

February 26, 1940

TO A PAIR OF SLANTING EYES

What is there in a pair of slanting eyes
That makes me think of China in the rain,
Of rippling rice fields thru the rugged hills,
Of bronze-skinned workers bending in the fields,
Of sea-green jade and priceless ivory,
Of golden temples gleaming in the sun,
Of flatboats on a winding riverway,
Of kites and dragon-heads and festive wear,
Of tinkling tones of laughter through the streets,
The winding streets of China, mystical,
Of crowded houses, teashops, and antiques,
Of rice, a bowlful, chopsticks held in hand
Above which smiles a happy, workworn face,
Tranquil and merry, slanting, oblique eyes,
Of mountains fading in the distant blue
Where peace and joy and happiness did reign
Before the drastic horror of the bombs
That now spread ruin and misery throughout
The fields, the streets, the rivers of the land,
A land where once a happy people dwelt,

That loved and blest the world with honest love,

O tell me, lady, tell me why I sigh

When gazing at your mystic, slanting eyes.