

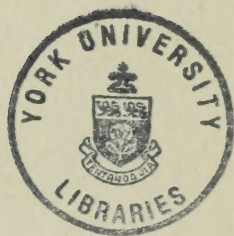
*Black Branches*

by

*Orrick Johns*

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Black  
Branches

A BOOK OF POEMS AND PLAYS

*By*

ORRICK JOHNS

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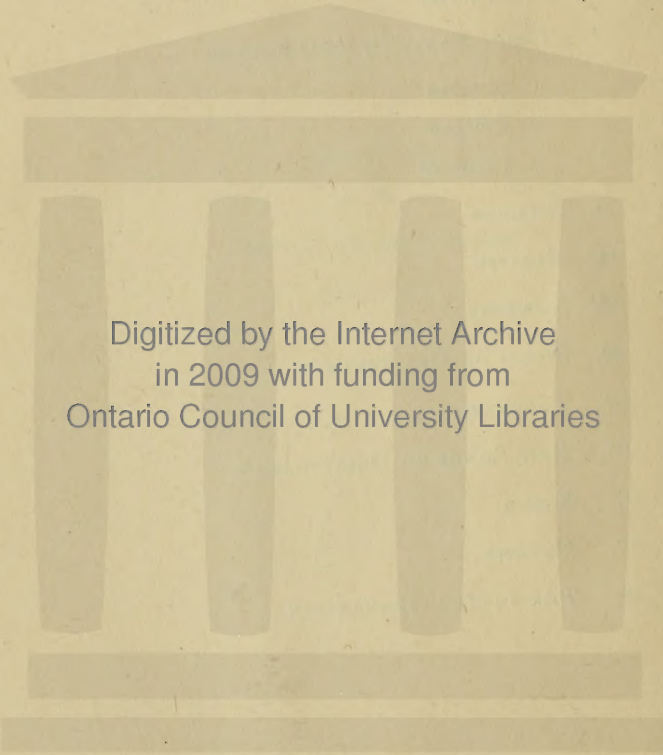
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**Dedication—Portrait**

## DEDICATION—PORTRAIT.

The asters wave  
in the viridescent pattern  
of your being here.  
The lights deepened by gay awnings  
rest aimlessly with drooping arms  
on wide white armchairs.  
The ringing of bells  
draws faint echoes  
from the well-dressed sides of the chaina,  
nestling in leaves.  
In the winter  
the lakes of your country  
reflect thin flames,  
the fingers of trees  
touch lightly your white and blue fabrics.  
The brown fields  
of restrained laughter  
are dotted with the white teeth  
of the snow.

Over your plains fly birds  
unexpected . . .  
You assort the days and the nights  
in your cabinets  
with languid intelligence.  
Improbably you touch the old beard of Truth  
until the unwilling mouth  
grows eloquent.  
Little do you know  
or care to know  
of his past.

## BLACK BRANCHES

7

You have seen too many torrents disappear,  
you have seen too much smoke ascend . . .  
You know better than any one  
the irregular ways  
of your desire;  
you would have no new architect  
in the narrow streets,  
with their crooked little boxes,  
where grow  
the flowers of destiny.

No less than wine are you made  
of imagination.  
What can the sun do  
but ripen you  
who have no desire for ripening.  
Distillation shall follow distillation;  
and in the end  
you shall be tasted  
by wind and shadow  
by the slow look of exiles.

Pleasure is essential. . .  
“. . . Can you not figure to yourself  
the folly of other people?”  
When I stand here  
looking down at the polished ribbon  
of the river you have crossed  
for the last time,  
I do not know that I am unwilling  
to drop all the petals  
of reality.



Three Plays in Chiaroscuro

SHADOW

ECLIPSE

LUMIERE

*To Grace*

## SHADOW

## A Play In One Act

*The three old sisters are faded and exquisite. The first sister, with a palette and brush, stands before an easel. The second sister lies motionless on a couch, draped over with gray. The third sister is seated on a wide chair behind the couch. Her hands are folded in her lap. Behind the three sisters rises a very large, broad window. Beyond is a garden, indistinct in the still dusk.*

*The Third Sister*

My hands I have folded and refolded  
for forty years. . . .  
My heart sings  
because it has no gestures.

*The First Sister*

We who have had this window  
know what it is  
to look with the eyes,  
hear  
with the ears,  
accept  
with the brain.

*The Third Sister*

We who have had these walls  
know what it is  
seeing,  
to be blind. . . .  
hearing,

to be deaf. . . .  
accepting,  
to be dumb.

*The Second Sister*

I have baked five thousand and thirty  
loaves of bread.

(*They pause for her to continue, and then—*)

*The Third Sister*

That which we are not unproved  
in the meditation of,  
we dare not discuss  
in the intrusion  
of this inquisitive window.

*The First Sister*

I have been  
with abounding grace  
those things that are called:  
aunt, cousin,  
grand aunt,  
daughter, grand daughter, niece,  
and sister. . . .

I shall curtsy  
unto the first Father, and say:  
"dear relative!"

*The Third Sister*

Our property is in things  
that do not cry  
with pain,  
and are not silent  
through joy.

*The First Sister*

It is conceivable  
for many to think  
that it is because no one  
required it of us. . . .  
when in reality it has happened  
that we required it of no one.

*The Third Sister*

If the will alone is a scholar  
the histories of others  
are written upon me.

*The First Sister*

I have seen twelve magnificent cats  
male and female  
die without a moan.

*The Third Sister*

It is no small thing  
to have escaped  
many absurdities.

*The Second Sister*

The table must be moved  
from the wall  
before the winter. . . .

*The First Sister*

(*After a long pause, to Third Sister*)

I have heard your feet, Sister,  
passing my door  
like poems in the dark.



*The Third Sister*

There are terrors  
in the presence of which  
we are fearless.

*The First Sister*

The sorrow that is long  
and comes slowly,  
is no sorrow at the last. . . .  
It has dropped its miracles,  
as it grew heavy  
with indolence.

*The Third Sister*

Once I came in the night  
to break this window. . . .  
But I awoke.  
I did not dare after all  
to let the dark in.

*The First Sister*

It was that time, Sister,  
that your feet  
sounded like poems.

*The Third Sister*

Do you think  
that for some merciless whim,  
we dressed for the ball  
too early?

*The First Sister*

There is a beauty

that knows. . . .  
and a beauty that does not know.

*The Third Sister*

My thoughts of other times  
visit me like ambassadors,  
grown old.

*The Second Sister*

Have you had the gardener  
kill the worms  
in the peaches?

*The First Sister*

*(To the Second Sister)*

The table has already been moved, Sister,  
for the winter.

*The Second Sister*

You have not yet opened the window. . .  
It is pressing inward. . . .  
I have noticed it  
more and more each year.

*The First Sister*

There is no window. . . .  
only the unaccustomedness to space. . . .

*The Third Sister*

Space  
is a tiny bubble  
growing in my brain.

*The First Sister*

To the keepers of the potential

it is enjoined to be  
responsible,  
considerate,  
comely. . . .  
Should any of those  
whom I have imprisoned go forth,  
they will be observant  
of these qualities.

*The Third Sister*

One grooms the hair  
as though in the presence of many  
waiting to be heard.

*The Second Sister*

Why am I strong now  
when I cannot stir?

*The First Sister*

*(After a pause, to Third Sister)*

Our mother left us quickly  
babbling of our wickedness. . . .  
she could never wait  
for our father.

*The Third Sister*

Is it strange  
that I did not know our father?

*The First Sister*

He was much away  
occupied, as he was,  
with his double property  
Honour and Patience.

*The Third Sister*

That I would remember,  
knowing how I grew. . . .  
but I am no longer afraid  
of the mirrors of my reality,  
though I tremble sometimes  
standing in powerful darkness.

*The First Sister*

Neither the flames of the sun  
nor the black snows  
of the night  
are hospitable to us.

*The Third Sister*

There are persons who take  
an interest in stories. . . .  
Do you believe  
there are stories?

*The First Sister*

I have memorized  
the writings of men. . . .  
I prefer  
the long, active silence of lamps.

*The Third Sister*

My nieces always knew  
the gifts I had chosen for them. . . .  
I attached  
great importance to these matters.

*The First Sister*

A child is appetite  
unclouded by design.

*The Third Sister*

A child munches  
without discrimination  
the bread of our agony  
and of our peace.

*The First Sister*

There is a notoriety of barrenness,  
nevertheless,  
unknown to multiples.

*The Third Sister*

. . . bearing its heraldry of race  
in the very absence  
of testimony.

*The First Sister*

The treasures of denial survive  
like empty chalices in alluvia.

*The Third Sister*

How can one be certain whether  
the greatness of desire  
is not also a barred door?

*The First Sister*

I fled once crying  
from the colors I had laid on my canvas.

*The Third Sister*

I have awakened frightened  
from the immensity  
of a vagrant dream.

*The First Sister*

The reticences of refusal are naked

as autumn branches.

*(She lays down her palette, elaborately. . . and passing across to a small table, speaks—)*

It is the time.

*The Third Sister*

*(With interest only languid)*

It is too soon.

*The First Sister*

*(returning toward the coach with a small wine-glass, filled, she leans over the head reclining there, and quickly draws back)*

It is . . . too late.

*The Third Sister*

*(She rises . . . she is agitated, somewhat at first as a birch may be agitated, by a evening wind. She looks with a certain helpless concern upon the stillness that has come over the form upon the couch . . . this concern translates itself into a formal sinking upon her knees beside it, a final childish surrender to tenderness as she presses over it, hiding her troubled face among the stillness. After a time she looks up to see the even profile of the First Sister, turned away from her, from the face beneath hers, showing thought that is too far within or too far without to be involved at once in what has happened. The Third Sister rises as she speaks.)*

When she was ill I went away with her.

I was not then as little younger

than she as now . . .

And you . . . did not return.

*The First Sister*

(Her even bearing, incapable of a note awry, is reflected  
in a voice cold and smooth.)

When at last I came,  
You could not go . . .  
It would not have been permissible  
that we had not loved her.

*The Third Sister*

It . . . would not have been permissible . . . ?

*The First Sister*

that we had not loved her . . .

*The Third Sister*

(Finding in the aesthetic a refuge.)

She is beautiful now . . . as  
thistledown. Have you  
looked again?

*The First Sister*

What can the eyes say  
of that upon which they have worn keen?

*The Third Sister*

We did not love her?

*The First Sister*

I have painted men and women  
as one would paint oranges  
one was forbidden to taste . . .  
Her colors were imperceptible  
in the screen of my emotion.

*The Third Sister*

(She comes around the couch, drawing closer to the

*First Sister, shaken by some new inexorable solitude.)*

I shall tremble . . .

I shall be too weary . . .

I shall scarcely stand . . .

*The First Sister*

*(Something has touched her voice, her face too, her less rigid figure—some instinct of the gregarious.)*

You . . . loved her?

*The Third Sister*

A negation made her  
the companion of my humility.

*The First Sister*

We . . . loved her?

*The Third Sister*

Our lives loved her.

*The First Sister*

Death . . . centers the divergent shadows  
in a spot of light.

*The Third Sister*

Illumination  
was not willingly her discovery  
as it was with us . . .  
you remember?

*The First Sister*

Hush . . .  
Remembrance has foregone  
the dissolute pastime  
of speaking loudly.



*The Third Sister*

*(The room perhaps has been lightened. Or a last ray of the sun has somehow found her face. Her voice is eager.)*

It is less difficult  
for two to hear,  
than for three.

*The First Sister*

It is less distant for two  
to return than for three.

*The Third Sister*

Sister!

*The First Sister*

Sister!

*(They put out both hands. The curtain hides them.)*



# Eclipse

## ECLIPSE

## A Play In One Act

*Five men are seated on lumps of clay under the rim of the enemy side of a deserted shell crater. From time to time the cloudy night sky is lighted by a dim, brief glow. Death comes without other indication. The men have been there for an eternity. Their mud-soaked clothing and ruined equipment and soiled flesh have assumed a color like that of the bank which protects them. Occasionally, however, the light is sufficient for this or that characteristic face to be seen.*

*The Poet*

My gluttony is affected  
by the taste of skin-baked tobacco  
qualified by exudation . . .  
To smoke is to practice auto-cannibalism.  
(*He lights a cigarette*)

*The Beggar*

(*To The Personage*)  
Did you rent your estate  
to a large widower with seven children?

*The Personage*

How can I remember?  
It is a heap of ruin  
inhabited by lizards of peace . . .

*The Boy*

There is no more ammunition.

*The Poet*

Four kilometres from my normal mind

I struck the fancy  
of a flute-playing Viennese.

*The Personage*

I recall . . .

He muttered some syllables  
affecting the technique of his dispatching.

*The Beggar*

His disciplinary values  
are bayonnetted.

*The Poet*

His philosophy henceforth will stink  
or bring forth orchids,  
as the case may be.

*The Beggar*

Have you a doubt of my actual desire  
to consume flesh?

*The Boy*

There is no food.

*The Poet*

Hunger is the child of idleness  
which begets men also . . .  
I was born with an inheritance  
of hunger and of thirst.

*The Personage*

You can go on talking . . .  
They haven't found the range yet.

*The Silent One*

(*He sits always with his head in his two hands, looking*

*far off at the ground between his feet)*  
I was a professional optimist . . .  
My face wore thin with grimaces . . .  
It took me a long time  
to become sober.

*The Poet*

We are like paper flames under glass  
or something  
in a museum.

*The Personage*

The music I heard all night  
was the laughter of those  
who have nothing to do.

*The Beggar*

Have you touched silk  
in your sleep?

*The Boy*

She had skin the color of blood and khaki  
or this foreign mud  
the second day after rain . . .  
She showed her two teeth . . .  
It's damned funny she should be  
the last woman for me to see  
on earth.

*The Beggar*

I have asked God for two yards  
of this soil.  
It is the first begging I have done  
here . . .

Did you know I used to live in luxury?  
I only went out to beg on fine days.

*The Poet*

There was a verse and a melody . . .  
Both are bloody now.  
It is strange how the arts  
harbor relentlessness.

*The Boy*

He said that we might stop  
if we wanted to . . .  
Suppose we had . . .

*The Poet*

There were four crosses  
on that first hill.

*The Beggar*

A fellow lay with a hand and foot  
at each.  
He looked so good  
Bill stuck him there  
with his own mucilage.

*The Poet*

I presuppose nothing  
about the end of my flesh,  
having known nothing of its beginning . . .  
It fascinates me like a young puppy.

*The Beggar*

I used to stand under a bridge, begging . . .  
Men of my class avoided rain . . .  
I could hear

the feet of the people  
over my head . . .  
That sort of thing, I said once,  
was over for me,  
but . . . it has just begun.

*The Boy*

You won't hear anything . . .  
My father was a philosopher in his way.

*The Beggar*

Her fat eyes were cross-hatched  
about the lids . . .  
Lord, how she knew me!

*The Personage*

They do not babble in the books

*The Beggar*

And yet  
they have babbled  
for nine thousand years.

*The Poet*

I feel the essences of great tales  
unfolded . . .  
My interest was ever  
in passing things.

*The Personage*

It's a curious pity  
the way some of them went  
that first week.

*The Poet*

Pity is a melody



only the stars have written . . .  
Will anyone know that I lie  
embalmed in frozen thought?

*The Personage*

The willing of grotesqueries  
is the business of commanders . . .  
I was demoted twice.

*The Beggar*

One learns to descend even three times three.  
I was only a European beggar—  
now I am a soldier without glory.

*The Personage*

We are, you see, each of us,  
something that is left from many . . .  
I, for instance,  
am thirty-seven ghosts.

*The Poet*

My means of expression are diminished  
in the manner of a capon,  
or a dumb parrot . . .  
May my buttocks be seasoned well  
for these hospitable birds . . .  
One that flew low yesterday,  
a very insistent public indeed,  
has promised himself  
the perusal of me,  
in a leisure moment.

*The Personage*

A chap once, long ago,

had a coat here he brought along . . .

It smelled like dog's hair . . .

It kept me awake with happiness . . .

*(He totters)*

Ah . . . I fancy I have it now . . .

*(He slumps down quietly and rolls out flat. The others shrink against the wall and stare at him in silence—)*

*The Poet*

They say he knew so many men

in both worlds,

one half of his memory

was already immortal.

*The Boy*

He was like a damned lieutenant

looking at you . . .

I'm full of holes from him.

*The Poet*

In the theatre of the dead each arrives

having spoken his prologue

to a hostile audience.

*The Beggar*

*(breaks off from humming a tune, a common tune once sung to rum-shop words)*

I sing because my belly quivers

with the vibration . . .

Hunger departs, being outdone

by passion.

*The Poet*

*(Musing)*

I kept my soul spotless under Caesar,  
I was not made a slave by courts . . .  
And now I have no more gestures  
than old Bill's severed hand.

*The Beggar*

It was like a woman's broken fan . . .

*The Boy*

There were only two of us,  
my father and me.  
I've forgotten what we talked about . . .  
But I remember many things . . .  
these we didn't talk about.

*The Beggar*

I was once in that state of damnation,  
called employment . . .  
Back and forth we went,  
with those shovels of sand . . .  
Four steps forward you fill . . .  
four steps backward, you—  
(*He stops gutterally in the middle of his speech and  
drops back, almost comfortably, on the cushion of clouds*)

*The Boy*

Ah hell . . .  
that was rotten of It.

*The Poet*

(*He stands over the body, shaken, for a moment, then  
looks up*)  
The proposals of indignant politicians  
made him, the blithest of men,

and my comrade,  
 a tragic philosopher.  
 He has existed to satisfy  
 the maw of history . . .  
 I too am a comedian.

*The Boy*

I never belonged here . . .  
 I have too many fathers.  
 My own father and I  
 were occupied together at many things . . .  
 now, I should be older than he.

*The Poet*

The public, my sole heir,  
 cannot know the testamentary disposition  
 I have made of its pleasures . . .  
 If they would count yesterday's dead,  
 it would be seen  
 that I spiked my poems neatly . . .

*The Boy*

They haven't sent any orders  
 since we took this hole.

*The Poet*

Soldiers without orders  
 are like girls without rivalry . . .  
 All my songs are sung . . .  
 (*He crosses the stage and looks over the top of the hole*)

*The Boy*

Careful . . .  
 I should rather your nonsense

outlived me.

*The Poet*

Hush . . . I am thinking  
of the odor of wet lawns in summer . . .

Do you believe  
they will ever count the dead?

*(He tumbles across the ledge)*

*The Silent One*

*(He rises and goes to the body)*

His songs are counted.

*The Boy*

*(He seats himself, his last strength departed from voice  
and body)*

Are we all gone now?

*The Silent One*

Yes, we're all gone.

*The Boy*

It's a clean wipe?

*The Silent One*

Clean.

*The Boy*

*(In a faint voice)*

Could you . . . kiss me here?

My father did that even until . . .

well . . . it seems a long time ago.

*(He stretches along the ground at the base of the wall.*

*The Silent One stumbles toward him and leans over the  
face. He returns to the parapet and begins to climb.*

*As he reaches the top, and spreads forth his hands, there*

*is a bright glare, then the stage is blotted out completely  
by darkness)*

Curtain.

Lumiere

## LUMIERE

## A Play In One Act

*The sky is a blue bowl with stars. The effect is of immense space. The two seated figures, a man and a girl, are dressed as though they had come from a summer party—the man coatless. They sit toward the front and left of the stage, on two raised bits of earth or rock. Otherwise the ground is absolutely flat, to the horizon, without a tree. The faces of the two are suffused with starlight, but not too clearly seen.*

*She*

Do you like it here?

It is prison . . . isn't it?

*He*

No . . . Yes.

The walls will go back soon . . .

we must wait, it only seems so now.

*She*

How can it seem? Seeming . . . is!

*He*

It is? See . . .

the walls are going back.

*She*

It is prison.

*He*

Shall I sing something?

*She*

No, the tunes are all gone out . . .

you cannot light them.



*He*

Yes, they are smothered . . .  
Is it cold there?

*She*

I should not mind the cold,  
if only I could feel it . . .  
One cannot feel anything in prisons.

*He*

I thought I saw  
the winking of a humorous *stuff*.

*She*

O, let me look . . . You saw it, then?

*He*

There . . . I thought I saw . . .

*She*

It has gone . . . Does everything go?

*He*

Everything . . . that comes.  
Don't you feel the walls going back?

*She*

I'm not thinking of that . . .  
How far away are you?

*He*

It only seems so far . . .

*She*

But if it seems . . . !

*He*

Yes, I am far away.

*She*

I suppose one does not really  
grow tired of prisons . . . only  
of one's self.  
We could run . . . round and round.

*He*

Or think . . . round and round.  
Or not think.

*She*

What is thinking?  
Is it what I am doing now?

*He*

What are you doing now?

*She*

My arms respond . . . clasping nothing.

*He*

That is thinking . . . only  
it is not what I meant.

*She*

Now I know . . .  
It is prison,  
but it is not what we meant.

*He*

Yes, it is not what we meant . . .  
it only will be what we meant . . .  
it only may be what we meant.

*(The figure of a man passes across the stage behind them, walking slowly)*

*She*

Who is that one?

He is not in our prison.

*He*

No . . . He is in another one.

*She*

Did you recognize him?

*He*

Yes,

his certitude was immaculate,  
he was never waiting for anything.

*She*

He is *in* our prison . . .  
there are others in our prison.

*He*

I grant it may seem  
there are others in our prison . . .  
then, it is not our prison.

*She*

You think it is not?

*He*

Did you feel the walls going back?

*She*

I thought I felt . . .

*(The figure of a woman passes through. She is fashion-*

*ably dressed, carrying a parasol. She turns for an instant to throw a quick glance at the man, before going off stage)*

It is more ominous . . . I saw her lips.  
they were like a thin blade . . .  
and her hair was heavy and dark,  
like storm clouds . . .  
though I do not quite remember *their* shape.

*He*

Yes, her heart was like a storm cloud . . .  
She could move like angry water.

*She*

She too, then,  
she is in our prison.

*He*

It is her prison . . .  
the prison of one is the prison of all . . .  
Have you any flowers left?

*She*

I threw them away before the door closed . . .  
I thought  
they would die.

*He*

They would have died . . .  
Nothing could live here, I think,  
unless the walls go back.

*She*

How can you think?  
I do not yet know what thinking is?

*He*

Do you remember  
when thought was like many roads . . . ?  
It is the continuity of walls  
that makes a prison.

*She*

Flowers could not live here . . .

*He*

It is the continuity of living  
that makes flowers.

*She*

It is dark.

*He*

There is no wind.

*She*

There is not even a tree.

*He*

Or a sound.

*She*

Do you remember frogs?

*He*

Almost . . .

*She*

I saw the moon once . . .

it was like a cup, poured out . . .

*(A tall man passes, a tall student, who gazes straight  
ahead of him. She speaks tremulously, with excitement)*

That one was he . . .

I saw him plainly.  
He is not in our prison.  
That one was like a tree  
stripped bare, for winter . . .  
I felt his breath, smelling of pines.  
I remember . . .

*He (spitefully)*

Remembering is without continuity . . .  
It falls through the hands . . .  
Are your hands full?

*She*

My hands lie in my lap . . .  
the veins are big and blue,  
it is dark under the veins  
as if the sun had set behind them . . .  
they sleep like a little village.

*He (sententiously)*

I was whispering to myself not long ago . . .  
"I am going perhaps, to a little village."

*She*

You can go, then?

*He*

Yes, I can go.

*She*

You do not feel the walls?

*He*

I only seem to.

*She*

The walls are hard . . .

or I would go all the way to morning,  
no matter how far . . .  
Do you think morning will be?

*He*

Morning will be.  
That has already been thought of . . .  
It began when continuity began . . .  
Morning will be.

*She*

But we shall not know it?

*He*

Not unless the walls go back.  
But you . . . do not believe.

*She*

How does one know that one believes?

*He*

Believe has not the acquaintance of know.  
Once . . . you believed.

*She*

Then the walls were so far  
one could not see them?

*He*

There were no walls.

*She*

It is hard to believe that . . .  
there were no walls . . .

*He*

Light came between . . .

dissolving as it did  
one conflict in another . . .  
We drank the walls in light.

*She*

Do you remember that?

*He*

I remember everything, but not now . . .  
not at one time.

*She*

Is tomorrow remembering?

*He*

Remembering is the petal  
of continuity . . .  
But we have forgotten.

*(A man comes in and stops. He spreads his arms over  
their heads towards the sky. He throws a kiss to the  
morning star. He goes out somewhat disconcerted, slowly  
and thoughtfully)*

*She*

That one stopped . . .  
he seemed to be trying to touch the walls . . .  
Perhaps he has pushed them back.

*He*

No, he is a wall.  
He is a wall against walls.

*She*

He has gone . . .  
Did you feel any change with his coming?



*He*

I do not feel . . .

It is a starvation in the presence of bread.

*She*

I hunger . . .

The walls seem to have come closer.

*(A group of figures, men and women, pass across the stage chatting gaily or seriously, as is their mood, in dumb show.)*

There are so many . . .

those we have seen,

and these that just passed.

Who are they all?

*He*

They are the others . . .

One does not think of them ordinarily . . .

Sometimes they are printed on the mind,  
as a woman is printed on a burnished door  
when she passes.

They divide in the imagination  
into many atoms.

*She*

Our prison will not hold so many . . .  
perhaps the walls will go back.

*He*

The walls are going back . . .

but there are none in our prison.

It may be that our prison is in many.

*She*

Are you laughing now?  
How can you remember laughter?

*He*

Because I am laughing.

*She*

Where are you laughing?

*He*

Up there . . .  
I am flying and laughing.

*She*

Up there? I do not see . . .  
I see only the walls.

*He*

My plumage is gray . . .  
One must wait.

*She (very softly)*

You . . . believe?

*He*

Yes . . . I believe.

*She*

How can you believe?

*He*

Because I am laughing.

*She*

How can you laugh?

*He*

I believe.

*She*

You believe?

*He*

I believe.

*She*

Tell me both sides of it.

*He*

I believe.

*She*

Is that all?

*He*

That is all.

*She*

That you believe?

*He*

That I believe.

*(On this last speech he has risen. There seems to be more light. Perhaps the stars, having been patient, are now given up to gaiety. He and She walk apart, holding out their hands as though feeling for something, as blind men do.)*

*She*

There *are* no walls!

*He*

Yes, there were no walls.

*(They turn and face each other, trembling with a new elation, which gradually is diminishing the space between them.)*

I am feeling . . . without starvation.

*(He turns to her eagerly)*

Can you dance?

*She*

No, I cannot dance now . . .

There . . . is no ground, is there?

We must wait . . . perhaps I shall try.

*(There is no need to wait, the dance takes her willy-nilly, her feet without her knowledge responding to unheard music. He follows her. They stop, embracing)*

*She*

It is morning . . . there will be dark.

*He*

*(Laughing gaily)*

There will be dark . . . that has been thought of.

It began, when continuity began.

Curtain.

Songs of Deliverance

## SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

*To Bob Minor*

## THE SONG OF YOUTH

This is the song of youth,  
This is the cause of myself;  
I knew my father well and he was a fool,  
Therefore will I have my own foot in the path before  
    I take a step;  
I will go only into new lands,  
And I will walk on no plank-walks.  
The horses of my family are wind-broken,  
And the dogs are old,  
And the guns rusty;  
I will make me a new bow from an ash-tree,  
And cut up the homestead into arrows.

Behold how people stand around!  
(there are always crowds of people standing around,  
Whose legs have no knees)—  
While the engineers put up steel work . . .  
Is it something to catch the sunlight,  
Jewelry and gew-gaw?  
I have no time to wait for them to build bridges for me;  
Where awful the gap seems stretching there is no gap,  
Leaping I take it at once from a thought to a thought.  
I can no more walk in the stride of other men  
Than be father of their children.

My treasure lured like a bright star,  
And I went to it young and desirous.  
Lo, as it stood there in its great chests,

The wise men came up with the keys,  
Crying, "Blasphemy, blasphemy!"  
For I had broken the locks . . .  
And when the procession went waving to a funeral,  
They cried it again;  
For I stayed in my home and spoke truth about the dead.

Much did I learn waiting in my youth;  
At the door of a great man I waited on one foot and  
then on the other.

The files passed in and out before me to the antechamber,  
for at that door I was not favored:

(O costly preferment!)

Yet I watched them coming and going,  
And I learned the great man by heart from the stories  
on their faces.

When presently the retainers arrived, one above the other  
in a row, saying:

"The great man is ready,"

I had long been a greater than he.

This is the reason for myself:

When I used to go in the races, I had but one prayer,  
And I went first before the judges, saying:

"Give everyone a distance, such as you consider best;  
I will run scratch."

#### NO PREY AM I

No prey am I of poor thought.

I leave all of my followers; I tire quickly of them;

I send them away from me when they ask too much;  
for though I live alone

Still will I live, night and day . . .

There is not anything in me save mutation and laughter;  
My laughter is like a sword,  
Like the piston-rod that defies oceans and grades.  
When I labor it is the song of battle in the broad noon;  
For behold the muscles of a man—  
They are piston-rods; they are cranes, hydraulic presses,  
powder-magazines:  
But though my body be as beautiful as a hill crowned  
with flowers  
I will despise it and make it obey me . . .

Is the old love dead?  
Then I shall await the new,  
To embrace it more sturdily and passionately than ever  
the old;  
And break it under the white force of my laughter  
Until it lies passive in my arms.  
There is nothing in me but renewal;  
If my friend bow his head over me I soon surprise him  
with shouts of joy;  
For in an instant I am again what I was,  
Only with a few moments more of the infusion of Earth;  
I tell him, the griever, to follow me and he is a griever  
no more;

He raises his head and must follow.  
Yet it is my battle, not his battle,  
For in me I absorb others . . .  
I hail parties and partisans from afar;  
Not men but parties are my comrades,  
Not persons but nations are my associates.  
I shake the hand of nations;  
For I am a nation and a party, and majorities do not



elect me—

I elect myself.

I swam in the sea, and lo!

The continents assembled like islands off my coast.

My talk is with Homer and Bonaparte, with David and  
Garibaldi, with China and Pharaoh and Texas;

When I laugh it is with Lucifer and Rabelais.

A pathfinder is my mistress, one hard to keep and  
unbridled,

I have no respect for tame women.

My friends and I do not meet every day,

For we are centuries apart, our salutations girdle the  
globe.

I have eaten locusts with Jeremiah;

I invite all hatreds and the stings of little creatures,

They enrich me, I glory in my parasites.

No man shall ever read me,

For I bring about in a gesture what they cannot fathom  
in a life;

Yet I tell Bob and Harry and Bill—

It costs me nothing to be kind;

If I am a generous adversary, be not deceived, neither  
be devoted—

It is because I despise you.

Yet if any man claim to be my peer I shall meet him,

For that man has an insolence that I like;

I am beholden to him.

I know the lightning when I see it,

And the toad when I see it . . .

I warn all pretenders.

Yet before I came it was known of me to the chosen, all

that I should do.

Every tree knew it;

Every lion and every leech knew it—

And called out to meet the new enemy,

The new friend . . .

What power can deny me?

It was known that I should do not one thing but hundreds,

For I despise my works and make them obey me.

I have my time and I bide it . . .

It was known that I should turn no whit from my end

until I had attained it.

Nothing has scathed me,

Nothing ever, nor ever will.

I have touched pitch, I have revelled in it and rolled in it;

Buried in mire and filth, I laughed long.

And sprang up.

I have loved lust and vain deviltries

And taken them into my heart—

Their dirt and their lies—and my heart was aflame

With a new fancy . . .

Not me can pitch defile!

For the Spring, my sister, rose under my feet

And I was again naked and white,

Ready to dive into the deep pool, green and bottomless,

The medium for heroes, since it is dangerous and  
beautiful—

The pool of To-morrow!

It is because I breathe like fishes and live in the waters  
of To-morrow that Death fears me . . .

How often I have intercepted thee, O Death!

O windy Liar!

Thou canst do nothing against me;  
If I command thee to stand back thou art afraid and  
    cowerest,  
For I have caught thee often and punished thee . . .

I am the greastest laughter of all,  
Greater than the sun and the oak-tree,  
Than the frog and Appollo;  
I laugh all day long!  
I laugh at Death, I hail Death, I kiss her on the cheek  
    as a lover his bride,  
But the lover goes not to his bride unless he desire her;  
I go not to Death until I am ready.  
The strong lover goes not to his bride until he would  
    people his land with sons,  
Then I too, I go not to Death, except it be for the labor  
    greater than all others.  
I shall break her with my laughter;  
I shall complete her . . .  
Only then shall Death be when I die!



## Tunings

## TUNINGS

*To Alfred Kreymborg*

*Fingers* I've ten fingers  
Very much admired,  
I shall frame them  
For they cannot do anything;  
They cannot earn dinner  
Or even hold a pebble . . .  
Pebbles are pretty falling through them.

*Shoe-  
string* Little old shoe,  
You need a shoe-string;  
I shall find one for you,  
For without it you are helpless  
As a man who studies regulations,  
But with a yellow one  
Like a woman who is bald.

*Moon* We had one moon . . .  
You took it for a baby  
And when it cried  
For a bib and a bottle,  
All was over.

*Miggles* Miggles—  
That was his name,  
Everyone always said,  
"Miggles did it."  
O, Miggles,  
I admired you from the beginning,  
Miggles!

*A Room* It is a room that sets people thinking,  
So they say,  
Lighted like grandma's moonflowers . . .  
Swish . . . I hear something in the corner,  
Suddenly,  
And I wish I were a cat.

*Blue Under-shirts* Blue undershirts,  
Upon a line,  
It is not necessary to say to you  
Anything about it—  
What they do,  
What they might do . . . blue undershirts.

*At the Door* I have only a tingling remembrance  
Not of his eyes  
But of  
A dandelion . . .  
Nevertheless,  
The whole of him,  
The whole of me,  
There—  
Known; elicited, understood.

*On the table* Little duck  
Made of plaster,  
With your head  
Upon a spring,  
When my hand trembles upon the table  
You nod,  
And when I chuckle too . . .  
Such understanding,  
*C'est enaurme!*

*Beautiful* Oh, beautiful mind,  
I lost it  
*Mind* In a lot of frying pans  
And calendars and carpets  
And beer bottles . . .  
Oh, my beautiful mind!



New Songs of Deliverance

## NEW SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

*To the Whip-poor-wills*

## THE POPLARS

Three poplars I have watched  
A long time now in the west wind  
Which blows here always.  
Three poplars close together that lean in the wind . . .  
And I have never seen them touch each other.  
So my brothers, my good brothers,  
With whom by the chance of fortune  
I have lived,  
Let us lean to the stern fate  
All one way if you like . . .  
But let us not touch.

## ONE STRING

O song, song . . .  
O untenable song,  
On the string of the harp  
I have heard you make the sweetest music!

## EPITOME

What is but a small thing  
Will have the changelessness of marble, too,  
The bent twig is a matter of direction only . . .  
It seems to me  
When I have heard the first speech of a child  
I have seen the whole time  
Of a man on earth.  
There is interpretation  
In a gesture in the darkness,  
And a bird will have one feather erect always  
Like a flag.

## THE DOG

Scored and bleeding was the ear of that dog,  
Helpless was one foot.  
And how he stood even more unmoved  
Thereafter!  
How he annoyed sleep  
More than ever with the perception of his task:  
How he waited, half fallen  
By the door,  
And sounded joy-trumpets  
For the next coming of his enemy!

## THE LITTLE FLOWERS

I am not smiling  
Beside this mound—  
For a long time now I have forgotten to smile  
At the wrecked and beaten ruin  
Of so many a proud-facaded thought . . .  
But I watch the little flowers  
Growing from it—  
Gravely I watch the little indomitable flowers  
Putting their heads up.  
Thrusting out their fingers to the sun.

## CRYSALIS

They have piled one thing after another upon me,  
Until I am buried;  
They have placed shadow upon shadow  
And over the top with my own cowardly hands  
I have laid a roof.

Perhaps it will be a long time before I grow  
To break from my house  
As a boy bursts his coats,  
And drop it about me . . .

What a falling of curious shadows there will be.  
Shadows that I cannot linger with,  
Shadows of the past  
Like beggars that I shall not speak to.

## PATHS

Many a one will go down those paths  
Where the wild ivy grows venomous,  
And the rope vines shake in the wind  
And the tall chestnuts make the light dim--  
Many a one who will never know  
That Greece and all her wars  
Could not outery  
The crying memories of those branches  
The troubled pity of those stolid trunks.

## RETURN

Come then, all my dreams,  
Come back and be at home . . .  
See, like the flame between the logs,  
You will take life again.  
You will creep higher and higher!  
O wounded one,  
O you of bitter love,  
O you who were too great and angular  
For courts,  
O you who could not ever speak  
So full was your desire . . .  
Come then undiminished, all my dreams,  
Come back and be at home!



Kysen

## KYSEN

## A Frieze

## I

The gods have taken a child from the womb of a dead lady.

The father has sacrificed five bullocks for the child in the womb during three days following the intense heat.

Twenty stores of grain have been turned out along the roads for the poor, and forty wells have been sunk between Wul and Tanaio.

The rains have fallen for a day upon the ashes of the mother, but the infant Kysen thrives upon the black breast of a Nubian, whose first-born was thrown from the rock.



## II

In the center of the circular pool before the house of Kysen's father facing the alley of poplars and the little valley beyond, stands a tiny girl-child of marble holding in her hands a wounded bird.

Sometimes the sun robes it in a transparent gown of silver, reflected from the basin at its feet.

The sculptor Tamaporis modeled it from Kysen's very self, and she, who is forbidden to do so because she is stately and silent in her father's house, longs to take the child down from its pedestal and question it regarding their future.

But at night she goes out from the house in her tunic of shimmery white, with the fringe of peacock colored silk, and wading through the pool she climbs upon the rim of the basin and kisses the little limbs and the hands, for the sake of all the things she does not wish to remember.

## III

Every morning for seven mornings, Kysen has risen from her chocolate, taken behind the lattice of her verandah, and binding her hair in a knot over her brow and donning her double chiton of pale blue, embroidered with gold and modena phoenixes, has gone among the rose-bushes to watch for the first bud.

It is understood that until the labors of the Spring have borne this fruit, her lover may not return.

This morning on the smallest bush three steps from the olive tree a spot of red no larger than a jewel pushed out of the green cloak, and Kysen has gone to the East window at the top of her house, spreading her arms in welcome. At night a rocket will be sent up from the terrace.

## IV

When Kysen awakes in the night and sees the big wings of the window open beside her bed she shudders, for she imagines they are the arms of a monster come to carry her away.

And when she hears the sound of the dry branches in the wind outside she imagines it is the voice of the monster calling her to come.

Then she turns to awaken her lover.

But if he is not there she throws back the purple rugs and the white covers of the bed and goes to the chamber where the parroquets hang, and lifting the black silk night-shade with the pink monogram, she chatters to them until she falls asleep in her chair.

## V

When the red cat is ill it is as though the sea has escaped through a hole in one of the continents and the maid whose business it is to care for it stands before the shrine of Ptah, trying to pull her fingers out of their sockets.

All the doors of the house close more noisily than usual and the gold-fish die before they can be eaten.

But Kysen has prepared for this and in a far chamber of the house she has ordered a table to be laden with twenty kinds of fruit and the rarest wines from each province, delicate tongues of the baby calves, and the skins of quails roasted between honey.

When her friends are assembled the doors are locked and Kysen feasts and makes merry until the red cat is well.

## VI

Once a year at dawn the priest comes from the temple to the house of Kysen.

He is tall and his robe is of apple-color with a yellow band around the ankles and he has been chosen because he has the longest beard of all the young men.

He walks back and forth in front of the door, watching the casement of her sleeping apartment.

As soon as it is closed he enters and pressing his lips upon the clasps of her feet and upon her hair, he demands the name of her lover.

She pouts and refuses to answer, and though she would keep him longer pleading with her, he goes away.

Kysen watches the reflection of the window upon the round pounce-box of gold upon her table, and calling the score and five of maids she orders them to bar the doors and windows, to wear soiled linen and never to admit anyone again.

As for herself she has a bed of coarse sand made in her room and sleeps upon it until her skin stings with pain and is so rough that it must be embrocated for thirty-one days before her lover is allowed to return.

## VII

On the tenth day after the birth of a child in her household Kysen prays for the things she can never have:

“Father of Smiles, Forgiver, I have read in a crimson doe-skin book with silver sprays and an orange enamel clasp, of a bird in Africa which the Tunisians call buhabibi, meaning the bird of laughter and which eats grain from the tongue without being trained.

“In the palace of the Zuwya Sheik, who is said to be always on horseback shaded by a green umbrella, bearing a falcon on a tiny cushion and followed by a greyhound, there is a shawl of silk like sunset passing through the branches of the palms.

“Give me both of these, Father, and let thy daughter have many children, but let them be born from my kisses as sound is born from the wind and let them come into the world fully clothed in tunics of blue.”

## VIII

Today there passed along the road ten men with iron collars about their necks and chains between them, and either side a file of young soldiers.

Kysen, without even waiting for the completion of her toilet and with her hair flowing behind her like a fan of bronze, ran out of the house and addressed the dark-skinned captain of the soldiers: "Give these men to me that I may free them! Are they barbarians or Lydians that you put iron weights upon their necks and fasten them together with chains?"

And the captain answered: "Kysen of the province of Wul, each of them has committed a murder by binding the hair of a maiden about her throat."

And Kysen replied: "It is a thing that has happened since the beginning of the world, and men know that none but the gods can take life, for none but they can give it. The gods have brought death to the ten maidens by making these youths their instruments."

Hearing Kysen speak thus the soldiers nodded to each other as though they had gained a new knowledge, and the men in chains drew themselves up and laughed.

But the captain ordered the column to go on, and because she could not prevail Kysen has placed a man upon the road to herald the approach of misery caused by the law.

She will hide her head beneath four thicknesses of ostrich down and fill her ears with scented gums in order not to know the sound of injustice.

## IX

The little girl from the village whose parents gave her all the tasks to do in order that they might not lose a moment from their wine, has been brought into the house of Kysen to learn the art of laughter.

When the offenses of the child, whose name is called Dikai, have filled the red sheet kept by the secretaries, Kysen goes into the chamber of porphyry in which seven candles are kept burning day and night, and administers punishment to herself for the acts of Dikai, being careful that no member of the household should see the manner of her punishment.

When she has finished she gathers the tears which she has shed in a silver bowl, and pours them into the closed amphora upon which is written, "The Dowry of Dikai." Then summoning the maids she orders forty lashes to be administered to the lintels of the great south door, and instructs them to give the child greater freedom than before, and to obey her in all her desires.

## X

At the dance of the Cow, which is sacred to the poor, Kysen wears the calyx of a poppy inverted, and her limbs are bound with cords woven of the tongues of serpents dried upon weights and treated with oil.

Her mask is made of ivory scraped thinner than the fibers of an orange, and two children carry the crystal alms-bowl, containing the figures of boys modelled in wax of Hymettus.

Her hair is powdered with the ashes of young men who have died for her love.

When she returns to her house, before laying the garments away she will press her lips upon all the soiled places for the sake of the gentle fingers of beggars.



Hedone

## HEDONE

*To Hugh Ferriss*

## PROLEGOMENON

I greet the skill of those cool hands,  
their chisel and the graver's breath  
wherefrom my fashioning understands  
life in dissentient death.

O touch precise and personal  
that carves these lapidescent spheres,  
this soundless breast make beautiful  
with its impassioned years.

Shadows immonde and lines volupt  
set forth in thy incautious art . . .  
such vice that flowered and that supped  
nightly with my hard heart.

Spare not . . . in laminate relief,  
unmoved by ghibbeline and guelph,  
laconic and eternal grief  
cut boldly here myself.

## SANGFROID

No pierrots come here khaki-clad  
nor warlike flutterings feminine,  
but fatidique and slightly mad  
thought-children frail and thin.

Ripostes and pregnant raillery drift  
through sorrow phases demi-sane . . .  
Voicelessly they wait the lift  
bring up some new refrain.

The terraces and balcon lie  
unvibrate in the dripping moon  
save where the glint of clasping thigh  
or laughter breaks the swoon.

## AMAZON

Up-rythming from the groined arch  
her navel flower is a cup;  
the spiral flexing of her march  
shuttles to calf and crup.

From stride to swifter stride and run  
the ivory, sheatheless, cabrioled,  
then quick beneath a stroke of sun  
Swayed like a vine of gold.

## SALON DES VERS

The little verses seek their meal . . .

O chef appointed, glut these aches!  
and from the noon of wine and cakes,  
lo, fed to fullness, let them steal  
into the dusk to violate  
in verbal corybantic daze  
each one his slim and guarded phrase  
or line most dimply celibate.

## RESEMBLANCE

Would you be varied as the moon  
were I to poison grown entire;  
were I thus bringing gown and shoon  
of hate embroiled upon desire,

were I such ambivalent veil  
to slip upon the torsal vase  
of this your body slim and stale  
Anubis of aseptic days?

Lemurent god upon my cross,  
en cueros vivos, delirante,  
would I reminded of some loss  
murmur a name like yours, Amante?

In any bed cacoethine  
where you in pervious candor spread  
the essences of high cuisine,  
would I be dead . . . would I be dead ?

Londlouper I, désenchanté . . .  
in railway tunnels move me still!  
Ah, unintrigued, how once we lay  
epullmanned . . . frail ambrosophyl!

These improved lots . . . O rose-tiled floor . . .  
so nourished face . . . O porous boon!  
However, when I pass the door  
shall you be varied as the moon?

## VIVIPAROUS

'Tis the crusade of bagatelle,  
and down the heights, á corps perdu,  
have fallen since the matin bell  
small Choris and Kwei-foo.

Their laugh the thirty centuries  
have sought to hush with fumes of bhang  
and incense from the mysteries  
whence wicked temples sprang.

Above the morning's horizon  
a single cloud floats lightly blue . . .  
To Choris this is TO KALON,  
a fragrance to Kwei-foo.

Still undisintegrated, Kwei  
and impious Choris ravish nude  
the shady waters of Hei-hei  
blown by the gales of mood.

## PIETY

The daedal queen edulcorate  
strove with her sleepiness at tea;  
Theos, attending lounged and ate  
the crumbs of social apathy.

The envious pom unwound and leaped  
upon the god's wide, hairy lap,  
sniffing the breezes that were steeped  
with odors from her mistress' nap.

Soon the celestial bard is stirred,  
he strikes in pianissimo  
notes the Calypsine victims heard  
out of the sea's mouth long ago.

The sleeper turns . . . upon her throat  
the slow blood stipples through the down,  
her fingers as in dream afloat  
drift to the nipples in her gown.

## FIERTE

Imrudent yielder, guard thou still,  
 durante beneplacito,  
 the rage that draws the sea-tide's will,  
 thy retrogressive no.

Complacent dragons haul thy car,  
 and fantoccini cieline,  
 eyed by the yellow-barred cougar  
 who feeds upon my spleen.

In regal bass the old ædiles  
 praise, through the damask of thy nights  
 the prescience of elate denials,  
 the innocence of rites.

## LUNETTE

The window flames no longer clamber  
 like gonfanons against the sky,  
 and faintly blue-green glows the camber  
 of her thigh.

The febrile radiance left of day  
 creeps through the forest of her passion,  
 and riant in the dusk I stay  
 a man of fashion . . .

Her cigarette, avid of design,  
 is one still spark by shadow pressed,  
 and like a moon beneath, benign,  
 glimmers her breast.



## BLACK BRANCHES

25

### INVITATION

Idonean lemur, sport with me  
beneath the amber cyprilune,  
where roll in onomotope  
the rumbles of maroon.

O Clovic shaft, these lobes await  
the splitting glaive, inappetent . . .  
O shadow-eyes aculeate,  
return, relume, resent!

### SAMAHDI

At first thy soul is such a gate  
as carved the cinquecento master,  
its suave increase exfoliate  
with rich volute and mince pilaster.

No ideal rapture struggles there . . .  
yet do the inward heats remain  
that forged it, and the acier  
impassive tonic of disdain.

## USURY

Treasure I aught beneath the stars  
to scorn thy soul's ihlang-ihlang . . .  
Have I some yet crescent bars  
no other suitor learned or sang?

These searching fingers unashamed,  
sweet with the ink that blots the sun,  
are they not tigers loosed and tamed  
to fright thee, guest of Babylon?

My tangled hairs and anguished jaws  
above thee loom like riddled flags,  
storming beyond the menopause  
to whitened Hyllotheic crags.

Thou shalt fall back, the knotted loins  
of thought are pressing on unbound!  
the pillars and the deep-lunged groins  
of reticence are flung to ground.

Yet for thy love's ihlang-ihlang  
these fiery flanks obey, are still;  
and the uncivilized mustang  
of beauty sleeps . . . it is thy will.

## BIOGRAPHY

Cramouni fled the tedious days,  
his thought divagous as a cloud,  
the egg-eyed women in their stays  
playing the violins too loud.

Withdrew his feet, entwined with these,  
grass of the sense, and climbed the air  
blotting the brain's cacophonies  
and cooling the hot roots of his hair . . .

Cramouni must enucleate  
the marish path, he brunts the storm.  
He gains the end, he makes the gate  
into the palace bright and warm.

"Forward!" sings Cramouni's heart;  
he plucks at the marsh-mist on his eyes . . .  
"Here among beauty I am part . . ."  
he gurgles . . . and Cramouni dies.



## The Little Generation

## THE LITTLE GENERAION

I have sought always the inert enemy.  
 Hardest to arouse . . .  
 I say, therefore, to the generation that ruled in my youth  
 And still pleads for burial,  
 "My father was born of the masters,  
 And followed a rabble-man."  
 He is anathema to me—  
 I will not follow him  
 Nor be of his teachings.  
 I will defy his aims.  
 So be it to all scorers of themselves,  
 Ashamed of their own blood;  
 To those who fear the face of themselves,  
 In their offspring.  
 I speak over the head of my father  
 To the men who were his fathers. . . .  
 A race is an inheritance greater than money.  
 A race is a temple built of the sweat of many workmen,  
 Indestructible, thrusting its sinews into the rock.  
 Against him who sells himself, his race will rise like many  
     stones.  
 His days will be solitary.  
 Accursed be the fathers of this age,  
 Who have given absolution to the usurers.  
 Masters we were and masters we shall be.  
 The slaves of a crucifier are not of my line—  
 I say unto you, ye fathers of my flesh, I am the true son  
     of your best.  
 Not of your latest.  
 I recognize no cowardly generations—

I live serene, the fair face of poverty whispering to me  
the nobility of my blood.

I am the untrue. . . . if the truth of them that shout  
loudly be contemptible.

I am faithless . . . if faith have a price.

I deny failures

For in a gutter I should still be a king.

Shall I rule?

I have ruled myself.

I shall rule the aspects of the sky, watching the white  
moon make its entry into dusk, and I shall tell  
certain things to women they may not forget.

I shall rule the steel gray pools of dawn, and the many  
troubled writings of the sea, as they pass in my  
imagination,

And going away, I shall forget the sea in my old pleasure  
at the many-faced stupidity of men.

I love the bearded ones, when they are unwise and  
drunken,

When they expose to me the bones that have whitened  
upon their beaches.

I love witty profound seekers, who reign in the shadow  
of life's gateways and deny the necessity of the  
sun.

I storm not against doors, knowing that their iron feet will  
one day march upon me, and that the steel of my  
flesh and my soul will fling them aside.

Who wearies of the unalterable weariness of life?

Life, weary or unweary, is nothing to him

Who initiates.

I interest myself, being infinite in to-morrows. . . .

Let them come—

Doubts and foolishness,  
Ennui, the great enemy.  
Even the desolation of my gods I could endure  
So long as I lie in the mornings  
Listening to the promises of my body.  
Let the Greeks scoff, Odysseus and Helen;  
They shall find in us a new metal  
Which was not forged in their day. . . .  
Upon the proud abdomen of many a strong woman  
Were we forged into clean surfaces. . . .  
I shrink from propinquity,  
For it is propinquity alone,  
That has betrayed me. . . .  
Nevertheless only in watchfulness could I survive,  
And only in the treachery of others,  
Could I look into my face.









