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## Return

Marina Wister

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## Return

*By* MARINA WISTER

None from his jarred and stupefying sleep  
Will rouse and prop an elbow so he may look  
Through the dirty pane  
At his side of the groaning train :  
He will take out his watch or open his book,  
Count the click of the streaming rails while he seems to creep  
Forever and ever through the distance ever the same  
And go back to sleep.

The sunwarped shacks  
Stick a shaking pipe through the rusted roof  
And hollow-eyed stare out upon the tracks :  
And bluntfaced whitefaced cattle  
Stand in the sun and stir no hoof  
At the rumble and rattle :  
And stringy fences run  
Sagging across the miles of vacant sun.

Uncoagulate is this bleached dust  
Poured thick on brittle rock  
Humping, ribbing, flattening,  
Without a pause, without a shock,  
And sunk away  
From skeletal monster teeth  
And tilted ridges scooped out underneath ;  
It cracks in crooked gulleys powder-dry,  
And the dark opalescence of the hills  
Melts into cloud as soft as they  
In the early light which has not yet  
The burning deepness of the desert sky.

A hateful land to bird and beast and tree  
Arid as starsmothering infinity:  
But the cramped mind  
Once having tasted  
Only here will find  
For what it wasted—  
Desire-haunted fear  
Of the faded bubble bursting—leaving it bare  
To solemn planes of silence without air  
Will not perplex it here.

### Present Tense

*By* OSCAR WILLIAMS

Incisive as the vivid rose  
Searing the eyes of sense,  
Against the past's unclouded snows  
There breathes the present tense.

Though God may sleep with suns for dreams  
Beneath blue feather quilts,  
And thought may walk the gilded streams  
On seven leaguèd stilts.

The prèsent tense is in my bone,  
So welded to the heart  
It would take all of earth's great stone  
To shatter us apart.