

frondy anemones and scales' armor gave us birth.
 Bring us to air, ancestors! and we breathed
 the young flesh wincing against naked December.
 Masters of fire, fire gave us riches, gave us life.
 Masters of water, water gave us riches, gave us life,
 masters of earth, earth gave us riches, gave us life.
 Air mocks, and desire whirls outward in strict frenzy, leaping,
 elastic circles widening from the mind,
 turning constricted to the mind again.
 The dynamics of desire are explained
 in terms of action outward and reaction to a core
 obscured and undefined, except, perhaps, as "God in Heaven," "God in Man,"
 Elohim intermittent with the soul, recurrent
 as Father and Holy Ghost, Word and responsive Word,
 merging with contact in continual sunbursts,
 the promise, the response, the hands laid on,
 the hammer swung to the anvil, mouth fallen on mouth,
 the plane nose up into an open sky.
 Roads are cut, purchase is gained on our wish,
 the turbines gather momentum, tools are given :
 whirl in desire, hurry to ambition, return,
 maintaining the soul's polarity ; be : fly.

THE LYNCHINGS OF JESUS

1 PASSAGE TO GODHEAD

Passage to godhead, fitfully glared upon
 by bloody shinings over Calvary
 this latest effort to revolution stabbed
 against a bitter crucificial tree,
 mild thighs split by the spearwound, opening
 in fierce gestation of immortality.

Icarus' phoenix-flight fulfils itself,
 desire's symbol swings full circle here,
 eternal defeat by power, eternal death
 of the soul and body in murder or despair
 to be followed by eternal return, until
 the thoughtful rebel may triumph everywhere.

Many murdered in war, crucified, starved,
loving their lives they are massacred and burned,
hating their lives as they have found them, but
killed while they look to enjoy what they have earned,
dismissed with peremptory words and hasty graves,
little calm tributes of the unconcerned.

Bruno, Copernicus, Shelley, Karl Marx : you
makers of victory for us : how long?
We love our lives, and the crucifixions come,
benevolent bugles smother rebellion's song,
blowing protection for the acquiescent,
and we need many strengths to continue strong.

Tendons bind us to earth, Antaeus-ridden
by desperate weakness disallied from ground,
bone of our bone; and the sky's plains above us
seduce us into powers still unfound,
and freedom's eagles scream above our faces,
misleading, sly, perverse, and unprofound.

Passage to godhead, shine illuminated
by other colors than blood and fire and pride.
Given wings, we looked downward on earth, seen
uniform from distance; and descended, tied
to the much-loved near places, moved to find
what numbers of lynched Jesuses have not been deified.

2 THE COMMITTEE-ROOM

Let us be introduced to our superiors, the voting men.
They are tired ; they are hungry ; from deciding all day
around the committee-table.

Is it foggy outside? It must be very foggy

The room is white with it.

The years slope into a series of nights, rocking sea-like,
shouting a black rush, enveloping time and kingdom
and the flab faces

Those people engendered my blood swarming
over the altar to clasp the scrolls and Menorah
the black lips, bruised cheeks, eye-reproaches :
as the floor burns, singing Shema

Our little writers go about, hurrying the towns along,

running from mine to luncheon, they can't afford
to let one note escape their holy jottings:
today the mother died, festering : he shot himself : the bullet entered
the roof of the mouth, piercing the brain-pan

How the spears went down in a flurry of blood;
how they died howling
how the triumph marched
all day and all night past the beleaguered town
blowing trumpets at the fallen towers;
how they pulled their shoulders over the hill, crying
for the whole regiment to hear The Sea The Sea

Our young men opening the eyes and mouths together,
facing the new world with their open mouths

gibbering war
gibbering conquest

Ha. Will you lead us to discovery?

What did you do in school today, my darling?

Tamburlaine rode over Genghis had a sword
holding riot over Henry V Emperor of and
the city of Elizabeth the tall sails
crowding England into the world and Charles
his head falling many times onto a dais
how they have been monarchs and
Calvin Coolidge who wouldn't say

however, America

All day we have been seated around a table

all these many days

One day we voted on whether he was Hamlet
or whether he was himself and yesterday
I cast the deciding vote to renounce our mouths.
Today we sentinel the avenue solemnly warning
the passers (who look the other way, and cough) that we
speak with the mouths of demons, perhaps the people's,
but not our own.

Tomorrow

the vote's to be cast on the eyes, and sex, and brain.

Perhaps we will vote to disavow all three.

We are powerful now : we vote

death to Sacco a man's name
and Vanzetti a blood-brother; death

to Tom Mooney, or a wall, no matter;
poverty to Piers Plowman, shrieking anger
to Shelley, a cough and Fanny to Keats;
thus to Blake in a garden; thus to Whitman;
thus to D. H. Lawrence.

And to all you women,
dead and unspoken-for, what sentences,
to you dead children, little in the ground
all you sweet generous rebels, what sentences

This is the case of one Hilliard, a native of Texas,
in the year of our Lord 1897, a freeman.
Report . . . Hilliard's power of endurance seems to be
the most wonderful thing on record. His lower limbs
burned off a while before he became unconscious;
and his body looked to be burned to the hollow.
Was it decreed (oh coyly coyly) by an avenging God
as well as an avenging people that he suffer so?

We have

16 large views under magnifying glass.
8 views of the trial and the burning.
For place of exhibit watch the street bills.

Don't fail to see this.

Lie down dear, the day was long, the evening is smooth.
The day was long, and you were voting all day
hammering down these heads
tamping the mould about these diamond eyes
filling the mouths with wax
lie down my dear
the bed is soft lie down to kindest dreams

all night they carried leaves
bore songs and garlands up the gradual hill
the noise of singing kept the child awake
but they were dead
all Shakespeare's heroes the saints the Jews the rebels
but the noise stirred their graves' grass
and the feet all falling in those places
going up the hill with sheaves and tools
and all the weapons of ascent together.

3 THE TRIAL

The South is green with coming spring ; revival
flourishes in the fields of Alabama. Spongy with rain,
plantations breathe April : carwheels suck mud in the roads,
the town expands warm in the afternoons. At night the black boy
teeters no-handed on a bicycle, whistling The St. Louis Blues,
blood beating, and hot South. A red brick courthouse
is vicious with men inviting death. Array your judges; call your
jurors; come,
here is your justice, come out of the crazy jail.
Grass is green now in Alabama; Birmingham dusks are quiet
relaxed and soft in the park, stern at the yards:
a hundred boxcars shunted off to sidings, and the hoboes
gathering grains of sleep in forbidden corners.
In all the yards : Atlanta, Chattanooga,
Memphis, and New Orleans, the cars, and no jobs.

Every night the mail-planes burrow the sky,
carrying postcards to laughing girls in Texas,
passionate letters to the Charleston virgins,
words through the South : and no reprieve,
no pardon, no release.

A blinded statue attends before the courthouse,
bronze and black men lie on the grass, waiting,
the khaki dapper National Guard leans on its bayonets.
But the air is populous beyond our vision:
all the people's anger finds its vortex here
as the mythic lips of justice open, and speak.

Hammers and sickles are carried in a wave of strength, fire-tipped,
swinging passionately ninefold to a shore.
Answer the back-thrown Negro face of the lynched, the flat
forehead knotted,
the eyes showing a wild iris, the mouth a welter of blood,
answer the broken shoulders and these twisted arms.
John Brown, Nat Turner, Toussaint stand in this courtroom,
Dred Scott wrestles for freedom there in the dark corner,
all our celebrated shambles are repeated here : now again
Sacco and Vanzetti walk to a chair, to the straps and rivets
and the switch spitting death and Massachusetts' will.
Wreaths are brought out of history

here are the well-nourished flowers of France, grown strong on blood,
Caesar twisting his thin throat toward conquest, turning
north from the Roman laurels,
the Istrian galleys slide again to sea.
How they waded through bloody Godfrey's Jerusalem !
How the fires broke through Europe, and the rich
and the tall jails battened on revolution !
The fastidious Louis', cousins to the sun, stamping
those ribboned heels on Calas, on the people;
the lynched five thousand of America.
Tom Mooney from San Quentin, Herndon : here
is an army for audience

all resolved

to a gobbet of tobacco, spat, and the empanelled hundred,
a jury of vengeance, the cheap pressed lips, the narrow eyes like
hardware;
the judge, his eye-sockets and cheeks dark and immutably secret,
the twisting mouth of the prosecuting attorney.
Nine dark boys spread their breasts against Alabama,
schooled in the cells, fathered by want.

Mother : one writes : they treat us bad. If they send us
back to Kilby jail, I think I shall kill myself.
I think I must hang myself by my overalls.

Alabama and the South are soft with spring;
in the North, the seasons change, sweet April, December and the air
loaded with snow. There is time for meetings
during the years, they remaining in prison.

In the Square

a crowd listens, carrying banners.
Overhead, boring through the speaker's voice, a plane
circles with a snoring of motors revolving in the sky,
drowning the single voice. It does not touch
the crowd's silence. It circles. The name stands :
Scottsboro



Earth, include sky ; air, be stable to our
feet, which have need of stone and iron stance;
all opposites, affirm your contradictions,
lead, all you prophets, our mechanic dance.

Arches over the earth, conform, be still,
calm Roman in the evening cool of grace,
dramatic Gothic, be finally rounded now
pared equal to the clean savannahs of space,

grind levels to one plane, unfold the stones
that shaped you pointed, return to ground, return,
bird be no more a brand upon the sky
no more a torch to which earth's bodies burn

fire attracting fire in magnetism
too subtle for dissection and pronouncement,
torturing fire, crucifying posture
with which dead Jesus quenches his opponents.

Shall we then straddle Jesus in a plane
the rigid crucified revived at last
the pale lips flattened in a wind a rain
of merging conquered blast and counterblast.
Shout to us : See !
the wind !
Shout to us :
FLY

THE TUNNEL

1

NO WORK is master of the mine today
tyrant that walks with the feet of murder here
under his cracked shoes a grass-blade dusted
dingy with coal's smear.

The father's hand is rubbed with dust, his body
is witness to coal, black glosses all his skin.
Around the pithead they stand and do not talk
looking at the obvious sign.

Behind his shoulder stands the black mountain
of unbought coal, green-topped with grass growing