FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Poetry

Love's Exqisite Freedom
Maya Angelou
Edward Burne-Jones, illustrator
Welcome Books
978-1-59962-103-6

Readers expect superlative performances from celebrated writers and artists when they present new works to the public. The most recent publication in Welcome Books' Art & Poetry series, *Love's Exquisite Freedom*, a love poem by Maya Angelou paired with artwork by Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burke-Jones, exceeds these high expectations. It is a treasure, a feast for eye and ear.

In one hundred words, Angelou takes us on the emotive journey called love—from living "coiled in shells of loneliness" to the aftermath of love's arrival, including "ecstasies / old memories of pleasure / ancient histories of pain." Through these experiences, she reminds us, "In the flush of love's light / we dare to be brave." And so, "it is only love / which sets us free."

Renaissance woman Maya Angelou, Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University, has published more than thirty best-selling titles. She has distinguished herself as poet and memoirist, novelist and dramatist, producer and actress, educator and historian, and as a civil rights activist. In 2000, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Arts and, in 2008, the Lincoln Medal. She has earned three Grammy Awards and more than thirty honorary degrees, and has served on two presidential committees.

In a world filled with terror and hatred, Angelou's message of the redemptive power of love is welcome relief. We can live our lives guided by fear or guided by love, so the saying goes. Maya Angelou exhorts us to take the latter path and, in so doing, to become truly free.

Each line of Angelou's lyrical poem is accompanied by the glorious artwork of nineteenth-century British artist Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), who portrays love using an impressive variety of media: tapestry, oil on canvas, watercolor, stained and painted glass, graphite, and tempera. His evocative scenes, rich use of color, and exquisite compositions delight and inspire, giving credence to his own words: "Only this is true, that beauty … softens and comforts, and inspires, and rouses, and lifts up and never fails."

Love's Exquisite Freedom is a glorious book, one destined to lift reader's spirits each time they revisit it.

Nancy E. Walker