Two Sonnets

by Jeffrey Burghauser (December 2019)



Family Portrait II, Florine Stettheimer, 1933

Artifice

"Late Middle English (in the sense 'workmanship'): from Old French, from Latin *artificium*, based on *ars*, art- 'art' + facere 'make'." —Oxford English Dictionary

I remember Lucite frosted pink & hung

To compose a chandelier above the tongue-

Colored corkscrew sprigs amid the ordered sweep

Of synthetic flowers. I remember deep

Carpet changing hue depending on the last

Arcing course in which its fibers were caressed.

I remember when a cohort of sedate

Local matrons, having somehow all of late

Been divorced, incited what they thought to be

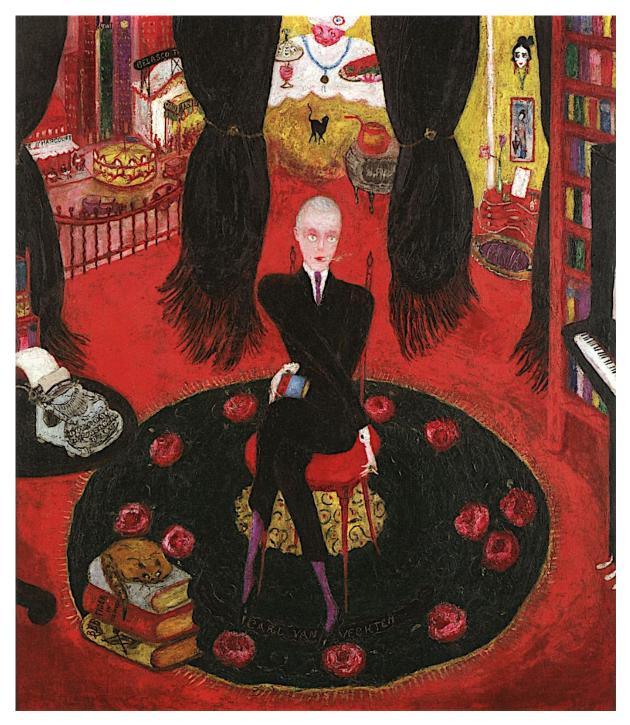
Well, "themselves" (brash Caribbean fish set free

Just too near a riptide) into a weird, tense,

Unbecoming second adolescence.

Thermoplastic women & acrylic trees

Are less artificial than these memories.



Carl Van Vechten, Florine Stettheimer, 1922

Out or In

There were these inflamed, concentric zones

Of my father's privacy, and loans

One fund of neurosis made to its

Counterparts, and neatly folded chits

Bearing passwords, and the underscored,

Simple malice where these things were stored.

Frantic Auntie Emma smacked her head

On the opened freezer: spinach, bread,

Trays of ice cubes, butter, and all else

Tumbled forth, marauding through her false

Poise to cause a radius, a reef

Of conclusive, end-of-heaven grief.

You can let it out or keep it in.

Both hurt. It's the Binary of Sin.

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