

# Bizerte

Translation by George Campbell Hay of his Gaelic poem *Bisearta*

I see during the night guard  
a blaze flickering, fringing the skyline over yonder  
beating with its wings  
and scattering and dimming the stars of that airt.  
You would think that there would be heard  
from its midst, though far away, wailing and lamentation,  
the roar of rage and the yell of hate,  
the barking of [frenzied] dogs from it or the howling of wolves,  
that the snarl of violence would reach  
from yon amber furnace the very edge of the world.  
But yonder it spreads  
along the rim of the sky in evil ghastly silence.

What is their name tonight,  
the poor streets where every window spews  
its flame and smoke,  
its sparks and the screaming of its inmates,  
while house upon house is rent  
and collapses in a gust of smoke?  
And who tonight are beseeching  
Death to come quickly in all their tongues,  
or are struggling among stones and beams,  
crying in frenzy for help, and are not heard?  
Who tonight is paying  
the old accustomed tax of common blood?

Now red like a battlefield puddle,  
now pale like the drained whiteness of foul fear,  
climbing and sinking,  
reaching and darting up and shrinking in size,  
growing faint for a moment,  
and swelling like the breath of a devil in intensity,  
I see Evil as a pulse and a heart,  
declining and leaping in throbs.  
The blaze, a horror on the skyline,  
a ring of rose and gold at the foot of the sky,  
belies and denies  
with its light the ancient high tranquillity of the stars.

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