls, and Satan's kin.
I see their veiled impurities,
An harlot hidden in a child,
Through all their love and laughter lean ;
And like a witch's eyes are wise,
And like a witch's eyes are wild,
And like a witch's eyes are Sin.

She moves her breasts in Bacchanal
Rhymes to that music manifold
That pulses in the golden head,
Seductive phrase perpetual,

Terrible both to change or hold ;
 They move, but all their light is fled ;
And like a dead girl's breasts are small,
 And like a dead girl's breasts are cold,
 And like a dead girl's breasts are dead.

Forests and ancient haunts of sleep
 See dawn's intolerable spark
 While yet fierce darkness lingereth.
So I, their traveller, sunward creep,
 Hail Ra uprising in his bark,
 And feel the dawn-wind's sombre breath.
Strange loves rise up, and turn, and weep!
 Our warm wet bodies may not mark
 How these spell Satan's shibboleth
And like a devil's loves are deep,
 And like a devil's loves are dark,
 And like a devil's loves are death.