

*Loy in Florence, ca. 1909, Stephen Haweis photograph  
(Collection Roger L. Conover)*

## Songs to Joannes

### I

Spawn of Fantasies  
Silting the appraisable  
Pig Cupid his rosy snout  
Rooting erotic garbage  
"Once upon a time"  
Pulls a weed white star-topped  
Among wild oats sown in mucous-membrane

I would an eye in a Bengal light  
Eternity in a sky-rocket  
Constellations in an ocean  
Whose rivers run no fresher  
Than a trickle of saliva

These are suspect places

I must live in my lantern  
Trimming subliminal flicker  
Virginal to the bellows  
Of Experience  
Coloured glass

### II

The skin-sack  
In which a wanton duality  
Packed  
All the completion of my infructuous impulses  
Something the shape of a man  
To the casual vulgarity of the merely observant

More of a clock-work mechanism  
Running down against time  
To which I am not paced  
    My finger-tips are numb from fretting your hair  
A God's door-mat  
        On the threshold of your mind

III

We might have coupled  
In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment  
Or broken flesh with one another  
At the profane communion table  
Where wine is spill'd on promiscuous lips

We might have given birth to a butterfly  
With the daily news  
Printed in blood on its wings

IV

Once in a mezzanino  
The starry ceiling  
Vaulted an unimaginable family  
Bird-like abortions  
With human throats  
And Wisdom's eyes  
Who wore lamp-shade red dresses  
And woolen hair

One bore a baby  
In a padded porte-enfant  
Tied with a sarsenet ribbon  
To her goose's wings

But for the abominable shadows  
I would have lived

Among their fearful furniture  
To teach them to tell me their secrets  
Before I guessed  
—Sweeping the brood clean out

V

Midnight empties the street  
Of all but us  
Three  
I am undecided which way back  
    To the left a boy  
—One wing has been washed in the rain  
    The other will never be clean any more—  
Pulling door-bells to remind  
Those that are snug  
    To the right a haloed ascetic  
    Threading houses  
Probes wounds for souls  
—The poor can't wash in hot water—  
And I don't know which turning to take  
Since you got home to yourself—first

VI

I know the Wire-Puller intimately  
And if it were not for the people  
On whom you keep one eye  
You could look straight at me  
And Time would be set back

VII

My pair of feet  
Smack the flag-stones  
That are something left over from your walking  
The wind stuffs the scum of the white street

Into my lungs and my nostrils  
Exhilarated birds  
Prolonging flight into the night  
Never reaching— — — — —

VIII

I am the jealous store-house of the candle-ends  
That lit your adolescent learning  
— — — — —

Behind God's eyes  
There might  
Be other lights

IX

When we lifted  
Our eye-lids on Love  
A cosmos  
Of coloured voices  
And laughing honey

And spermatozoa  
At the core of Nothing  
In the milk of the Moon

X

Shuttle-cock and battle-door  
A little pink-love  
And feathers are strewn

XI

Dear one at your mercy  
Our Universe  
Is only

A colorless onion  
You derobe  
Sheath by sheath  
                Remaining  
A disheartening odour  
About your nervy hands

XII

Voices break on the confines of passion  
Desire Suspicion Man Woman  
Solve in the humid carnage

Flesh from flesh  
Draws the inseparable delight  
Kissing at gasps to catch it

Is it true  
That I have set you apart  
Inviolat in an utter crystallization  
Of all the jolting of the crowd  
Taught me willingly to live to share

Or are you  
Only the other half  
Of an ego's necessity  
Scourging pride with compassion  
To the shallow sound of dissonance  
And boom of escaping breath

XIII

Come to me There is something  
I have got to tell you and I can't tell  
Something taking shape  
Something that has a new name  
A new dimension

A new use  
A new illusion

It is ambient      And it is in your eyes  
Something shiny      Something only for you  
                                 Something that I must not see

It is in my ears      Something very resonant  
Something that you must not hear  
                                 Something only for me

Let us be very jealous  
Very suspicious  
Very conservative  
Very cruel  
Or we might make an end of the jostling of aspirations  
Disorb inviolate egos

Where two or three are welded together  
They shall become god  
— — — — —

Oh that's right  
Keep away from me    Please give me a push  
Don't let me understand you    Don't realise me  
Or we might tumble together  
Depersonalized  
Identical  
Into the terrific Nirvana  
Me you — you — me

XIV

Today  
Everlasting    passing    apparent    imperceptible  
To you  
I bring the nascent virginity of  
—Myself    for the moment

No love or the other thing  
Only the impact of lighted bodies  
Knocking sparks off each other  
In chaos

XV

Seldom    Trying for Love  
Fantasy dealt them out as gods  
Two or three men    looked only human

But you alone  
Superhuman    apparently  
I had to be caught in the weak eddy  
Of your drivelling humanity  
                                 To love you most

XVI

We might have lived together  
In the lights of the Arno  
Or gone apple stealing under the sea  
Or played  
Hide and seek in love and cob-webs  
And a lullaby on a tin-pan

And    talked till there were no more tongues  
To talk with  
And never have known any better

XVII

I don't care  
Where the legs of the legs of the furniture are walking to  
Or what is hidden in the shadows they stride  
Or what would look at me  
If the shutters were not shut

Red a warm colour on the battle-field  
Heavy on my knees as a counterpane  
Count counter  
I counted the fringe of the towel  
Till two tassels clinging together  
Let the square room fall away  
From a round vacuum  
Dilating with my breath

XVIII

Out of the severing  
Of hill from hill  
The interim  
Of star from star  
The nascent  
Static  
Of night

XIX

Nothing so conserving  
As cool cleaving  
Note of the Q H U  
Clear carving  
Breath-giving  
Pollen smelling  
Space

White telling  
Of slaking  
Drinkable  
Through fingers  
Running water  
Grass haulms  
Grow to

Leading astray  
Of fireflies  
Aerial quadrille  
Bouncing  
Off one another  
Again conjoining  
In recaptured pulses  
Of light

You too  
Had something  
At that time  
Of a green-lit glow-worm  
———  
Yet slowly drenched  
To raylessness  
In rain

XX

Let Joy go solace-winged  
To flutter whom she may concern

XXI

I store up nights against you  
Heavy with shut-flower's nightmares  
———

Stack noons  
Curled to the solitaire  
Core of the  
Sun

XXII

Green things grow  
Salads

For the cerebral  
Forager's revival  
Upon bossed bellies  
Of mountains  
Rolling in the sun  
And flowered flummery  
Breaks  
To my silly shoes

In ways without you  
I go  
Gracelessly  
As things go

XXIII

Laughter in solution  
Stars in a stare  
Irredeemable pledges  
Of pubescent consummations  
Rot  
To the recurrent moon  
Bleach  
To the pure white  
Wickedness of pain

XXIV

The procreative truth of Me  
Petered out  
In pestilent  
Tear drops  
Little lusts and lucidities  
And prayerful lies  
Muddled with the heinous acerbity  
Of your street-corner smile

XXV

Licking the Arno  
The little rosy  
Tongue of Dawn  
Interferes with our eyelashes  
— — — — —

We twiddle to it  
Round and round  
Faster  
And turn into machines

Till the sun  
Subsides in shining  
Melts some of us  
Into abysmal pigeon-holes  
Passion has bored  
In warmth

Some few of us  
Grow to the level of cool plains  
Cutting our foot-hold  
With steel eyes

XXVI

Shedding our petty pruderies  
From slit eyes

We sidle up  
To Nature  
— — — that irate pornographer

XXVII

Nucleus Nothing  
Inconceivable concept

Insentient repose  
The hands of races  
Drop off from  
Immodifiable plastic

The contents  
Of our ephemeral conjunction  
In aloofness from Much  
Flowed to approachment of — — — —  
NOTHING  
There was a man and a woman  
In the way  
While the Irresolvable  
Rubbed with our daily deaths  
Impossible eyes

XXVIII

The steps go up for ever  
And they are white  
And the first step is the last white  
Forever  
Coloured conclusions  
Smelt to synthetic  
Whiteness  
Of my  
Emergence  
And I am burnt quite white  
In the climacteric  
Withdrawal of your sun  
And wills and words all white  
Suffuse  
Illimitable monotone

White where there is nothing to see  
But a white towel  
Wipes the cymophanous sweat

—Mist rise of living—  
From your  
Etiolate body  
And the white dawn  
Of your New Day  
Shuts down on me

Unthinkable that white over there  
— — — Is smoke from your house

XXIX

Evolution fall foul of  
Sexual equality  
Prettily miscalculate  
Similitude

Unnatural selection  
Breed such sons and daughters  
As shall jibber at each other  
Uninterpretable cryptonyms  
Under the moon

Give them some way of braying brassily  
For caressive calling  
Or to homophonous hiccoughs  
Transpose the laugh  
Let them suppose that tears  
Are snowdrops or molasses  
Or anything  
Than human insufficiencies  
Begging dorsal vertebrae

Let meeting be the turning  
To the antipodean  
And Form a blurr  
Anything

Than seduce them  
To the one  
As simple satisfaction  
For the other

Let them clash together  
From their incognitoes  
In seismic orgasm

For far further  
Differentiation  
Rather than watch  
Own-self distortion  
Wince in the alien ego

XXX

In some  
Prenatal plagiarism  
Foetal buffoons  
Caught tricks  
— — — — —

From archetypal pantomime  
Stringing emotions  
Looped aloft  
— — — — —

For the blind eyes  
That Nature knows us with  
And the most of Nature is green  
— — — — —

What guaranty  
For the proto-form  
We fumble

Our souvenir ethics to  
— — — — —

XXXI

Crucifixion  
Of a busy-body  
Longing to interfere so  
With the intimacies  
Of your insolent isolation

Crucifixion  
Of an illegal ego's  
Eclosion  
On your equilibrium  
Caryatid of an idea

Crucifixion  
Wracked arms  
Index extremities  
In vacuum  
To the unbroken fall

XXXII

The moon is cold  
Joannes  
Where the Mediterranean — — — — —

XXXIII

The prig of passion — — — — —  
To your professorial paucity

Proto-plasm was raving mad  
Evolving us — — —



XXXIV

Love — — — the preeminent litterateur

III

**CORPSES AND GENIUSES**

**(POEMS 1919-1930)**

