

1. AND VEGETABLES

And! And! The all too And, the also-rans.
Is "still life" still? How gray are kitchen greens?
Turnips are stagehands (a ROSE is the queen of the scenes);
Use them for usefulness; dry them in footnotes or cans.

But an And is a brightness, green red yellow.
Parsleys so tender their tendrils flutter.
Lumbering fat-cheeked pumpkins, bovine-mellow.
Stone-hearted olives as con-man-smoothie as butter.

The squat and boisterous potato-flower,
Most greedy of the throats that poach the sky,
Stuffed with starch and solar power,
Loads its abysmal fruits until they fly

Open like bombs the day the forks descend.
That old officiousness of bees
Serves us this plate of calm-round-perfect peas,
Polished a thousand years by gene and wind.

Sapless, in many a "Golden Treasury" pressed,
The two-dimension ROSE of love sleeps on,
While living Indies wake the West
With prodding coffee, jabs of cinnamon.

2. LOVE SONG OF PRUFROCK JUNIOR

Must all successful rebels grow
From toreador to Sacred Cow?
What cults he slew, his cult begot.
"In my beginning," said his Scot,
"My end, My end;" and aging eagles know
That 1912 was long ago.
Today the women come and go
Talking of T. S. Eliot.

3. THE REACHING OUT OF WARMTH IS NEVER DONE

The reaching out of warmth is never done.
To see around the bend, to see around, around,
Through ice to see a poppy wink you on,
Entangle with the tentacles of light
And nudge a green unkemptness up from night,—
The mixed-up splice of things, the all, the one.
 Mix in, mix in, and weave a blurring Other.
Give all — keep twining in — and you may get
A more-than-all: three dance a strict quartet,
And pairs are threes (O Eros, unseen brother),
And even grapes, so single in their glowing,
Mix with a twin from sky (O wine-god, flowing);
The reaching out of warmth is never done.
 What reaching up, though old, can still astound?
 Persephone is stirring underground.
 Stretching up drowsily through melting snow,
 See how each calyx opens, row on row
 (Whole hillsides now, soon half a planet sighing);
 Each flower-throat "O" exhales her wakening yawn.
What twining in with death is never dying?
Till flame is burnt and water drowned,
The reaching out of warmth is never done,—
The mixed-up blur of gods, the good black sun.

4. TO A SINISTER POTATO

O vast earth-apple, waiting to be fried,
Of all life's starers the most many-eyed,
What furtive purpose hatched you long ago
In Indiana or in Idaho?

In Indiana and in Idaho
Snug underground, the great potatoes grow,
Puffed up with secret paranoias unguessed
By all the duped and starch-fed Middle West.

Like coiled-up springs or like a will-to-power,
The fat and earthy lurkers bide their hour,
The silent watchers of our raucous show
In Indiana or in Idaho.

"They think us dull, a food and not a flower.
Wait! We'll outshine all roses in our hour.
Not wholesomeness but mania swells us so
In Indiana and in Idaho.

"In each Kiwanis Club on every plate,
So bland and health-exuding do we wait
That Indiana never, never knows
How much we envy stars and hate the rose."

Some doom will strike (as all potatoes know)
When – once too often smashed in Idaho –
From its cocoon the drabbest of earth's powers
Rises and is a star.
And shines.
And lours.

5. A GNARLED OLD CRAB-APPLE TREE ANSWERS JOYCE KILMER

I'll bow my trunk to true simplicity
But not to folksy simperings that drool.
Poems are made by trees like me,
But only God can make a fool.