

# Subjugating the Beast and the Angel: Suggestions of Dante's Inferno in Altarwise by owl-light.

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### Subjugating the Beast and the Angel: Suggestions of Dante's Inferno in "Altarwise by owl-light"

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Text

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#### Abstract

'Altarwise by owl-light' is one of Thomas's most intransigent poems, an intricately woven text of images and symbols. It has generated, over the years, a great variety of interpretations ranging from the astrological, to the Freudian to the Surrealistic . The reading of this poem often involves a search for sources,

the unravelling of references and allusions. For instance, in some of the sonnets' most seemingly surreal lines , at the end of Sonnet V, an unexpected source has been discovered by Walford Davies and Ralph Maud. In -□ Cross-stroked salt Adam to the frozen angel□ Pin-legged on pole-hills with a black medusa□ By waste seas where the white bear quoted Virgil□ And sirens singing from our lady's sea-straw. □ - the image of the 'waste seas where the white bear quoted Virgil' originates in an allegorical text by Anatole France entitled L'île des pingouins . There now remains the problem of finding out who the 'frozen angel' and the 'black medusa' are, and of piecing together the elements.□ This paper will offer suggestions regarding these and other images, by concentrating on allusions, in the poem, to Dante's Inferno. In the process, it will raise a previously unrecognised possibility in the core interpretation of the poem.

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