

HERTHA

I AM that which began ;
 Out of me the years roll ;
 Out of me God and man ;
 I am equal and whole ;
 God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily ;
 I am the soul.

 Before ever land was,
 Before ever the sea,
 Or soft hair of the grass,
 Or fair limbs of the tree,
 Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches, I was, and
 thy soul was in me.

 First life on my sources
 First drifted and swam ;
 Out of me are the forces
 That save it or damn ;
 Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird :
 before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go ;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves ; I am stricken,
and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul
and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate ;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the
measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
“ I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high ” ?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him ; find thou
but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the
dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast
thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and
shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Hath the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the
winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now ?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the
mountains and thou ?

What is here, dost thou know it ?
What was, hast thou known ?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy
mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made ;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs
not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night ;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live
out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith ;
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought,
and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee ;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free ;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt
thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Always to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshadowing the shadows
and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light ;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadow-
less soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I ;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves :
ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off ;
they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark ;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread
out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me ;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the
waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and
branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of
my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of
storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights ;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop
through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or
deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these ;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite
lands and of seas.

In the spring-coloured hours
When my mind was as May's
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out
from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots ;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom
of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be ;
I have need not of prayer ;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air ;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the
fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse ;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs ;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him
with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the
wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful ?
Was it hard to be free ?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you ; look
forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with
the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here ;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown grey from his fear ;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of
his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives ;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon free-
dom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole ;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed
of my soul.

One birth of my bosom ;

One beam of mine eye ;

One topmost blossom

That scales the sky ;

Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me,
man that is I.