

RAINBOW
Sylvia Townsend Warner
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Rigid in heaven stands the bow
Above the thunder's overthrow;
Beneath it, washed to milk, a bough
Of this year's cherry is budding now.

Emerging from the storm's embrace
Sleekly winks the market place,
And lusted weather vanes one by one
Preen their tinsel in the sun.

Revived from shadow man and man
Step briskly forth and praise the plan
That with the lancing East unlooses
Adder-brood lightnings from sky-juices.

Since on March dust an April morrow
Of sun-slashed rain falls due to furrow,
And the dabbled blossom innocent
Smiles on a world survived; but bent

Is yet the crude unslackening bow
Whose primal blue and red and yellow
Outface with aristocratic stare
The hybrid hues of earthbound air.

Fade! Fade! Uncurtained Covenant,
 Too naked truth of light and gaunt,
 Revealed by twitch of weather-flaw;
 Momentary menace of a law

(Howbeit sight's cozening scribble gloze)
 Brandished immovable by those
 Eyernal arms outstretched beneath
 Man's private remedy of death.

Not so the sanguine patriarch,
 Congratulating round the ark,
 To whom this sign ostended spelled
 God's moody mind from man withheld.

Distance seemed safety then. God furled
 In heaven bespoke all well with the world.
 Retreating with his bough the archer
 From farther off shoots deadlier.

Artillery mathematical,
 Out of the void his arrows fall
 And onward to the void are sped,
 But we, our woe, distargeted,

Quivering void and void betwixt,
 With each discovered shaft transfixed
 Fester to feel the wound, and know
 No animus behind the bow.

Rigid on air, as hung the smile
 Of the absent cat, it looms awhile;
 But will be gone before the bough
 Discards the diamond drops where now,

Echoes of a threat unsaid,
 The primal yellow and blue and red
 Wink back from every water-flaw
 The unrelenting look of law.