Changed Smoke

Ruth Dudgeon*
Inattention
By Edna L. Schultz

He was saying something, but my mind
Refused to hear his words. It was intent
On watching his deepened eyes, burning in
Their too-blue depths—all that is meant
By beauty. I heard his voice, hushed music,
Cathedral quiet, and the rain's wet, soft beat
On June mornings—all of these, but no words.
And he wondered why I asked him to repeat.

Changed Smoke---
By Ruth Dudgeon

The power of smoke to change bright days to sordid gray
Once made me hate its grimy fumes. I thought
That I could never find it good. But one day
That smoke was not the same; it had caught
The echo of my moods, was deeply fraught
With meaning.

When winds are speeding low and cold, they snatch my smoke
And whip it from the chimney’s lip so fast
I seem to hear its little chucklings at the joke
Of disappearing in the streaming blast.
And even when that scurrying day has passed
The feeling stays.

Smoke is pluming upward in the pale blue day,
So still and slow that it seems apart
From the hurrying world. In its curling, dusky fringe I stray
In mind to secret thoughts that part
Me from my cares, and make my labor-weary heart
Find soothing peace.

But I like best the smoke that flaunts to sky and town
The flaming banners of the setting sun.
The shifting lights exalt my earth-bound thoughts and crown
A dreary day with high elation,
Ending it with something bright and gay that one
Cannot forget.