

I could lay hands to, and strike the Genoese
While sailing down the mainland to the Tiber.
But I remember as our parley ended
My father's ardor wavered and went out,
And he was moody till we were alone.
Then as I turned to leave him he inquired,
"Have you no fear, no secret fear, my son,
Of Rome's much-feared and hard anathema
That falls on you now as it fell on me?"
But all that I could think to answer was,
"I am your son." He gripped me hard at that.
There is some balm in lingering on such moments
When he was proud my bastard blood was his. . . .
Another one was when I dashed from Pisa,
Riding in lathered haste, my tidings' own
Glad messenger. Ah, then time's brutal hand
Had not yet brushed the moth-gold from my youth!
Dusty and hollow-eyed and streaked with sweat
I burst upon him with the victory:
Our sally in the dark; the shock at dawn;
How such and such a ship was sunk or boarded;
Where sprang their main resistance, and its toll;
And who their worships were we clapped in prison.
I saved the humor of it for the last.
Archbishop though you are, you too had laughed
At those two prelates pigeon-paunched, red-gilled,
Who started excommunicating me
Right in the face of my own gaping troops.
My father ruffled when I told him of it.
But when I added with what unconcern
I cut in on their curse and whisked them off,

Blowsy with rage, to learn civility
And Christian meekness in a lousy cell —
He laughed till tears were shaking in his beard.
Then a great banquet, jousts and glees and tourneys —
And I the target of his toasts and praises.

There was not much of laughing loud together,
Or banqueting, after the Pisan coup.
Campaigns and sieges, battles and assaults —
Ungilding in the glut and mire of war.
We thought when Gregory died there would be respite,
But wished him back before this Innocent
Had run one scale upon his harp of hate.
He'll likely die now, when his death's no profit.
The evil always die too late for thanks,
Serene and impotent, their worst full blown.
I hated war, but matched against my father's,
My hatred of it was intemperate love.
There never was so great a warrior,
A general so visioned and aggressive,
Who so rebelliously despised his calling.
It wore into his very strength and sinews
Like trace-chains on the haunches of a charger.
But still his camp outlustered any court,
Was rumored into fable as the home
Of every undared dark delirious vice,
And still he browbeat fame and looked the victor. . . .
It was a specious semblance of his world.

When Innocent fled Rome for France, it seemed
Our victory, but was our brink of ruin.

There was no fleet to summon merrily
And catch the Conclave he convened for Lyons,
He did not fall in Gregory's trap. And I
Nor Pietro could devise a scheme to stave
The darkening fate that gathered as we gazed
To hurtle on a head so undeserving.
If he had gone himself, Berard, and stood
Before them in his cloak of burning wrath,
Could they have found him guilty? Oh, I think
They would have swept their croziers up like swords
And sworn to follow him, though bound for hell.
But likely not. They were old tepid men,
By whom to be adjudged as by one's equals
Was desecration and indignity.
So Thaddeus went, and Pietro followed him,
To act the absent and imperial
Protagonist; while one old man and I
With sombre hearts kept near the emperor
And made Turin our waiting place for news.

The tricks of prison life are strange, Berard.
Here in my cell I've paced so many times
That length of hall where his great feast was held
That I can count the casements down one wall,
The lolling torches sconced along the other,
And often, sleepless, in a mad calm dream
I seem to move about there in the moonlight,
Lonesome as Abel's ghost alone in death,
Searching for something missed but unremembered,
And gazing with vague misty eyes far out
Across the night-washed lowlands of Turin.

Why did he choose of all times that for feasting,
Summoning friends, near friends, near enemies,
To drink deep and to make a show of pleasure,
When all the while our hearts were raw with waiting
For news of Thaddeus and his mission's end?
But the room glittered with its crush of guests,
The dipping torch-light through its own blue smoke
Crimsoning carcanets and jewelled clasps,
Daubing with fire the burnished bowls and beakers —
And he too glittered from his dais'd throne
At the long table's end, above the crowd,
Superb in tissued gold and rash abandon.
How wearily for us the mirth rushed on!
And when we heard those clattering hoofs outside
Dash up and halt, how well we knew some fate
With hooded vizer stood, a wall's width from us,
And would not stand there long. So Thaddeus entered —
Forgive my telling what you know already!
I am a draft of visions. Hear me out,
Or I shall strangle in their mounting fumes! —
It seemed he'd never walk that length of room
And stand before my father, whispering.
Then lacked the emperor courtesy, if ever:
He brushed the words back Thaddeus was speaking
And rose; the chatter froze away to silence.
His own words sprang across the air like arrows:
" My friends, we have somewhat of news to hear
Which Thaddeus brings still piping from the Pope.
We'll hear it with you. The worst is not too bad
To share with friends, simply, with no concealment.
Speak, Thaddeus, speak: as if to me alone."

And Thaddeus faced us, anguish on his face
And such nobility as heartbreak chisels.

They could find naught wherewith to charge my father
Save heresy — no vileness, no one act
Infamous or diseased with evil outcome!
But day by day they clustered in their church,
Stinking with sweat and incense, and pawed through
The jewelled details of his passionate life,
Seeking for filth, hungry for carrion —
Carrion-beaked and carrion-clawed themselves!
As Thaddeus spoke, I saw those cardinals,
Archbishops, abbots, royal emissaries,
Ranged in the tainted darkness of their church,
Posturing as the world's high court of justice
And tottering through the motions of a trial
Whose sentence had been writ before its charge.
Guzzlers and sycophants of envious Rome!
Louis of France, for all his saintliness,
Pled for the emperor, and England's voice
Was just though weak. So potent was the suasion
Of Thaddeus when at last they gave him leave
To answer and defend, the council shook,
They say, with conscience-stabbed irresolution. . . .
But Innocent poured out his eloquent hate
And while the organ groaned, the hymns surged up —
As through some fissure cracked in noisy hell —
Those old men dashed their writhing torches down
And in the awful darkness cursed my father. . . .
'Twas here you will recall that Thaddeus stopped,
Sank to his seat and dumbly clutched the table.

And my father's voice leaped out, "Go on, go on!
The sentence?" It was not Thaddeus who answered.
Da Vigna spoke, standing far down the room,
A late arrival here as at the Conclave:
His tones, clear always, never seemed so clear:
"Anathema and Excommunication."
I saw my father smile. Da Vigna saw it.
He paused and spoke again: "And this besides:
The Holy Roman Empire's Emperor,
Frederick, called the Second, is hereby
Deposed — allegiance to him voided, nay,
Forbidden: thus saith the Conclave with one voice."
Lightning — that blinded as it crashed, downward!
There was a deadly daze of silence. It grew.
All gazed toward my father. But he was silent,
And motionless upon the conspicuous throne.
Their stupor turned ferocious restlessness:
Fear that he searched in vain for words to feed them
Smothered my heart and twitched about my nostrils.
But still he did not speak or lift his eyes.
Suddenly swirled the blade-hiss of his voice:
"Arabs, ho there! Fetch here my treasure chests!"
Our wonder was a terror and a stillness
The whole while that they found and brought the chests.
We leaned and saw them by the lowest step
And barely let our eyes seek up to where
He sat and gazed upon them. Then he stood,
And slowly step by step came down — stooping,
Horribly focussed on the treasure chests.
One hand trailed to his girdle's keys and hung,
And he himself unlocked and opened each.

He lifted one by one his sacred crowns,
Jerusalem's, the Kingdom's, last the Empire's,
And held them to the light with fixed filmed eyes,
Then strained about to face us, stealthily.
The spectre of his voice called through a cave:
"They are all here." That hollow sound awoke him:
He straightened, set the great crown on his head,
And mounted to his throne the way he would,
All emperor, of world and self possessed.

How hot then poured his lava eloquence,
Molten and vehement! but back of it
Cold mind, and crafty watching of his hearers.
He probed the vacillant world in probing them —
Those faces brutal, unintelligent,
Ferocious in their avidness to live,
Confused or terrified at Pietro's news.
They listened to his wrath. But at his warning
Of what submission to such arrogance
Boded to them who were themselves enthroned
And could by this same precedent be dashed
From their high stations at an old man's whim —
He set them breathing hard and fingering sword-hilts.
Then it was pitiful, Berard, to see him,
Warmed at their warning, hope to flush their hearts
With the wild rosy splendor of his dream.
He dignified them with the truth — explained
His kingdom of the spirit for the few,
His fancied freedom for the falcon-souled —
As if they could partake of visioning.
They chilled: and slipped vague glances at their neighbors.

And then I caught da Vigna watching them,
The hovering wings of his eyes gray as old ice.
He felt their ebb of ardor, but no sooner
Than Frederick himself, who forthwith changed
And spiced his argument to suit their stomachs.
He challenged Innocent to pull him down,
Dared him to set another in his place,
Swearing he'd hold it as his sacred right
Though old men cursed and quenched their torches out.
Their strength was equal to a torch's quenching,
But not to quenching an imperial sun.
Then on from there of strengths and weaknesses —
The man-power his from Etna to the Rhine,
His fleets, allies, resources, endless treasure
Against the starveling papal regiments,
The flight from Rome, the general disaffection,
The iterated and unanswered calls
For tithes and tribute. Conclaves could convene,
But Victory crowned the strong, and who as strong
In all the armored world as Frederick?
Cheeks flushed and flashing eyes were everywhere:
The hot contagion of his words as always
Had done its work: his last phrase thundering still,
They clashed their swords down on the reeling table,
Tossed up their goblets in a mighty toast,
And shouted, "Death to Rome! Frederick! Frederick!"
He gravely bowed and gravely waved them out
With "Gentlemen, be your sleep calm as mine."

They joined the darkness. With the last one's exit
He sank back in his throne: I kept my place

And waited for his eyes to look for mine.
We were alone: the shadowy hall was empty,
Bleak with disorder, stale with feasting done.
He sat immobile as a carven king:
I feared to rouse him from that fell abstraction
And he seemed not to know I even lived.
The lights waned and the moonlight grew and lengthened
And bars of hollow silver spanned the gloom.
And still we sat apart and no word spoken.
Then I crept down the table to his throne
And stood beneath him, saw his eyes wide open,
But not the eyes I knew. They did not see me.
I mounted one by one the purple steps
And coming to his feet sat there, and leaned
My head against the throne, flush with his knee.
At last I questioned: "What does it mean, my father?"
I thought he had not heard me; then he spoke
From loneliness, across an infinite chasm:
"The end. Darkness ahead. Darkness ahead." —
Words the fewest and most sorrowful
That ever sunk their anchors in my soul!
We were so close! yet I could not reach out
And soothe the grief of his profound despair.
The vultures tear us on our several hills
Which neighbor no two closelier than yields
A perfect view of our most loved one's anguish.
I knew he saw the conclave's condemnation
As the immitigable blow of fate
That crashed down all the fabric of his life
And left his hopes dispowered as a dream.
And I knew what he saw was very truth

Though what I saw was only curling chaos
And nothing clear and nothing of fair promise.
So though the ebbing smoke-drifts of the room
I looked out on the lowlands and the moonlight
And watched the ravelled cloud-banks floating past,
The spindrift of a sunset's storm of color,
And thought of his cloud-splendor now so toppled. . . .
There was much time for many thoughts to stumble
Before he stirred and spoke in that far way,
But now his voice was frayed and slow with pain:
"Save yourself, Enzo. For you there's time.
You are not safe with Helios any more."
My throat swelled suddenly and all my will
Was in the forcing of a voice to answer:
"I will not leave you now; nor ever leave you.
We will fight on as we have fought, together."
His body's quiver was a long time dying:
"We will fight on then, Enzo, my son."
His hand blessed for a moment my bent head.
The torches guttered out; down the long hall,
Across the litter of the banquet table,
The windows poured their caverns of gray fire;
And still he sat, sagged forward, hands on knees,
The imperial crown a red slur round his forehead.
A moon misshapen stumbled down the sky,
Bloody and sick. And there was no more to say. . . .

Another man had broken: not my father.
He fought on, with a difference that grew. . . .
How do we hate iniquity and thrive,
But, hating them that are iniquitous,

Harden and grow ourselves somehow attain
With the venom hoarded for the unrighteous foe?
Unjust dilemma! We cannot grip an evil
Fleshless, abstract, not cased in him or her
On whom we may lay hands of wrath and ruin!
To not hate wrong rubs out man's one distinction:
Able to hate it saps the root of reason.
He grew to hate, a clenched, vein-jutting hatred,
And Innocent and them opposed he hated.
The priests will write it in their manuscripts —
For flourish to his catalogue of crimes —
That he was cruel. I have found all men so.
But true it is he hardened after Lyons:
He did not lag in cruelty; indeed,
His old Sicilian temperateness dried up.
The tide was set against him: each new day
Brought new defections, losses, perjured friends,
But still he dominated with his dripping sword
The whole peninsula — and for his camp
Built him a city — “Victory,” alas.
That monster citadel he meant as answer,
Insult and challenge to the Conclave's edict.
He could not name its name even to me
Afterwards. Verily, Parma, I could wish
To live, if life of mine could work revenge!
It had not fallen, had I not been elsewhere.
Berard, it is not all the treasure lost,
The scoffing of the world, even the death
Of Thaddeus torn, still living, limb from limb,
That makes so passing pitiful to me
Vittoria's capture. But I am picturing always

His gay return from hunting through the woods.
He was so great a hunter, and its love
Medicined him when most his soul was sickened.
I see him, rested by his weariness,
Riding ahead upon his sweating stallion
With all the rough loud hunters in his wake,
And coming to a clearing on the hillside,
And catching sight below him on the plain
Of aced flames where once Vittoria spread
And running ants that were his armies once.
Humiliation heaped on helplessness!
He never hunted after that, Berard,
And lacked, I know, the sweetening of that
Forgetful wholesomeness. That Parma stole.

Deposed, his honor gone, and Thaddeus slain,
There seemed no residue of misery
That he need blench at. Yet the worst impended.
This incarnator of uncarinate dreams
Had left for fate to pierce only his heart,
And men had thought that was invulnerable.
Men thought so: we knew better. But your eyes
Were spared the sight of it red-riven, smoking —
Would mine had been! They'd have less fear of sleep
Had not his sickness called me to Cremona.
He ailed, and none could find the seat of ailment,
So he exchanged a captive we had got
Of Parma for Pietro's own physician who
Was there, a prisoner — the mutual gift
Made at da Vigna's counsel, nay, his urgency.
I had not seen him since he spoke so clearly.

He'd been too late to speak out at the Conclave,
But heard the sentence, with some horror doubtless.
When his physician came and saw my father
Feeble with fever, twitching on the bedclothes,
Da Vigna was solicitous, but asked
Leave to depart the city that same day
About the empire's business. Leave was granted,
For I was there to act in his behalf.
When he had gone, and with him the physician
To brew a sleeping potion for the night,
An Arab burst into the room, tottered,
Fell at my father's bedside, gripped his shoulder,
And while swift tears of misery smeared his cheeks
Whispered in Arabic some broken message.
My father roused up with a choking cry,
Struck him across the face, and as he fell
Called for the guards to gag him and imprison;
Then fell back on his bed, sweat-cold and shaking.
"Let not da Vigna leave tonight," he gasped.
"Be here with him at dark, and nothing said."
The night came soon, though slower than night comes,
And found da Vigna, me, the Arab guards
Assembled in his chamber. It reeked of fever.
But, saying that his health was mended somewhat,
He sat half-dressed, though haggard as I thought,
And calm, except his eyes, blue-bright, unpausing.
Beside him was a table with his papers,
A rush-light, and his ruby-hilted broad-sword.
He was midway in giving us instructions
As to provisioning the eastern army,
When Pietro's good physician padded in,

His hands about a bowl of sleeping draught.
My father smiled: "All sleep is good, but one
Is best. You mean me well?" "Master, with this,"
The leech replied, "you will sleep well till morning."
"Which will break, doubtless, with a trumpet blast,"
My father sneered. "I will take as much to sain me."
Then carelessly to Pietro, "We can trust him?"
Who was as careless in his clear-voiced answer,
"My life is almost hourly in his hands:
I've never found a cause to think him faithless."
My father's snake-arm struck and bit his sword-hilt,
His voice snarled through his nostrils at the leech:
"Then drink it half yourself." The man shrank back,
Sick-green and speechless, horrible with fear.
The drink splashed in his hands, had fallen but
My father clutched it up half-full and called,
"Bring now the prisoner that prays for sleep,"
And instantly from some near room there walked
A blank-eyed prisoner between two Arabs.
My father held the bowl to him and said,
"Drink this, my friend; my hope is you will sleep."
The man said not a word, but drank it down.
"Sirs," my father turned to us, "sit down.
There's patient waiting here for all of us."
So we sat down; the man, too, that had drunk.
Bound in a common cataleptic coil,
Speechless, transfixed, we watched his poor meek face —
Our separate terrors wrestling with our wills
To burst out in a scream and break the nightmare.
At last his eyelids flickered, lowered, closed.
Our senses strained, each one an ear, to catch

The rustle of his breathing. His body slackened,
Wavered and lurched, and toppled to the floor.
He lay there twisted, still, so unrepeseful
One longed to make him easy, but none stirred.
And our own spell of hideous quietude
Seemed part of his eternal sprawled discomfort.
The emperor broke it with a voice as dead
As were his eyes and they were tombs: "Pietro,
Lean down and lay your head upon his heart
And tell me if it beats." And Pietro reeled
And sounds clawed in his throat and choked away
And all his body wrinkled back with horror.
But he knelt down and leaned and pressed his ear
Upon the spot where that man's heart had beat.
His eyes grew wide and wider, no more wings
Hovering, then they shut, and when his voice
Rasped through an opening in his throat, it had
No old-time clearness. "It beats no more," he said.
The emperor staggered — thunder might have struck him,
Instead of words just heard. He took one step,
Lunged through the leech's body with his sword,
Who belched up blood, crumpled and fell, stone dead.
The smoking huddle lay across his feet —
He spurned it off and spoke: "Take out the dung."
Then tottered, stayed him on his bleeding sword,
And closed his eyes, and held his hand upon them,
As if gone blind of infinite despair,
But opened them and plunged them into Pietro's
And held them there, as though for all his grief
There must be comfort in those once friendly depths.
But Pietro flung himself face down and clasped

His feet and cried, " Pardon, Imperial Master,
Pardon! " The sword dropped from my father's hand
And both his hands groped upward to his throat
And worried there and tore his collar back:
His eyes closed in their hollows, his features worked.
He strangled so before he could groan out:
" Another word — not that — another word! "
And then his reason reeled and stumbled back,
Calling one word as if there were no other:
" Confessed, confessed, confessed, confessed — O God! "
Da Vigna crushed his face against his arm,
Shuddered, then lay quite still, so did not see
The emperor stoop above him, gaze, recoil,
And draw his foot back with a snarl of loathing.
Berard, Berard, I would forget his change
From agony to rage and hate, though just!
He said no more than it was true to say,
Pouring the words like acid over Pietro,
Words you can guess, deserved — oh, well deserved —
And yet, when heard, unworthy of my father.
Let me not think of that! O God! O God!
I shrank from him, he did not seem my father,
But some gross beast that had gone beastly mad —
His flaccid mouth too weak to hold its water,
And all his face a pouch of flesh that glistened!
And, oh, the beastly cry that ended it:
" Burn out his eyes and bind him to a mule
And drive him, socket-empty, through the world —
An epigram of Frederick's love turned hate! " . . .
Justice, indeed, but who is ripe for justice?
Pietro had fainted when the Arabs touched him.

The emperor watched him heaved out like a corpse,
Then blindly motioned us to leave the room —
And I left gladly, left him palsied, shrunken;
So even I was dimmed with treachery
And let my spirit falter in its love.

My bed was in a chamber close to his,
A bed that night no sleep had tucked and pillowed.
I lay and killed the horror in my soul,
And reckoned up his measureless misery.
I saw what I had never seen before,
That he was young no longer. He had looked
Almost an old man when they lifted Pietro —
Slack and uncertain, creased and gray with strain.
I had not thought he'd ever not be hale
Or wear the taint of time in any crevice.
Not death, but mind and body's stealthy crumble
Before they slough and fall is nature's worst.
And nothing twitches so the heart as seeing
In one we love the wall's first visible crack.
I wept for him, Berard, and as I wept
His great voice suddenly burst across the stillness
And he was calling, "Enzio, Enzio, Enzio!"
As hell's poor damned must call on their first night.
I rushed into his chamber. He was sitting
Upon the bedside, clutching it for prop,
His mighty shoulders stooping, and his head
Bowed on his breast. I ran to him, dropped down,
And saw his eyes — my father's eyes, Berard! —
Smoking with terror! He seized my hands, my arms,
Felt up my face, across my hair — oh, blindly —

Whispering " Is it you, Enzo? Is it you? "
I slipped my arm around him, steadied him.
But still he shook, and whispered huskily:
" He knew me. My heart lay beating in his hand.
He was the faithful Peter of our Kingdom.
He did not hate me: could he love, he loved me;
But he was overborne by the turned tide.
There was no anchor to his intellect:
Truth he saw, but could not hook its grapples
Under his heart. The long time that I prospered,
Their outcry moved him not: but at the end
The universal condemnation shook him,
And when the filthy world cried out ' Unclean '
He could not feel me clean, although he knew it,
So slackened in his faith, doubting, doubting,
And at my ebb of fortune did — what he did!
If Pietro can desert me, who will stay?
If he can be untrue, where look for faith?
There're daggers in each doorway, in each aisle
Spears, and each window has drawn arrows. Oh,
No cup but reeks with poison and no heart
But rears with viper hate and treachery!
No way to turn — no going back or forward —
And none to wade the blood and darkness with me!
Enzo, Enzo, we are alone, and you —
Will you be going too? Will you? Will you?
The way I walk leads to a ghastly nowhere,
But, oh, beseech you, leave me not alone!
Be pitiful, for all the love I bear you —
My son, my son! "
Berard, the noblest of all emperors

Lay sobbing in my arms like some poor child,
And I was healing him of dreadful tears
With words my own would hardly let me utter —
Mere words, though weak in wisdom, strong in love.
No night of mine can ever be as choked
With misery and helplessness again.

So wounded mortally, he still could live
Because I clove to him. Then I was taken. . . .
All that his son could do I did in that
Last battle: more than any but his son
Could dream of doing. The Modanese betrayed us.
There was no help. Their dead lay tiered around me
And ours had left me friendless by the evening.
I could not tell my blood from blood I'd emptied
And I had fainted when they captured me.
There was no help. Fate meant to break him so
With the one cruelty unused, but hoarded.
I knew he threatened and implored, and vainly,
For I was brag and safeguard of Bologna:
Assaulted, she would tear me limb from limb
Before his maddened eyes, and there's not gold
Sufficient in the earth to ransom me.
And, after that, I knew he could not stay
And fight the fight out in the north alone,
But would drag back like some great wounded beast
Into the Kingdom's lair and sanctuary. . . .
Yet, all his heart was homesick for had gone,
Vanished in cloud-dust, dust of death, or prison:
His kingdom was a boundary, bounding nothing.
He died because he had no heart to live:

Life was unworthy of his presence in it. . . .
I'm glad he died away from the loud world,
With twilight woods around him, in your arms;
And glad his mind was steady to the end
And he knew Death. . . . It was a kingly meeting —
Death and my father. . . . You say he had his bed
Borne to that window of the hunting lodge
That faces west, and lay there open-eyed,
In some great revery beyond your ken,
Watching the wintry sunset winnow out
From red to gray behind the keen still trees;
And then his eyes called to you and you stooped,
And heard his words, but two: "Tell Enzo."
He closed his lids, regretless that no strength
Would open them again. . . . When he walked through
The portals of Death's purple-raftered house,
I know the other guests arose and stood. . . .

My words have bridged the two walls of the night.
The far one crumbles now. . . . Come, look, Berard.
Aldebaran has gone with his companions.
An old moon, blue with cold, limps up the east,
Thin as the new. He will be overtaken,
And halfway up his mountain die, in the sun
A beggar's death an old man's death, alone. . . .
Old age which should be but a hill's descent,
May be an ever-upward mountain toil,
By night, through empty cold, in loneliness. . . .
By count, Berard, my years are thirty: but
My living days ahead are all old age.
Here is a crass unthoughtedness, a waste,

A mere continuing that is not life,
Miserable to me, to no man helpful. . . .
Our utmost is a stave of noble song
Scrawled blindly on the scrap of page allowed
And tossed into the sea — unlearned, unpraised,
Of no avail. Yet it could be ignoble:
I'll not have mine default in fortitude
By ending it. I'll let the stave be rounded,
As if my father were my listener. . . .

I cannot see by what integrity
High Heaven annihilated so his efforts!
Unless there be no heaven — and that I'll grant
Sooner than that his vision's fate was just! . . .
A vision's own validity and worth
Has no transmuting power to turn it facts;
And, even turned, with all the needed aid
Of accident combined with dominant will,
Its best escapes: its second best may live
And for a dubious cycle shed its lustre.
But his was buttressed by all things save chance,
And there's no tatter left, no single gleam.
What hope for this wrong world if such things be?
What are so hemmed by horror, pressed by darkness,
That there's no lighted calm where we may pause
And see our evil destinies in bulk —
Bathed in an awful loveliness, perhaps,
And part of some transcending glimpsed coherence.
There is no certain thing I can lay hold on
And say, " This, this is good! This will I worship! "
Except my father. For he intended like

A god: or, since I see no signs of gods,
If some day earth shall house divinities
In guise of men, or in some guise I guess not,
They shall be minded, willed, and souled like him.
And so despite life's infamy and failure
I thank whatever may be thanked that I
Was heaved up from the insentient void and saw
In him divinity, though marred and baffled.
It seems now nothing else in life was worth
The seeing. What the crop is of his sowing
I am not seer enough to speculate:
I only know the grain was golden and
The earth is culpable if there's no harvest. . . .
Darkness; darkness; and for me no hope
Of any light, unless there be some place
For tarrying, where he will tarry for me.

Now let me kneel, old man, and clasp your knees
And bend my head the way I learned when little,
And you will bless me through your falling tears. . . .
Ah, you and I are all that now remain
Of his heart's Kingdom, so we must keep worthy. . . .
Go now, Berard. The waiting's empty, but
The end is sure, and we have much to dream on.

EPILOGUE

*This wind upon my mouth, these stars I see,
The breathing of the night above the trees,
Not these nor anything my senses touch
Are real to me or worth the boon of breath.
But all the never-heard, the never-seen,
The just-beyond my hands can never reach,
These have a substance that is stout and sure,
These brace the unsubstantial sliding world,
And lend the evanescent actual
An air of life, a tint of worth and meaning.
Shall dust, fortuitously blown into
A curve of moon or leaf or throat or petal
And seeding back to vacancy and dust,
Content my soul with its illiterate
And lapsing loveliness? Or tired knowledge
Make credible the hard decree of living?
Oh, I have heard a golden trumpet blowing
Under the night. Another warmth than blood
Has coursed, though briefly, through my intricate veins.
Some sky is in my breast where swings a hawk
Intemperate for immortalities
And unpersuaded by the show of death.
I am content with that I cannot prove.*

