

Two Sonnets

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (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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