Le Maudit

By Richard Aldington

Women’s tears are but water;
   The tears of men are blood.

He sits alone in the firelight
   And on either side drifts by
   Sleep, like a torrent whirling,
   Profound, wrinkled and dumb.

Circuitously, stealthily,
   Dawn occupies the city;
   As if the seasons knew of his grief
   Spring has suddenly changed into snow

Disaster and sorrow
   Have made him their pet;
   He cannot escape their accursed embraces.
   For all his dodgings
   Memory will lacerate him.

What good does it do to wander
   Nights hours through city streets?
   Only that in poor places
   He can be with common men
   And receive their unspoken
   Instinctive sympathy.

What has life done for him?
   He stands alone in the darkness
   Like a sentry never relieved,
   Looking over a barren space,
   Awaiting the tardy finish.

from Coterie, 1920