

On deck they lay obscured, bodily blanketed,  
the faceless travellers, streaming fog bannering  
between them let them forget the dangling lifeboat hooks,  
the prison days, the reach of sea, the death  
around them, mutinies, wars, suicides, angers,  
the ineffective rancid idle engines.

The captain saw the fog taint brightening to ochre,  
“Sulphur!” he cried, “that’s hell, that’s yellow, the color of  
madness,  
we’ll travel back to blue . . .”  
tearing at his mirror, smashing it, smashing the radio,  
smashing the fog  
until his arms were tied.

And deep into the galleries of fog, riding in silence, ship  
drifted dead. The cloud came wave on wave,  
the blond woman sang to the sleeping passengers, captain  
shrieked from his straitjacket : Make her go, her hair is  
yellow fog.

Land, land, she sang, let them all attempt land.  
Land, she sang, doubtful or dangerous. Barriers came  
across her, filling up over her face.  
Disaster of music in the yellow fog,  
and she sang land  
Drifting. Disaster. Drifted the world away  
saner than angels, promise of safety, harbor.

## MEDITERRANEAN

On the evening of July 25, 1936, five days after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Americans with the Anti-Fascist Olympic Games were evacuated from Barcelona at the order of the Catalonian Government. In a small Spanish boat, the *Ciudad de Ibiza*, which the Belgians had chartered, they and a group of five hundred, including the Hungarian and Belgian teams as well as the American, sailed overnight to Sète, the first port in France. The only men who remained were those who had volunteered in the Loyalist forces : the core of the future International Column.

1

At the end of July, exile. We watched the gangplank go  
cutting the boat away, indicating : sea.  
Barcelona, the sun, the fire-bright harbor, war.

Five days.

Here at the rail, foreign and refugee,  
we saw the city, remembered that zero of attack,  
alarm in the groves, snares through the olive hills,  
rebel defeat : leaders, two regiments,  
broadcasts of victory, tango, surrender.  
The truckride to the city, barricades,  
bricks pried at corners, rifle-shot in street,  
car-burning, bombs, blank warnings, fists up, guns  
busy sniping, the town walls, towers of smoke.  
And order making, committees taking charge, foreigners  
commanded out by boat.

I saw the city, sunwhite flew on glass,  
trucewhite from window, the personal lighting found  
eyes on the dock, sunset-lit faces of singers,  
eyes, goodbye into exile. Saw where Columbus rides  
black-pillared : discovery, turn back, explore  
a new found Spain, coast-province, city-harbor.  
Saw our parades ended, the last marchers on board  
listed by nation.

I saw first of the faces going home into war  
the brave man Otto Boch, the German exile, knowing  
he quieted tourists during machine gun battle,  
he kept his life straight as a single issue—  
left at that dock we left, his gazing Breughel face,  
square forehead and eyes, strong square breast fading,  
the narrow runner's hips diminishing dark.  
I see this man, dock, war, a latent image.

The boat *Ciudad di Ibiza*, built for 200,  
loaded with 500, manned by loyal sailors,  
chartered by Belgians when consulates were helpless,  
through a garden of gunboats, margin of the port,  
entered : Mediterranean.

2

Frontier of Europe, the tideless sea, a field of power  
touching desirable coasts, rocking in time conquests,  
fertile, the moving water maintains its boundaries  
layer on layer, Troy—seven civilized worlds:

Egypt, Greece, Rome, jewel Jerusalem,  
giant feudal Spain, giant England, this last war.

The boat pulled into evening, underglaze blue  
flared instant fire, blackened towards Africa.  
Over the city alternate lights occurred;

and pale

in the pale sky emerging stars.

No city now, a besieged line of lights  
masking the darkness where the country lay.

But we knew guns  
bright through mimosa  
singe of powder  
and reconnoitering plane  
flying anonymous  
scanning the Pyrenees  
black now above the Catalonian Sea.

Boat of escape, dark on the water, hastening, safe,  
holding non-combatants, the athlete, the child,  
the printer, the boy from Antwerp, the black boxer,  
lawyer and communist.

The Games had not been held.

A week of Games, theatre and festival;  
world anti-fascist week. Pistol starts race.  
Machine gun marks the war. Answered unarmed,  
charged the Embarcadero, met those guns.  
And charging through the province, joined that army.  
Boys from the hills, the unmatched guns,  
the clumsy armored cars.  
Drilled in the bullring. Radio cries:  
To Saragossa! And this boat.

Escape, dark on the water, an overloaded ship.  
Crowded the deck. Spoke little. Down to dinner.  
Quiet on the sea: no guns.  
The printer said, In Paris there is time,  
but where's its place now; where is poetry?

This is the sea of war; the first frontier  
blank on the maps, blank sea; Minoan boats  
maybe achieved this shore;  
mountains whose slope divides

one race, old insurrections, Narbo, now  
moves at the colored beach  
destroyer wardog. "Do not burn the church,  
compañeros, it is beautiful. Besides,  
it brings tourists." They smashed only the image  
madness and persecution.  
Exterminating wish; they forced the door,  
lifted the rifle, broke the garden window,  
removed only the drawings : cross and wrath.  
Whenever we think of these, the poem is,  
that week, the beginning, exile  
remembered in continual poetry.

Voyage and exile, a midnight cold return,  
dark to our left mountains begin the sky.  
There, pointed the Belgian, I heard a pulse of war,  
sharp guns while I ate grapes in the Pyrenees.  
Alone, walking to Spain, the five o'clock of war.  
In those cliffs run the sashed and sandalled men,  
capture the car, arrest the priest, kill captain,  
fight our war.  
The poem is the fact, memory fails  
under and seething lifts and will not pass.

Here is home-country, who fights our war.  
Street-meeting speaker to us:  
" . . . came for Games,  
you stay for victory; foreign? your job is:  
go tell your countries what you saw in Spain."  
The dark unguarded army left all night.  
M. de Païche said, "We can learn from Spain."  
The face on the dock that turned to find the war.

3

Seething, and falling back, a sea of stars,  
Black marked with virile silver. Peace all night,  
over that land, planes  
death-lists a frantic bandage  
the rubber tires burning monuments  
sandbag, overturned wagon, barricade  
girl's hand with gun food failing, water failing  
the epidemic threat

the date in a diary a blank page opposite  
no entry—  
however, met  
the visible enemy heroes: madness, infatuation  
the cache in the crypt, the breadline shelled,  
the yachtclub arsenal, the foreign cheque.  
History racing from an assumed name, peace,  
a time used to perfect weapons.

If we had not seen fighting,  
if we had not looked there  
    the plane flew low  
    the plaster ripped by shots  
    the peasant's house  
if we had stayed in our world  
between the table and the desk  
between the town and the suburb  
slowly disintegration  
male and female

If we had lived in our city  
sixty years might not prove  
    the power this week  
    the overthrown past  
    tourist and refugee  
Emeric in the bow speaking his life  
and the night on this ship  
the night over Spain  
quick recognition  
male and female

And the war in peace, the war in war, the peace,  
the faces on the dock  
the faces in those hills.

4

Near the end now, morning. Sleepers cover the decks,  
cabins full, corridors full of sleep. But the light  
vitreous, crosses water; analyzed darkness,  
crosshatched in silver, passes up the shore,  
touching limestone massif, deserted tableland,  
bends with the down-warp of the coastal plain.

The colored sun stands on the route to Spain,  
builds on the waves a series of mirrors  
and on the scorched land rises hot.  
Coasts change their names as the boat goes to  
France, Costa Brava softens to Côte Vermeil,  
Spain's a horizon ghost behind the shapeless sea.

Blue praising black, a wind above the waves  
moves pursuing a jewel, this hieroglyph  
boat passing under the sun to lose it on the  
attractive sea, habitable and kind.  
A barber sun, razing three races, met  
from the north with a neurotic eagerness.

They rush to solar attraction; local daybreak finds  
them on the red earth of the colored cliffs; the little islands  
tempt worshippers, gulf-purple, pointed bay.  
We crowd the deck,  
welcome the islands with a sense of loss.

5

The wheel in the water, green, behind my head.  
Turns with its light-spokes. Deep. And the drowning eyes  
find under the water figures near  
in their true picture, moving true,  
the picture of that war enlarging clarified  
as the boat perseveres away, always enlarging,  
becoming clear.

Boat of escape, your water-photograph.  
I see this man, dock, war, a latent image.  
And at my back speaking the black boxer,  
telling his education : porter, fighter, no school,  
no travel but this, trade-union sent a team.

*I saw Europe break apart  
and artifice or martyr's will  
cannot anneal this war, nor make  
the loud triumphant future start  
shouting from its tragic heart.*

Deep in the water Spanish shadows turn,  
assume their brightness past a cruel lens,  
quick vision of loss. The pastoral lighting takes

the boat, deck, passengers, the pumice cliffs,  
the winedark sweatshirt at my shoulder.

*Cover away the fighting cities  
but still your death-afflicted eyes  
must hold the print of flowering guns,  
bombs whose insanity craves size,  
the lethal breath, the iron prize.*

The clouds upon the water-barrier pass,  
the boat may turn to land; the shapes endure,  
rise up into our eyes, to bind  
us back; an accident of time  
set it upon us, exile burns it in.

*Once the fanatic image shown,  
enemy to enemy,  
past and historic peace wear thin;  
we see Europe break like stone,  
hypocrite sovereignties go down  
before this war the age must win.*

6

The sea produced that town : Sète, which the boat turns to,  
at peace. Its breakwater, casino, vermouth factory, beach.  
They searched us for weapons. No currency went out.  
The sign of war had been search for cameras,  
pesetas and photographs go back to Spain,  
the money for the army. Otto is fighting now, the lawyer said.  
No highlight hero. Love's not a trick of light.

But. The town lay outside, peace, France.  
And in the harbor the Russian boat *Schachter*;  
sharp paint-smell, the bruise-colored shadow swung,  
sailors with fists up, greeting us, asking news,  
making the harbor real.

Barcelona.

Slow-motion splash. Anchor. Small from the beach  
the boy paddles to meet us, legs hidden in canoe,  
curve of his blade that drips.  
Now gangplank falls to deck.

Barcelona

everywhere, Spain everywhere, the cry of Planes for Spain.

The picture at our eyes, past memory, poem,  
to carry and spread and daily justify.  
The single issue, the live man standing tall,  
on the hill, the dock, the city, all the war.  
Exile and refugee, we land, we take  
nothing negotiable out of the new world;  
we believe, we remember, we saw.  
Mediterranean gave  
image and peace, tideless for memory.

For that beginning  
make of us each  
a continent and inner sea  
Atlantis buried outside  
to be won.