

## FRAGMENTS FROM LOST DAYS

. . . Like birds that get used to walking  
and grow heavier and heavier, as in falling:  
the earth sucks out of their long claws  
the brave memory of all  
the great things that happen high up,  
and makes them almost into leaves that cling  
tightly to the ground,—  
like plants which,  
scarcely growing upward, creep into the earth,  
sink lightly and softly and damply  
into black clods and sicken there lifelessly,—  
like mad children,—like a face  
in a coffin,—like happy hands that  
grow hesitant, because in the full goblet  
things are mirrored that are not near,—  
like calls for help which in the evening wind  
collide with many dark huge chimes,—  
like house plants that have dried for days,  
like streets that are ill-famed,—like bright curls  
within which jewels have grown blind,—  
like early morning in April  
facing the hospital's many windows:  
the sick press up against the hall's seam  
and look: the grace of a new light  
makes all the streets seem vernal and wide;  
they see only the bright majesty  
that makes the houses young and laughing,  
and don't know that all night long  
a storm ripped the garments from the sky,  
a storm of waters, where the world still freezes,  
a storm which this very moment roars through the streets  
and takes all burdens  
off the shoulders of each thing,—

that Something outside is huge and incensed,  
that outside Power stalks, a fist  
that would strangle each one of the sick  
in the midst of this brilliance, which they believe.—  
. . . Like long nights in withered garden-huts,  
which are already torn apart on all sides  
and much too open now to weep there together  
with another person, who is so loved,—  
like naked girls, tiptoeing over stones,  
like drunkards in a birch grove,—  
like words which mean nothing definite  
and yet go, go inside the ear, keep going  
into the brain and secretly on the nerve-branches  
through every limb try out leap after leap,—  
like old men who curse their race  
and then die, so that no one can ever  
turn aside the once-pronounced woe,  
like full roses, artfully raised  
in the blue hothouse where the air lied,  
and then from the exhilaration in great curves  
strewn out upon the scattered snow,—  
like an earth which cannot orbit,  
because too many dead weigh on its feeling,  
like a man killed and buried  
whose hands defend themselves against roots,—  
like one of the high, slim, red  
midsummer flowers, which unredeemed  
all at once dies in its favorite meadow-wind,  
because down below its roots hit turquoise  
in the earring of a corpse  
and stop . . .

And many a day's hours were like that.  
As if someone fashioned my likeness somewhere

in order to torment it slowly with needles.  
I felt each sharp prick of his playing,  
and it was: as if a rain fell on me  
in which all things change.