

Yvor Winters

(1900-1968)

To a Portrait of Melville in My Library (1937)

O face reserved, unmoved by praise or scorn!
O dreadful heart that won Socratic praise!
What was the purchase-price of thy release?
What life was buried, ere thou rose reborn?
Rest here in quiet, now. Our strength is shorn.
Honor my books! Preserve this room from wrack!
Plato and Aristotle at thy back,
Above thy head this ancient powder-horn.

The lids droop coldly, and the face is still:
Wisdom and wilderness are here at poise,
Ocean and forest are the mind's device,
But still I feel the presence of thy will:
The midnight trembles when I hear thy voice,
The noon's immobile when I meet thine eyes.