

L'Après-Midi d'un Faune

William Faulkner. 1919.

I follow through the singing trees
Her streaming clouded hair and face
And lascivious dreaming knees
Like gleaming water from some place
Of sleeping streams, or autumn leaves
Slow shed through still, love-wearied air.
She pauses: and as one who grieves
Shakes down her blown and vagrant hair
To veil her face, but not her eyes--
A hot quick spark, each sudden glance,
Or like the wild brown bee that flies
Sweet winged, a sharp extravagance
Of kisses on my limbs and neck.
She whirls and dances through the trees
That life and sway like arms and fleck
Her with quick shadows, and the breeze
Lies on her short and circled breast.
Now hand in hand with her I go,
The green night in the silver west
Of virgin stars, pale row on row
Like ghostly hands, and ere she sleep
In silent meadows, dim and deep--
In dreams of stars and dreaming dream.

I have a nameless wish to go
To some far silent midnight noon
Where lonely streams whisper and flow
And sigh on sands blanched by the moon,
And blond limbed dancers whirling past,
The senile worn moon staring through
The sighing trees, until at last,
Their hair is powdered bright with dew.
And their sad slow limbs and brows
And petals drifting on the breeze
Shed from the fingers of the boughs;
Then suddenly on all of these,
A sound like some great deep bell stroke
Falls, and they dance, unclad and cold--
It was the earth's great heart they broke
For springs before the world grew old.