

The Barrier

Claude McKay

I must not gaze at them although
Your eyes are dawning day;
I must not watch you as you go
Your sun-illuminated way;

5 I hear but I must never heed
The fascinating note,
Which, fluting like a river reed,
Comes from your trembling throat;

I must not see upon your face
10 Love's softly glowing spark;
For there's the barrier of race,
You're fair and I am dark.

Textual Note

This poem also appeared in:

- *The Liberator* (July, 1919)
- *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920)
- *Cambridge Magazine* (Summer, 1920)

7 river reed] river-reed *Lib.*