

The Reef, Aldous Huxley

The Reef

My green aquarium of phantom fish,  
Goggling in on me through the misty panes;  
My rotting leaves and fields spongy with rains;  
My few clear quiet autumn days—I wish

I could leave all, clearness and mistiness;  
Sodden or goldenly crystal, all too still.  
Yes, and I too rot with the leaves that fill  
The hollows in the woods; I am grown less

Than human, listless, aimless as the green  
Idiot fishes of my aquarium,  
Who loiter down their dim tunnels and come  
And look at me and drift away, nought seen

Or understood, but only glazedly  
Reflected. Upwards, upwards through the shadows,  
Through the lush sponginess of deep-sea meadows  
Where hare-lipped monsters batten, let me ply

Winged fins, bursting this matrix dark to find  
Jewels and movement, mintage of sunlight  
Scattered largely by the profuse wind,  
And gulfs of blue brightness, too deep for sight.

Free, newly born, on roads of music and air  
Speeding and singing, I shall seek the place  
Where all the shining threads of water race,  
Drawn in green ropes and foamy meshes. There,

On the red fretted ramparts of a tower  
Of coral rooted in the depths, shall break  
An endless sequence of joy and speed and power:  
Green shall shatter to foam; flake with white flake

Shall create an instant's shining constellation  
Upon the blue; and all the air shall be  
Full of a million wings that swift and free  
Laugh in the sun, all power and strong elation.

Yes, I shall seek that reef, which is beyond  
All isles however magically sleeping  
In tideless seas, uncharted and unconned  
Save by blind eyes; beyond the laughter and weeping

That brood like a cloud over the lands of men.  
Movement, passion of colour and pure wings,  
Curving to cut like knives—these are the things  
I search for:—passion beyond the ken

Of our foiled violences, and, more swift  
Than any blow which man aims against time,  
The invulnerable, motion that shall rift  
All dimness with the lightning of a rhyme,

Or note, or colour. And the body shall be  
Quick as the mind; and will shall find release  
From bondage to brute things; and joyously  
Soul, will and body, in the strength of triune peace,

Shall live the perfect grace of power unwasted.  
And love consummate, marvellously blending  
Passion and reverence in a single spring  
Of quickening force, till now never yet tasted,

But ever ceaselessly thirsted for, shall crown  
The new life with its ageless starry fire.  
I go to seek that reef, far down, far down  
Below the edge of everyday's desire,

Beyond the magical islands, where of old  
I was content, dreaming, to give the lie  
To misery. They were all strong and bold  
That thither came; and shall I dare to try?

The end