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## Hoc Est Proprium

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## FIVE POEMS AND A GROUP

## THE GINGTURE OF CHASTITY

My lord and master went upon crusade.  
 I am the kind of faithful wife he made,  
 Who in my dungeon that I wear with me  
 Am all that bars compel a wife to be.

My flesh is loyal and I keep his trust.  
 The lock is stout until the iron rust.  
 I'm to commend, whom never man assails—  
 A value kept, and proved by worldly scales.

But what my lord no doubt an hour forgot,  
 Was how the heart may stain, the flesh may rot,  
 The tender touch be frayed when fancy frays—  
 Confined in iron and by pure dispraise.

## THREE PRAYERS FOR A SORT OF REDEMPTION

*Irenë, or Peace*

She said she wanted to say farewell to debauchery,  
 So I said, Okay, get up and say farewell.  
 But her statement was signed with a signature that was a forgery,  
 For I met her later ensconced in state in hell:  
 She had married well; she had married a hellish noble;  
 She was Countess C., and had given him three sons.  
 I visited them once in Laguna; her shape was supple  
 As she moved among her guests and the sound of guns.

*The Brand*

The unscrupulous woman, adverting to her youth,  
 The saga of past willingness,  
 Mused on and on in the foggy peninsular dusk;  
 To whom I listening from clinical motives only  
 Was yet as one consumed by the memory of past jealousies.

*The Climate of Hell*

The fog is fog, not rain or dew.  
On Sunday it is foggy, too.  
In June the foggy mornings last  
Until the afternoon is past.  
The morning dawns between the hour  
Of noon and what the bats devour.

Poor futile bats that on this strip of coast  
Starve and grow lean whose insects drought hath lost!

The sun, a silver-bronze as round  
As lens punched out of the profound,  
Suggests its face, and the striped mist  
Whitens the cedars where we kissed  
It may have been an age ago,  
But none shall know; no, none shall know.

Dear daily sun, by whose obscure demand  
Oceans keep faith, adulteries are planned,

Men without women slay and steal,  
Make God an image, drink and reel,  
Dishonor sire, disown the truth,  
Labor their beasts with greed nor ruth,  
And in all covetousness pray  
Their flesh be fed each seventh day—

Dear sun, in what remote and treeless hills  
Your influence is felt, and warms and kills!

H O C E S T P R O P R I U M

If, before I die,  
All the things I try  
Should result in good—