

# One Year After

Claude McKay

I

Not once in all our days of poignant love,  
Did I a single instant give to thee  
My undivided being wholly free.  
Not all thy potent passion could remove  
5 The barrier that loomed between to prove  
The full supreme surrendering of me.  
Oh, I was beaten, helpless utterly  
Against the shadow-fact with which I strove.  
For when a cruel power forced me to face  
10 The truth which poisoned our illicit wine,  
That even I was faithless to my race  
Bleeding beneath the iron hand of thine,  
Our union seemed a monstrous thing and base!  
I was an outcast from thy world and mine.

II

15 Adventure-seasoned and storm-buffeted,  
I shun all signs of anchorage, because  
The zest of life exceeds the bound of laws.  
New gales of tropic fury round my head  
Break lashing me through hours of soulful dread;  
20 But when the terror thins and, spent, withdraws,  
Leaving me wondering awhile, I pause—  
But soon again the risky ways I tread!  
No rigid road for me, no peace, no rest,  
While molten elements run through my blood;  
25 And beauty-burning bodies manifest  
Their warm, heart-melting motions to be wooed;  
And passion boldly rising in my breast,  
Like rivers of the Spring, lets loose its flood.