

The Last Act  
(Louise Bogan)

Now that I have your face by heart, I look  
Less at its features than its darkening frame  
Where quince and melon, yellow as young flame  
Lie with quilted dahlias and the shepherd's crook.

Beyond, a garden. There in insolent ease  
The lead and marble figures watch the show.  
Of yet another summer loath to go.  
Although the scythes hang in the apple trees.

Now that I have your face by heart, I look

Now that I have your voice by heart, I read  
In the black chords upon a dulling page  
Music that is not meant for music's cage.  
Whose emblems mix with words that shake and bleed.

The staves are shuttled over with a stark unprinted silence.  
In a double dream, I must spell out the storm, the running stream.  
The beat's too swift, the notes shift in the dark.

Now that I have your voice by heart, I read

Now that I have your heart by heart, I see  
The wharves, with their great ships and architraves,  
The rigging and the cargo, and the slaves,  
On a strange beach under a broken sky.

Oh, not departure, but a voyage done!  
The bales stand on the stone, the anchor weeps  
Its red rust downward, and the long vine creeps  
Beside the salt herb in the lengthening sun.

Now that I have your heart by heart,  
I see