

## A Litany of Atlanta



Silent God, Thou whose voice afar in mist and mystery hath  
left our ears an-hungered in these fearful days—

*Hear us, good Lord!*

\* \* Listen to us, Thy children: our faces dark with doubt are made  
a mockery in Thy sanctuary. With uplifted hands we front Thy  
heaven, O God, crying:

*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!*

\* \* We are not better than our fellows, Lord, we are but weak and  
human men. When our devils do deviltry, curse Thou the doer and  
the deed: curse them as we curse them, do to them all and more  
than ever they have done to innocence and weakness, to womanhood  
and home.

*Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!*

\* \* And yet whose is the deeper guilt? Who made these devils?  
Who nursed them in crime and fed them on injustice? Who ravished  
and debauched their mothers and their grandmothers? Who bought  
and sold their crime, and waxed fat and rich on public iniquity?

*Thou knowest, good God!*

\* \* Is this Thy justice, O Father, that guile be easier than innocence,  
and the innocent crucified for the guilt of the untouched guilty?

*Justice, O Judge of men!*

\* \* Wherefore do we pray? Is not the God of the fathers dead?  
Have not seers seen in Heaven's halls Thine hearsed and lifeless form  
stark amidst the black and rolling smoke of sin, where all along bow  
bitter forms of endless dead?

*Awake, Thou that sleepest!*

\* \* Thou art not dead, but flown afar, up hills of endless light,  
thru blazing corridors of suns, where worlds do swing of good and  
gentle men, of women strong and free—far from the cozenage, black  
hypocrisy and chaste prostitution of this shameful speck of dust!

*Turn again, O Lord, leave us not to perish in our sin!*

\* \* From lust of body and lust of blood

*Great God deliver us!*

SIT no longer blind, Lord God, deaf to our prayer and dumb to our dumb suffering. Surely Thou too art not white, O Lord, a pale, bloodless, heartless thing?

*Ah! Christ of all the Pities!*

\* \* Forgive the thought! Forgive these wild, blasphemous words. Thou art still the God of our black fathers, and in Thy soul's soul sit some soft darkenings of the evening, some shadowings of the velvet night.

\* \* But whisper—speak—call, great God, for Thy silence is white terror to our hearts! The way, O God, show us the way and point us the path.

\* \* Whither? North is greed and South is blood; within, the coward, and without, the liar. Whither? To death?

*Amen! Welcome dark sleep!*

\* \* Whither? To life? But not this life, dear God, not this. Let the cup pass from us, tempt us not beyond our strength, for there is that clamoring and clawing within, to whose voice we would not listen, yet shudder lest we must, and it is red, Ah! God! It is a red and awful shape.

*Selah!*

\* \* In yonder East trembles a star.

*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord!*

\* \* Thy will, O Lord, be done!

*Kyrie Eleison!*

\* \* Lord, we have done these pleading, wavering words.

*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!*

\* \* We bow our heads and hearken soft to the sobbing of women and little children.

*We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!*

\* \* Our voices sink in silence and in night.

*Hear us, good Lord!*

\* \* In night, O God of a godless land!

*Amen!*

\* \* In silence, O Silent God,

*Selah!*