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## Foul Conjunction

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## POETRY

### FOUR POEMS

#### DEPARTURE

In this quotidian of my setting out  
I fumble at the latch and hesitate  
Before my froward shadow on the step  
Blotting the sprawling sunlight from the stone.

There was a time when I would not have gone  
Beyond this door, when sorrow's tentacles  
Were strong as hemp. (And what grave image there  
Was hoist for matins in that darkened hall.)

Pressed by impedimenta-freighted brain  
Resilient tendons dared not stretch. Prostrate  
On polished timbers mummied time aroused  
No horror of the rodent hours. But now

Departure-chastened, desuetude propounds  
New formulae for taking leave. Upon  
The threshold I have paused to give entail  
And benediction to my termite heirs.

#### FOUL CONJUNCTION

O foul conjunction joining this bright soul  
With carrion-food for worms—no sacrament  
Hallowed this tainted marriage making whole  
Two ones; rather carnivorous sediment,  
Earth's belly (womb and tomb!) awaits return  
Of flesh and bone. As surely as that proud

Cloud-flaunting hill where lavic cones now burn  
Sea-buried once shall feel the watery shroud  
Once more, so body back to dust. But where  
In daisied fields or fiery-dappled sky  
Shall go the transient-and-eternal fair  
Divorcéd one, unknown and knowing I,  
(O lonely soul that will not be compost  
For fecund earth!) the lost and homeless ghost?

V A N T A G E

He had seen travelogues depicting the  
Picturesque villages, marvelled at quaint  
Costumes, viewed an Oroscau panorama  
Whose real and fabulous conjoin in paint.

And he had heard one, wiser than many,  
Say, "It is a strange and terrible land;  
Not for the half-hearted." But the frenzy  
Of departure was in him. So he planned

A sojourn, mapping an itinerary  
To include the latitudes of Whence and Why.  
After that brash incredible journey  
He stared at the implacable vast sky

As once might one of Cortez' baser men  
Who came, mazed in cold greed of scrutiny,  
And compromised with fear. Could he not then  
Cull some truth from this gaudy pageantry—

Rash fables hatched to gull poor traveling  
Fools? Or was truth adamant in mountains,  
Trapped in rock-sealed strata with the deathling  
Fossils of old Time? Such were the questions

Troubling him who looked beyond a landscape  
Toward history's mirage. The mango's taste  
Exotic on his tongue, a dancer's shape,  
Maguey green-armored in a desert waste