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In Praise of Figs

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He has a swift machine that sets the words,
 Hurriedly massing protection for the dead,
 Swinging across the room, imprisoned birds,
 Amy Lowell, John Keats and Chapman within his head.

Some one in this room says, "The poets are mine.
 I shall keep them. The world must not forget.
 (Memory is enough to keep the unbroken line.
 The world is dead.)" and lights a cigarette.

RAYMOND KRESENSKY

SHADOW

It is this shadow I most dread.
 Not the sick nor addicted figurehead,
 but the dangerous silhouette
 of him that loiters in the armor
 of a necessarily foreboding past.
 This shadow he can nevermore arrest.
 It is the barrier of distrust against his neighbor.
 One does not argue mercy of this ghost.

Just as unheeded smoke can choke
 a proud and handsome sky,
 so does this jealous shadow defy
 the stoutest desires in us pious folk.

IN PRAISE OF FIGS

Your clover-like leaves outstrip the vineyards I have seen.
 No sycamore can boast of your persuasive green,
 When summer licks the shadows from your sticky sheen.

What bulging fruit, limp and purple to ferment,
 furnish testimony of passionate extravagance!
 Once dessicated black by the furious heat,
 insects relish your biblical sweet,
 and birds delight in plundering such cargo.

Buffeting your sturdy grey physique, the wind must know
and marvel at your patient persistent contemplation.
Slave of emerald seasons and summer's amethyst,
I hold your lump of sorrow in my fist.

WILLIAM PETERSON

ANOTHER ADVENTURE

The crack of doom
Sounded twice
In the fire-lit room,
And you,
Writing some new adventure story,
Laid it aside
For one more hoary.

A one-gun fusillade
Was fired, and you set sail
Upon a deep, cold sea.
Was your passage stormy?
Did you go third class,
Or did you loll upon the upper deck
And smoke a cigarette
And make a pass
At some wan-faced wench?

With love as your religion,
And you its priest,
Who in your name received
Your fiery baptism?

Of course, you took the boat for Hell;
You always said you would,
Going there to meet those sultry ladies
Who are more fair than good.

I have heard you mention
Cleopatra as your bold intention.