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Nocturne Militaire

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Their dung-eating lackeys—
 There is not a good thing in this world but somehow
 The capitalists and their perverts and the ugly small souls
 Mothered in Hollywood will slime it all over.

P O S T C A R D

The waves break on the point, and the gulls cry,
 And the sky is empty; a soldier's voice in the air
 Carries flat in the wind. Afterward, nightfall—

*The sun kindles on Wisconsin water,
 The hills sharp as a girl's breasts,
 And, farther, the massive feminine Dakotas,
 The tall grain whispering through the summer weather.*

Night becomes; like a meeting of water and water,
 Like a dark mating, a waiting as of mist deepening,
 And lower and later the light lies under the headland.

*The pheasant in covert in gay plumage
 Salutes the sun which from the height of August
 Flatters all meridians and on the beaches
 Gilds the bathers in a kind of homage.*

Nameless figures move, but over the clamor,
 The yammer of trucks, in the dark, the words hover
 Like the last grin of the Cheshire cat whose clever
 Meaning we cannot determine, although we construe the manner.

N O C T U R N E M I L I T A I R E

Imagine or remember how the road at last led us
 Over bridges like prepositions, linking a drawl of islands.
 The coast curved away like a question mark, listening slyly
 And shyly whispered the insomniac Atlantic.
 But we were uncertain of both question and answer,
 Stiff and confused and bemused in expendable khaki,
 Seeing with innocent eyes, the walls gleaming,
 And the alabaster city of a pervert's dream.

Sodom and Gomorrah, Miami and Hollywood—
 The poor human spirit stung between two poles:
 Between the perversion of love and the easy perversion of pleasure,
 Between that whore Cinderella and that whore Mrs. Astor,
 Between the wet dream and Crazy Water Crystals,
 Between the whorehouse and the sanatorium,
 Between the fake and the phoney, between Miami and Hollywood:
 The city we entered was its own caricature.

Borne by the offshore wind, an exciting rumor,
 The legend of tropic islands, caresses the coast like hysteria,
 Bringing a sound like bells rung under sea;
 And brings the infected banker and others whose tenure
 Is equally uncertain, equally certain: the simple
 And perfect faces of women—like the moon—
 Whose radiance is disturbing and quite as impersonal,
 But not to be warmed by and never ample.

They linger awhile in the dazzling sepulchral city,
 Delicately exploring their romantic diseases,
 The gangster, the capitalist and their proteges
 With all their doomed retainers: not worth your hate or pity
 Now that they have to learn a new language—
 And they despise the idiom like an upper class foreigner:
 The verb *to die* baffles them. We cannot mourn,
 But their doom gives stature at last, moon dazzled, silhouette on the
 flaming Atlantic.

Something is dying. But in the fierce sunlight,
 On the swanky golf-course drill-field, something is being born
 Whose features are anonymous as a child's drawing
 Or the nameless guard whose cry brings down the enormous night.
 For the sentry moonlight is only moonlight, not
 Easy to shoot by. But our devouring symbols
 (Though we walk through *their* dying city and *their* moonlight lave
 us like lovers)
 Are the loin-sprung spotlight sun and the hangman sack-hooded
 blackout.

Now in the east the dark, like many waters,
 Moves, and up-town, in the high hotels, those few
 Late guests move through their remembered places
 But their steps are curiously uncertain, like a sick man's or a sleep-
 walker's.

Down the beach, in rooms designed for their masters
 The young men move and talk in the early blackout.
 Their voices nameless but clear and full of courage
 Ring like calm bells through their terrible electric idyll.

They are the nameless poor who have been marching
 Out of the dark, to that exact moment when history
 Crosses the tracks of our time. They do not see it approaching,
 But their faces are strange with a wild and unnoticed mystery.
 And now at the Casino the dancing is nice and no one
 Notices the hunchback weeping among the bankers,
 Or sees, like the eye of an angel, offshore, the burning tanker,
 As the night patrol of bombers climbs through the rain and is gone.

FROM THE JERSEY STATION

Where in the early hills lie lakes like captured light,
 And the meadows are a Victorian swoon in the summer wind,
 Day was the bronze legend of some.

Others, where night
 Swallowed its modifiers, and the late express
 Leaps like a cat on its burning rails, caged in thunder,
 Under Broadway's inconstant stars, the street meeting, Times-Square
 press,
 Were night's familiars.

But were unfamiliar with their furious day,
 That polar attraction which had brought them here:
 Terminus of a hungry decade where
 The rails begin and the pulse learns other cadence.

For they were innocent, pacing their classic myth,
 (what lips they kissed, whose arms in the violent moonlight)
 They wore enchantment as an emblem of conduct,
 And now their eyes are strange, like one woken from sleep, like a
 dreamer's.