The Song of the Smoke

By W. E. B. Du Bois

I am the Smoke King
   I am black!
   I am swinging in the sky,
   I am wringing worlds awry;
   I am the thought of the throbbing mills,
   I am the soul of the soul-toil kills,
   Wraith of the ripple of trading rills;
Up I'm curling from the sod,
   I am whirling home to God;
   I am the Smoke King
   I am black.

I am the Smoke King,
   I am black!
   I am wreathing broken hearts,
   I am sheathing love's light darts;
Inspiration of iron times
   Wedding the toil of toiling climes,
Shedding the blood of bloodless crimes—
   Lurid lowering 'mid the blue,
   Torrid towering toward the true,
   I am the Smoke King,
   I am black.

I am the Smoke King,
   I am black!
   I am darkening with song,
   I am hearkening to wrong!
   I will be black as blackness can—
The blacker the mantle, the mightier the man!
For blackness was ancient ere whiteness began.
   I am daubing God in night,
   I am swabbing Hell in white:
   I am the Smoke King
   I am black.

I am the Smoke King
   I am black!
   I am cursing ruddy morn,
   I am hearsing hearts unborn:
Souls unto me are as stars in a night,
   I whiten my black men—I blacken my white!
What's the hue of a hide to a man in his might?
   Hail! great, gritty, grimey hands—
   Sweet Christ, pity toiling lands!
   I am the Smoke King
   I am black.