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Now That I Am Forty

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NOW THAT I AM FORTY

Now that I am forty I spread like fair wheat
ripened by suns and rains, blown by a wind
that had raised high waves and devastated woods
and, calm today, teaches me of the hours
lost and won to the course of years gone by.
I have learned that love is war and death is quiet,
that wine is generous and seeds do not hurry,
that ways are made of water and, after the storm,
the trees straighten and look evenly at the mills.
I have learned to love myself as you train a dog,
as the dim sighted man, learning how to write,
draws a signature, and proudly makes it his.
In the pierced nights I take stock of the stars
and the griefs—the riches I bring to the desert island.
Waiting for Saturday—lest it be the last one—
I outline ink figures on paper.
When the bell tolls, I defy the witches
and I raise the bet. I turn my fear
into guineas, take them in, and address
my feet to the plaza of the salt market.