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