

Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet

Like Courbet, with his pack of trade, I came
As proud to paint myself, vagrant on the land
And, gypsy in the whistling wood,
I found no lady, but a land
Through which no travellers passed
And wanted none within its brined bounds to tune
Nor any aid to celebrate the storm
For though the poet struts and thrusts his chin
Halfway to heaven, and wills the storm his pride
What came without his aid will rage without,
The island elements demand a poll-tax,
the empty head is returned.

And if I sing the jewelled isle,
Splendid on a splendid day,
With Mangere's stone blue misting away,
I'll sing from a safe distance.

And the lonely girls,
That needed but a love to live,
Maud, or Rose, or Venice,
That rang in a vagrant's heart like a gift of bells
Are not here, and the gypsy is dry
And dying in my shell.