

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY

**OU\_168956**

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY

Gift of  
YALE UNIVERSITY



With the aid of the  
ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

1949





THE AGE OF ANXIETY

*A Baroque Eclogue*



**T H E**  
**A G E O F A N X I E T Y**

*A BAROQUE ECLOGUE*

---

**W. H. A U D E N**

*Lacrimosa dies illa  
Qua resurget ex favilla  
Iudicandus homo reus*

Thomas a Celano (?)  
*Dies Irae*

---

R A N D O M   H O U S E • N E W   Y O R K

COPYRIGHT, 1946, 1947, BY W. H. AUDEN

FIFTH PRINTING

Acknowledgments are due to the *New Yorker* magazine and *Commonweal*, in which two extracts originally appeared under the titles *Spinster's Song* and *Metropolis*, respectively.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED UNDER INTERNATIONAL AND PAN-AMERICAN  
COPYRIGHT CONVENTIONS. PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK BY RANDOM  
HOUSE, INC., AND SIMULTANEOUSLY IN TORONTO, CANADA, BY  
RANDOM HOUSE OF CANADA, LIMITED, 1947.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY KINGSPORT PRESS, INC., KINGSPORT, TENN.

A. B.

To  
JOHN RETJEMAN



P A R T O N E

P R O L O G U E



*Now the day is over,  
Night is drawing nigh,  
Shadows of the evening  
Steal across the sky.*

S. Baring-Gould



WHEN THE HISTORICAL PROCESS breaks down and armies organize with their embossed debates the ensuing void which they can never consecrate, when necessity is associated with horror and freedom with boredom, then it looks good to the bar business.

In times of peace there are always a number of persons who wake up each morning excited by the prospect of another day of interesting and difficult work, or happily certain that the one with whom they shared their bed last night will be sharing it with them again the next, and who, in consequence, must be written off by the proprietor as a lost market. Not that he need worry. There will always be enough lonelies and enough failures who need desperately what he has to offer—namely, an unprejudiced space in which nothing particular ever happens, and a choice of physiological aids to the imagination whereby each may appropriate it for his or her private world of repentant felicitous forms, heavy expensive objects or avenging flames and floods—to guarantee him a handsome profit still.

But in war-time, when everybody is reduced to the anxious

status of a shady character or a displaced person, when even the most prudent become worshippers of chance, and when, in comparison to the universal disorder of the world outside, his Bohemia seems as cosy and respectable as a suburban villa, he can count on making his fortune.

Looking up from his drink, QUANT caught the familiar eye of his reflection in the mirror behind the bar and wondered why he was still so interested in that tired old widower who would never be more now than a clerk in a shipping office near the Battery.

More, that is, as a public figure: for as so often happens in the modern world—and how much restlessness, envy and self-contempt it causes—there was no one-to-one correspondence between his social or economic position and his private mental life. He had come to America at the age of six when his father, implicated somehow in the shooting of a landlord, had had to leave Ireland in a hurry, and, from time to time, images, some highly-colored, some violent, derived from a life he could not remember, would enter unexpectedly and incomprehensibly into his dreams. Then, again, in early manhood, when unemployed during a depression, he had spent many hours one winter in the Public Library reading for the most part—he could not have told you why—books on Mythology. The knowledge gained at that time had ever since lain oddly around in a corner of his mind like luggage left long ago in an emergency by some acquaintance and never reclaimed.

Watching the bubbles rise in his glass, MALIN was glad to

forget for his few days of leave the uniform of the Canadian Air Force he was wearing and the life it represented, at once disjointed and mechanical, alternately exhausting and idle, of a Medical Intelligence officer; trying to recapture the old atmosphere of laboratory and lecture hall, he returned with pleasure to his real interests.

Lighting a cigarette, ROSETTA, too, ignored her surroundings but with less ease. Yes, she made lots of money—she was a buyer for a big department store and did it very well—and that was a great deal, for, like anyone who has ever been so, she had a sensible horror of being poor. Yes, America was the best place on earth to come to if you had to earn your living, but did it have to be so big and empty and noisy and messy? Why could she not have been rich? Yes, though she was not as young as she looked, there were plenty of men who either were deceived or preferred a girl who might be experienced—which indeed she was. But why were the men one liked not the sort who proposed marriage and the men who proposed marriage not the sort one liked? So she returned now to her favorite day-dream in which she indulged whenever she got a little high—which was rather too often—and conjured up, detail by detail, one of those landscapes familiar to all readers of English detective stories, those lovely innocent countrysides inhabited by charming eccentrics with independent means and amusing hobbies to whom, until the sudden intrusion of a horrid corpse onto the tennis court or into the greenhouse, work and law and guilt are just literary words.

EMBLE, on the other hand, put down his empty glass and looked about him as if he hoped to read in all those faces the answer to his own disquiet. Having enlisted in the Navy during his sophomore year at a Mid-Western university, he suffered from that anxiety about himself and his future which haunts, like a bad smell, the minds of most young men, though most of them are under the illusion that their lack of confidence is a unique and shameful fear which, if confessed, would make them an object of derision to their normal contemporaries. Accordingly, they watch others with a covert but passionate curiosity. What makes them tick? What would it feel like to be a success? Here is someone who is nobody in particular, there even an obvious failure, yet they do not seem to mind. How is that possible? What is their secret?

In certain cases—his was one—this general unease of youth is only aggravated by what would appear to alleviate it, a grace of person which grants them, without effort on their part, a succession of sexual triumphs. For then the longing for success, the doubt of ever being able to achieve the kinds of success which have to be earned, and the certainty of being able to have at this moment a kind which does not, play dangerously into each other's hands.

So, fully conscious of the attraction of his uniform to both sexes, he looked round him, slightly contemptuous when he caught an admiring glance, and slightly piqued when he did not.

It was the night of All Souls.

QUANT My deuce, my double, my dear image,  
was  
thinking: Is it lively there, that land of glass  
Where song is a grimace, sound logic  
A suite of gestures? You seem amused.  
How well and witty when you wake up,  
How glad and good when you go to bed,  
Do you feel, my friend? What flavor has  
That liquor you lift with your left hand;  
Is it cold by contrast, cool as this  
For a soiled soul; does your self like mine  
Taste of untruth? Tell me, what are you  
Hiding in your heart, some angel face,  
Some shadowy she who shares in my absence,  
Enjoys my jokes? I'm jealous, surely,  
Nicer myself (though not as honest),  
The marked man of romantic thrillers  
Whose brow bears the brand of a winter  
No priest can explain, the poet disguised,  
Thinking over things in thieves' kitchens,  
Wanted by the waste, whom women's love  
Or his own silhouette might all too soon  
Betray to its tortures. I'll track you down,  
I'll make you confess how much you know who  
View my vices with a valet's slight  
But shameless shrug, the *Schadenfreude*  
Of cooks at keyholes. Old comrade, tell me  
The lie of my lifetime but look me up in

Your good graces ; agree to be friends  
Till our deaths differ ; drink, strange future,  
To your neighbor now.

MALIN

was

thinking: No chimpanzee  
Thinks it thinks. Things are divisible,  
Creatures are not. In chaos all bodies  
Would differ in weight. Dogs can learn to  
Fear the future. The faceless machine  
Lacks a surround. The laws of science have  
Never explained why novelty always  
Arrives to enrich (though the wrong question  
Initiates nothing). Nature rewards  
Perilous leaps. The prudent atom  
Simply insists upon its safety now,  
Security at all costs; the calm plant  
Masters matter then submits to itself,  
Busy but not brave; the beast assures  
A stabler status to stolen flesh,  
Assists though it enslaves: singular then  
Is the human way; for the ego is a dream  
Till a neighbor's need by name create it;  
Man has no mean; his mirrors distort;  
His greenest arcadias have ghosts too;  
His utopias tempt to eternal youth  
Or self-slaughter.

thinking: We beheld what was ours. Undulant land  
Rose layer by layer till at last the sea  
Far away flashed; from fretted uplands  
That lay to the north, from limestone heights  
Incisive rains had dissected well,  
For down each dale industrious there ran  
A paternoster of ponds and mills,  
Came sweet waters, assembling quietly  
By a clear congress of accordant streams  
A mild river that moseyed at will  
Through parks and ploughland, purring  
southward  
In a wide valley. Wolds on each side  
Came dawdling downwards in double curves,  
Mellow, mature, to meadowlands and  
Sedentary orchards, settled places  
Crowded with lives; fat cattle brooded  
In the shade of great oaks, sheep grazed in  
The ancient hollows of meander scars and  
Long-legged ladies with little-legged dogs  
Lolled with their lovers by lapsing brooks.  
A couth region: consonant, lofty,  
Volatile vault and vagrant buttress  
Showed their shapeliness; with assured ease,  
Proud on that plain, St Peter Acorn,

St Dill-in-the-Deep, St Dust, St Alb,  
St Bee-le-bone, St Botolph-the-less,  
High gothic growths in a grecian space,  
Lorded over each leafy parish  
Where country curates in cold bedrooms  
Dreamed of deaneries till at day-break  
The rector's rooks with relish described  
Their stinted station.

EMBLE

was

thinking:

Estranged, aloof,  
They brood over being till the bars close,  
The malcontented who might have been  
The creative odd ones the average need  
To suggest new goals. Self-judged they sit,  
Sad haunters of Perhaps who after years  
To grasp and gaze in get no further  
Than their first beholding, phantoms who try  
Through much drink by magic to restore  
The primitive pact with pure feeling,  
Their flesh as it felt before sex was,  
(The archaic calm without cultural sin  
Which her Adam is till his Eve does)  
Eyeing the door, for ever expecting  
Night after night the Nameless One, the  
Smiling sea-god who shall safely land  
Shy and broad-shouldered on the shore at last,  
Enthusiastic, of their convenient

And dangerous dream; while days away, in  
Prairie places where no person asks  
What is suffered in ships, small tradesmen,  
Wry relatives on rocking-chairs in  
Moss-grown mansions, mothers whose causes  
For right and wrong are unreal to them,  
Grieve vaguely over theirs: their vision shrinks  
As their dreams darken; with dulling voice  
Each calls across a colder water,  
Tense, optative, interrogating  
Some sighing several who sadly fades.

But now the radio, suddenly breaking in with its banal noises upon their separate senses of themselves, by compelling them to pay attention to a common world of great slaughter and much sorrow, began, without their knowledge, to draw these four strangers closer to each other. For in response to its official doctored message:

*Now the news. Night raids on  
Five cities. Fires started.  
Pressure applied by pincer movement  
In threatening thrust. Third Division  
Enlarges beachhead. Lucky charm  
Saves sniper. Sabotage hinted  
In steel-mill stoppage. Strong point held  
By fanatical Nazis. Canal crossed*

*By heroic marines. Rochester barber  
Fools foe. Finns ignore  
Peace feeler. Pope condemns  
Axis excesses. Underground  
Blows up bridge. Thibetan prayer-wheels  
Revolve for victory. Vital crossroads  
Taken by tanks. Trend to the left  
Forecast by Congressman. Cruiser sunk  
In Valdivian Deep. Doomed sailors  
Play poker. Reporter killed.*

**MALIN**  
thought:

Untalkative and tense, we took off  
Anxious into air; our instruments glowed,  
Dials in darkness, for dawn was not yet;  
Pulses pounded; we approached our target,  
Conscious in common of our closed Here  
And of Them out There thinking of Us  
In a different dream, for we die in theirs  
Who kill in ours and become fathers  
Not twisting tracks their trigger hands are  
Given goals by; we began our run;  
Death and damage darted at our will,  
Bullets were about, blazing anger  
Lunged from below, but we laid our eggs  
Neatly in their nest, a nice deposit  
Hatched in an instant; houses flamed in  
Shuddering sheets as we shed our big

Tears on their town: we turned to come back,  
But at high altitudes, hostile brains  
Waited in the west, a wily flock  
Vowed to vengeance in the vast morning,  
—A mild morning where no marriage was,  
And gravity a god greater than love—  
Fierce interferers. We fought them off  
But paid a price; there was pain for some.  
“Why have They killed me?” wondered our Bert,  
our

Greenhouse gunner, forgot our answer,  
Then was not with us. We watched others  
Drop into death; dully we mourned each  
Flare as it fell with a friend’s lifetime,  
While we hurried on to our home bases  
To the safe smells and a sacrament  
Of tea with toast. At twenty to eight I  
Stepped onto grass, still with the living,  
While far and near a fioritura  
Of brooks and blackbirds bravely struck the  
International note with no sense  
Of historic truth, of time meaning  
Once and for all, and my watch stuttered:—  
Many have perished; more will.

And  
QUANT  
thought: All war’s woes I can well imagine.  
Gun-barrels glint, gathered in ambush,  
Mayhem among mountains; minerals break

In by order on intimate groups of  
Tender tissues; at their tough visit  
Flesh flusters that was so fluent till now,  
Stammers some nonsense, stops and sits down,  
Apathetic to all this. Thousands lie in  
Ruins by roads, irrational in woods,  
Insensitive upon snow-bound plains,  
Or littered lifeless along low coasts  
Where shingle shuffles as shambling waves  
Feebly fiddle in the fading light  
With bloated bodies, beached among groynes,  
Male no longer, unmotivated,  
Have-beens without hopes: earth takes charge of,  
Soil accepts for a serious purpose  
The jettisoned blood of jokes and dreams,  
Making buds from bone, from brains the good  
Vague vegetable; survivors play  
Cards in kitchens while candles flicker  
And in blood-spattered barns bandaged men,  
Their poor hands in a panic of need  
Groping weakly for a gun-butt or  
A friendly fist, are fetched off darkling.  
Many have perished; more will.

And  
EMBLE  
thought: High were those headlands; the eagles promised  
Life without lawyers. Our long convoy  
Turned away northward as tireless gulls

Wove over water webs of brightness  
And sad sound. The insensible ocean,  
Miles without mind, moaned all around our  
Limited laughter, and below our songs  
Were deaf deeps, dens of unaffection,  
Their chill unchanging, chimes where only  
The whale is warm, their wildness haunted  
By metal fauna moved by reason  
To hunt not in hunger but for hate's sake,  
Stalking our steamers. Strained with gazing  
Our eyes ached, and our ears as we slept  
Kept their care for the crash that would turn  
Our fears into fact. In the fourth watch  
A torpedo struck on the port bow:  
The blast killed many; the burning oil  
Suffocated some; some in lifebelts  
Floated upright till they froze to death;  
The younger swam but the yielding waves  
Denied help; they were not supported,  
They swallowed and sank, ceased thereafter  
To appear in public; exposed to snap  
Verdicts of sharks, to vague inquiries  
Of amoeboid monsters, mobbed by slight  
Unfriendly fry, refused persistence.  
They are nothing now but names assigned to  
Anguish in others, areas of grief.  
Many have perished; more will.

ROSETTA I see in my mind a besieged island,  
thought: That island in arms where my home once was.  
Round green gardens, down grooves between  
white  
Hawthorne-hedges, long hospital trains  
Smoothly slide with their sensitized freight  
Of mangled men, moving them homeward  
In pain through pastures. In a packed hall  
Two vicious rivals, two virtuosos  
Appear on one platform and play duets  
To war-orphans and widowed ladies,  
Grieving in gloves; while to grosser ears  
In clubs and cabarets crooners wail  
Some miserere modern enough  
In its thorough thinness. I think too of  
The conquered condition, countries where  
Arrogant officers, armed in cars,  
Go roaring down roads on the wrong side,  
Courts martial meet at midnight with drums,  
And pudgy persons pace unsmiling  
The quays and stations or cruise the nights  
In vans for victims, to investigate  
In sound-proof cells the Sense of Honor,  
While in turkish baths with towels round them  
Imperilled plotters plan in outline  
Definitions and norms for new lives,  
Half-truths for their times. As tense as these,

Four who are famous confer in a schloss  
At night on nations. They are not equal:  
Three stand thoughtful on a thick carpet  
Awaiting the Fourth who wills they shall  
Till, suddenly entering through a side-door,  
Quick, quiet, unquestionable as death,  
Grief or guilt, he greets them and sits down,  
Lord of this life. He looks natural,  
He smiles well, he smells of the future,  
Odorless ages, an ordered world  
Of planned pleasures and passport-control,  
Sentry-go, sedatives, soft drinks and  
Managed money, a moral planet  
Tamed by terror: his telegram sets  
Grey masses moving as the mud dries.  
Many have perished; more will.

And when in conclusion the instrument said:

*Buy a bond. Blood saves lives.*

*Donate now. Name this station.*

they could no longer keep these thoughts to themselves, but turning towards each other on their high wooden stools, became acquainted.

ROSETTA  
spoke first: Numbers and nightmares have news value.

Then

MALIN: A crime has occurred, accusing all.

Then

QUANT: The world needs a wash and a week's rest.

To  
which  
EMBLE  
said:

Better this than barbarian misrule.  
History tells more often than not  
Of wickedness with will, wisdom but  
An interjection without a verb,  
And the godless growing like green cedars  
On righteous ruins. The reticent earth,  
Exposed by the spade, speaks its warning  
With successive layers of sacked temples  
And dead civilians. They dwelt at ease  
In their sown centers, sunny their minds,  
Fine their features; their flesh was carried  
On beautiful bones; they bore themselves  
Lightly through life; they loved their children  
And entertained with all their senses  
A world of detail. Wave and pebble,  
Boar and butterfly, birch and carp, they  
Painted as persons, portraits that seem  
Neighbors with names; one knows from them  
what  
A leaf must feel. By lakes at twilight  
They sang of swans and separations,  
Mild, unmilitant, as the moon rose  
And reeds rustled; ritual appointed  
Tastes and textures; their touch preferred the  
Spectrum of scents to Spartan morals,  
Bells babbled in a blossoming month,  
Near-sighted scholars on canal paths

Defined their terms, and fans made public  
The hopes of young hearts, out of the north, from  
Black tundras, from basalt and lichen,  
Peripheral people, rancid ones  
Stocky on horses, stomachs in need of  
Game and grazing, by grass corridors  
Coursed down on their concatenation  
Of smiling cities. Swords and arrows  
Accosted their calm; their climate knew  
Fire and fear; they fell, they bled, not an  
Eye was left open; all disappeared:  
Utter oblivion they had after that.

MALIN  
said:

But the new barbarian is no uncouth  
Desert-dweller; he does not emerge  
From fir forests: factories bred him;  
Corporate companies, college towns  
Mothered his mind, and many journals  
Backed his beliefs. He was born here. The  
Bravura of revolvers in vogue now  
And the cult of death are quite at home  
Inside the city.

QUANT  
said:

The soldiers' fear  
And the shots will cease in a short while,  
More ruined regions surrender to less,  
Prominent persons be put to death  
For mass-murder, and what moves us now,

The defense of friends against foes' hate,  
Be over for ever. Then, after that,  
What shall we will? Why shall we practise  
Vice or virtue when victory comes?  
The celebrations are suddenly hushed,  
The coarse crowds uncomfortably still,  
For, arm-in-arm now, behind the festooned  
Conqueror's car there come his heirs, the  
Public hangman, the private wastrel.

ROSETTA  
said: Lies and lethargies police the world  
In its periods of peace. What pain taught  
Is soon forgotten; we celebrate  
What ought to happen as if it were done,  
Are blinded by our boasts. Then back they come,  
The fears that we fear. We fall asleep  
Only to meet the idiot children of  
Our revels and wrongs; farouche they appear,  
Reluctant look-behinds, loitering through  
The mooring gate, menacing or smiling,  
Nocturnal trivia, torts and dramas,  
Wrecks, arrivals, rose-bushes, armies,  
Leopards and laughs, alarming growths of  
Moulds and monsters on memories stuffed  
With dead men's doodles, dossiers written  
In lost lingos, too long an account  
To take out in trade, no time either,

Since we wake up. We are warm, our active  
Universe is young; yet we shiver:  
For athwart our thinking the threat looms,  
Huge and awful as the hump of Saturn  
Over modest Mimas, of more deaths  
And worse wars, a winter of distaste  
To last a lifetime. Our lips are dry, our  
Knees numb; the enormous disappointment  
With a smiling sigh softly flings her  
Indolent apron over our lives  
And sits down on our day. Damning us,  
On our present purpose the past weighs  
Heavy as alps, for the absent are never  
Mislaid or lost: as lawyers define  
The grammar of our grief, their ghosts rise,  
Hanged or headless, hosts who disputed  
With good governors, their guilty flesh  
Racked and raving but unreconciled,  
The punished people to pass sentence  
On the jolly and just; and, joining these  
Come worse warlocks, the wailing infants  
Who know now they will never be born,  
Refused a future. Our failings give  
Their resentment seizin; our Zion is  
A doomed Sodom dancing its heart out  
To treacly tunes, a tired Gomorrah  
Infatuated with her former self

Whose dear dreams though they dominate still  
Are formal facts which refresh no more.

They fell silent and immediately became conscious again of  
the radio, now blandly inexorably bringing to all John Doakes  
and G.I. Joes tidings of great joy and saying

*Definitely different. Has that democratic  
Extra elegance. Easy to clean.  
Will gladden grand-dad and your girl friend.  
Lasts a lifetime. Leaves no odor.  
American made. A modern product  
Of nerve and know-how with a new thrill.  
Patriotic to own. Is on its way  
In a patent package. Pays to investigate.  
Serves through science. Has something added  
By skilled Scotchmen. Exclusively used  
By upper classmen and Uncle Sam.  
Tops in tests by teen-agers.  
Just ask for it always.*

Matter and manner set their teeth on edge, especially Malin's  
who felt like talking. So he ordered a round of drinks, then  
said:

Here we sit  
Our bodies bound to these bar-room lights,  
The night's odors, the noise of the El on  
Third Avenue, but our thoughts are free . . .  
Where shall they wander? To the wild past

When, beaten back, banished to their cirques  
The horse-shoe glaciers curled up and died,  
And cold-blooded through conifers slouched  
Fumbling amphibians; forward into  
Tidy utopias of eternal spring,  
Vitamins, villas, visas for dogs  
And art for all; or up and down through  
Those hidden worlds of alien sizes  
Which lenses elicit?

But Muster no monsters, I'll meeken my own.

EMBLE

ob-  
jected:

So did You may wish till you waste, I'll want here.

ROSETTA:

So did Too blank the blink of these blind heavens.

QUANT:

MALIN

sug-  
gested:

Let us then

Consider rather the incessant Now of  
The traveller through time, his tired mind  
Biased towards bigness since his body must  
Exaggerate to exist, possessed by hope,  
Acquisitive, in quest of his own  
Absconded self yet scared to find it  
As he bumbles by from birth to death  
Menaced by madness; whose mode of being,  
Bashful or braggart, is to be at once

Outside and inside his own demand  
For personal pattern. His pure I  
Must give account of and greet his Me,  
That field of force where he feels he thinks,  
His past present, presupposing death,  
Must ask what he is in order to be  
And make meaning by omission and stress,  
Avid of elseness. All that exists  
Matters to man; he minds what happens  
And feels he is at fault, a fallen soul  
With power to place, to explain every  
What in his world but why he is neither  
God nor good, this guilt the insoluble  
Final fact, infusing his private  
Nexus of needs, his noted aims with  
Incomprehensible comprehensive dread  
At not being what he knows that before  
This world was he was willed to become.

QUANT

ap-  
proved: Set him to song, the surly old dodger.

So did

EMBLE: Relate his lies to his longing for truth.

So did

ROSETTA: Question his crimes till his clues confess.

The radio attempted to interrupt by remarking

*And now Captain Kidd in his Quiz Programme*

*HOW ALERT ARE YOU*

But Quant pointed a finger at it and it stopped immediately.  
He said:

Listen, Box,  
And keep quiet. Listen courteously to us  
Four reformers who have founded—why not?—  
The Gung-Ho Group, the Ganymede Club  
For homesick young angels, the Arctic League  
Of Tropical Fish, the Tomboy Fund  
For Blushing Brides and the Bide-a-wees  
Of Sans-Souci, assembled again  
For a Think-Fest: our theme tonight is

*HOMO ABYSSUS OCCIDENTALIS*

*or*

*A CURIOUS CASE OF COLD FEET*

*or*

*SEVEN SELFISH SUPPERLESS AGES*

And now, at Rosetta's suggestion, they left their bar-stools  
and moved to the quieter intimacy of a booth. Drinks were  
ordered and the discussion began.



P A R T T W O

T H E S E V E N A G E S

---

*A sick toss'd vessel, dashing on each thing;  
Nay, his own shelf:  
My God, I mean myself.*

George Herbert *Miserie*



**MALIN** Behold the infant, helpless in cradle and  
**began:** Righteous still, yet already there is  
Dread in his dreams at the deed of which  
He knows nothing but knows he can do,  
The gulf before him with guilt beyond,  
Whatever that is, whatever why  
Forbids his bound; till that ban tempts him;  
He jumps and is judged: he joins mankind,  
The fallen families, freedom lost,  
Love become Law. Now he looks at grown-ups  
With conscious care, and calculates on  
The effect of a frown or filial smile,  
Accuses with a cough, claims pity  
With scratched knees, skillfully avenges  
Pains and punishments on puny insects,  
Grows into a grin, and gladly shares his  
Small secret with the supplicating  
Instant present. His emptiness finds  
Its joy in a gang and is joined to others

By crimes in common. Clumsy and alarmed,  
As the blind bat obeys the warnings  
Of its own echoes, his inner life  
Is a zig-zag, a bizarre dance of  
Feelings through facts, a foiled one learning  
Shyness and shame, a shadowed flier.

QUANT  
said:

O

Secret meetings at the slaughter-house  
With nickels and knives, initiations  
Behind the billboards. Then the hammerpond  
looked  
So green and grim, yet graciously its dank  
Water made us welcome—once in, we  
Swam without swearing. The smelting mill  
We broke into had a big chimney  
And huge engines; holding our breath, we  
Lighted matches and looked at the gears,  
The cruel cogwheels, the crank's absolute  
Veto on pleasure. In a vacant lot  
We built a bonfire and burned alive  
Some stolen tires. How strong and good one  
Felt at first, how fagged coming home through  
The urban evening. Heavy like us,  
Sank the gas-tanks—it was supper time.  
In hot houses helpless babies and  
Telephones gabbled untidy cries,  
And on embankments black with burnt grass

Shambling freight-trains were shunted away  
Past crimson clouds.

EMBLE  
said:

My cousins were both  
Strong and stupid: they stole my candy,  
They tied me to a tree, they twisted my arms,  
Called me crybaby. "Take care," I sobbed,  
"I could hold up my hand and hot water  
Would come down on your drought and drown  
you all  
In your big boots." In our back garden  
One dark afternoon I dug quite a hole  
Planning to vanish.

ROSETTA  
said:

On picnic days  
My dearest doll was deaf and spoke in  
Grunts like grandfather. God understood  
If we washed our necks he wasn't ever  
To look in the loft where the Lamps were  
And the Holy Hook. In the housekeeper's room  
there  
Was currant cake and calves-foot jelly  
As we did our sums while down below,  
Tall in tweeds on the terrace gravel,  
Father and his friends reformed régimes,  
Monies and monarchs, and mother wrote  
Swift and sure in the silk-hung saloon

EMBLE  
said:

MY COUSINS WERE BOTH

Following a fox with our fingers crossed  
Or after the ogre in Indian file,  
We stole with our sticks through a still world of  
Hilarious light, our lives united  
Like fruit in a bowl, befriended by  
The supple silence, incited by  
Our shortened shadows.

Malin went on to the Second Age:

With shaving comes

An hour when he halts, hearing the crescent  
Roar of hazard, and realizes first  
He has laid his life-bet with a lying self  
Who wins or welches. Thus woken, he is  
Amused no more by a merely given  
Felt fact, the facile emergence of  
Thought with thing, but, threatened from all  
sides,  
Embarrassed by his body's bald statements,  
His sacred soul obscenely tickled  
And bellowed at by a blatant Without,  
A dog by daylight, in dreams a lamb  
Whom the nightmare ejects nude into  
A ball of princes too big to feel  
Disturbed by his distress, he starts off now,  
Poor, unprepared, on his pilgrimage  
To find his friends, the far-off élite,

And, knowing no one, a nameless young man,  
Pictures as he plods his promised chair  
In their small circle secret to those  
With no analogies, unique persons,  
The originals' ring, the round table  
Of master minds. Mountains he loves now,  
Piers and promontories, places where  
Evening brings him all that grandeur  
Of scope and scale which the sky is believed  
To promise or recall, pacing by  
In a sunset trance of self-pity  
While his toy tears with a touching grace  
Like little balloons sail lonely away  
To dusk and death.

QUANT  
said:

With diamonds to offer,  
A cleaned tycoon in a cooled office,  
I smiled at a siren with six breasts,  
Leaning on leather, looking up at  
Her righteous robber, her Robin Hood,  
Her plump prince. All the public could see  
Was a bus-boy brushing a table,  
Sullen and slight.

ROSETTA  
said:

In my sixteenth year  
Before sleeping I fancied nightly  
The house on the headland I would own one day.

Its long windows overlooked the sea  
And its turf terrace topped a sunny  
Sequestered cove. A corkscrew staircase  
From a green gate in the garden wall  
Descended the cliff, the sole entrance  
To my beach where bathers basked beside  
The watchet waves. Though One was special,  
All forms were friends who freely told their  
Secrets to me; but, safe in my purse  
I kept the key to the closet where  
A sliding panel concealed the lift,  
Known to none, which at night would take me  
Down through the dark to my dock below,  
A chamber chiselled in the chalk hill,  
Private and perfect; thence, putting forth  
Alone in my launch through a low tunnel  
Out to the ocean, while all others slept,  
Smiling and singing I sailed till dawn,  
Happy, hatless.

EMBLE  
said:

After a dreadful  
Row with father, I ran with burning  
Cheeks to the pasture and chopped wood, my  
Stomach like a stone. I strode that night  
Through wicked dreams: waking, I skipped to  
The shower and sang, ashamed to recall  
With whom or how; the hiss of the water

Composed the tune, I supplied the words  
For a fine dirge which fifty years hence  
Massed choirs would sing as my coffin passed,  
Grieved for and great on a gun-carriage.

Malin went on, spoke of the Third Age:

Such pictures fade as his path is blocked  
By Others from Elsewhere, alien bodies  
Whose figures fasten on his free thoughts,  
Ciphers and symbols secret to his flesh,  
Uniquely near, needing his torments,  
His lonely life, and he learns what real  
Images are; that, however violent  
Their wish to be one, that wild promise  
Cannot be kept, their case is double;  
For each now of need ignores the other as  
By rival routes of recognition  
Diminutive names that midnight hears  
Intersect upon their instant way  
To solid solitudes, and selves cross  
Back to bodies, both insisting each  
Proximate place a pertinent thing.  
So, learning to love, at length he is taught  
To know he does not.

QUANT  
said:

Since the neighbors did,  
With a multitude I made the long  
Visitors' voyage to Venus Island,

Elated as they, landed upon  
That savage shore where old swains lay wrecked  
Unfit for her fable, followed up  
The basalt stairway bandying jokes with  
The thoughtless throng, but then, avoiding  
The great gate where she gives all pilgrims  
Her local wine, I legged it over  
A concrete wall, was cold sober as,  
Pushing through brambles, I peeked out at  
Her fascination. Frogs were shooting  
Craps in a corner; cupids on stilts,  
Their beautiful bottoms breaking wind,  
Hunted hares with hurricane lanterns  
Through woods on one side, while on the other,  
Shining out through shivering poplars,  
Stood a brick bath-house where burghers mixed  
With light-fingered ladies and louche trade,  
Dancing in serpents and daisy chains  
To mad music. In the mid-distance  
On deal chairs sat a dozen decayed  
Gentlewomen with dejected backs  
And raw fingers morosely stitching  
Red flannel scivvies for heroic herms.  
Primroses, peacocks and peachtrees made  
A fair foreground but fairer there, with  
An early Madonna's oval face  
And lissom limbs, delighting that whole

Degraded glen, the Goddess herself  
Presided smiling; a saucy wind,  
Plucking from her thigh her pink wrapper  
Of crêpe-de-chine, disclosed a very  
Indolent ulcer.

Rosetta said nothing but, placing a nickel in the Wallomatic,  
selected a sad little tune *The Case Is Closed* (*Tschaikovsky—*  
*Fink*) and sang to it softly:

Deep in my dark the dream shines  
Yes, of you, you dear always;  
My cause to cry, cold but my  
Story still, still my music.

Mild rose the moon, moving through our  
Naked nights: tonight it rains;  
Black umbrellas blossom out;  
Gone the gold, my golden ball.

Heavy these hands. I believed  
That pleased pause, your pause was me  
To love alone till life's end:  
I thought this; this was not true.

You touched, you took. Tears fall. O  
Fair my far, when far ago  
Like waterwheels wishes spun  
Radiant robes: but the robes tore.

Emble did likewise but his choice was a hot number, *Bugs in the Bed* by *Bog Myrtle & Her Two-Timers*. He sang gaily:

His Queen was forward, Her King was shy;  
He hoped for Her Heart but He overbid;  
When She ducked His Diamond down They  
went.

In Smuggler's Cove He smelt near Him  
Her musical mermaids; She met His angels  
In Locksmith's Lane, the little dears.

He said to Her: "You're a hazy truth;"  
She said to Him: "You're a shining lie;"  
Each went to a washroom and wept much.

The public applauded and the poets drew  
A moral for marriage: "The moths will get you  
If the wolves won't, so why not now?"

The consequence was Both claimed the insurance  
And the furniture gave what-for to Their  
elbows.  
A reason for One, a risk on the Pair.

Malin went on, spoke of the Fourth Age:

Now unreckoned with, rough, his road descends  
From the haughty and high, the humorless places

His dreams would prefer, and drops him till,  
As his forefathers did, he finds out  
Where his world lies. By the water's edge,  
The unthinking flood, down there, yes, is his  
Proper place, the polychrome Oval  
With its kleig lights and crowd engineers,  
The mutable circus where mobs rule  
The arena with roars, the real world of  
Theology and horses, our home because  
In that doubt-condemning dual kingdom  
Signs and insignia decide our cause,  
Fanatics of the Egg or Knights sworn to  
Die for the Dolphin, and our deeds wear  
Heretic green or orthodox blue,  
Safe and certain.

ROSETTA  
said:

Too soon we embrace that  
Impermanent appetitive flux,  
Humorous and hard, which adults fear  
Is real and right, the irreverent place,  
The clown's cosmos.

EMBLE  
said:

Who is comforted by it?  
Pent in the packed compulsory ring  
Round father's frown each *famus* waits his  
Day to dominate. Here a dean sits  
Making bedroom eyes at a beef steak,

As wholly oral as the avid creatures  
Of the celibate sea; there, sly and wise  
Commuters mimic the Middle Way,  
Trudging on time to a tidy fortune.  
(A senator said: "From swimming-hole  
To board-meeting is a big distance.")  
Financiers on knolls, noses pointing  
East towards oil fields, inhale the surplus  
Their bowels boast of, while boys and girls, their  
Hot hearts covered over with marriage  
To tyrant functions, turn by degrees  
To cold fish, though, precarious on the  
Fringes of their feeling, a fuzzy hope  
Persists somehow that sometime all this  
Will walk away, and a wish gestates  
For explosive pain, a punishing  
Demanded moment of mortal change,  
The Night of the Knock when none shall sleep,  
The Absolute Instant.

QUANT  
said:

It is here, now.

For the huge wild beast of the Unexpected  
Leaps on the lax recollecting back;  
Unknown to him, binoculars follow  
The leaping lad; lightning at noonday  
Swiftly stooping to the summer-house  
Engraves its disgust on engrossed flesh,

And at tea-times through tall french windows  
Hurtle anonymous hostile stones.  
No soul is safe. Let slight infection  
Disturb a trifle some tiny gland,  
And Caustic Keith grows kind and silly  
Or Dainty Daisy dirties herself.  
We are mocked by unmeaning; among us fall  
Aimless arrows, hurting at random  
As we plan to pain.

Malin went on, spoke of the Fifth Age:

In peace or war,  
Married or single, he muddles on,  
Offending, fumbling, falling over,  
And then, rather suddenly, there he is  
Standing up, an astonished victor  
Gliding over the good glib waters  
Of the social harbor to set foot  
On its welcoming shore where at last  
Recognition surrounds his days with  
Her felicitous light. He likes that;  
He fairly blooms; his fever almost  
Relaxes its hold. He learns to speak  
Softer and slower, not to seem so eager;  
His body acquires the blander motions  
Of the approved state. His positive glow  
Of fiscal health affects that unseen

Just judge, that Generalized Other  
To whom he thinks and is understood by,  
Who grows less gruff as if gravely impressed  
By his evident air of having now  
Really arrived, bereaved of every  
Low relation.

EMBLE  
said:

Why leave out the worst  
Pang of youth? The princes of fiction,  
Who ride through risks to rescue their loves,  
Know their business, are not really  
As young as they look. To be young means  
To be all on edge, to be held waiting in  
A packed lounge for a Personal Call  
From Long Distance, for the low voice that  
Defines one's future. The fears we know  
Are of not knowing. Will nightfall bring us  
Some awful order—Keep a hardware store  
In a small town. . . . Teach science for life to  
Progressive girls—? It is getting late.  
Shall we ever be asked for? Are we simply  
Not wanted at all?

QUANT  
said:

Well, you will soon  
Not bother but acknowledge yourself  
As market-made, a commodity  
Whose value varies, a vendor who has

To obey his buyer, will embrace moreover  
The problems put you by opposing time,  
The fight with work, the feud of marriage,  
Whose detonating details day and night  
Invest your breathing and veto sleep,  
As their own answers, like others find  
The train-ride between your two natures,  
The morning-evening moment when  
You are free to reflect on your faults still,  
Is an awkward hiatus, is indeed  
The real risk to be read away with  
Print and pictures, reports of what should  
Never have happened, will no longer  
Expect more pattern, more purpose than  
Your finite fate.

ROSETTA  
said:

I refuse to accept  
Your plain place, your unprivileged time.  
No. No. I shall not apologize  
Nor retire contempt for this tawdry age.  
The juke-box jives rejoicing madly  
As life after life lapses out of  
Its essential self and sinks into  
One press-applauded public untruth  
And, massed to its music, all march in step  
Led by that liar, the lukewarm Spirit  
Of the Escalator, ever timely,

His whims their will, away from freedom  
To a locker-room life at low tension,  
Abnormal none, anonymous hosts  
Driven like Danaids by drill sergeants  
To ply well-paid repetitive tasks  
(Dowdy they'll die who have so dimly lived)  
In cosy crowds. Till the caring poet,  
Child of his chamber, chooses rightly  
His pleased picture of pure solitudes  
Where gusts gamble over gaunt areas  
Frozen and futile but far enough  
From vile civilities vouched for by  
Statisticians, this stupid world where  
Gadgets are gods and we go on talking,  
Many about much, but remain alone,  
Alive but alone, belonging—where?—  
Unattached as tumbleweed. Time flies.

QUANT  
said:

No, Time returns, a continuous Now  
As the clock counts. The captain sober  
Gulps his beer as the galley-boy drunk  
Gives away his water; William East is  
Entering Olive as Alfred West  
Is leaving Elaine; Lucky McGuire  
Divides the spoil as Vacuous Molly  
Joins in the joke; Justice van Diemen  
Foresees the day when the slaves rise and

Ragamuffins roll around the block  
His cone-shaped skull while Convict 90  
Remembers his mother. We move on  
As the wheel wills; one revolution  
Registers all things, the rise and fall  
In pay and prices, peregrinations  
Of lies and loves, colossal bangs and  
Their sequential quiets in quick order.  
And who runs may read written on walls  
Eternal truths: "Teddy Peterson  
Never washes." "I'm not your father  
You slobbering Swede." "Sulky Moses  
Has bees in his bush." "Betty is thinner  
But Connie lays." —Who closes his eyes  
Sees the blonde vistas bathed in sunlight,  
The temples, tombs, and terminal god,  
Tall by a torrent, the etruscan landscape  
Of Man's Memory. His myths of Being  
Are there always. In that unchanging  
Lucid lake where he looks for ever  
Narcissus sees the sensitive face  
He's too intelligent to trust or like  
Pleading his pardon. Polyphemus  
Curses his cave or, catching a nymph,  
Begs for brotherhood with a big stick,  
Hobbledehoy and helpless. Kind Orpheus lies  
Violently slain on the virid bank,

That smooth sward where he sinned against  
kind,  
And, wild by the water, women stone  
The broken torso but the bloody head,  
In the far distance, floating away  
Down the steady stream, still opening  
Its charming mouth, goes chanting on in  
Fortissimo tones, a tenor lyre  
Dinning the doom into a deaf Nature  
Of her loose chaos. For Long-Ago has been  
Ever-After since Ur-Papa gave  
The Primal Yawn that expressed all things  
(In His Boredom their beings) and brought forth  
The wit of this world. One-Eye's mistake  
Is sorry He spoke.

Malin went on, spoke of the Sixth Age:

Our subject has changed.  
He looks far from well; he has fattened on  
His public perch; takes pills for vigor  
And sound sleep, and sees in his mirror  
The jawing genius of a jackass age,  
A rich bore. When he recollects his  
Designed life, the presented pomp is  
A case of chaos, a constituted  
Famine of effect. Feverish in  
Their bony building his brain cells keep

Their hectic still, but his heart transfixed  
By the ice-splinter of an ingrown tear,  
Comatose in her cave, cares little  
What the senses say; at the same time,  
Dedicated, clandestine under  
The guilt and grime of a great career,  
The bruise of his boyhood is as blue still,  
Horrid and hurting, hostile to his life  
As a praised person. He pines for some  
Nameless Eden where he never was  
But where in his wishes once again  
On hallowed acres, without a stitch  
Of achievement on, the children play  
Nor care how comely they couldn't be  
Since they needn't know they're not happy.

QUANT  
said:

So do the ignored. In the soft-footed  
Hours of darkness when elevators  
Raise blondes aloft to bachelor suites  
And the night-nurse notices a change  
In the patient's breathing, and Pride lies  
Awake in himself too weak to stir  
As Shame and Regret shove into his their  
Inflamed faces, we failures inquire  
For the treasure also. I too have shed  
The tears of parting at Traitor's Halt  
Where comforts finished and kind but dull,

In low landaus and electric broughams,  
Through wrought-iron gates, down rhododendron  
Avenues they came, Sir Ambrose Touch,  
Fat Lady Feel, Professor Howling,  
Doctor Dort, dear Mrs. Pollybore,  
And the Scarsdale boy with a school friend  
To see us off. (But someone important,  
Alas, was not there.) Some laughed of course.  
Ha-ha, ha-ha, cried Hairy Mary  
The lighthouse lady, little Miss Odd,  
And Will Walton the watercress man,  
And pointed northward. Repellent there  
A storm was brewing, but we started out  
In carpet-slippers by candlelight  
Through Wastewood in the wane of the year,  
Past Torture Tower and Twisting Ovens,  
Their ruins ruled by the arrested insect  
And abortive bird. In the bleak dawn  
We reached Red River; on Wrynose Weir  
Lay a dead salmon; when the dogs got wind  
They turned tail. We talked very little;  
Thunder thudded; on the thirteenth day  
Our diseased guide deserted with all  
The milk chocolate. Emerging from  
Forests to foothills, our fears increased,  
For roads grew rougher and ridges were

Congested with gibbets. We had just reached  
The monastery bridge; the mist cleared;  
I got one glimpse of the granite walls  
And the glaciers guarding the Good Place.  
(A giant jawbone jutted from that ice;  
Condors on those crags coldly observed our  
Helpless anguish.) My hands in my pockets,  
Whistling ruefully I wandered back  
By Maiden Moor and Mockbeggar Lane  
To Nettlenaze where nightingales sang  
Of my own evil.

ROSETTA  
said:

Yet holy are the dolls  
Who, junior for ever, just begin  
Their open lives in absolute space,  
Are simply themselves, deceiving none,  
Their clothes creatures, so clearly expressing,  
Tearless, timeless, the paternal world  
Of pillars and parks. O Primal Age  
When we danced deisal, our dream-wishes  
Vert and volant, unvetoes our song.  
For crows brought cups of cold water to  
Ewes that were with young; unicorn herds  
Galumphed through lilies; little mice played  
With great cock-a-hoop cats; courteous griffins  
Waltzed with wyverns, and the wild horses

Drew nigh their neighbors and neighed with joy,  
All feasting with friends. What faded you  
To this drab dusk? O the drains are clogged,  
Rain-rusted, the roofs of the privies  
Have fallen in, the flag is covered  
With stale stains and the stable-clock face  
Mottled with moss. Mocking blows the wind  
Into my mouth. O but they've left me.  
I wronged. Then they ran. I'm running down.  
Wafna. Wafna. Who's to wind me now  
In this lost land?

EMBLE  
said:

I've lost the key to  
The garden gate. How green it was there,  
How large long ago when I looked out,  
Excited by sand, the sad glitter  
Of desert dreck, not dreaming I saw  
My future home. It foils my magic:  
Right is the ritual but wrong the time,  
The place improper.

QUANT  
said:

Reproaches come,  
Emanating from some hidden centet,  
Cold radiations directed at us  
In waves unawares, and we are shaken  
By a sceptical sigh from a scotch fir,  
The Accuser crying in a cocktail glass.

Someone had put on the juke box a silly number *With That Thing* as played by *The Three Snorts*, and to this he sang:

Let me sell you a song, the most side-splitting  
tale  
Since old Chaos caught young Cosmos bending  
With his back bare and his braces down,  
Homo Vulgaris, the Asterisk Man.

He burned all his boats and both pink ends  
Of his crowing candle, cooked his goose-flesh.  
Jumped his bailiwick, jilted his heirs  
And pickled his piper, the Approximate Man.

With his knees to the north and the night in  
his stride  
He advanced on the parlors, then vanished  
upstairs  
As a bath-tub admiral to bark commands  
At his ten hammer toes, the Transient Man.

Once in his while his wit erupted  
One pure little puff, one pretty idea;  
A fumerole since he has fizzled a cloud  
Of gossip and gas, the Guttering Man.

Soon his soul will be sent up to Secret Inks,  
His body be bought by the Breakdown Gang;

It's time for the Ticklers to take him away  
In a closed cab, the Camouflage Man.

So look for a laundress to lay him out cold,  
A fanciful fairy to fashion his tomb  
In Rest-room Roman; get ready to pray  
In a wheel-chair voice for the Watery Man.

Malin went on once more, spoke of the Seventh Age:

His last chapter has little to say.  
He grows backward with gradual loss of  
Muscular tone and mental quickness:  
He lies down; he looks through the window  
Ailing at autumn, asks a sign but  
The afternoons are inert, none come to  
Quit his quarrel or quicken the long  
Years of yawning and he yearns only  
For total extinction. He is tired out;  
His last illusions have lost patience  
With the human enterprise. The end comes: he  
Joins the majority, the jaw-dropped  
Mildewed mob and is modest at last.  
There his case rests: let who can disprove.

So their discussion concluded. Malin excused himself and went to the men's room. Quant went to the bar to fetch more drinks. Rosetta and Emble sat silent, occupied with memories of a distant or recent, a real or imaginary past.

ROSETTA  
was  
think-  
ing:

There was Lord Lugar at Lighthazels,  
Violent-tempered; he voted against  
The Banking Bill. At Brothers Intake  
Sir William Wand; his Water Treaty  
Enriched Arabia. At Rotherhope  
General Locke, a genial man who  
Kept cormorants. At Craven Ladies  
Old Tillingham-Trench; he had two passions,  
Women and walking-sticks. At Wheels Rake,  
In his low library loving Greek  
Bishop Bottrel; he came back from the East  
With a fat notebook full of antique  
Liturgies and laws, long-forgotten  
Christian creeds occluded within a  
Feldspar fortress. Fay was his daughter;  
A truant mutation, she took up art,  
Carved in crystal, became the friend of  
Green-eyed Gelert the great dressmaker,  
And died in Rome. There was Dr. Sykes  
At Mugglers Mound; his monograph on  
The chronic cough is a classic still;  
He was loved by all. At Lantern Byepew  
Susan O'Rourke, a sensitive who  
Prayed for the plants. They have perished  
now; their  
Level lawns and logical vistas  
Are obliterated; their big stone

Houses are shut. Ease is rejected,  
Poor and penalized the private state.

EMBLE  
was  
think-  
ing:

I have friends already, faces I know  
In that calm crowd, wearing clothes like mine,  
Who have settled down, accepted at once,  
Contemporary with Trojan Knights  
And Bronze-Age bagmen; Bud and Whitey  
And Clifford Monahan and Clem Lifschutz,  
Dicky Lamb, Dominic Moreno,  
Svensson, Seidel: they seem already  
Like anyone else. Must I end like that?

Waiting to be served, Quant caught sight of himself again in  
the bar mirror and thought:

Ingenious George reached his journey's end  
Killed by a cop in a comfort station,  
Dan dropped dead at his dinner table,  
Mrs. O'Malley with Miss De Young  
Wandered away into wild places  
Where desert dogs reduced their status  
To squandered bones, and it's scared you look,  
Dear friend of a friend, to face me now.  
How limply you've aged, how loose you stand  
A frog in your fork, my far-away  
Primrose prince, but a passenger here  
Retreating to his tent. Whose trump hails your

Shenanigans now? Kneel to your bones  
And cuddle your cough. Your castle's down.  
It rains as you run, rusts where you lie.  
Beware my weakness. Worse will follow.  
The Blue Little Boys should blow their horns  
Louder and longer, for the lost sheep  
Are nibbling nightshade. But never mind . . .

Malin returned and Quant brought back drinks to the table.  
Then raising his glass to Rosetta, Quant said:

Come, peregrine nymph, display your warm  
Euphoric flanks in their full glory  
Of liberal life; with luscious note  
Smoothly sing the softer data of an  
Unyielding universe, youth, money,  
Liquor and love; delight your shepherds  
For crazed we come and coarsened we go  
Our wobbling way: there's a white silence  
Of antiseptics and instruments  
At both ends, but a babble between  
And a shame surely. O show us the route  
Into hope and health; give each the required  
Pass to appease the superior archons;  
Be our good guide.

To  
which  
ROSETTA Is entrusted to me to take charge  
answered: Of an expedition any may  
What gift of direction

Suggest or join? For the journey homeward  
Arriving by roads already known  
At sites and sounds one has sensed before,  
The knowledge needed is not special,  
The sole essential a sad unrest  
Which no life can lack. Long is the way  
Of the Seven Stages, slow the going,  
And few, maybe, are faithful to the end,  
But all start out with the hope of success,  
Arm in arm with their opposite type  
Like dashing Adonis dressed to kill  
And worn Wat with his walrus moustache,  
Or one by one like Wandering Jews,  
Bullet-headed bandit, broad churchman,  
Lobbyist, legatee, loud virago,  
Uncle and aunt and alien cousin,  
Mute or maddening through the Maze of Time,  
Seek its center, desiring like us  
The Quiet Kingdom. Comfort your wills then  
With hungry hopes; to this indagation  
Allay your longings: may our luck find the  
Regressive road to Grandmother's House.

As everyone knows, many people reveal in a state of semi-intoxication capacities which are quite beyond them when they are sober: the shy talk easily and brilliantly to total strangers, the stammerers get through complicated sentences without a

hitch, the unathletic is translated into a weight-lifter or a sprinter, the prosaic show an intuitive grasp of myth and symbol. A less noted and a more significant phenomenon, however, is the way in which our faith in the existence of other selves, normally rather wobbly, is greatly strengthened and receives, perhaps precisely because, for once, doubt is so completely overcome, the most startling justifications. For it can happen, if circumstances are otherwise propitious, that members of a group in this condition establish a rapport in which communication of thoughts and feelings is so accurate and instantaneous, that they appear to function as a single organism.

So it was now as they sought that state of prehistoric happiness which, by human beings, can only be imagined in terms of a landscape bearing a symbolic resemblance to the human body. The more completely these four forgot their surroundings and lost their sense of time, the more sensitively aware of each other they became, until they achieved in their dream that rare community which is otherwise only attained in states of extreme wakefulness. But this did not happen all at once.



P A R T T H R E E

T H E S E V E N S T A G E S

---

*O Patria, patria! Quanto mi costi!*

A. Ghislanzoni *Aida*



At first all is dark and each walks alone. What they share is only the feeling of remoteness and desertion, of having marched for miles and miles, of having lost their bearings, of a restless urge to find water. Gradually for each in turn the darkness begins to dissolve and their vision to take shape.

Quant is the first to see anything. He says:

Groping through fog, I begin to hear  
A salt lake lapping:  
Dotterels and dunlins on its dark shores  
Scurry this way and that.

Now Rosetta perceives clearly and says:

In the center of a sad plain  
Without forests or footpaths,  
Rimmed with rushes and moss  
I see a tacit tarn.

Some oddling angler in summer  
May visit the spot, or a spy  
Come here to cache a stolen  
Map or meet a rival.

But who remarks the beehive mounds,  
Graves of creatures who cooked  
And wanted to be worshipped and perhaps  
Were the first to feel our sorrow?

And  
now  
MALIN: How still it is; the horses  
Have moved into the shade, the mothers  
Have followed their migrating gardens.

Curlews on kettle moraines  
Foretell the end of time,  
The doom of paradox

But lovelorn sighs ascend  
From wretched greedy regions  
Which cannot include themselves.

And the freckled orphan flinging  
Ducks and drakes at the pond  
Stops looking for stones,

And wishes he were a steamboat,  
Or Lugalzaggisi the loud  
Tyrant of Erech and Umma.

And  
last  
EMBLE: The earth looks woeful and wet;  
On the raw horizon regiments pass  
Tense against twilight, tired beneath  
Their corresponsive spears.

Slogging on through slush  
By broken bridges and burnt hamlets  
Where the starving stand, staring past them  
At remote inedible hills.

And now, though separate still, they begin to advance from  
their several starting-points into the same mountainous dis-  
trict. Rosetta says:

Now peaks oppose to the ploughman's march  
Their twin confederate forms,  
In a warm weather, white with lilies,  
Evergreen for grazing.

Smooth the surfaces, sweeping the curves  
Of these comely frolic clouds,  
Where the great go to forget themselves,  
The beautiful and boon to die.

QUANT  
says:

Lights are moving  
On the domed hills  
Where the little monks  
Get up in the dark.

Though wild volcanoes  
Growl in their sleep  
At the green world,  
Inside their cloisters

They sit translating  
A vision into  
The vulgar lingo  
Of armed cities,  
  
Where brides arrive  
Through great doors  
And robbers' bones  
Dangle from gallows.

EMBLE  
says:

Bending forward  
With stern faces,  
Pilgrims puff  
Up the steep bank  
In huge hats.

Shouting I run  
In the other direction,  
Cheerful, unchaste,  
With open shirt  
And tinkling guitar.

MALIN  
says:

Looming over my head  
Mountains menace my life,  
But on either hand, let down  
From U-valleys like yarn,  
Waterfalls all the way  
Quietly encourage me on.

And now one by one they enter the same valley and begin to ascend the same steep pass. Rosetta is in front, then Emble, then Malin and Quant last.

ROSETTA These hills may be hollow; I've a horror of  
says: dwarfs

And a streaming cold.

EMBLE This stony pass  
says: Is bad for my back. My boots are too small  
My haversack too heavy. I hate my knees  
But like my legs.

MALIN The less I feel  
says: The more I mind. I should meet death  
With great regret.

QUANT Thank God I was warned  
says: To bring an umbrella and had bribes enough  
For the red-haired rascals, for the reservoir  
guard  
A celluloid sandwich, and silk eggs  
For the lead smelters; for Lizzie O'Flynn,  
The capering cowgirl with clay on her hands,  
Tasty truffles in utopian jars,  
And dungarees with Danish buttons  
For Shilly and Shally the shepherd kings.

Now  
ROSETTA The ground's aggression is growing less.  
says: The clouds are clearing.

EMBLE My cape is dry.  
says: I can reckon correctly.

MALIN My real intentions  
says: Are nicer now.

And I'm nearing the top.  
QUANT says: When I hear what I'm up to, how I shall laugh.

And so, on a treeless watershed, at the tumbledown Mariners Tavern (which is miles inland) the four assemble, having completed the first stage of their journey. They look about them, and everything seems somehow familiar. Emble says:

The railroads like the rivers run for the most part

East and west, and from here  
On a clear day both coasts are visible  
And the long piers of their ports.  
To the south one sees the sawtooth range  
Our nickel and copper come from,  
And beyond it the Barrens used for Army  
Manœuvres; while to the north

A brown blur of buildings marks  
Some sacred or secular town.

**MALIN**  
says: Every evening the oddest collection  
Of characters crowd this inn:  
Here a face from a farm, its frankness yearning  
For corruption and riches; there  
A gaunt gospel whom grinning miners  
Will stone to death by a dolmen;  
Heroes confess to whores, detectives  
Chat or play chess with thieves.

**QUANT**  
says: And one finds it hard to fall asleep here.  
Lying awake and listening  
To the creak of new creeds on the kitchen stairs  
Or the sob of a dream next door,  
(By pass and port they percolated,  
By friendships and official channels)  
Gentler grows the heart, gentler and much  
Less certain it will succeed.

But  
**ROSETTA**  
says  
impa-  
tiently: Questioned by these crossroads our common hope  
Replies we must part; in pairs proceed  
By bicycle, barge, or bumbling local,  
As vagabonds or in wagon-lits,  
On weedy waters, up winding lanes,  
Down rational roads the Romans built,



Peasant wives are pounding  
Linen on stones by a stream,  
And a doctor's silk hat dances  
On top of a hedge as he hurries  
Along a sunken lane.

All these and theirs are at home,  
May love or hate their age  
And the beds they are built to fit;  
Only I have no work  
But my endless journey, its joy  
The whirr of wheels, the hiss  
As moonlit miles flash by,  
Its grief the glimpse of a face  
Whose unique beauty cannot  
Be asked to alter with me.

Or must everyone see himself  
As I, as the pilgrim prince  
Whose life belongs to his quest  
For the Truth, the tall princess,  
The buried gold or the Grail,  
The important thought-of Thing  
Which is never here and now  
Like this world through which he goes  
That all the others appear  
To possess the secret of?

**QUANT**  
says:

Between pollarded poplars  
This rural road  
Ambles downhill  
In search of the sea.

Nothing, neither  
The farms nor the flowers,  
The cows nor the clouds,  
Look restive or wrong.

Then why without warning,  
In my old age,  
My duty done,  
Do I change to a child,  
And shake with shame,  
Afraid of Father,  
Demanding Mother's  
Forgiveness again?

**ROSETTA**  
says:

The light collaborates with a land of ease,  
And rivers meander at random  
Through meadowsweet massed on moist pastures,  
Past decrepit palaces  
Where, brim from belvederes, bred for riding  
And graceful dancing, gaze  
Fine old families who fear dishonor.

But modern on the margin of marshy ground  
Glitter the glassier homes

Of more practical people with plainer minds,  
And along the vacationer's coast,  
Distributed between its hotels and casinos,  
Ex-monarchs remember a past  
Of wars and waltzes as they wait for death.

**MALIN**  
says:

Though dunes still hide from the eye  
The shining shore,  
Already by a certain exciting  
Kind of discomfort  
I know the ocean near.

For wind and whining gull  
Are saying something,  
Or trying to say, about time  
And the anxious heart  
Which a matter-snob would dismiss.

So, arriving two and two at the rival ports, they complete  
the second stage of their journey.

**ROSETTA** These ancient harbors are hailed by the morning  
says:

Light that untidies  
Warehouses and wharves and wilder rocks  
Where intolerant lives  
Fight and feed in the fucoid thickets  
Of popular pools.





Once well-to-do's at their wits' end,  
And underpaid agents of underground powers  
The faded and failing in flight towards town.

**ROSETTA**  
says: Just visible but vague,  
Way down below us lies  
The world of hares and hounds,  
Open to our contempt.

Escaping by our skill  
Its public prison, we  
Could love ourselves and live  
In just anarchic joy.

**QUANT**  
says: The parlor cars and Pullmans are packed also  
With scented assassins, salad-eaters  
Who murder on milk, merry expressives,  
Pert pyknics with pumpkin heads,  
Clever cardinals with clammy hands,  
Jolly logicians with juvenile books,  
Farmers, philistines, filles-de-joie,  
The successful smilers the city can use.

**ROSETTA**  
says: What fear of freedom then  
Causes our clasping hands  
To make in miniature  
That earth anew, and now

By choice instead of chance  
To suffer from the same  
Attraction and untruth,  
Suspicion and respect?

QUANT  
says: What mad oracle could have made us believe  
The capital will be kind when the country is not,  
And value our vanities, provide our souls  
With play and pasture and permanent water?

They lose altitude, they slow down, they arrive at the city,  
having completed the third stage of the journey, and are  
united once more, greet each other.

EMBLE  
says: Here we are.

MALIN  
says: As we hoped we have come  
Together again.

ROSETTA  
says: I am glad, I think.  
It is fun to be four.

QUANT  
says: The flushed animations  
Of crowds and couples look comic to friends.

They look about them with great curiosity. Then Malin says:  
The scene has all the signs of a facetious culture,  
Publishing houses, pawnshops and pay-toilets;

August and Graeco-Roman are the granite  
temples  
Of the medicine men whose magic keeps this body  
Politically free from fevers,  
Cancer and constipation.

The rooms near the railroad-station are rented  
mainly  
By the criminally inclined; the Castle is open  
on Sundays;  
There are parks for plump and playgrounds for  
pasty children;  
The police must be large, but little men are  
hired to  
Service the subterranean  
Miles of dendritic drainage.

A married tribe commutes, mild from suburbia,  
Whom ritual rules protect against raids by the  
nomad  
Misfortunes they fear; for they flinch in their  
dreams at the scratch  
Of coarse pecuniary claws, at crying images,  
Petulant, thin, reproachful,  
Destitute shades of dear ones.

Well, here I am but how, how, asks the visitor,  
Strolling through the strange streets, can I start  
to discover

The fashionable feminine fret, or the form of  
insult  
Minded most by the men? In what myth do their  
sages

Locate the cause of evil?  
How are these people punished?

How, above all, will they end? By any natural  
Fascination of frost or flood, or from the artful  
Obliterating bang whereby God's rebellious  
image  
After thousands of thankless years spent in  
thinking about it,

Finally finds a solid  
Proof of its independence?

Now a trolley car comes, going northward. They take it.  
Emble says:

This tortuous route through town  
Was planned, it seems, to serve  
Its institutions; for we halt  
With a jerk at the Gothic gates  
Of the Women's Prison, the whitewashed  
Hexagonal Orphanage for  
Doomed children, the driveway,  
Bordered with trees in tubs  
Of the Orthopædic Hospital,  
And are crowded by the close relatives

Of suffering, who sit upright  
With little offerings on their laps  
Of candy, magazines, comics,  
Avoiding each other's eyes,  
Shy of a rival shame.

Slums are replaced by suburbs,  
Suburbs by tennis-courts, tennis-courts  
By greenhouses and vegetable gardens.  
The penultimate stop is the State  
Asylum, a large Palladian  
Edifice in acres of grounds  
Surrounded by iron railings;  
And now there is no one left  
For the final run through fields  
But ourselves whose diseases as yet  
Are undiagnosed, and the driver  
Who is anxious to get home to his tea.

The buttercups glitter; our bell  
Clangs loudly; and the lark's  
Song is swallowed up in  
The blazing blue: we are set  
Down and do not care  
Very much but wonder why.

Now they see before them, standing, half hidden by trees, on  
a little insurrection of red sandstone above a coiling river, the

big house which marks the end of their journey's fourth stage.

Rosetta is enthusiastic and runs forward saying:

In I shall go, out I shall look.

But the others are tired and Malin says:

Very well, we will wait, watch from outside.

QUANT  
says:

A scholarly old scoundrel,  
Whose fortune was founded on the follies of  
others,

Built it for his young bride.  
She died in childbed; he died on the gallows;  
The property passed to the Crown.

The façade has a lifeless look,  
For no one uses the enormous ballroom;  
But in book-lined rooms at the back  
Committees meet, and many strange  
Decisions are secretly taken.

High up in the East Tower,  
A pale-faced widow looks pensively down  
At the terrace outside where the snow  
Flutters and flurries round the formal heads  
Of statues that stare at the park.

And the guards at the front gate  
Change with the seasons; in cheerful Spring

How engaging their glances; but how  
Morose in Fall: ruined kitchen-maids  
Blubber behind the bushes.

Rosetta returns, more slowly than she left. Emble asks:

Well, how was it? What did you see?

ROSETTA  
answers: Opera glasses on the ormolu table  
Frock-coated father framed on the wall  
In a bath-chair facing a big bow-window,  
With valley and village invitingly spread,  
I got what is going on.

At the bend of the Bourne where the brambles  
grow thickest  
Major Mott joins Millicent Rusk;  
Discreetly the kingfisher keeps his distance  
But an old cob swan looks on as they  
Commit the sanguine sin.

Heavy the orchards; there's Alison pinching  
Her baby brother, Bobby and Dick  
Frying a frog with their father's reading-glass,  
Conrad and Kay in the carpentry shed  
Where they've no business to be.

Cold are the clays of Kibroth-Hattaavah,  
Babel's urbanities buried in sand,

Red the geraniums in the rectory garden  
Where the present incumbent reads Plato in  
French  
And has lost his belief in Hell.

From the gravel-pits in Groaning Hollow  
To the monkey-puzzle on Murderer's Hill,  
From the Wellington Arms to the white steam  
laundry,  
The significant note is nature's cry  
Of long-divided love.

I have watched through a window a World that  
is fallen,  
The mating and malice of men and beasts,  
The corporate greed of quiet vegetation,  
And the homesick little obstinate sobs  
Of things thrown into being.

I would gladly forget; let us go quickly.

EMBLE said: Yonder, look, is a yew avenue,  
A mossy mile. For amusement's sake  
Let us run a race till we reach the end.

This, willing or unwilling, they start to do and, as they run,  
their rival natures, by art comparing and compared, reveal  
themselves. Thus Malin mutters:



Thoughtfully, therefore,  
Peer as you pass  
These cases clouded  
By vetch and eyebright  
And viper's bugloss  
At each little collection  
Loosely arranged  
Of dated dust.

Here it is holy,  
Here at last  
In mute marble  
The Master closed  
His splendid period;  
A spot haunted  
By goat-faced grasshoppers  
And gangling boys  
Taunted by talents  
Which tell them more  
Than their flesh can feel.

Here impulse loses  
Its impetus: thus  
Far and no farther  
Their legs, resolutions  
And longings carried  
The big, the ambitious,

The beautiful; all  
Stopped in mid-stride  
At this straggling border  
Where wildflowers begin  
And wealth ends.

Yet around their rest  
Flittermice, finches  
And flies restore  
Their lost milieu;  
An inconsequential  
Host of pert  
Occasional creatures,  
Blindly, playfully,  
Bridging death's  
Eternal gap  
With quotidian joy.

Malin sighs and says what they are all thinking but wish they were not.

Again we must digress, go by different  
Paths in pairs to explore the land.

Knowing they will never be able to agree as to who shall accompany whom, they cast lots and so it falls out that Rosetta is to go with Quant and Emble with Malin. Two are disappointed, two are disturbed.

QUANT This bodes badly.  
mutters:

And So be it. Who knows  
MALIN: If we wish what we will?

And Will you forget  
ROSETTA: If you know that I won't?

And Will your need be me?  
EMBLE:

They depart now, Malin and Emble westward on bicycles,  
Quant and Rosetta eastward by boat, sad through fair scenes,  
thinking of another and talking to themselves.

MALIN As we cycle silent through a serious land  
says: For hens and horses, my hunger for a live  
Person to father impassions my sense  
Of this boy's beauty in battle with time.

These old-world hamlets and haphazard lanes  
Are perilous places; how plausible here  
All arcadian cults of carnal perfection,  
How intoxicating the platonic myth.

EMBLE Pleasant my companion but I pine for another.  
says:

QUANT Our canoe makes no noise; monotonous  
says: Ramparts of reeds surround our navigation;

The waterway winds as it wants through the  
hush:

O fortunate fluid her fingers caress.

Welcome her, world; sedge-warblers, betray your  
Hiding places with song; and eddy, butterflies,  
In frivolous flights about that fair head:  
How apt your homage to her innocent disdain.

ROSETTA The figure I prefer is far away.  
says:

MALIN To know nature is not enough for the ego;  
says: The aim of its eros is to create a soul,  
The start of its magic is stolen flesh.

QUANT Let nature unite us whose needs belong to  
says: Separate systems that make no sense to each  
other:  
She is not my sister and I am not her friend.

EMBLE Unequal our happiness: his is greater.  
says:

ROSETTA Lovelier would this look if my love were with me.  
says:

MALIN Girlishly glad that my glance is not chaste,  
says: He wants me to want what he would refuse:  
For sons have this desire for a slave also.

**QUANT** Both graves of the stream are agog as here  
**says:** Comes a bride for a bridegroom in a boat ferried  
By a dying man dreaming of a daughter-wife.

Now they arrive, two and two, east and west, at the hermetic gardens and the sixth stage of their journey is completed. They gaze about them entranced at the massive mildness of these survivals from an age of cypresses and cisterns.

**ROSETTA** How tempting to trespass in these Italian  
**says:** gardens  
With their smirk ouches and sweet-smelling  
borders,  
To lean on the low  
Parapet of some pursive fountain  
And drowse through the unctuous day.

**EMBLE** There are special perspectives for speculation,  
**says:** Random rose-walks, and rustic bridges  
Over neat canals;  
A miniature railroad with mossy halts  
Wambles through wanton groves.

**QUANT** Yet this is a theater where thought becomes act  
**says:** And beside a sundial, in the silent umbrage  
Of some dark daedal,  
The ruined rebel is recreated  
And chooses a chosen self.

From lawns and relievos the leisure makes  
Its uncomfortable claim and, caught off its guard,  
His hardened heart  
Consents to suffer, and the sudden instant  
Touches his time at last.

**MALIN**  
says: Tense on the parterre, he takes the hero's  
Leap into love; then, unlatching the wicket  
Gate he goes:  
The plains of his triumph appear empty,  
But now among their motionless

Avenues and urns with extra élan  
Faster revolves the invisible corps  
Of pirouetting angels  
And a chronic chorus of cascades and birds  
Cuts loose in a wild cabaletta.

Presently the extraordinary charm of these gardens begins  
to work upon them also. It seems an accusation. They become  
uneasy and unwell.

**EMBLE**  
says: I would stay to be saved but the stillness here  
Reminds me too much of my mother's grief;  
It scorns and scares me.

**QUANT**  
says: My excuses throb  
Louder and lamer.





A vagrant veteran I,  
Discharged with grizzled chin,  
Sans youth or use, sans uniform,  
A tiger turned an ass.

Then  
MALIN'S: These branches deaf and dumb  
Were woeful suitors once;  
Mourning unmanned, and moping turned  
Their sullen souls to wood.

Then  
ROSETTA'S: My dress is torn, my tears  
Are running as I run  
Through forests far from father's eye  
To look for a true love.

Then  
EMBLE'S: My mother weeps for me  
Who disappeared at play  
From home and hope like all who chase  
The blue elusive bird.

Now  
QUANT'S  
again: Through gloomy woods I go  
Ex-demigod; the damp  
Awakes my wound; I want my tea  
But needed am of none.

Now  
EMBLE'S: More faint, more far away  
The huntsman's social horn

Calls through the cold uncanny woods  
And nearer draws the night.

Now Dear God, regard thy child;  
ROSETTA'S: Repugn or pacify  
All furry forms and fangs that lurk  
Within this horrid shade.

Now Their given names forgot,  
MALIN'S: Mere species of despair,  
On whims of wind their wills depend,  
On temperatures their mood.

And yet So, whistling as I walk  
once Through brake and copse, I keep  
more  
QUANT'S: A lookout for the Limping One  
Who buys abandoned souls.

Obedient to their own mysterious laws of direction, their  
twisting paths converge, approach their several voices, and  
collect the four for a startled reunion at the forest's edge.  
They stare at what they see.

QUANT says: The climate of enclosure, the cool forest  
Break off abruptly:  
Giddy with the glare and ungoverned heat,  
We stop astonished,

Interdicted by desert, its dryness edged  
By a scanty scrub  
Of Joshua trees and giant cacti;  
Then, vacant of value,  
Incoherent and infamous sands,  
Rainless regions  
Swarming with serpents, ancestral wastes,  
Lands beyond love.

Now, with only the last half of the seventh stage to go to finish their journey, for the first time fear and doubt dismay them. Is triumph possible? If so, are they chosen? Is triumph worth it? If so, are they worthy?

**MALIN**  
says: Boring and bare of shade,  
Devoid of souvenirs and voices,  
It takes will to cross this waste

Which is really empty: the mirage  
Need not be tasty to tempt;  
For the senses arouse themselves,

And an image of humpbacked girls  
Or plates of roasted rats  
Can make the mouth water.

With nothing to know about,  
The mind reflects on its movements  
And so doubles any distance.

Even if we had time  
To read through all the wrinkled  
Reports of explorers who claim

That hidden arrant streams  
Chuckle through this chapped land  
In profound and meagre fissures,

Or that this desert is dotted with  
Oases where acrobats dwell  
Who make unbelievable leaps,

We should never have proof they were not  
Deceiving us. For the only certain  
Truth is that they returned,

And that we cannot be deaf to the question:  
“Do I love this world so well  
That I have to know how it ends?”

EMBLE  
says:

As yet the young hero's  
Brow is unkissed by battle,  
But he knows how necessary  
Is his defiance of fate  
And, serene already, he sails  
Down the gorge between the august  
Faces carved in the cliffs  
Towards the lordship of the world.

And the gentle majority are not  
Afraid either, but, owl-like  
And sedate in their glass globes  
The wedded couples wave  
At the bandits racing by  
With affection, and the learned relax  
On pinguid plains among  
A swarm of flying flowers.

But otherwise is it with the play  
Of the child whom chance decrees  
To say what all men suffer:  
For he wishes against his will  
To be lost, and his fear leads him  
To dales of driving rain  
Where peasants with penthouse eyebrows  
Sullenly guard the sluices.

And his steps follow the stream  
Past rusting apparatus  
To its gloomy beginning, the original  
Chasm where brambles block  
The entrance to the underworld;  
There the silence blesses his sorrow,  
And holy to his dread is that dark  
Which will neither promise nor explain.

**ROSETTA** Are our dreams indicative? Does it exist,  
says:

That last landscape  
Of gloom and glaciers and great storms  
Where, cold into chasms, cataracts  
Topple, and torrents  
Through rocky ruptures rage for ever  
In a winter twilight watched by ravens,  
Birds on basalt,  
And shadows of ships long-shattered lie,  
Preserved disasters, in the solid ice  
Of frowning fjords?  
Does the Moon's message mean what it says:  
"In that oldest and most hidden of all places  
Number is unknown"?  
Can lying lovers believe their bones'  
Unshaken assurance  
That all the elegance, all the promise  
Of the world they wish is waiting there?

Even while she is still speaking, their fears are confirmed, their hopes denied. For the world from which their journey has been one long flight rises up before them now as if the whole time it had been hiding in ambush, only waiting for the worst moment to reappear to its fugitives in all the majesty of its perpetual fury.

**QUANT** My shoulders shiver. A shadow chills me  
says:  
As thunderheads threaten the sun.

**MALIN** Righteous wrath is raising its hands  
**says:** To strike and destroy.

**EMBLE** Storm invades  
**says:** The Euclidean calm. The clouds explode.  
The scene dissolves, is succeeded by  
A grinning gap, a growth of nothing  
Pervaded by vagueness.

**ROSETTA** Violent winds  
**says:** Tear us apart. Terror scatters us  
To the four coigns. Faintly our sounds  
Echo each other, unrelated  
Groans of grief at a great distance.

**QUANT** In the wild West they are whipping each other.  
**says:**

**EMBLE** In the hungry East they are eating their books.  
**says:**

**ROSETTA** In the numb North there are no more cradles.  
**says:**

**MALIN** The sullen South has been set on fire.  
**says:**

**EMBLE** Dull through the darkness, indifferent tongues  
**says:** From bombed buildings, from blacked-out towns,

Camps and cockpits, from cold trenches,  
Submarines and cells, recite in unison  
A common creed, declaring their weak  
Faith in confusion. The floods are rising;  
Rain ruins on the routed fragments  
Of all the armies; indistinct  
Are friend and foe, one flux of bodies  
Miles from mother, marriage, or any  
Workable world.

QUANT  
says:

The wall is fallen  
That Balbus built, and back they come  
The Dark Ones to dwell in the statues,  
Manias in marble, messengers from  
The Nothing who nothings. Night descends;  
Through thickening darkness thin uneases,  
Ravenous unimals, perambulate  
Our paths and pickles.

MALIN  
says:

The primary colors  
Are all mixed up; the whole numbers  
Have broken down, the big situations  
Ceased to excite.

ROSETTA  
says:

Sick of time,  
Long Ada and her Eleven Daughters,  
The standing stones, stagger, disrupt

Their petrified polka on Pillicock Mound;  
The chefs and shepherds have shot themselves,  
The dowagers dropped in their Dutch gardens,  
The battle-axe and the bosomed war-horse  
Swept grand to their graves. Graven on-all things,  
Inscribed on skies, escarpments, trees,  
Notepaper, neckties, napkin rings,  
Brickwalls and barns, or branded into  
The livid limbs of lambs and men,  
Is the same symbol, the signature  
Of reluctant allegiance to a lost cause.

**MALIN** says: Our ideas have got drunk and drop their H's.

**EMBLE:** We err what we are as if we were not.

**ROSETTA:** The honest and holy are hissed at the races.

**QUANT:** God's in his greenhouse, his geese in the world.

Saying this, they woke up and recognized where they sat and who they were. The darkness which had invaded their dream was explained, for it was closing time and the bartender was turning off the lights. What they had just dreamed they could no longer recall exactly, but when Emble and Rosetta looked at each other, they were conscious of some

sweet shared secret which it might be dangerous to remember too well. Perhaps it was this which prompted Rosetta to suggest that they all come back to her apartment for a snack and a nightcap for, when they accepted, she realized that she had been expecting Quant and Malin to decline. But it was too late now. They were out in the street already and Emble had hailed a cab.

P A R T F O U R

T H E D I R G E

---

*His mighty work for the nation,  
Strengthening peace and securing union,  
Always at it since on the throne,  
Has saved the country more than one billion*  
Broadsheet on the death of King Edward VII



As they drove through the half-lit almost empty streets, the effect of their dream had not yet worn off but persisted as a mutual mood of discouragement. Whether they thought of Nature, of her unending stream of irrelevant events without composition or center, her reckless waste of value, her alternate looks of idiotic inertia and insane ferocity, or whether they thought of Man, of the torpor of his spirit, the indigent dryness of his soul, his bottomless credulity, his perverse preference for the meretricious or the insipid—it seemed impossible to them that either could have survived so long had not some semi-divine stranger with superhuman powers, some Gilgamesh or Napoleon, some Solon or Sherlock Holmes, appeared from time to time to rescue both, for a brief bright instant, from their egregious destructive blunders. And for such a great one who, long or lately, has always died or disappeared, they now lamented thus.

Sob, heavy world,  
Sob as you spin  
Mantled in mist, remote from the happy:  
The washerwomen have wailed all night,  
The disconsolate clocks are crying together,  
And the bells toll and toll  
For tall Agrippa who touched the sky:  
Shut is that shining eye  
Which enlightened the lampless and lifted up  
The flat and foundering, reformed the weeds  
Into civil cereals and sobered the bulls;  
Away the cylinder seal,  
The didactic digit and dreaded voice  
Which imposed peace on the pullulating  
Primordial mess. Mourn for him now,  
Our lost dad,  
Our colossal father.

For seven cycles  
For seven years  
Past vice and virtue, surviving both,  
Through pluvial periods, paroxysms  
Of wind and wet, through whirlpools of heat,  
And comas of deadly cold,  
On an old white horse, an ugly nag,  
In his faithful youth he followed  
The black ball as it bowled downhill



In the high heavens,  
The ageless places,  
The gods are wringing their great worn hands  
For their watchman is away, their world-engine  
Creaking and cracking. Conjured no more  
By his master music to wed  
Their truths to times, the Eternal Objects  
Drift about in a daze:  
O the lepers are loose in Lombard Street,  
The rents are rising in the river basins,  
The insects are angry. Who will dust  
The cobwebbed kingdoms now?  
For our lawgiver lies below his people,  
Bigger bones of a better kind,  
Unwarped by their weight, as white limestone  
Under green grass,  
The grass that fades.

But now the cab stopped at Rosetta's apartment house. As they went up in the elevator, they were silent but each was making a secret resolve to banish such gloomy reflections and become, or at least appear, carefree and cheerful.

P A R T V

T H E M A S Q U E



*"Oh, Heaven help me," she prayed, "to be decorative and  
to do right."*

Ronald Firbank *The Flower beneath the Foot*



Rosetta had shown the men where everything was and, as they trotted between the kitchen and the living room, cutting sandwiches and fixing drinks, all felt that it was time something exciting happened and decided to do their best to see that it did. Had they been perfectly honest with themselves, they would have had to admit that they were tired and wanted to go home alone to bed. That they were not was in part due, of course, to vanity, the fear of getting too old to want fun or too ugly to get it, but also to unselfishness, the fear of spoiling the fun for others. Besides, only animals who are below civilization and the angels who are beyond it can be sincere. Human beings are, necessarily, actors who cannot become something before they have first pretended to be it; and they can be divided, not into the hypocritical and the sincere, but into the sane who know they are acting and the mad who do not. So it was now as Rosetta switched on the radio which said:

*Music past midnight. For men in the armed  
Forces on furlough and their feminine consorts,  
For war-workers and women in labor,  
For Bohemian artists and owls of the night,  
We present a series of savage selections  
By brutal bands from bestial tribes,  
The Quaraqorams and the Quaromanlics,  
The Arsocids and the Alonites,  
The Ghuzz, the Guptas, the gloomy Krimchaks,  
The Timurids and Torguts, with terrible cries  
Will drag you off to their dream retreats  
To dance with your deaths till the dykes  
collapse.*

Emble asked Rosetta to dance. The others sat watching. Quant waved his cigar in time to the music and sang a verse from an old prospector's ballad.

When Laura lay on her ledger side  
And nicely threw her north cheek up,  
How pleasing the plight of her promising grove  
And how rich the random I reached with a rise.

Whereupon Malin sang a verse of a folksong from a Fen District.

When in wanhope I wandered away and alone,  
How brag were the birds, how buxom the sky,



A signal from whom excites time to  
Confused outbursts, filling spaces with  
Lights and leaves. In pelagic meadows  
The plankton open their parachutes;  
The mountains are amused; mobs of birds  
Shout at fat shopkeepers. "Shucks! We are free.  
Imitate us—" and out of the blue  
Come bright boys with bells on their ankles  
To tease with roses Cartesian monks  
Till their heads ache, geometers vexed by  
Irrelevant reds. May your right hand,  
Lightly alighting on their longing flesh,  
Promise this pair what their prayers demand,  
Bliss in both, born of each other, a  
Double dearness; let their dreams descend  
Into concrete conduct. Claim your own.

Rosetta and Emble had stopped dancing and sat down on  
the couch. Now he put his arm around her and said:

Enter my aim from all directions, O  
Special spirit whose expressions are  
My carnal care, my consolation:  
Be many or one. Meet me by chance on  
Credulous coasts where cults intersect  
Or join as arranged by the Giants' Graves,  
Titanic tombs which at twilight bring

Greetings from the great misguided dead;  
Hide from, haunt me, on hills to be seen  
Far away through the forelegs of mares;  
Stay till I come in the startling light  
When the tunnel turns to teach surprise,  
Or face me and fight for a final stand  
With a brave blade in your buffer states,  
My visible verb, my very dear,  
Till I die, darling.

Rosetta laid her head on his shoulder and said:

O the deep roots  
Of the cross-roads yew, calm for so long,  
Have felt you afar and faintly begin  
To tingle now. What twitters there'll be in  
The brook bushes at the bright sound of  
Your bicycle bell. What barking then  
As you stride the stiles to startle one  
Great cry in the kitchen when you come home,  
My doom, my darling.

They kissed. Then Emble said:

Till death divide  
May the Four Faces Feeling can make  
Assent to our sighs.

She  
said:

The snap of the Three  
Grim Spinning Sisters' Spectacle Case  
Uphold our honors.

He  
said:

The Heavenly Twins  
Guard our togetherness from ghostly ills.

She  
said:

The Outer Owner, that Oldest One whom  
This world is with, be witness to our vows.

Which vows they now alternately swore.

If you blush, I'll build breakwaters.  
When you're tired, I'll tidy your table.  
If you cry, I'll climb crags.  
When you're sick, I'll sit at your side.  
If you frown, I'll fence fields.  
When you're ashamed, I'll shine your shoes.  
If you laugh, I'll liberate lands.  
When you're depressed, I'll play you the piano.  
If you sigh, I'll sack cities.  
When you're unlucky, I'll launder your linen.  
If you sing, I'll save souls.  
When you're hurt, I'll hold your hand.  
If you smile, I'll smelt silver.  
When you're afraid, I'll fetch you food.  
If you talk, I'll track down trolls.

When you're on edge, I'll empty your ash-tray.  
If you whisper, I'll wage wars.  
When you're cross, I'll clean your coat.  
If you whistle, I'll water wastes.  
When you're bored, I'll bathe your brows.

Again they embraced. Quant poured out the dregs of the glass on the carpet as a libation and invoked the local spirits.

Ye little larvae, lords of the household,  
Potty, P-P, Peppermill, Lampshade,  
Funnybone, Faucet, Face-in-the-wall,  
Head-over-heels and Upsy-daisy  
And Collywobbles and Cupboard-Love,  
Be good, little gods, and guard these lives,  
Innocent be all your indiscretions,  
That no paranoic notion obsess  
Nor dazing dump bedevil their minds  
With faceless fears; no filter-passing  
Virus invade; no invisible germ,  
Transgressing rash or gadding tumor  
Attach their tissues; nor, taking by  
Spiteful surprise, conspiring objects  
With slip or sharpness or sly fracture  
Menace or mangle the morbid flesh  
Of our king and queen.

Now, turning to Rosetta, Malin said:

O clear Princess,  
Learn from your hero his love of play,  
Cherish his childishness, choose in him  
Your task and toy, your betrayer also  
Who gives gladly but forgets as soon  
What and why, for the world he is true to  
Is his own creation; to act like father,  
And beget like God a gayer echo,  
An unserious self, is the sole thought  
Of this bragging boy. Be to him always  
The mother-moment which makes him dream  
He is lord of time. Belong to his journey:  
O rest on his rock in your red dress,  
His youth and future.

Then, turning to Emble, he said:

And you, bright Prince,  
Invent your steps, go variously about  
Her pleasant places, disposed to joy;  
O stiffly stand, a staid monadnock,  
On her penepain; placidly graze  
On her outwash apron, her own steed;  
Dance, a wild deer, in her dark thickets;  
Run, a river, all relish through her vales.

Alcohol, lust, fatigue, and the longing to be good, had by now induced in them all a euphoric state in which it seemed



**EMBLE:**                               Where pampered opulent  
Grudges governed, the Graces shall dance  
In excellent order with hands linked.

**ROSETTA:**Where, cold and cruel, critical faces  
Watched from windows, shall wanton putti  
Loose floods of flowers.

**EMBLE:**                               Where frontier sentries  
Stood so glumly on guard, young girls shall pass  
Trespassing in extravagant clothes.

**ROSETTA:**Where plains winced as punishing engines  
Raised woeful welts, tall windmills shall pat  
The flexible air and fan good cows.

**EMBLE:** Where hunted hundreds helplessly drowned,  
Rose-cheeked riders shall rein their horses  
To smile at swans.

The others joined in chorus. Malin cried:

  It is safe to endure:  
Each flat defect has found its solid  
Gift to shadow, each goal its unique  
Longing to lure, relatedness its





Attend your time of passage,  
And easy seas assist you.

**MALIN**  
sang:

Redeem with a clear  
Configuration  
Of routes and goals  
The ages of anguish,  
All griefs endured  
At the feet of appalling  
Fortresses; may  
Your present motions  
Satisfy all  
Their antecedents.

Rosetta went with them to the elevator. As they waited in the corridor for it to come up, Quant went on singing:

Wonder warm you with its wisdom now,  
Genial joy rejuvenate your days,  
A light of self-translation,  
A blessed interior brightness,

Animate also your object world  
Till its pure profiles appear again,  
Losing their latter vagueness,  
In the sharp shapes of childhood.

So did Malin as they entered the elevator:

Plumed and potent  
Go forth, fulfill  
A happy future  
And occupy that  
Permanent kingdom  
Parameters rule,  
Loved by infinite  
Populations  
Of possible cases:  
Away. Farewell.

Then they sank from her sight. When she got back to her apartment, she found that Emble had gone into her bedroom and passed out. She looked down at him, half sadly, half relieved, and thought thus:

Blind on the bride-bed, the bridegroom snores,  
Too aloof to love. Did you lose your nerve  
And cloud your conscience because I wasn't  
Your dish really? You danced so bravely  
Till I wished I were. Will you remain  
Such a pleasant prince? Probably not.  
But you're handsome, aren't you? even now  
A kingly corpse. I'll coffin you up till  
You rule again. Rest for us both and  
Dream, dear one. I'll be dressed when you wake  
To get coffee. You'll be glad you didn't



Of the inner life. How could I share their  
Light elations who belong after  
Such hopes end! So be off to the game, dear,  
And meet your mischief. I'll mind the shop.  
You'll never notice what's not for sale  
To charming children. Don't choose to ask me.  
You're too late to believe. Your lie is showing,  
Your creed is creased. But have Christian luck.  
Your Jesus has wept; you may joke now,  
Be spick and span, spell out the bumptious  
Morals on monuments, mind your poise  
And take up your cues, attract Who's-Who,  
Ignore What's-Not. Niceness is all and  
The rest bores. I'm too rude a question.  
You'd learn to loathe, your legs forget their  
Store of proverbs, the staircase wit of  
The sleep-walker. You'd slip and blame me  
When you came to, and couldn't accept  
Our anxious hope with no household god or  
Harpist's Haven for hearty climbers.  
So fluke through unflustered with full marks in  
House-geography: let history be.  
Time is our trade, to be tense our gift  
Whose woe is our weight; for we are His Chosen,  
His ragged remnant with our ripe flesh  
And our hats on, sent out of the room  
By their dying grandees and doleful slaves,

Kicked in corridors and cold-shouldered  
At toll-bridges, teased upon the stage,  
Snubbed at sea, to seep through boundaries,  
Diffuse like firearms through frightened lands,  
Transpose our plight like a poignant theme  
Into twenty tongues, time-tormented  
But His People still. We'll point for Him,  
Be as obvious always if He won't show  
To threaten their thinking in their way,  
Nor His strong arm that stood no nonsense,  
Fly, let's face it, to defend us now  
When bruised or broiled our bodies are chucked  
Like cracked crocks onto kitchen middens  
In the time He takes. We'll trust. He'll slay  
If His Wisdom will. He won't alter  
Nor fake one fact. Though I fly to Wall Street  
Or Publisher's Row, or pass out, or  
Submerge in music, or marry well,  
Marooned on riches, He'll be right there  
With His Eye upon me. Should I hide away  
My secret sins in consulting rooms,  
My fears are before Him; He'll find all,  
Ignore nothing. He'll never let me  
Conceal from Him the semi-detached  
Brick villa in Laburnum Crescent,  
The poky parlor, the pink bows on  
The landing-curtains, or the lawn-mower

That wouldn't work, for He won't pretend to  
Forget how I began, nor grant belief  
In the mythical scenes I make up  
Of a home like theirs, the Innocent Place where  
His Law can't look, the leaves are so thick.  
I've made their magic but their Momma Earth  
Is His stone still, and their stately groves,  
Though I wished to worship, His wood to me.  
More boys like this one may embrace me yet  
I shan't find shelter, I shan't be at peace  
Till I really take your restless hands,  
My poor fat father. How appalling was  
Your taste in ties. How you tried to have fun,  
You so longed to be liked. You lied so,  
Didn't you, dad? When the doll never came,  
When mother was sick and the maid laughed.  
—Yes, I heard you in the attic. At her grave you  
Wept and wilted. Was that why you chose  
So blatant a voice, such button eyes  
To play house with you then? Did you ever love  
Stepmother Stupid? You'd a strange look,  
Sad as the sea, when she searched your clothes.  
Don't be cruel and cry. I couldn't stay to  
Be your baby. We both were asking  
For a warmth there wasn't, and then wouldn't  
write.  
We mustn't, must we? Moses will scold if

We're not all there for the next meeting  
At some brackish well or broken arch,  
Tired as we are. We must try to get on  
Though mobs run amok and markets fall,  
Though lights burn late at police stations,  
Though passports expire and ports are watched,  
Though thousands tumble. Must their blue glare  
Outlast the lions? Who'll be left to see it  
Disconcerted? I'll be dumb before  
The barracks burn and boisterous Pharaoh  
Grow ashamed and shy. *Sh'ma' Yisra'el.*  
*"donai "lohenu, "donai 'echad.*



P A R T V I

E P I L O G U E

---

*Some natural tears they drop'd, but wip'd them soon;  
The world was all before them, where to choose . . .*

John Milton *Paradise Lost*



Meanwhile in the street outside, Quant and Malin, after expressing their mutual pleasure at having met, after exchanging addresses and promising to look each other up some time, had parted and immediately forgotten each other's existence. Now Malin was travelling southward by subway while Quant was walking eastward, each to his own place. Dawn had begun to break.

Walking through the streets, Quant sang to himself an impromptu ballad:

When the Victory Powers convened at Byzantium,  
The shiners declined to show their faces,  
And the ambiences of heaven uttered a plethora  
Of admonitory monsters which dismayed the  
illiterate.

Sitting in the train, Malin thought:

Age softens the sense of defeat  
As well as the will to success,



QUANT sang: The Laurentian Landshield was ruthlessly  
gerrymandered,  
And there was a terrible tussle over the Tethys  
Ocean;  
Commentators broadcast by the courtesy of a  
shaving-cream  
Blow by blow the whole debate on the Penin-  
sulas.

MALIN thought: Both professor and prophet depress,  
For vision and longer view  
Agree in predicting a day  
Of convulsion and vast evil,  
When the Cold Societies clash  
Or the mosses are set in motion  
To overrun the earth,  
And the great brain which began  
With lucid dialectics  
Ends in a horrid madness.

QUANT sang: But there were some sensible settlements in the  
sub-committees:  
The Duodecimal System was adopted unani-  
mously,  
The price of obsidian pegged for a decade,  
Technicians sent north to get nitrogen from the  
ice-cap.

**MALIN**  
thought:

Yet the noble despair of the poets  
Is nothing of the sort; it is silly  
To refuse the tasks of time  
And, overlooking our lives,  
Cry—"Miserable wicked me,  
How interesting I am."  
We would rather be ruined than changed,  
We would rather die in our dread  
Than climb the cross of the moment  
And let our illusions die.

**QUANT**  
sang:

Outside these decisions the cycle of Nature  
Revolved as usual, and voluble sages  
Preached from park-benches to passing forni-  
cators  
A Confucian faith in the Functional Society.

**MALIN**  
thought:

We're quite in the dark: we do not  
Know the connection between  
The clock we are bound to obey  
And the miracle we must not despair of;  
We simply cannot conceive,  
With any feelings we have  
How the raging lion is to lime  
With the yearning unicorn;  
Nor shall we, till total shipwreck  
Deprive us of our persons.

Quant had now reached the house where he lived and, as he started to climb the steps of his stoop, he tripped and almost fell. At which he said:

Why, Miss *ME*, what's the matter? *Must* you  
go woolgathering?  
Once I was your wonder. How short-winded  
you've gotten.  
Come, Tinklebell, trot. Let's pretend you're a  
thoroughbred.  
Over the hill now into Abraham's Bosom.

So saying, he opened his front door and disappeared. But Malin's journey was still not done. He was thinking:

For the new locus is never  
Hidden inside the old one  
Where Reason could rout it out,  
Nor guarded by dragons in distant  
Mountains where Imagination  
Could explore it; the place of birth  
Is too obvious and near to notice,  
Some dull dogpatch a stone's throw  
Outside the walls, reserved  
For the eyes of faith to find.

Now the train came out onto the Manhattan Bridge. The sun had risen. The East River glittered. It would be a bright clear day for work and for war.

**MALIN** For the others, like me, there is only the flash  
**thought:** Of negative knowledge, the night when, drunk, one  
Staggers to the bathroom and stares in the glass  
To meet one's madness, when what mother said seems  
Such darling rubbish and the decent advice  
Of the liberal weeklies as lost an art  
As peasant pottery, for plainly it is not  
To the Cross or to Clarté or to Common Sense  
Our passions pray but to primitive totems  
As absurd as they are savage; science or no science,  
It is Bacchus or the Great Boyg or Baal-Peor,  
Fortune's Ferris-wheel or the physical sound  
Of our own names which they actually adore as their  
Ground and goal. Yet the grossest of our dreams is  
No worse than our worship which for the most part  
Is so much galimatias to get out of  
Knowing our neighbor, all the needs and conceits of  
The poor muddled maddened mundane animal  
Who is hostess to us all, for each contributes his  
Personal panic, his predatory note  
To her gregarious grunt as she gropes in the dark  
For her lost lollypop. We belong to our kind,  
Are judged as we judge, for all gestures of time  
And all species of space respond in our own  
Contradictory dialect, the double talk  
Of ambiguous bodies, born like us to that

Natural neighborhood which denial itself  
Like a friend confirms; they reflect our status,  
Temporals pleading for eternal life with  
The infinite impetus of anxious spirits,  
Finite in fact yet refusing to be real,  
Wanting our own way, unwilling to say Yes  
To the Self-So which is the same at all times,  
That Always-Opposite which is the whole subject  
Of our not-knowing, yet from no necessity  
Condescended to exist and to suffer death  
And, scorned on a scaffold, ensconced in His life  
The human household. In our anguish we struggle  
To elude Him, to lie to Him, yet His love observes  
His appalling promise; His predilection  
As we wander and weep is with us to the end,  
Minding our meanings, our least matter dear to Him,  
His Good ingressant on our gross occasions  
Envisages our advance, valuing for us  
Though our bodies too blind or too bored to examine  
What sorts excite them are slain interjecting  
Their childish Ows and, in choosing how many  
And how much they will love, our minds insist on  
Their own disorder as their own punishment,  
His Question disqualifies our quick senses,  
His Truth makes our theories historical sins,  
It is where we are wounded that is when He speaks

Our creaturely cry, concluding His children  
In their mad unbelief to have mercy on them all  
As they wait unawares for His World to come.

So thinking, he returned to duty, reclaimed by the actual world where time is real and in which, therefore, poetry can take no interest.

Facing another long day of servitude to wilful authority and blind accident, creation lay in pain and earnest, once more reprieved from self-destruction, its adoption, as usual, postponed.









