

**THE
LEGEND
OF ROME**

The following set of poems is the commingled essence of four separate poetic impulses. The 20 lined triptychs are all drawn from the unabridged version of Axis & Allies. There is also a sonnet sequence, a poem in the Spenserian measure & several stanzas in the Keatsian style drawn from the poem, Imperatrix. Together I hope they create a lyrical history of the eternal legend that is the Roman Empire.

Forbidden Fruit

*Upon immortal Mount Olympus dwell
The brightest members of that pantheon
Which binds all mortal motion to its spell
Before our works are swallow'd by the sun;
My story rolls
T'where Jupiter resides,
Thro Heaven's gleaming halls a golden apple glides.*

*Upon its deep, dawn-colour'd skin
Was written, "For the finest!"
Three goddesses desire to win
Much smitten by the contest,
Their chatter making such a din
To find out who was bless'd,
With beauty's art, more than the other two,
Said Jupiter, "I know what you must do!"*

*Seek out a pure & mortal youth
To cure your bickering,
His choice, I sooth, rare voice of truth,
Shall judge your siren spring,
But still I sense these strange events violence to us shall bring!"*

Olympus

The Judgement of Paris

They search'd the Earth for that rare quality
Which fortifies a man from lustful thought
Noble enough to admire true beauty
Give honest answers to opinions sought;
Just one was found,
A handsome prince of Troy,
Three goddesses drew round, seductive, sweet & coy.

"Tell, prithee, Paris, which of us,
Fairer than fairest flower?"
Minerva offer'd genius
While Juno promis'd power,
"If I am chosen," sigh'd Venus,
*"The roseate bower
Of womanhood shall spread across thy mind -
When you may take your pick of womankind!"*

"Then I choose thee..." from Venus flew
Helen's bright araura,
The other two more humble grew,
Mumbling their displeasure,
"Now hurry!" sang the victor, *"To Lacedaemonia!"*

Troy
1160 BC

Helen

Not setting sun, nor rosy finger'd dawn,
Not ocean pearl, nor breezy mountain air,
Not spider-spun, nor lazy summer lawn
Could ever to this temptress smile compare;
Her gorgeous hand
Won by the Spartan king,

Many a Grecian band gifts to their wedding bring.

During wine-soak'd festivities
Paris took her to one side,
Venus entwined their destinies,
Watch'd that hot, bedswerving bride
Sing lush, erotic melodies
Sucking his love inside -
Soon by the fine zen of their enchantment
Silent thro spacious halls their footsteps went.

The moon made webbing in the waves,
Men rowed their ship to sea,
History craves the golden graves
Of immortality -
As silken-sheeted sweethearts drink the milk of exstasi.

The Aegean Sea 1159 BC

The Fall of Troy

Hard upon the western fringe of Asia
Have disembark'd the arks the Greeks command,
Turning Trojan treachery to terror,
An enemy encamped upon her sand;
Tween gate & shore
Would flow a bloody scene
A decade fraught with war fought for a gorgeous queen.

Noble the men of Achea -
Midst armies of swarming bees
Men like the Dardan Aeneas,
Armipotent Achilles,
High King of Salaminia
& striking Ulysees
Into a flock of falcon-men enfuse -

Now Menaleus dreams a daring ruse.

As gods affect our mortal course
& fate is fickle starred,
A wooden horse (with secret force)
Wheel'd into this courtyard -
"The war is over," sing the crowds... the gates that night unbarr'd...

Troy

Wanderings of Aeneas

As swollen rivers rampage pitiless
Wreaking, havoc & damage thro the fields
From the market place to royal palace
Terrific tide of flashing bronze & shields;
Stone torn from stone,
Illium up in flames
A bitter killing zone of dust & screams & names...

Day drew a veil across the night
Vital Aeneas survives!
Men mingled for his myckle might
With wisdom, weapons & wives
Eyes reflecting his guiding light
They offered him their lives,
Watching their citadel crash on the town
As mountain Ashes cold farmers hack down.

They sailed west thro plague & terror,
Beyond the Strophades,
Past Ithica, Sicilia,
Thro lush Phoenecian seas,
To this strange land, whose smitten queen caught by love's cruel disease.

Carthage

Death of Dido

Like two lillies tossed to a rivers flow,
Love growing as a flight of scattered doves
Aeneas courts Sidonian Dido -
Treasures from Troy, banquets & words of love;
Her heart was won
Infatuated bliss
Web of sweet devotion, the world locked in a kiss

For her his own heart beat as strong;
So descended Mercury,
*"Son of Venus, dally not long
Hasten to thy destiny..."*
Love's trance dispell'd he led his throng
Back to the open sea...
The queen awoke to the watchmen ringing,
To his empty couch her tears soon clinging.

She built herself a cypress pyre,
Her husband's name outcalls,
Echoing choir! wrackt with desire,
Upon her blade slowfalls,
Blood hissing from its hilt she joins the shades of jilted souls.

Carthage

Italy

Rosy Araura raced across the sea
Those painted ships at last are dragged ashore
*"In this place we shall build a new city
& play the wand'ring mendicant namore!"*
Dardanus' stock
Triumphant wanderers!
Old shepherd leaves his flock to warn King Latinus.

On came the stalwart Laurentines
The enemy so calm is,
White-beard rode from his armour'd lines
Between the parted armies,
As cedars softly wrapped by vines
With their leader parlies,
Eastern captain girdled with godly awe
His noble bearing firm for peace or war.

King Latinus shuns battle's beast,
"My daughter shall be yours!"
A wedding feast, the walls well pieced,
The gates formed by the oars,
As Trojans snugly settle by these Ausonian shores.

Lavinium

The House of Aeneas

From Trojan blood hath sprung Ascanius
Alba Longa rises amid the hills
Fair city bequeathed to young Silvius -
Son born within the druid woodland rills;
Bards inspired sing
Of consanguinity,
A catalogue of kings, Sylvian monarchy

Our babe grew manly, died, then came
Aeneas & Latinus
Atys & Alba knew their fame
With Capys & Capetus
& then the Tiber won its name
When poor Tiberinus
Was drown'd crossing the ancyent Albula
"This flow my father's shrine!" sang Agrippa,

Who ruled a wise & wondrous king
 Begetting Romulus,
Struck by lightning, his scarab ring
 Shared with Aventinus,
Whose tomb lies on this fragrant slope close to his grandfather's.

The Aventine Hill

Rape of Rhea

Amulius usurps Numitor's throne
Murders his nephew very clandestine
 & preventing avengers being born,
Shuts up his niece to serve the vestal wine;
 Heaven angry!
 Full karma to restore,
For this long white city they send the god of war

Mars stepp'd into her simple room
 Upon soft-feather'd sandals
 & there seduced the turpid gloom
 With silks & censored candles
With vibrant seed invades her womb
 Like the warring Vandals
She moan'd with must & murmuring to Mars
Tasted nirvana & waltzed with the stars.

The god fled from the ravishing
 For her a tragic taylor
Days fluttering from fall to spring
 Toward her pregnant grail
Where she shall be Philomele & then the nightingale

Alba Longa

Romulus & Remus

Twin babes are born, raging Amulius,
Murders fair Rhea, orders their demise,
To die on the Tiber left so helpless,
A she-wolf finds them by their little cries;
Soft-suckled there
Til a pure-eyed shepherd
Brings them into his care, Quirini think them dead.

Faustalus raised them wise & couth
Hiding them from destiny
Time drew them unto manly youth
& back into the city
Where Numitor could see the truth
Exposed deceit keenly;
The brother's plan a brave pincer attack -
The guards captive, their uncle on his back

KARMA descends to tend the crime
Dress'd in her saffron gown
"For time cures time!" From scarlet slime
They raise the silver crown
& placed it on their grandfather before a shell-shocked town.

Alba Longa

Death of Remus

The brothers are soon burning with the urge
To build a prosp'rous city of their own
Certain Quirini join the questing surge
With cattle trains & tools to hack the stone;
Choosing the hills
Their father called their home
To name it causes ills, a Remo or a Rome?

*"Then we shall let the gods decide -
Augury tutelary!"*

Each settled on his own hill-side
Waiting word from Mercury
O'er Remulus six vultures glide
Giving priority
But not long aft above the Palatine
Twelve vultures fly, cries Remulus, "A sign!"

Inveighing quickly, thick words shoot,
Flickers bickering flame
Such fierce dispute! none could refute
The other brothers claim
Til Romulus drew scimitar & won eternal fame!

Rome

Rome's First Temple

About the scene of that fatal quarrel
The limits of the city wall were drawn
Plough pulled by heifer & a long-horned bull
The Palatine turn'd to a place of stone
"Upon this ground!"
King Romulus decrees
"A temple shall be found to honor Hercules..."

*Heroic god among all men,
Came on this grassy meadow
Pastured by beautiful oxen,
Grew drowsy on good vino,
Camus came on from his foul den
The finest steers to stow
Dragging them backwards to his dreary cave
Their lowing woke the bravest of the brave.*

*He soon worked out the reverse hoof
The entrance swiftly blocked
Full grinding tooth off ripped the roof
Ogre pelted with rocks,
The flames leapt thro, the beast strangl'd beside an half-gorged ox."*

The Aventine Hill

Rape of the Sabines

How fair thou art, virgin Capillia
Riding this oxen train which parts the plain
Aiming for the festive consualia
Rome has declared about great Neptune's fane;
To laugh & play
With many a Sabine
She joined that joyous day, ate hearty & drank wine.

At once the plush extravagance
Broken by the conches blast,
Soon shrieking women left to chance
& sex-starved brigand outcast,
She tried to flee this grotesque dance,
Her father watched aghast,
Each lover had a mistress in his eye
Toxeus took her to a desp'rate cry.

Romulus came to kiss her cheek
"Your name?" "Capillia!"
"Fortuna speaks!" her weep-wells leak,
Shock mixes with terror,
Her father flung to Cares by the gruff Roman soldier.

Rome

Sabine War

The men of Caenina are primed to rise
They reach the walls upon a saffron day

Where Romulus & his jaguar eyes,
Bids bravest soldiers for to form the fray
Great champions
Made contact, stone-on-stone!
Despite sacred paeans, the Romans give a groan.

As winds opposing contest war
Thro heaven's arching reaches
Men leapt thro murder's gory jaw
With all its varied chances
Spears dripping with this sable gore,
Black the smoking torches
Til running thro the shafts of flying spears
The women croon with loosen'd hair & tears.

"Fathers, husbands, sons & brothers!"

War paused about their kneel,

"We are mothers, we are lovers!"

Yes, tis love that we feel!"

The weapons dropp'd, the nations merged, so profound the appeal

Rome

Death of Romulus

To arms! To arms! Etruscan nation calls
Standards to meet the upstart march of Rome
Romulus drives them to their very walls
Returns enriched in triumph to his home;
Great storms soon rage
For the task completed
He rises from the age, campus-stella seated.

*Said Juno, "Welcome to this place,
See your skin suffers no scars
You have founded the greatest race
Thy name shall rise to the stars
Brave men shall crave thy shaven face*

& worship you as Mars!"
She placed a shining broadsword in his hand,
"Their legion's eagles thine own to command!"

Below the gates a soft flute played
Amid the broken spears
Thro death's parade the widow made
A well of all her tears
When born from such beginnings blood must surely spill for years

Veii

SPQR

A new king wins the throne, the lust returns
Tullus Hostilius is all for war
With brother Alba how the hot blood burns
Far from the day both left the Trojan shore
To ease the blow
Two sets of triplets found
Two populaces flow about the battleground.

Combat is join'd, a flash of blades
Two Roman brothers lay dead
The last pursued thro olive glades
But all the three are wounded
Their thick cuts seep, the vigour fades
To action Rome's last sped
& one-by-one cut down his enemy
Behold the saviour of a great contree!

Alas the Alba Longese
Are forced to share the home
Of the city whose victory
Has set a phrase in stone,
Being, '*Senatus Populares Quirini & Rome*'

Italy

743 BC

Republicca

Long shining line of effervescent kings
Dark crystal by the time of Tarquinus
When vanity unto a contree brings
The flagrant gossip of its populace;
Stripp'd of the crown
Their palaces defiled,
From farmstead, strand & town the royal brood exiled.

The revolution was proclaim'd
By wise & noble leaders,
Whose surreptitious laws were framed
By erruditious readers,
When oratory men inflamed,
"Those who shall succeed us
Pay duty to thy great inheritance,
The sacred human right to remonstrance."

The constitution ink'd in blood
& regnum reigns namore,
The city rudder steers time's flood,
Holds justice as its core,
When any civil unrest channel'd into tests of war.

Rome

500 BC

(from)

The Twelve Tables

The Tarpeian Rock awaits
Spellcraft aggressively pursued

Thirty days debtor's respite
Else slavery sold

Between plebian & patrician
Marriage strictly forbidden

Murdering deform'd children mercifully
Every father's right

Club to death mercilessly
Slanderers & crop stealers

Distribute increasing punishment accordingly
Patrician, plebian, slaves

Justice decrees two killers;
Accidental & intentional

MERCENARY

Four brothers ride to Macedonic wars,
Bloodlusty just a century too soon,
To sweethearts pining by the latin shores
These men were more or less upon the moon;
For those who yearn
The mercenary life
Man's peasant-pleasures spurn, prefer *war* more than *wife*.

The first did fall in Phrygia
'Fore the Cilician gates,
The second murder'd in Persia,
Gory price of conquer'd states,
The third cut down in India

With thousands of their mates,
Thus when great Alexander made for home
The youngest of he brothers sail'd for Rome

Rest-yearning veteran returns,
His father clapp'd his joys -
Alas! he learns these litle urns
The last dusts of his boys -
"My father we could win the East if Rome her might employs."

Ostia
333 BC

Sicilia

The legacy of Achean tenure
Peppers these precious Ausonian shores,
Temple-cities rich with trade & culture
Beyond the ambit of the Roman laws;
Whose eagles fly
Spurr'd on by battledrum,
The math'maticians sigh, their time for conquest come.

Ev'ry man should have a river
Ev'ry man should have a hill,
So when death does him deliver
At the moment of the kill
He can thank life & forgive her
For beating his heart still -
So many many dying men now think of Greece
That those living sail home in search of peace.

A diamond isle does interest
The rising Roman state
Captains obsess'd with more conquest
Sail cross Messina's strait -
Segesta's Carthaginians left to their gruesome fate.

Segesta
254 BC

Cannae

Unbalanced by the Sicilian loss,
Fleet driven from the Thyrranean foam,
Combined races pacing the mountain moss,
Shall cross the Alps & bring the war to Rome;
Cleverly led,
Hannibal of Carthage
Harvests the latin dead in horrible carnage.

The senate moves to meet the threat -
Men outnumbering the foe,
Drive back the centre-line, & yet
Routed not, moves sure & slow,
Dragging legions within its net,
Round them the flanks now flow...
Such slaughter! five hundred deaths a minute!
What terror drives thro the breathless senate!

Now for glorious Hannibal
These his halycon days
Seiges, battle, cities rubble,
His soldiers sack & raze -
But for one tall determin'd wall's rogue, defiant displays

Rome

Carthage

Cursing the grand redoubt of stoic Rome
Hannibal hurls his spear at gates full huge
Then plied pursuivance down the pathways home -
Not stunning war nor cunning subterfuge
Help'd him prevail,
Now in his bitter wake
Young Scipio set sail a vital war to make.

Skirting the everlasting sands

Where pass'd the Trojan hero,
In perfect health the legion lands
As ruddy-cheek'd as Dido,
Marching inland conquest expands
Til carthage cuts the flow,
Its saviour-gen'ral blocks the plains of Zama,
Where waits the judgement of the goddess KARMA.

This time the black Numidians
With Scipio reside,
Neath seering suns the Phoenicians
& all his dreams have died,
"Huzzah!" sing the Centurians, *"Let us to Carthage ride!"*

Africa

Greece

With the Western Meditteranean
Enraptured at the lilt of Latin tongue,
Golden eagles survey the Aegean
& the old league of Grecia beating strong;
These classic lands
Proclaim'd a sister shore
As one the senate stands & votes for conq'ring war.

As Persia wooed Asia Minor,
Her made imperial queen
Thro glory-faded Achea
March'd the Roman war-machine,
To absorb her clever culture
& all her wisdom ween -
Seeking a Platonic ressurection,
Osmosis-seeping intussusception.

Tho swollen on philosophie
& pregnant with the arts,
The legions see brutality
Best way to break men's hearts -
When none would live to wave away their wives in slavish carts.

Corinth

Imperatrix

Rome, allied with the old Acheaen league
Took fields elysian thro bold intrigue
& ending Carthago's vitality
Her eagles sail to raze that great city
& others fly thro wild Cisalpine Gaul
The Alps now form the borders & the wall
Where from the rooftops of Rome's vast demense
An even richer empire can be seen
There's Dacia & Abbyssinia
The precious palaces of Parthia
There's Petra & the steppes of Arabie
Egyptus & the salt of Galilee
These ever fertile verdant leagues of Gaul
Beyond whose shores strange mist-swept isles enthrall...

Pompey

From the internal furnace that was Rome
Arose a noble genius of arms
Yclad in purple, circensian robes
Gnaeus Pompeius has already purged
Spartacus & the ghouls of Barbarie
Rome celebrates his campaigns in the East
Kings, princes, wives & gen'ral in his tow
Subjects of the latin Alexander;

Armenia, Syria, Judea,
Cilicia & Cappaducia
Treasure chest-on-chest of pirate plunder
Fell to his feats as did they fall to Rome
How wond'rous was the glory of this man

Mused Ceasar from low station midst the crowds

Julius Ceasar

As men are born with auras rarely seen
When power seems to latch upon the soul
& regal purple paints a princely green,
Flagitious paths of glory lead to Gaul;
One whirlwind war -
Veni! Vedi! Vici!
& even Britain's shore is left in victory.

Revolting Vercingetorix
Celtic chieftanship allies,
Imperils this imperatrix -
From whose traps this eagle flies
To flap its wings & soon the Styx
Surrounds the royal rise -
Delivering vermillion checkmate,
How swiftly turn the swelling tides of fate.

The onerous cast from the walls,
Died innocent each child,
The fortress falls, the gore-dress'd Gauls
With Rome art reconcil'd,
Their captain knelt beneath a man on whom the gods hath smiled.

Alesia
55 BC

Conquistador

From the quills of history great men made;
To satisfy honour, blood debt & rage,
The noble warlord once more shall invade,
To lay his laurels on the Latin page.

Woden descends from his seat midst the stars,

Unites the tribes to quell the march of Rome
Neath Cassivellaunus, first British king.

Mounted upon an iron elephant, Mars
Fords the Thames...scyth'd chariots race for home,
Slower foot slaughter'd by sword, spear & sling.

Londinium
54BC

Emperor

As rivers gently drift along the glen
Then gather speed & gallop down the falls
 Ceasar is elevated by his men,
Crosses the Rubicon, reaches Rome's walls,
 Seizes control,
 But one stands in his way,
The bright, immortal soul that is the great Pompey.

He flees to Alexandria
 & the pleasures of the East
Where the long-lash'd Cleoptara
 On his passion is releas'd,
Lust disturb'd by panting soldier,
 "Sir, Ceasar has releas'd
 His legions all along th' Aegyptian shore!"
 "Then Rome must fight a bloody civil war!"

How soon the Pharsalian plain
 Knee deep in fratricide,
Joining the slain in gurgling pain
 The Great Pompey has died,
& Ceasar proclaim'd emperor, Cleopatra his bride.

Rome
48BC

Cleopatra

A queen of immaculate quality,
Power like no Roman had ever known,
A son set to secure his legacy
No wonder Ceasar topp'l'd from the throne;
The bloody knives
Of Brutus & his firm
Shall turn so many lives to fodder for the worm.

As the pirate's power vacuum
Ever fill'd by civil wars
The soothsayers prescient doom
Has curs'd Mark Anthony's cause,
Soon sultry in her wooing room
The Queen's seductive claws
Unveil to win Octavian with lust -
But choosing not his bulging loins to thrust

Preffer'd the path of death-paved arms
The world was his to grasp -
One bite becalms her vixen charms
That suicidal asp
Slithers into historic song with sharp-tongue'd hissing rasp.

Aegypt **29 BC**

Emporer

Augustus! the rever'd first son of Rome
Under whose feet the kings of nations kneel
Gazed on the global map his scribes reveal
Unknowing of the world beyond the foam
Sweet Bacchantes stroke mane with gem-laid comb,
Thank Saturn for the timeless season wheel
Upon whose spin empiric thoughts grow real
Sommer sojurns soothe each citizen's home

Ceasar would have been proud of ye, his child,
Egypt & both the doors of Janus closed

Age of contenment settles on the Earth.
Seduced by coin thy soldiers reconciled
Absorb'd those senators ye once opposed
Rejoicing in the glory of thy birth,

Latin Literati

Come praise the Roman Vates & their song
Numidian Bacchantes pour their wine
Thro midnight meetings of the mother tongue
 At fev'rish pitch,
 Erotic in recline
 Ovid slowly unpeels his satin glove
 Musing til morning on the Latin love

Horace prefers the art of poetry
The weight of empire burns his lyric mind
As life, mythology & history
Entwined full rich,
 That night Virgil designed
 An epic in the image of Homer
 Enough to impress Alexandria

(famous writers)

ON THE ARMS OF ROME

Acquisition nothing without preservation
Usefulness & improvement - Aristotle

Energy, Speed, Resolution, Foresight
Envelop excellent generals - Cicero

Victors ally strategic anticipation
With invincible persistence - Plutarch

Donning your enemies disguise

Detects treasonable sympathies - Frontinus

As sparks begin conflagration
Destroy potential subversives - Rufus

When enemies become profitable
Deem them assets - Xenophon

When deeds are decided
Words rattle needlessly - Aristotle

The Art of Love

(from Ovid)

Children of cupid note down thy name;
Best you believe all women may be won,
Promise her presents to charm her armour,
Wear rose-fashion'd clothes like men of milieu,
Be aware of your hair & trim thy chin,
Say her face is fair, her eyes are like skies,
Blood warm'd by wine fair spirits flame & flow,
Lust multiplies with each draught that we drink,
Choose not for certain if thy day is drunk
For wine gilds women with looks & laughter,
Speak & with speed, for Venus loves the brave,
& females forced e'en to their true desires,
Then comes the kiss & when passion express'd
There leaves but little rusing for the rest...

Jesus Christ

Rays of pure stardust pulse across the Earth,

When interplanetary spheres align
& diety desires a humble birth
According to some alien design;
The Starchild born,
Warm & mellow manger,
His writ the world to warn of the Devil's danger.

The virgin mother sent her child
To a cult of strict Essene
With whom the Dead Sea scrolls were filed
Ancient prophecies to glean
By them this little lad was styled
Until he turn'd thirteen
When Mary's boy return'd to Nazereth,
Naught but hell-burning brains & smell of death.

Like sharp, shark fins the sins of man
Round the incarnate swirl'd,
Where Romans ran their sordid plan,
Their war-polluted world -
Boy tutor'd in messiahdom or heaven's face unfurl'd.

Judea
13 AD

9 AD

Thro the Teutoburger Wald went the arms of Varius
Arminius of the Cherusci made his excuses
& soon a ghoulis baritas surrounds the sons of Mars
Chaunting for Lord Tuisto & Odin amidst the stars
The chiefs fighting for victory, companions for their chief
They set out all for slaughter, no quarter & no relief
A black storm rages all around the javelins & spears
The fallen Goths are carried off to dry the widow tears
Three days of carnage rampant in the dark & marshy wood
The roman gen'ral cuts his throat & gurgles on the blood
Some men cast off their armour & await the lethal blow
Only a lucky few would safely reach the Rhine's wide flow
The news reaches Augustus, flying thro grieving regions;

"O Quintillius Varius, give me back my legions!"

The German Frontier

Round Ceasar's son, august Octavian,
The empire was ablaze with burnish'd gold,
But for the story of the lost legion,
Slaughter'd within the Teutoburger Wald;
Sublunary,
Crunching cross spangling snow,
Vet'rans of that army lit by a ghostly glow.

As the sun revived their terror,
Gleaming coronet of dawn,
They could hear the battle's clangour
Skeletons about them grown,
Mute & eyeless skulls together
Down shallow death-pits thrown -
Thro press of shield & shrieking arrow maze
Few men of blood have seldom half our days.

Altho' the proud Italian
Lives unsubduable,
The Aryan barbarian
Has made his Mars mortal,
Wrought ruin on legionairres rarely rivall'd in battle.

16

Germania

Death of Jesus

Bound by the Jew's Messianic cravings
The Nazarene essene gathers his voice
Dismiss'd by Rome, "*Strange religious ravings!*"
His teachings give the common man a choice;

"Heaven on Earth!"
The fearful Sannhedrim
Deny his sacred birth, steer Pilate's doelful whim.

This 'imposter' promptly taken
To the hill of Calvary,
When the sins of man awaken,
Crucified upon the tree,
"Father, why am I foresaken?"
Jesus weeps eerily -
& as the soldiers spear driven full hilt
First flickers of the Holy Roman guilt.

His followers proclaim him king,
Trumpet his history -
Sin-forgiving & storm-stilling
Miracle ministry,
The perishing ephemeron of Christianity.

33

Jerusalem

THE NAZARENE

Gethsemene
Judas rope
Archmagus
Sadly maintain the scandalised Sanhedrim
Leaning their wills upon the Roman whim
The Pilate's orders murder the son of Him
To Calvary
A Crucifix
Sanguinus
Human sin
Son of god
Devils day
Pious fires
Epiphanies

Britannica

Swift trim ships, sails puff'd proud, brimming with shield
Mark the return of th'imperial fleet,
Mars marches legions tween each battlefield
Til conquest of the province claim'd complete.

From the cultural vastness of empire
Sails a steady stream of exotic goods
& immigrants to flavour this new land.

The legion sets the worship hall on fire,
Pagans massacred in mistletoe woods,
The golden sickles stolen from their hand.

Anglesey

60

Bouddicea

The double-edged broadsword of Empire sews
Britons into the fabric of the Pax;
Roads, trade, towns, baths, games, soldiers, theatre, laws,
The native suppression, terror & tax.

She speaks to the soul of the proud Briton,
The tribes rise in arms! The garrisons slain,
The governer flees, Londinium burns.

Her Chieftans race to face Rome's crack legion,
Eighty thousand die, more lie rack'd with pain,
The rebellion quashed, the pax returns.

Brittaniae

60

Colluseum

The plans of a great monument unfurl'd
From all parts of the empire dragg'd the stone
To build this spectacular of the world
Where to the heavens fifty thousand borne
& gladiators battle, fiercely will'd
They pit sheer wits for fame & sweet freedom
Or fighting beasts, how thick the hot blood spill'd
As wounded men await the turning thumb
Where in the devil heat of burning flame
The scoundrel Christians are scandalized
Still loyal to the Lamb's immortal name
Good lives now vandalized & victimized,
Much entertainment to the roaring crowd,
With such splendour are emporers endow'd

Nero

How mighty is the music of an art
To those that play, Nero assumes the throne
Setting a space in Rome to sit apart
Palace of gold where pleasure makes ye moan
& eunochs act the lover or the page,
A fire is lit, rips thro the city's rooves
The emporer just fiddles on his stage
Until woken by hot-clattering hooves,
"My lord!" old servant urges him, *"My lord
You are to be kill'd, by Jupiter flee!"*
"I shall not," & so falling on his sword
He utters, *"What an artist dies in me!"*
His death, dark cave, passing without a friend,
Marks the beginning of an empire's end.

SILK ROAD

Being an account of the journey of a Chinese merchant & his bodyguard, set at the time of Trajan & Hadrian, when the empire of Rome was at its highest extent. The poem proceeds along the route of the Silk Road between China & Rome, passing thro the Himalayas & India to reach the Eastern provinces of the empire, Rome & then Gaul before the poem comes to a conclusion on the island of Britain.

A cart set forth from beautiful Tun Huang,
Laden in silk, an epic desert sweep
Lay all before them with ominous pang,
For many leagues between the craggy steep
From waterhole to waterhole they creep
To drive upon a tower in the gloam
A little velvet traded for their keep,
Where over supper men whisper of Rome;
They left the next good day, now many miles from home.

A land of death encroaching on their souls
They joined their cart to a fine caravan
That slowly 'long the famous Silk Road rolls
Yon the fabulous fountains of Khotan
Where mountains rise up from the grey Makan -
The Kunluns, whose ravines tremulous sheer
Form the borders of the peaceful Kushan
Images of the Buddha wide appear
As thro lofty passes the frozen drivers steer.

They spend a night with an old Persian man;
"Trajan is another Alexander
Who bridged the Danube with a mighty span
& rais'd the standards over Dacia
Then turn'd his gaze to his own Parthia
There launched his legions on a fierce campaign

*Beyond the Tigris to lay low Susa
Now fifty million attend his reign
In such a grand empire there is much gold to gain!"*

Far yon the Sinthus, from the lands of Han
Rode our old merchant & his warrior
A midget & his Mongel muscleman
With hands so big brigands fled in terror
Carrying silk cross the Himalaya
Thro India to decadent Cochin
Sandal-wooded rakhi trade for pepper
& copper pots to put the pepper in -
"We leave the luscious East, better profits to win..."

They coracled the Erythrean seas
Craft after craft along the windy spur
Town after town beside the Euphrates
They heard the humor of the Persian burr
Where local merchants silken sheets refer
To the desert city of Palmyra
For aromatic frankincense & myrrh
From the perfumed palaces of Petra -
There join'd a caravan from the dark Sahara...

Camels pound cloven prints in oven sand
They found themselves about Cilicia
A scourge of talk was surging thro the land
Here, yesterday, life left an emperor
On whose death bed adopted was another
All hail the glory of this Hadrian!
On went our merchant & his warrior
For Ephesus & the old Aegean -
Sea of magentan blue, sail's darling halcyon!

They rode into asensual Corinth
Bought velvet succor'd grapes of Achaea
Took oracle at Deplhi's sacred plinth
"See Rome!" she said, so by Silicia,

Fair Cumae & the port of Ostia
Breathing beautiful Ausonian shores
To reach Rome & her living theatre -
Their emperor returning from the wars,
Watching his triumph pass men join the loud applause

Good Roman minds yclad in Grecian dress
Fabulous explorers of the psyche!
Push back the bounds of physical prowess
Tame calculus & tend astronomy
Frame body politic & poetry
History & the handling of the legions
The sexual treasures of an orgy
The study of man & distant regions
Philosophy, the arts & multitude religions

The populace drops from the Avantine
The steep Caelian & the Quirinal
The Palatine & the Capitoline
The Esquiline & the fair Viminal
To the valley at the foot of each hill
Where marble forums meld the empire's trade
Hispanic olive oil by the bottle,
Dacian iron, the Gothic slave parade
Our merchant fill'd his cart & for Ostia made.

With many a fresh amphora of wine
They dock at an exotic Massilla
Bought garments sewn by seamstresses divine
& peddled further into Gallia
The Rhone was a profitable river
So much they chose to dally many years
Alesia & the isle of Lutetia
As to the north Rome's furthest province nears
A galley whisks them there, a white coastline appears.

As closer came the thicket & the briar
"What is this land," the Merchant asked the mate
"This is Britain, corner of the Empire,

*Forever allied to the Roman fate,
Proud-standing at the Western Ocean gate
The trident of Neptune shall here be found
"When was she conquered?" "In a fev'rish spate
Not ninety years ago a battleground...
Permit me a moment her chronicles to sound.*

*Dawn's goddess dispers'd dank mists from the sky
Three hundred galleys part the channel tides
White sliver sunder'd Vespasian's eye -
"Britannia!" claim'd the exiled princes' guides
Unto whose shores the wolfish pack divides
Invaders of these legendary isles
A land of mystery the strange mist hides
Another pawn for political guiles
Another land to grasp & lace with Roman miles.*

*As on Earth's mantle mortal men made war
Mars fired his fiery bow at Camulos
Below, not Medway, the Thamesian shore,
Nor the chariots of Caratacus
Could halt the stern assaults of Claudius
Enacting as a modern Pericles
In triumph rode thro Conubelinus -
The Cantii & Iceni on their knees
& envoys humbly sent from the great Brigantes.*

*Lord Sol roll'd round the circles of the years
The lust of Mars affected harsh campaign
The hill fort of the Belgae disappears
The Dumnoni outnumber'd by their slain
But still Caratacus vain hopes maintain
From Mona mann'd the mountains of the West
But outmaneuverd on the fields of pain
Fled to the Brigantes, at Rome's request
Their queen shackled his chains, sestertii fill'd her chest*

*A letter came, "I, seven days ago..."
Sang Agricole's son-in-law Pliny,
"Witness'd an eruption of Vesuvo*

*Great earthquakes & her hot flames sinewy
When tsunami swallow'd a sliding sea
& red hot stones upon her districts crash
Now Pompeii is preserv'd by memory
As from the lava flow still fire nymphs flash
& here, as far as Rome, the sky is choak'd with ash!"*

*Whilst Irish pirates periled the tide
Thro mist & marsh, thro storm & flashing flood
Rome marches from the Solway to the Clyde
Deeper & deeper, battles, battles, blood
A chain of forts sprung from the local mud
Turn'd Caledon into a private isle
Where on the steep Mons Graupius up-stood
Calgacus & his flower to revile
The bitter building of another Roman mile.*

*Dark skies descended on a deadly scene
Namore the Pictish chariots career
The battle for the last British demesne
Then over & so awful & austere
The hills went silent with a chilling fear
But for the widows wailing for a ghost
Then fleets of Roman battleships appear
Dragging their standards round the craggy coast..."*
"So this is an island, well told our gracious host!"

The province claims a portion of the pax
The petty chiefs the trappings of progress
Whose peoples pave the roads & pay the tax
While *rexes* flit & flow in Roman dress
Now grandiose banquetiers play hostess,
With their priceless wines & complex sauces
Commissioning mosaics to impress
Foreign dignitaries & their forces
Which freely roam the land on their tall, white horses.

They spent a season serving Chichester
The baths of Aquae Sulis quite impress'd

Then complaining of the local weather
On those men went without a day of rest
They drove their ox-cart further North & West
Til Luguvalium's centurion
Trades all their goods for one great treasure chest
They pause beside the house of Hadrian
Not halting at the wall they urge their oxen on.

Beyond the towers of that fortress chain
That swept from Solway to the tidal Tyne
Sandals soon soak'd in Strathclyde's raging rain
Kind Briton offers water, warmth & wine
On soft furs by his warm hearth they recline
His bard-friend comes to shelter from the gales
Who utters many a poetic line
Regaling them with ancient lays of Wales -
The air that stormy night was filled with famous tayles.

They left the Celts & rattl'd further North
Until they reached the legion at the wall
Thrust up betwixt Dunedin & the Forth
& there, upon the stones, the course did stall
No longer did the Roman frontier sprawl,
New lawless land lay wild beyond its span,
So, thankful that they knew the world was small,
They turned around & steer'd their caravan
Along the Roman roads that led them home to Han.

An eagle sits upon the Pictish wall
She hears a sound & clicks back in Celtic
Around the empire kin answer the call;
Hispanic, Punic & Aramaic -
She sets off south, joining her soft frolic
Fly eagles from the distant Caspians,
Iberia, Araby & Afric,
To whistle oer the Umbrian mountains
For the waters of Rome's thirteen hundred fountains.

Constantius

As Athens' sheer Acropolis did rise
To marvel man & rival Heaven's gates
Then slowly weaken'd by the sea-salt skies
When cracking marble glory dissapates;
The Roman realm
On stressful fault survives,
Brow-batter'd at the helm by blunt assassin knives.

The emperor's preffer'd legion
To the painted problems ride,
Bouy'd by the pagan pantheon,
His young blood-son by his side,
Death for many a flaming dun
Restores the Roman pride -
When of grim warfare he had won his fill
He turns for Rome, burning a fev'rish ill.

& when Constantius did die,
His Britons full of praise,
Up climbs a cry, up to the sky
His son the soldiers raise,
On shoulders battle-broaden'd thro Caledonian days.

York

306

Constantine

Driven by fate's rightful inheritance
Soft music zinging thro his singing soul,
Thro silviculture legionairres advance,
Until a blaze of light on him did fall;
Grand cross of cloud
Trails bianco banner,
With sacred words endow'd, reading, "*By this conquer!*"

The warlord asks "*What does this mean?*"

*"The Christians," men reply,
Epiphanies settl'd serene,
Angels pass'd thro his mind's eye,
"Men build a cross of golden sheen
To proud above us fly,
Pure emblem of our rising righteousness!"
"What phantom!" cries fearful Maxentius.*

The battle won by Constantine
Who builds a finer Rome,
Oer Byzantine, brought by design,
Rose Forum, Hippodrome, -
The Troynavant of Asia, the Palladiums new home

Constantinople

315

The Sack of Rome

Two chieftans leave the palatial table
Viziers of Visigoth & Vandal,
Colluded Rome's empire was unstable
Deluded thro orgiastic scandal;
They fetter'd hands,
"Let's drain this corpse of blood!"
Then left for native lands, fated & understood.

First Vandal shakes the verve of Gaul,
Breaks flacid Iberia
'Fore sailing seas of silver shoal,
Vanquishing North Africa,
Forcing Rome's Forum to recall
Forces from Britannia -
Where Celt experiences liberty
With growing sense of incredulity.

Protion of that princely bargain

Owed by the Gothic horde
With shocking sin shall flow sanguine
Bringing Asgard abroad,
To sack a mighty capital & lick the crimson sword.

Italia

410

The Fall of Rome

Rome risen from the ashes as a bird,
Fate has not yet dictated she shall fall,
Tho' fetterless her sense of freedom stirr'd,
The rumor-mill a growing hill-snowball;
The scourge of god
Has Rome upon the run,
All kneel beneath the rod of Atilla the Hun!

Headquartering in Hungary
Master of vast resources,
Between the Rhine & Euxine Sea
Went watering his horses,
With victories in Italy
Lavish'd on his forces -
Before a life of excess pierced his heart
As pearldivers may die by stingray dart.

Then strode noble Theodoric,
The old empire divides,
Thro phantastical rhetoric
Phlebotomy subsides -
Driving the latin tiremes from the adriatic tides.

Ravenna

525

