











## THE AGE OF ANXIETY

A Baroque Eclogue



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#### A BAROQUE ECLOGUE

by

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Lacrimosa dies illa
Qua resurget ex favilla
Iudicandus bomo reus
Thomas a Celano (?)
Dies Irae

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### To JOHN BETJEMAN



#### Part I

#### **PROLOGUE**

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-coloured, 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 favourite 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 on to 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 was thinking:

My deuce, my double, my dear image,

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 flavour has That liquor you lift with your left hand; Is it cold by contrast, cool as this To 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 neighbour 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 Imitates 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 neighbour'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.

#### ROSETTA was thinking:

From Seager's Folly
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, Saint Peter Acorn, Saint Dill-in-the-Deep, Saint Dust, Saint Alb, Saint Bee-le-Bone, Saint 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 daybreak 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 have got 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

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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; 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 tricky targets 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 Which instantly hatched; 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 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 and toast. At twenty to eight I Stepped on to 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, denes of unaffection, Their chill unchanging, chines 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 thought:

I see in mind a besieged island,
That island in arms where my home once was.
Round green gardens, down grooves between
white

Hawthorn-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 Honour, 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 about 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, Odourless 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 centres, 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 Neighbours 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, Art to action. But, unexpected, as 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 Eve 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 defence 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 mooing 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, till 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 odour.

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 odours, 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 Emble objected:

Muster no monsters, I'll meeken my own.

So did ROSETTA:

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

So did QUANT:

Too blank the blink of these blind heavens.

#### MALIN suggested:

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, Acquisities, 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 his 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 approved:

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.



#### Part II

#### THE SEVEN AGES

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



# MALIN began:

Behold the infant, helpless in cradle and 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, skilfully 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:

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 tyres. 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 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 Her large round letters. Along the esker, 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 bet with a lying self
Who wins or welches. Thus woken, he is
Amused no more by the 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 stumbled
To the shower and sang, ashamed to recall
With whom or how; the hissing 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 neighbours 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 peach-trees 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 and 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 humourless 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 towards 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 some day 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 harbour 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 lapsing out of
Its essential self 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, the 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. 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 vigour 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 picture 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 Over 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 Scarsdales 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; just as we reached The monastery bridge the mist cleared And 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, unvetoed 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 neighbours 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, 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,

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Excited by sand, the sad glitter
Of desert dreck, not dreaming I saw
My future home. It foils my magic:
Right the ritual but wrong the time,
The place improper.

# QUANT said:

Reproaches come,
Emanating from some hidden centre,
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 parlours, 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 thinking:

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 thinking:

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 off 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 answered:

What gift of direction

Is entrusted to me to take charge Of an expedition any may Suggest or join? For the journey home Arriving by roads one already knows 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, may be, 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 centre, 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 semiintoxication 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.



#### Part III

# THE SEVEN STAGES

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 centre 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 district. 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 doomed 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 says:

These hills may be hollow; I've a horror of dwarfs And a streaming cold.

#### EMBLE says:

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

MALIN says:

The less I feel

The more I mind. I should meet death With great regret.

# QUANT says:

Thank God I was warned
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 says:

The clouds are clearing.

The ground's aggression is growing less.

# Emble says:

My cape is dry.

I can reckon correctly.

### MALIN says:

My real intentions

Are nicer now.

# And QUANT says:

I'm nearing the top. 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 impatiently:

Questioned by these cross roads 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, Over or into, under or round Mosses dismal or mountains sudden, Farmlands or fenlands or factory towns, Left and right till the loop be complete And we meet once more.

Emble whispers to himself:

Do I mind with whom?

Yes, a great deal.

#### And MALIN:

In youth I would have cared,

But not now.

# And QUANT:

I know what will happen,

Am sincerely sorry.

They divide thus, youth with youth and age with age. To the left go Rosetta and Emble, to the right Quant and Malin, these on foot, those by car, moving outwards in opposite directions from the high heartland to the maritime plains.

# Emble says:

As I pull on my gloves and prepare
For another day-long drive,
The landscape is full of life:
Nieces of millionaires
Twitter on terraces,
Peasant wives are pounding

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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,
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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 dishonour.

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

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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 says:

These ancient harbours are hailed by the morning
Light that untidies
Warehouses and wharves and wilder rocks
Where intolerant lives
Fight and feed in the fucoid thickets
Of popular pools.

### EMBLE says:

Reflected fleets, feeling in awe
Of their sheltered lagoons,
Stand still, a steady congregation
Of gigantic shadows;
Derricks on these docks adore in silence
The noon they denote.

### MALIN says:

Quiet falls the dusk at this queasy juncture
Of water and earth,
And lamps are lit on the long esplanade;
Urgent whispers
Promise peace, and impatience shakes
Ephemeral flesh.

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# And QUANT says:

As, far from furniture and formal gardens
The desperate spirit
Thinks of its end in the third person,
As a speck drowning
In those wanton mansions where the whales take
Their huge fruitions.

But here they may not linger long. Emble says to Rosetta:

A private plane, its propeller tied With red ribbons is ready waiting To take us to town.

# MALIN says to QUANT:

A train whistles For the last time. We must leave at once.

And so by air, by rail, they turn inland again towards a common goal.

# QUANT says:

Autumn has come early; evening falls;
Our train is traversing at top speed
A pallid province of puddles and stumps
Where helpless objects, an orphaned quarry,
A waif of a works, a widowed engine,
For a sorry second sigh and are gone
As we race through the rain with rattling
windows

Bound for a borough all bankers revere.

### ROSETTA says:

Lulled by an engine's hum, Our insulated lives Go floating freely through Space in a metal spore.

White hangs the waning moon, A scruple on the sky, And constellations crowd Our neighbourhood the night.

# QUANT says:

In the smoking cars all seats are taken
By melancholics mewed in their dumps,
Elegant old-school ex-lieutenants
Cashiered for shuddering, short blowhards,
Thwarted geniuses in threadbare coats,
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 parlour 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.

[71]

# 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 who keep this body Politic 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 and 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 Orthopaedic 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 says:

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 [75]

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, in 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:

'Alas,' say my legs, 'if we lose it will be A sign you have sinned.'

# And QUANT:

The safest place
Is the more or less middling: the mean average
Is not noticed.

#### And EMBLE:

How nice it feels To be out ahead: I'm always lucky But must remember how modest to look.

#### And ROSETTA:

Let them call; I don't care. I shall keep them waiting.

They ought to have helped me. I can't hope to be first

So let me be last.

In this manner, sooner or later they come to the crumbling lichen-covered wall of the forgotten graveyard which marks the end of the fifth stage of their journey. At their feet lies a fallen wooden sign, bearing in faded letters the warning:

# No Entrance Here Without a Subject

and underneath this, in smaller, barely decipherable script, some verses which Emble starts to read aloud:

Stranger, this still
Museum exhibits
The results of life:
Thoughtfully, therefore,
Peer as you pass
[777]

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 mutters:

This bodes badly.

And MALIN:

So be it. Who knows

If we wish what we will?

And ROSETTA:

Will you forget

If you know that I won't?

And Emble:

Will your need be me?

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.

[79]

### MALIN says:

As we cycle silent through a serious land 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 says:

Pleasant my companion but I pine for another.

# QUANT says:

Our canoe makes no noise; monotonous
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 says:

The figure I prefer is far away.

# MALIN says:

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

### QUANT says:

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

### EMBLE says:

Unequal our happiness: his is greater.

# ROSETTA says:

Lovelier would this look if my love were with me.

### MALIN says:

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

# QUANT says:

Both graves of the stream are agog as here 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 says:

How tempting to trespass in these Italian 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.

[81]

# EMBLE says:

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

# QUANT says:

Yet this is a theatre where thought becomes act
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 [82]

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.

ROSETTA says:

The long shadows

Disapprove of my person.

MALIN says:

Reproached by the doves,

My groin groans.

ROSETTA:

I've got a headache,

And my nose is inflamed.

QUANT:

My knees are stiff.

Emble:

My teeth need attention.

Then QUANT says:

Who will trust me now,

[83]

Who with broad jokes have bored my children And, warm by my wife, have wished her dead Yet turned her over, who have told strangers Of the cars and castles that accrued with the fortune

I might have made?

# And EMBLE says:

My mortal body
Has sinned on sofas; assigning to each
Points for pleasure, I have pencilled on envelopes
Lists of my loves.

# And ROSETTA says:

Alas for my sneers At the poor and plain: I must pay for thinking Failure funny.

# And MALIN says:

I have felt too good
At being better than the best of my colleagues:
Walking by water, have worked out smiling
Deadly reviews. My deeds forbid me
To linger longer. I'll leave my friend,
Be sorry by myself.

### Then Emble again:

I must slip off

To the woods to worry.

### Then Rosetta:

I want to retire To some private place and pray to be made A good girl.

[84]

# And then QUANT:

I must go away With my terrors until I have taught them to sing.

So one by one they plunge into the labyrinthine forest and vanish down solitary paths, with no guide but their sorrows, no companion but their own voices. Their ways cross and re-cross yet never once do they meet though now and then one catches somewhere not far off a brief snatch of another's song. Thus Quant's voice is heard singing:

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 ROSETTA'S:

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

#### Now MALIN'S:

Their given names forgot,
Mere species of despair,
On whims of wind their wills depend,
On temperatures their mood.

# And yet once more QUANT's:

So, whistling as I walk
Through brake and copse, I keep
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?

### Emble 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.

[87]

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 says:

Are our dreams indicative? Does it exist,

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 says:

My shoulders shiver. A shadow chills me As thunderheads threaten the sun.

# MALIN says:

Righteous wrath is raising its hands To strike and destroy.

### EMBLE says:

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

### ROSETTA says:

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

[90]

### QUANT says:

In the wild West they are whipping each other.

### EMBLE says:

In the hungry East they are eating their books.

### ROSETTA says:

In the numb North there are no more cradles.

# MALIN says:

The sullen South has been set on fire.

### EMBLE says:

Dull through the darkness, indifferent tongues
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 unreals, perambulate
Our paths and pickles.

### MALIN says:

The primary colours
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.

[92]

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 bar-tender 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.



#### Part IV

### THE DIRGE

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 centre, 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 semidivine 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,

[97]

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
On the spotted spirit's spiral journey,
Its purgative path to that point of rest

Where longing leaves it, and saw Shimmering in the shade the shrine of gold, The magical marvel no man dare touch, Between the towers the tree of life

> And the well of wishes The waters of joy.

Then he harrowed hell,

Healed the abyss

Of torpid instinct and trifling flux,

Laundered it lighted it made it harble un

Laundered it, lighted it, made it lovable with Cathedrals and theories: thanks to him

Brisker smells abet us, Cleaner clouds accost our vision

And honest sounds our ears.

For he ignored the Nightmares and annexed their ranges,

Put the clawing Chimaeras in cold storage. Berated the Riddle till it roared and fled, Won the Battle of Whispers,
Stopped the Stupids, stormed into
The Fumblers' Forts, confined the Sulky
To their drab ditches and drove the Crashing
Bores to their bors

Bores to their bogs, Their beastly moor.

In the high heavens, The ageless places,

79788

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.



#### Part V

# THE MASQUE

'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 labour, For Bohemian artists and owls of the night, We present a series of savage selections By brutal bands from bestial tribes, The Quaraquorams 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, But sad were the sallows and slow were the brooks And how dismal that day when I danced with my dear.

Moving well together to the music, Rosetta and Emble were becoming obviously attracted to each other. In times of war even the crudest kind of positive affection between persons seems extraordinarily beautiful, a noble symbol of the peace and forgiveness of which the whole world stands so desperately in need. So to dancers and spectators alike, this quite casual attraction seemed and was of immense importance.

Rosetta and Emble sang together:

Hushed is the lake of hawks Bright with our excitement, And all the sky of skulls Glows with scarlet roses; The melter of men and salt Admires the drinker of iron: Bold banners of meaning Blaze o'er the host of days.

Malin has been building a little altar of sandwiches. Now he placed an olive upon it and invoked the Queen of love.

Hasten earthward, Heavenly Venus. Mistress of motion, Mother of loves, 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 honours.

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.

[106]

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,
Harmless 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 tumour

[107]

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 peneplain; 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 as if it were only some trifling and easily rectifiable error, improper diet, inadequate schooling, or an outmoded moral code which was keeping mankind from the millennial Earthly Paradise. Just a little more effort, perhaps merely the discovery of the right terms in which to describe it, and surely absolute pleasure must immediately descend upon the astonished armies of this world and abolish for ever all their hate and suffering. So, such effort as at that moment they could, they made. Rosetta cried:

Let brazen bands abrupt their din and Song grow civil, for the siege is raised. The mad gym-mistress, made to resign, Can pinch no more.

#### EMBLE cried:

Deprived of their files, The vice-squads cavort in the mountains, The Visa-Division vouch for all.

#### Then ROSETTA:

The shops which displayed shining weapons And crime-stories carry delicate Pastoral poems and porcelain groups.

### Then Emble:

Nor money, magic, nor martial law, Hardness of heart nor hocus-pocus Are needed now on the novel earth.

### ROSETTA:

Nor terrors, tides, contagion longer Lustrate her stables: their strictures yield To play and peace.

### EMBLE:

Where pampered opulent [109]

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 Invariant base, since Venus has now Agreed so gladly to guarantee Plenty of water to the plants this year, Aid to the beasts, to all human demands Full satisfaction with fresh structures For crucial regions.

[110]

## QUANT cried:

A kind word and A fatherly peak not far away For city orphans.

# Then ROSETTA again:

Synchronized watches And a long lane with a lot of twists For both sexes.

#### And EMBLE:

Barns and shrubberies For game-playing gangs.

## QUANT:

Grates full of logs and Hinterland homes for old proconsuls And pensioned pairs.

### EMBLE:

Places of silence

For real readers.

### ROSETTA:

A room with a view

For a shut-in soul.

## MALIN:

A shady walk There and back for a thinker or two.

### EMBLE:

A gentle jaunt for dejected nerves Over warm waters.

[111]

#### ROSETTA:

A wild party Every night for the outgoing sort.

#### MALIN:

A long soliloquy to learn by heart For the verbal type.

## QUANT:

Vast museums For the acquisitive kind to keep tidy.

#### MALIN:

Spigots to open for the spendthrift class, And choke-pear choices for champion wills.

Malin caught Quant's eye and they rose to take their leave. As they were getting their hats and coats, Quant sang:

> O gifted ghosts, be gone now to affirm Your dedication; dwell in your choice: Venus with grace preventing Requires what she may quicken.

Royal with roses be your resting place, Balmy the airways, blue the welkin that 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, fulfil
A happy future
And occupy that
Permanent kingdom
Perameters 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:

[113]

H

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
While your headache lasts, and I won't shine
In the sobering sun. We're so apart
When our ways have crossed and our words

touched

On Babylon's banks. You'll build here, be Satisfied soon, while I sit waiting On my light luggage to leave if called For some new exile, with enough clothes But no merry maypole. Make your home With some glowing girl; forget with her what Happens also. If you ever see A fuss forming in the far distance, Lots of police, and a little group In terrible trouble, don't try to help; They'd make you mock and you might be ashamed. As long as you live may your lying be Poetic only. I'd hate you to think How gentile you feel when you join in The rowdy cries at Rimmon's party: '-Fasten your figleaf, the Fleet is in. Caesar is sitting in solemn thought, Do not disturb. I'm dying tonight with The tragic poets—' for you'll trust them all. Be at home in there where a host of creatures, Shot or squashed, have insured good-luck to

Their bandit bodies, blond mausoleums Of the inner life. But 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 on to 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. Though 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 parlour, the pink bows on The landing-curtains, or the lawn-mower That wouldn't work. 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.

But 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' Tisra'el.
"donai 'lohenu, 'donai 'ehcad.



#### Part VI

### **EPILOGUE**

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

John Milton, Paradise Lost
Lacrimosa dies illa
Qua resurget ex favilla
Iudicandus homo reus
Thomas a Celano (?), Dies Irae



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,
Till the unchangeable losses of childhood,
The forbidden affections rebel
No more; so now in the mornings
I wake, neither warned nor refreshed,
From dreams without daring, a series
Of vaguely disquieting adventures
Which never end in horror,
Grief or forgiving embraces.

QUANT sang:

But peace was promised by the public hepatoscopists
[12]

As the Ministers met to remodel the Commonwealth In what was formerly the Museum of Fashion and Handicrafts,

While husky spectres haunted the corridors.

## MALIN thought:

Do we learn from the past? The police, The dress-designers, etc.,
Who manage the mirrors, say—No.
A hundred centuries hence
The gross and aggressive will still
Be putting their trust in a patron
Saint or a family fortress,
The seedy be taking the same
Old treatments for tedium vitae,
Religion, Politics, Love.

# 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 shavingcream

Blow by blow the whole debate on the Peninsulas.

## 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.

[122]

## QUANT sang:

But there were some sensible settlements in the subcommittees:

The Duodecimal System was adopted unanimously, 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 fornicators 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;

[123]

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 on to the Manhattan Bridge. The sun had risen. The East River glittered. It would be a bright clear day for work and for war.

## MALIN thought:

For the others, like me, there is only the flash
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 neighbour, 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 neighbourhood 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.







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