

CARRION.

Recall, my soul, the sight we twain have looked upon
This summer morning soft and sweet,
Beside the path, an infamous foul carrion,
Stones for its couch a fitting sheet.

Its legs stretched in the air, like wanton whores
Burning with lust, and reeking venom sweated,
Laid open, carelessly and cynically, the doors
Of belly rank with exhalations foetid.

Upon this rottenness the sun shone deadly straight
As if to cook it to a turn,
And give back to great Nature hundredfold the debt
That, joining it together, she did earn.

The sky beheld this carcase most superb outspread
As spreads a flower, itself, whose taint
Stank so supremely strong, that on the grass your
head
You thought to lay, in sudden faint.

The flies swarmed numberless on this putrescent belly,
Whence issued a battalion
Of larvae, black, that flowed, a sluggish liquid jelly,
Along this living carrion.

All this was falling, rising as the eager seas,
Or heaving with strange crepitation—
Was't that the corpse, swollen out with a lascivious
breeze,
Was yet alive by copulation?

And all the carcase now sounded strange symphonies
Like wind, or running water wan,
Or grain that winnower shakes and turns,
whene'er he plies
With motion rhythmical his fan.

The shapes effaced themselves; no more their images
Were aught but dreams, a sketch too slow
To tint the canvas, that the artist finishes
By memory that does not go.

Behind the rocks a bitch unquietly gazed on
Ourselves with eye of wrathful woe,
Watching her time to return unto the skeleton
For tit-bits that she had let go.

Yet you are like to it, this dung, this carrion,
To this infection doubly dire,
Star of my eyes that are, and still my nature's sun,
You, O my angel! You, my own desire!

Yes! such will you be, queen, in graces that surpass,
Once the last sacraments are said;
When you depart beneath wide-spreading blooms
and grass
To rot amid the bones of many dead.

Then, O my beauty! tell the worms, who will devour
With kisses all of you to dust;
That I have kept the form and the essential power
Divine of my distorted lust.