

R.L. Cook

POEM FOR THE NUCLEAR AGE

Geared to a music box whose dance is death
The world revolves
Towards the armageddon. You and I
Who work and worry, draw this fragile breath,
Touch the miraculous flowers and cry
For the rancid lemon of the moon and sometimes for
The monstrous grief of man, quarrel and kiss
Again and wonder why we miss

More than we ever catch of moth-quick joy,
Butterfly love
And mourn the loss of laughter, feel the cold
More than we should, who were a summer boy
And girl a war ago: now when we hold
Hands in the night it is to cast out fear:
The velvet glow of firelight can no more
Console as once it did before.

Before the cold, the dark, the terror swept
Into our lives
And gripped us like a plague, there was an hour
I can remember when we laughed and leapt
Towards the sun. Perhaps the wings we wore
Were false—I cannot tell—I only know
That in the cage where all these treadmill days
Are spent we have no wings to raise.

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