

FOR A LAND THAT ALLOWS SACCO AND  
VANZETTI TO DIE

From heaven what sign?  
What writing on the wall?  
What whisper running along the wind that power and pride  
shall fall?  
Assyria lies barren, the might of Egypt is a whirled simoon  
over deserts, the Persian hosts.  
Fell behind tumbling waters, and Greece is a story told, and  
sounding Judea  
Lives in a dying book, and Rome was proud of its world  
dominion, the haughty hidalgos of Spain  
Have gone with their Inquisition; mighty nations have gone  
Up roads of pride and splendor past memory of their start,  
past chiding recollection  
Of simple things and honest ways and surging force of  
spirit—spirit's a word they deny, a myth to them, a  
delusion  
Their science and power and growth have parted from, have  
surpassed—their one salvation,  
Pride: To stand in the ways of truth that lead past public  
scorning.  
Power: To be gentle as the mountain breasted with pine  
and crested with snow, calm as justice opening her  
eyes, serene  
As laying of fingers on the new born. Have ye this power,  
this pride, O Nation of Nations? O ye in your turn.  
For a space overgrown, three-bellied lord of the earth, with  
brazen bowels and feet of tempered steel and head  
Bent ground-ward from habit of search for gold and oil!  
Have ye mole's eyes? Look up—will the sun blind  
ye? Can ye look upon man  
Nor be ashamed? Will your kind know ye? Already the  
whispers, the squirrels through the forests of the mind  
Telling their brethren the tale, beyond fear and hate to a  
pity, as for the eagle dying, as for a land once great

Turned by its splendor from truth, won by its wealth from  
justice, swaggerly blindly  
To its doomed end. What have ye of worth, O my country,  
what hidden well of spirit, with breath  
Of humility astir in your lungs, softly, what steel rod of  
wrath ejecting the wrong  
As the ramrod, the powder—what fire to eat the poison  
though half your glory burn—my country!—

—Joseph T. Shipley