

Gardens of the Villa d'Este

The Terrace, like the crow's nest of a ship,
Hung above a rolling sea of trees
A sea of cypress green and olive grey
With cresting waves of pink and purple flowers
And lazily the piping of the birds
Rose above the murmur of the streams.

The steps were shallow, shady, worn and grey
Descending to the caverns of the sea
Where thought was soon submerged beneath a flood
Of deep sensations, beautiful and clear,
Until remained not knowledge but existence....
Cooled by the touch of water.....
Fresh with the scent of water....
Drowned in the roar of water.....
Held to earth by probing rays of sun.

Italy 1966

Migration

My butterfly -

Dark wings and peacock eyes -

My heart goes

Trembling with her

As she flies.

I have no compass

To direct her flight

I cannot guide her path

To left or right;

She chooses.....

By a code I do not know.

Oh, butterfly,

Be careful as you go.

I wish you well

I wish you tropic light

But you may choose

Volcanoes, storms and night

And if you do

I'm with you through the fire

If it will lead you

To your heart's desire.

She chooses.....by a code I do not know.

My butterfly, be careful as you go....

Nottingham UK 1991

The Panther

Tense he was and restless, ill at ease,

When first he caught my eye

Padding, padding up and down his cage

Dreaming his jungle dreams.

I wanted him to tame him for my own,

To stroke his mighty head and rippling limbs

I needed him to shield me from my fears

For he was power.

I took him to my world, a world of flowers

Which swayed and whispered under forest trees,

And there he lay at rest within my arms

And purred, for he was tired and far from home.

Slowly, slowly he absorbed my world
And, mellowing in its peace and gentleness,
He lost suspicion of the human race,
His pride and rage.

But then at last he turned his gaze on me
And suddenly remembered who he was....
A king, all-powerful, who walked alone
Unfettered by the subtle ties of love;
And in his amber eyes there came a glow,
A wish to own, to conquer and devour...
I knew my folly and I fled away,
And left him tramping down the forest flowers.

Oxford. 1962

Two-faced

My two-faced Cat, I love your fur
Your shining eyes, your rumbling purr.
I hate your fangs, your raking claw
The stains of blood upon the floor
The corpses underneath the chair.

You croon to me, your voice a whirr,

You pat my face, you lick my hair

At dark you lurk beside the door

My two-faced Cat.

Out in the night, a wraith-like blur

You pounce on all that moves out there

The doting pet you are no more

But hunter red in tooth and claw,

Let every creature near beware

My two-faced Cat.

December 2002

Unwilling Scientist

I have seen the anger of the tempest

Lashing in rage the fronds of languid trees;

I have heard the thunder of the ocean

And stood in awe before the untamed seas;

I have seen the splendour of the night-time

Midnight velvet sequined with the stars;

I have felt the heat of sun at midday

And shivered inward at its hidden powers.

Must we probe and pry into the causes,
Must nature fit the compass of our minds?
Can power and might be written in equations,
Or beauty broken down to strokes and signs?
Must we set ourselves to be the Masters
Knowing all and saying what shall be,
Must we try ourselves as re-Creators
And badly counterfeit reality?

Let myriad planets whirl at utmost distance
Tracing their patterns on the endless void,
Let entropy increase to final chaos,
And energy and mass change undestroyed,
Let light go speeding on uncomprehended,
Electrons spin their dual course unseen,
And let me live amidst this machination
Oblivious, incurious and serene.

Oxford, 1961