

POOR GIRL

Benét, William Rose, 1886-1950

There was an earthquake in my heart, and I
Have been what I have been,
Now— there's the long street and this bitter sky
Crying "Unclean! Unclean!"

But you're more swine- you-- you who have withstood,—
So smug, so self-sufficed!
Oh, there's a thing called "frenzy" in my blood
Snarls at your frock-coat Christ!

"Seduction," "the starvation wage"? Not me!
I seemed to flower in flame.
And so—"my soul is lost eternally."
You say. You "view my shame."

Oh, can that guff! If I'm no startled hare,
I'm caught. I know your traps.
I took my chance. You've got me in the snare,
Society,— *perhaps!*

Call me "poor girl," and psalm-sing through your nose!
The harlot— she gets hers.
'Think I should fawn on God then, I suppose?
You whited sepulchres!

Some poet will even put me in a song
And sell it – just to live.
People buy books to read why I "go wrong,"
I gave – and I forgive.