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ASH-WEDNESDAY

March  
1930

dedicated  
to  
Mrs. Elsie

'Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto  
dust thou shalt return.'

World and God  
desert and garden

Vita Nuova XVIII

Stygian

Song of Solomon, Ezekiel, Revelation &

Because I think not ever to return  
Ballad, to Susanna

St. John  
I Serchio non spero 1928

Because I do not hope to turn again

Because I do not hope

Because I do not hope to turn

Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope

I no longer strive to strive towards such things

(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)

Why should I mourn

The vanished power of the usual reign?

Ballata, written in exile  
at Sarzana, Cavalcanti  
doubt, despair

Psalm 103:5  
Isaiah 60:31

Because I do not hope to know again

The infirm glory of the positive hour

Because I do not think

Because I know I shall not know

The one veritable transitory power

Because I cannot drink

There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is  
nothing again

Because I know that time is always time

And place is always and only place

And what is actual is actual only for one time

And only for one place

I rejoice that things are as they are and

I renounce the blessèd face

And renounce the voice

Because I cannot hope to turn again

Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something

desire  
Paul II

Upon which to rejoice  
And pray to God to have mercy upon us  
And I pray that I may forget  
These matters that with myself I too much discuss  
Too much explain  
Because I do not hope to turn again  
Let these words answer  
For what is done, not to be done again  
May the judgement not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly  
But merely vans to beat the air  
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry  
Smaller and dryer than the will  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still.

*Salience in waiting for death*

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death  
Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

*to construct something of death  
e vo significando II Salutation 1927*

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree  
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety  
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had beer  
contained

In the hollow round of my skull. And God said  
Shall these bones live? shall these  
Bones live? And that which had been contained

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*Burglar  
24. 53-54*

*Vita Nuova  
XIX*

*Elijah  
(1 Kings 19)*

*Inferno I  
Ezekiel (37)*

In the bones (which were already dry) said chirping:  
Because of the goodness of this Lady  
And because of her loveliness, and because  
She honours the Virgin in meditation,  
We shine with brightness. And I who am here dissembled  
Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love  
To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.  
It is this which recovers  
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible por-  
tions  
Which the leopards reject. The Lady is withdrawn  
In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown.  
Let the whiteness of bones atone to forgetfulness.  
There is no life in them. As I am forgotten  
And would be forgotten, so I would forget  
Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose. And God said  
Prophecy to the wind, to the wind only for only  
The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping  
With the burden of the grasshopper, saying

*Ecclesiastes 5 (12:5)*

Lady of silences  
Calm and distressed  
Torn and most whole  
Rose of memory  
Rose of forgetfulness  
Exhausted and life-giving  
Worried reposeful  
The single Rose  
Is now the Garden

*Paradiso (33:7-9)*

Where all loves end  
Terminate torment  
Of love unsatisfied  
The greater torment  
Of love satisfied  
End of the endless  
Journey to no end  
Conclusion of all that  
Is inconclusible  
Speech without word and  
Word of no speech  
Grace to the Mother  
For the Garden  
Where all love ends.

Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shin-  
ing

We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each  
other,

Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of  
sand,

Forgetting themselves and each other, united

*Ezekiel (45:1)* In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye  
Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity  
Matters. This is the land. We have our inheritance.

*Burgos (26:146)*

III *Som de l'escalina 1929*

At the first turning of the second stair

I turned and saw below

The same shape twisted on the banister  
Under the vapour in the fetid air  
Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears  
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair  
I left them twisting, turning below;  
There were no more faces and the stair was dark,  
Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling, be-  
yond repair,  
Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark.

At the first turning of the third stair  
Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit  
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene  
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green  
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.  
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,  
Lilac and brown hair;  
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the  
mind over the third stair,  
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair *Matthew (8:8)*  
Climbing the third stair.

Lord, I am not worthy  
Lord, I am not worthy

but speak the word only.

Who walked between the violet and the violet  
Who walked between  
The various ranks of varied green  
Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour,  
Talking of trivial things  
In ignorance and in knowledge of eternal dolour  
Who moved among the others as they walked,  
Who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the  
springs

Made cool the dry rock and made firm the sand  
In blue of larkspur, blue of Mary's colour,  
Sovegna vos

Here are the years that walk between, bearing  
Away the fiddles and the flutes, restoring  
One who moves in the time between sleep and waking,  
wearing

White light folded, sheathed about her, folded.  
The new years walk, restoring  
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring  
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem  
The time. Redeem  
The unread vision in the higher dream  
While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.

The silent sister veiled in white and blue  
Between the yews, behind the garden god,  
Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed but  
spoke no word

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down  
Redeem the time, redeem the dream  
The token of the word unheard, unspoken

Till the wind shake a thousand whispers from the yew

And after this our exile

v 1930

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent  
If the unheard, unspoken  
Word is unspoken, unheard;  
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,  
The Word without a word, the Word within  
The world and for the world;  
And the light shone in darkness and  
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled  
About the centre of the silent Word.

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Where shall the word be found, where will the  
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence

Not on the sea or on the islands, not  
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,  
For those who walk in darkness  
Both in the day time and in the night time  
The right time and the right place are not here  
No place of grace for those who avoid the face  
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and  
deny the voice

Will the veiled sister pray for  
Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose  
thee,  
Those who are torn on the horn between season and sea-  
son, time and time, between  
Hour and hour, word and word, power and power, those  
who wait  
In darkness? Will the veiled sister pray  
For children at the gate  
Who will not go away and cannot pray:  
Pray for those who chose and oppose

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Will the veiled sister between the slender  
Yew trees pray for those who offend her  
And are terrified and cannot surrender  
And affirm before the world and deny between the rocks  
In the last desert between the last blue rocks

The desert in the garden the garden in the desert  
Of drouth, spitting from the mouth the withered apple-  
seed.

O my people.

VI

1930

Although I do not hope to turn again  
Although I do not hope  
Although I do not hope to turn

Wavering between the profit and the loss  
In this brief transit where the dreams cross  
The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying  
(Bless me father) though I do not wish to wish these  
things

From the wide window towards the granite shore  
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying  
Unbroken wings

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices  
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices  
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel  
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell  
Quickens to recover  
The cry of quail and the whirling plover  
And the blind eye creates

The empty forms between the ivory gates  
And smell renews the salt savour of the sandy earth

This is the time of tension between dying and birth  
The place of solitude where three dreams cross  
Between blue rocks  
But when the voices shaken from the yew-tree drift  
away

Let the other yew be shaken and reply.  
Blessèd sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit  
of the garden,  
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still  
Even among these rocks,  
Our peace in His will  
And even among these rocks  
Sister, mother  
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,  
Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.

## JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

'A cold coming we had of it,  
 Just the worst time of the year  
 For a journey, and such a long journey:  
 The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
 The very dead of winter.'  
 And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
 Lying down in the melting snow.  
 There were times we regretted  
 The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
 And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
 Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
 And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
 And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
 And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
 And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
 A hard time we had of it.  
 At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
 Sleeping in snatches,  
 With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
 That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
 Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation:  
 With a running stream and a water-mill beating the  
     darkness,  
 And three trees on the low sky,

And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lin-  
tel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and  
death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

## 8

### MARINA

*Quis hic locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga?*

What seas what shores what grey rocks and what  
islands

What water lapping the bow  
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through  
the fog

What images return  
O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning  
Death

Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird,  
meaning

Death

Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning  
Death

Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning  
Death

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,  
A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog  
By this grace dissolved in place

What is this face, less clear and clearer  
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—  
Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer than  
the eye

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurry-  
ing feet

Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.

I made this, I have forgotten

And remember.

The rigging weak and the canvas rotten

Between one June and another September.

Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my  
own.

The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.

This form, this face, this life

Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me

Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,

The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.

What seas what shores what granite islands towards my  
timbers

And woodthrush calling through the fog

My daughter.

## LANDSCAPES

## I. NEW HAMPSHIRE

Children's voices in the orchard  
Between the blossom- and the fruit-time:  
Golden head, crimson head,  
Between the green tip and the root.  
Black wing, brown wing, hover over;  
Twenty years and the spring is over;  
To-day grieves, to-morrow grieves,  
Cover me over, light-in-leaves;  
Golden head, black wing,  
Cling, swing,  
Spring, sing,  
Swing up into the apple-tree.

## II. VIRGINIA

Red river, red river,  
Slow flow heat is silence  
No will is still as a river  
Still. Will heat move  
Only through the mocking-bird  
Heard once? Still hills  
Wait. Gates wait. Purple trees,  
White trees, wait, wait,  
Delay, decay. Living, living,  
Never moving. Ever moving  
Iron thoughts came with me  
And go with me:  
Red river, river, river.

### III. Usk

Do not suddenly break the branch, or  
Hope to find  
The white hart behind the white well.  
Glance aside, not for lance, do not spell  
Old enchantments. Let them sleep.  
'Gently dip, but not too deep',  
Lift your eyes  
Where the roads dip and where the roads rise  
Seek only there  
Where the grey light meets the green air  
The hermit's chapel, the pilgrim's prayer.

# 10

## TWO CHORUSES FROM 'THE ROCK'

### I

The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,  
The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit.  
O perpetual revolution of configured stars,  
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,  
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!  
The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
But nearness to death no nearer to GOD.  
Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?  
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Bring us farther from GOD and nearer to the Dust.

I journeyed to London, to the timekept City,  
Where the River flows, with foreign flotations.  
There I was told: we have too many churches,  
And too few chop-houses. There I was told:  
Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the Church

In the place where they work, but where they spend  
their Sundays.

In the City, we need no bells:

Let them waken the suburbs.

I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:

We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor

To Hindhead, or Maidenhead.

If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the  
papers.

In industrial districts, there I was told

Of economic laws.

In the pleasant countryside, there it seemed

That the country now is only fit for picnics.

And the Church does not seem to be wanted

In country or in suburb; and in the town

Only for important weddings.

**CHORUS LEADER:**

Silence! and preserve respectful distance.

For I perceive approaching

The Rock. Who will perhaps answer our doubtings.

The Rock. The Watcher. The Stranger.

He who has seen what has happened

And who sees what is to happen.

The Witness. The Critic. The Stranger.

The God-shaken, in whom is the truth inborn.

*Enter the ROCK, led by a BOY:*