

TC

PERSONAL
AND
MISCELLANEOUS
POEMS

J'ACCUSE

I did not light this fire,
Nor did I bring the fuel.
I did not strike the match,
Relentless, cruel.

You woke the spark in the skull,
Your *TVEUMA* fanned it to flame,
You made its licking tongues.
Lust is its name.

I would forget this burning,
Forget it and be at ease.
I do not want this yearning,
I want surcease.

Let me forget this craze,
Bright, dancing hell.
Consume these questions that blaze
Or burn me as well.

I did not want this crying,
Sobbing and screaming brain.
Give it the peace of dying
Or make me again.

TO MY SON IN OCTOBER

I sat with my son on an October hill,
Fronting the sun.
It was drowsy with heat for the morning chill
Was over and done.

Sunlight reflected on yellowing leaves
And scarlet ones there;
But it shone more bright on the copper sheen
Of my little son's hair.

Friendly squirrels were storing nuts
In a nearby tree;
And they chattered and played for my two-year son,
And he laughed for me.

Bright-faced wildflowers peeped timidly
From the grass and weeds;
And my lad blew the fluff from a dandelion stalk,
Planting the seeds.

In the blue distance a friendly mountain
Held up the sky;
And flowers and trees and squirrels were glad,
And so was I.

God's colorful show of October profusion
Gave me real joy;
But the finest sight on the October hill
Was you, my boy.

REMINISCENCE

Did you ever hear the notes on promenade?
The little fools are thronging me tonight,
They are telling me about a great musical experience,
They are reminding me of a tone poem I knew.

I heard an ardent serenade,
Tender, mellow, soft and low,
But vibrant for all that.
My thoughts went back to a moonlit road,
A white carnation floating on a pebbly stream;
You spoke in the serenade.

And next I heard
A merry bit of fantasy:
The gay notes marched and danced together,
Gambolled, tripped and laughed together,
Drank to one another's health.
You laughed in that music, too.

And then I felt
A deep reverberating organ solo
Calling me to prayer.
God was so real I felt him there,
Felt his touch my shoulder
As I groped for him on my hands and knees
In the chancel of my soul.
You were in that music, too.

THE YEAR'S FIRST SNOW
AS REPORTED BY A BOY OF MIDDLE AGE

I was dozing in my chair
When a little voice piped, "Snow!
Look, it's snow!" And bolt upright
I sprang as though I'd heard the cry
Of "Fire!" come thrilling through the night.
A scream of "Help! Help!" in the street
Could not more quickly on those quick
Have brought me to my feet.

The blood was running free and high,
A tingling crawled about my skin,
My breath caught short as it used to do
At spring's first plunge in the cold, clear creek.
I mused a bit that I a man
Of mature concerns and business
Should let a simple thing like this
Arouse me to such bliss.

"It is a thing of no import,"
I said, and watched the snowflakes blur
The landscape, fill the trees and spur
Small boys and girls to shouting sport.
I went down to the porch to see...
I scooped up a handful of snow near the door...
I rushed for my shovel and jacket and gloves.
I was a boy once more.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

For twenty years I have been somebody else.
My song was one day bass, another coloratura:
False bass, false coloratura.
For twenty years I stacked my blocks by the rules
One day of Eliot, another of W. C. Bryant:
No purpose, no essence.
Half a life's productivity I produced
Or simulated production
Under the current or classic trademarks:
Hollow, no guts.
I was a bee, here lifting, there stealing,
Assimilating substances sticky and coarse:
But always synthetic.

Only today have I discovered my folly,
Discovered it in your ignorance:
You do not know, nor you, nor you.
You only say what you heard someone else say;
You too are an ape, a contriver.
I will have no more of you
In the hallowed dust of the Abbey
Or the equally sterile pages of the croaking quarterly.
There is no melody in your song.
You would not know one if it caught you by the scruff of
the neck
And poured or dripped or flooded in your ears.

(go on to next page)

DECLARATION (cont'd)

There is no harmony in you. You do not tune
Either with stars or atoms.
And the rhythm you claim that you still possess
Is metronomic, or a jagged pit space pat pat
Which does not know and can never know
The metrics of man's trembling heart.

I have a song. A song so loud
It will shiver the last cell in the farthest tip of your body
A song so soft you will hear it with no vibrations whatsoever
A song so ugly you will close your eyes and cover your head
with whatever is available;
A song so beautiful it will rob you of all being
Save the crazed palpitation of your transcendent brain.
My song will come rushing and crawling to you,
And you will receive it, or thrust it away and cry for it
to come again.
My song will be your despair and your hope for a new
dispensation,
For it will come in of its own self,
It will have its own fiber,
It will not explain nor apologize.
It will sing, sing, sing, sing, SING
And demand to be heard.

HUNGER

M'anselle,

May I

Devour you with my eyes?

May I

Voraciously,

Passionately,

Swallow the whole of you

At one huge gulp?

Once glances

Stolen now and then

Would satisfy. But now

Am gnawing at my soul eternally

Begs and cries, cries and begs

For deep

Engorging

Stares

At all the loveliness of you.

INFLUENCE

For just a second you were here
And the very house was glad with you,
And the merry tinkle of your laugh
Shed rays of music through its rooms.

And then in a twinkling you were gone
And the walls leant back on their dignity
And frowned till the sunbeams, sorely frightened,
Scampered out to look for you.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR SPEAKS

I have witnessed the deterioration of men's minds.
I have seen them crack under the strain of facing the gaff.
I have seen their shifty eyes and frenzied movements,
Afraid of fear and afraid to let men know of their fear.

It is a fearful thing to see men afraid,
To see them huddle before the loud-lunged orator
And simulate a courage as foreign to them as death:
Afraid of one another and driven like rats
Into the sea they fear, yet plunging in
As though the water were sweet and to drown were sweet.

Men do not want to kill, nor think it grand to die,
But the toot of a horn, the flap of a flag, the beat of a
drum,

Or the questionnaire from Selective Service
Will make them lie.

II

It took a tough hide and deep-rooted conviction
To stand in the midst of taunts and jeers
As I did for years
And to feel men's scorn like a stinging lash
Rising and falling with vengeful wrath.

III

Yet sweet is ignominy, sweet is life
And sweet are the passing years

(go on to next page)

Of the man who refused to be driven
By shouting or scorn or tears.
Sweetly he lives for his courage
And fruitfully rounds out his years.

SHAME

I whip myself with the strong whip-lash of an
angry mind,
I scourge my soul with the bitter salt-scourge
of tears,
I pierce my heart with the prick of remorseless
remorse,
For a friend was with me, and I have not been kind.

IF

Late at night the fancies fly
Thick as witches in Hallowe'en sky,
Incomplete as premature birth,
Wild as foxes that live in the earth.

Now, if I could capture one flying by breezily,
Tame him and fatten him, I'd write less easily.
Then contemplation would be my strength;
I'd write more deeply - and at more length!

TO VACHEL LINDSAY

There was a boy set out to sing,
A rude and simple boy
Who sang because his heart would sing
Who sang of simple joy.

He never knew the stars were false
Or that the world was ill,
Naive, untutored, trusting chap
Of homely, peasant skill.

He was a boy who still dared dream
And tell his vision free,
Oblivious to the deafened world,
Believing the blind could see.

He was a boy who liked to draw
A better town in his book,
A clean and airy man-love-man town,
Believing that men would look.

A score heard him sing his wistful songs
And sighed for departed days;
A few turned his pages, read, and wept
At his cheerful bardic lays.

Born out of season he soared and sang
To a world gone deaf and blind,
And the Rachel-Jane was an unheeded song
From the past, out of time out of mind.

ON GANDHI'S DEATH

Mohandas K. Gandhi is gathered to the universal spirit,
One last vestige of virtue in a violent world.

He loved right, lived right; loved love, lived love,
Imprisoning infinity, incarnating truth, embracing,
enfleshing the good in life.

Who killed him, how killed him, what matter?
Hate killed him, blind hate, black hate cut him off.

Hate inflamed, envious, snuffed out his incandescence,
Blew out his feeble flame, flickering but faithful.

Let fly at half-mast the flags of all folk today,
Drape all hearts' doors, for his death is your loss.

OBSERVATION AT FIVE O'CLOCK

In early early
 Ere world wakes,
 Or lambent lightnings
 Sun shakes,

Little women,
 Feather-frocked,
 Converse quietly,
 Unshocked.

In plaintive tones,
 Tweets sweet,
 Morning gossips
 Do the street.

All unstartled
 In the dusky
 Dim dawn daylight
 Voices husky

~~Sans vibrato~~ *Mezzo voce*
 Recitative,
~~Sans fortissimo~~ *Pianissimo*
 Titter, grieve....

Birds that later
 On a spray
 Prima Donna
 All the day.

LIFE IS A POEM

Line after line is the long poem written,
Letter and syllable spelt through the days.
Haltingly, falteringly thought shapes its free verse;
Liltingly, ripplingly love moulds its lays.
Some lines are splendid,
Some never ended.
Pain writes her blank verse of power and purity,
Joy sculptures sonnets of prayer and of praise.
And lyrical couplets of life's early certainties
Give place to octaves that peer through the haze,
Looking for consonance,
Lost in life's dissonance,
Listening for melody lost in the maze.
But through tribulation
To full consummation
Life scrawls one epic-ode phrase upon phrase.