

THE TUNNEL

Performances, assortments, résumés—
Up Times Square to Columbus Circle lights
Channel the congresses, nightly sessions,
Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces—
Mysterious kitchens. . . . You shall search them all.
Someday by heart you'll learn each famous sight
And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite;
You'll find the garden in the third act dead,
Finger your knees—and wish yourself in bed
With tabloid crime-sheets perched in easy sight.

Then let you reach your hat
and go.

As usual, let you—also
walking down—exclaim
to twelve upward leaving
a subscription praise
for what time slays.

Or can't you quite make up your mind to ride;
A walk is better underneath the L a brisk
Ten blocks or so before? But you find yourself
Preparing penguin flexions of the arms,—
As usual you will meet the scuttle yawn:
The subway yawns the quickest promise home.

Be minimum, then, to swim the hiving swarms
Out of the Square, the Circle burning bright—
Avoid the glass doors gyring at your right,
Where boxed alone a second, eyes take fright
—Quite unprepared rush naked back to light:
And down beside the turnstile press the coin
Into the slot. The gongs already rattle.

And so
 of cities you bespeak
 subways, rivered under streets
 and rivers. . . . In the car
 35 the overtone of motion
 underground, the monotone
 of motion is the sound
 of other faces, also underground—

40 “Let’s have a pencil Jimmy—living now
 at Floral Park
 Flatbush—on the fourth of July—
 like a pigeon’s muddy dream—potatoes
 to dig in the field—travlin the town—too—
 night after night—the Culver line—the
 45 girls all shaping up—it used to be—”

Our tongues recant like beaten weather vanes.
 This answer lives like verdigris, like hair
 Beyond extinction, surcease of the bone;
 And repetition freezes—“What

50 “what do you want? getting weak on the links?
 fandaddle daddy don’t ask for change—IS THIS
 FOURTEENTH? it’s half past six she said—if
 you don’t like my gate why did you
 swing on it, why *didja*
 55 swing on it
 anyhow—”

And somehow anyhow swing—

The phonographs of hades in the brain
 Are tunnels that re-wind themselves, and love

A burnt match skating in a urinal—
 Somewhere above Fourteenth TAKE THE EXPRESS
 To brush some new presentiment of pain—

“But I want service in this office SERVICE
 I said—after
 the show she cried a little afterwards but—”

Whose head is swinging from the swollen strap?
 Whose body smokes along the bitten rails,
 Bursts from a smoldering bundle far behind
 In back forks of the chasms of the brain,—
 Puffs from a riven stump far out behind
 In interborough fissures of the mind . . . ?

And why do I often meet your visage here,
 Your eyes like agate lanterns—on and on
 Below the toothpaste and the dandruff ads?
 75 —And did their riding eyes right through your side,
 And did their eyes like unwashed platters ride?
 And Death, aloft,—gigantically down
 Probing through you—toward me, O evermore!
 And when they dragged your retching flesh,
 80 Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore—
 That last night on the ballot rounds, did you,
 Shaking, did you deny the ticket, Poe?

For Gravesend Manor change at Chambers Street.
 The platform hurries along to a dead stop.

85 The intent escalator lifts a serenade
 Stilly
 Of shoes, umbrellas, each eye attending its shoe, then
 Bolting outright somewhere above where streets

Burst suddenly in rain. . . . The gongs recur:
 90 Elbows and levers, guard and hissing door.
 Thunder is galvothermic here below. . . . The car
 Wheels off. The train rounds, bending to a scream,
 Taking the final level for the dive

Under the river—
 95 And somewhat emptier than before,
 Demented, for a hitching second, humps; then
 Lets go. . . . Toward corners of the floor
 Newspapers wing, revolve and wing.
 Blank windows gargle signals through the roar.

100 And does the Daemon take you home, also,
 Wop washerwoman, with the bandaged hair?
 After the corridors are swept, the cuspidors—
 The gaunt sky-barracks cleanly now, and bare,
 O Genoese, do you bring mother eyes and hands
 105 Back home to children and to golden hair?

Daemon, demurring and eventful yawn!
 Whose hideous laughter is a bellows mirth
 —Or the muffled slaughter of a day in birth—
 O cruelly to inoculate the brinking dawn
 110 With antennae toward worlds that glow and sink;—
 To spoon us out more liquid than the dim
 Locution of the eldest star, and pack
 The conscience navelled in the plunging wind,
 Umbilical to call—and straightway die!

115 O caught like pennies beneath soot and steam,
 Kiss of our agony thou gatherest;
 Condensed, thou takest all—shrill ganglia
 Impassioned with some song we fail to keep.
 And yet, like Lazarus, to feel the slope,

The sod and billow breaking,—lifting ground,
 —A sound of waters bending astride the sky
 Unceasing with some Word that will not die . . . !

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A tugboat, wheezing wreaths of steam,
 Lunged past, with one galvanic blare stove up the River.
 I counted the echoes assembling, one after one,
 Searching, thumbing the midnight on the piers.
 Lights, coasting, left the oily tympanum of waters;
 The blackness somewhere gouged glass on a sky.
 And this thy harbor, O my City, I have driven under,
 Tossed from the coil of ticking towers. . . . Tomorrow,
 And to be. . . . Here by the River that is East—
 Here at the waters' edge the hands drop memory;
 Shadowless in that abyss they unaccounting lie.
 How far away the star has pooled the sea—
 Or shall the hands be drawn away, to die?

Kiss of our agony Thou gatherest,
 O Hand of Fire
 gatherest—

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Complete Poems of Hart Crane

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