OTHERS
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GRANTWOOD, N. J.

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OTHERS

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SKIPWITH CANNELL
ROBERT CARLTON BROWN
WALLACE STEVENS
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by
Alfred Kreymborg
Grantwood, N. J.
THE PEDDLER OF FLOWERS

I came from the country
With flowers,
Larkspur and roses,
Fretted lilies
In their leaves,
And long, cool lavender.

I carried them
From house to house,
And cried them
Down hot streets.
The sun fell
Upon my flowers,
And the dust of the streets
Blew over my basket.

That night
I slept upon the open seats
Of a circus,
Where all day long
People had watched
The antics
Of a painted clown.
A COMPARISON

This man is like a mechanical toy
Which runs, and streaks, and veers over the carpet,
With a noise of thin edges of tin
Whirring upon one another
In spirals of shrillness.
Even when you pick it up,
The wheels of the toy continue to whirl,
Grating incessantly.
They beat, and wobble, and whiz,
Inconceivably rapid rings of blurred spokes,
And the shrill scraping pierces one's eardrums
Like an auger.

TREES

The branches of the trees lie in layers
Above and behind each other,
And the sun strikes on the outstanding leaves
And turns them white,
And they dance like a splatter of pebbles
Against a green wall.

The trees make a solid path leading up in the air.
It looks as though I could walk upon it
If I only had courage to step out of the window.
REVENGE

I seek my revenge in the stars,
The quiet knowing stars.
I seek my revenge in the night,
The solemn truthful night.
And all the infinitude of space
Comes to aid in my revenge.

Let those who rule, rule.
They shall not rule my stars
Nor me;
For I am one with my stars
And my stars are one with me.
Sometimes there is noise in my stars,
A whirling noise of cynical joy,
And all their voices are lifted with my own
In the joy of revenge;
And I am one with the revenge
And the revenge is one with me.
We laugh with cynical joy
Until our laughter echoes and echoes
Into the most impenetrable depths of space
And beyond—
Gyrating through the unknown and beyond
And awakening the dumb ears of the world's dead God
To an only thought of mankind.
I laugh with joy at the mirth of my stars;
I laugh with joy at my revenge.
And there comes no voice to disturb my mirth,
Except the voice of dying men
Wailing on the winds of space
And death-rattling against the iron-ribbed stars.
But the sound of my mirth
And the mirth of my stars
Drown the wailing with cynical laughter.
And our laughter increases
Until it beats in time with the death rattle,
The hymn of our joy and revenge.

Thus all things laugh with my revenge—
Except mankind.
The very ground of earth laughs with me.
The flesh of man laughs with me.
The still voice of pathology tickles my ear,
And I laugh my revenge with pathology,
Understanding that we also shall death-rattle against
the stars.

But I do not fear, nor does pathology,
For we are one with revenge,
And revenge is death
And death is truth.

I sing the glory of death,
The beauty and truth of death—
And I sing the glory of revenge.
PASTORAL

The little sparrows
Hop ingenuously
About the pavement
Quarreling
With sharp voices
Over those things
That interest them.
But we who are wiser
Shut ourselves in
On either hand
And no one knows
Whether we think good
Or evil.

Then again,
The old man who goes about
Gathering dog lime
Walks in the gutter
Without looking up
And his tread
Is more majestic than
That of the Episcopal minister
Approaching the pulpit
Of a Sunday.
These things
Astonish me beyond words.
PASTORAL

If I say I have heard voices
Who will believe me?

"None has dipped his hand
In the black waters of the sky
Nor picked the yellow lilies
That sway on their clear stems
And no tree has waited
Long enough nor still enough
To touch fingers with the moon."

I looked and there were little frogs
With puffed out throats,
Singing in the slime.

THE Ogre

Sweet child,
Little girl with well shaped legs
You cannot touch the thoughts
I put over and under and around you.
This is fortunate for they would
Burn you to an ash otherwise.
Your petals would be quite curled up.

But this is all beyond you—no doubt.
Yet you do feel the brushings
Of the fine needles:
The tentative lines of your whole body
Prove it to me:
So does your fear of me,
Your shyness:
Likewise the toy baby cart
That you are pushing—
And besides, mother has begun
To dress your hair in a knot.
These are my excuses.

APPEAL

You who are so mighty,
Crimson salamander,
Hear me once more.

I lay among the half burned sticks
At the edge of the fire.
The fiend was creeping in.
I felt the cold tips of fingers—.

O crimson salamander!

Give me one little flame,
One!
That I may bind it
Protectingly about the wrist
Of him that flung me here,
Here upon the very center!

This is my song.
THE COMING OF NIGHT

The sun is near set
And the tall buildings
Become teeth
Tearing bloodily at the sky's throat;
The blank wall by my window
Becomes night sky over the marshes
When there is no moon, and no wind,
And little fishes splash in the pools.

I had lit my candle to make a song for you,
But I have forgotten it for I am very tired;
And the candle... a yellow moth...
Flutters, flutters,
Deep in my brain.
My song was about, 'a foreign lady
Who was beautiful and sad,
Who was forsaken, and who died
A thousand years ago.'
But the cracked cup at my elbow,
With dregs of tea in it,
Fixes my tired thought more surely
Than the song I made for you and forgot...
That I might give you this.
I am tired.

I am so tired
That my soul is a great plain
Made desolate,
And the beating of a million hearts
Is but the whisper of night winds
Blowing across it.

TO ENGLAND

I am American.
My pagan head
Bows to old things.
Yes! I, in London,
Heart choked with rage,
Smile and bow!

As the Vandals, victorious,
Cringed their unconquered way
Through the streets and temples
Of Imperial Rome.
I am Aladdin.
Wanting a thing I have but to snap my fingers.
Jinn, bring me a lady,
The lady with the magic kiss
That turns troubles into joys.
The lady of the soft white throat
And shell-tint cheeks.
Ah, here you are, Lady!
Thank you, Jinn.
Lady, sing to me,
A song as gorgeous as the plumage of a Bird of Paradise.
Music melts in your mouth
Becoming vaporous perfume
Utterly intoxicating me.
Now you may dance for me a while.
Weave a delirious design
With your body,
Ah, you are like a gold fish
Glinting gaily
Darting through sparkling waters.
There, that will do, Lady.
Say you love me, now.
Yes, yes, I believe you.
I could not doubt that voice of yours
As full of the abandon of expression
As your dance.
And now, Lady,
The magic kiss!
Ummm! That is good.
Jinn, take her away.
II

The other night I dreamed
Of a shimmering opalescent mermaid
Sitting on a shell of mother of pearl
With her tail cocked up on the edge
Quite saucily.
She was blowing soap bubbles,
Iridescent,
And flirting with a rainbow fish.
I awoke with a stinging in my eyes
As though one of her gay drifting bubbles
Had burst in my face
With a spatter of soap suds.
But I could not believe that,
Knowing the bite came from bitter tears,
I had seen her only in a dream,
And that I
Could never be
A rainbow fish.

III

I love anything ostentatious
Simpler things I despise.
I like to hear a nose blown with a bang
See teeth picked with a flourish
Watch a fat lady wobble her cargo of flesh
As though it were worth a thousand dollars an ounce.
I think ostentation of any sort
Is just grand.
IV

Big footed people
Go about stepping on things;
Ideals, egos, the cosmos
They crush
Clod-hopperdly.

I should hate to have the epidermis
Of an ornithorincus
On the sole of an elephantine foot.
I prefer skipping lightly across egg shells
In padded Chinese slippers with blue embroidered tops.

V

Fly speck,
You are such a neat, tidy, unimportant
Little thing
That no one takes offense
At sight of you
Or mention of your name.
But you irritate me
With your polite little airs of decency
Why don’t you grow up
And be something?
Even a fly speck
Can aspire to be
A manure heap.
PETER QUINCE AT THE CLAVIER

I

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the selfsame sounds
On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music. It is like the strain
Waked in the elders by Susanna:

Of a green evening, clear and warm,
She bathed in her still garden, while
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb
In witching chords, and their thin blood
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

II

In the green water, clear and warm,
Susanna lay,
She searched
The touch of springs,
And found
Concealed imaginings.
She sighed,  
For so much melody.  

Upon the bank, she stood  
In the cool  
Of spent emotions.  
She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.  

She walked upon the grass,  
Still quavering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering.  

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night.  
She turned—  
A cymbal crashed,  
And roaring horns.  

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,  
Came her attendant Byzantines.  

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side:
And as they whispered, the refrain
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines,
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.
So evenings die, in their green going,
A wave, interminably flowing.
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting
The cowl of Winter, done repenting.
So maidens die, to the auroral
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
Of those white elders; but, escaping,
Left only Death's ironic scraping.
Now, in its immortality, it plays
On the clear viol of her memory,
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

THE SILVER PLOUGH-BOY

A black figure dances in a black field.
It seizes a sheet—from the ground, from a bush—as if spread there by some wash-woman for the night.
It wraps the sheet around its body, until the black figure is silver.
It dances down a furrow, in the early light, back of a crazy plough, the green blades following.
How soon the silver fades in the dust! How soon the black figure slips from the wrinkled sheet! How softly the sheet falls to the ground!
Others for September are Walter Conrad Arensberg, Maxwell Bodenheim, T. S. Eliot and John Gould Fletcher.

OTHERS for October will be devoted to John Rodker and the CHORIC SCHOOL.
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