

DISTANT RAINFALL

Like mourning women veiled to the feet
Tall slender rainstorms walk slowly against gray cloud along the far verge.
The ocean is green where the river empties,
Dull gray between the points of the headlands, purple where the women walk.
What do they want? Whom are they mourning?
What hero's dust in the urn between the two hands hidden in the veil?
Titaness after Titaness proudly
Bearing her tender magnificent sorrow at her heart, the lost battle's beauty.

Robinson Jeffers (from *Solstice*)

**Text of Helen's aria from *Scenes from Thurso's Landing*
(in libretto format only)**

HELEN

If I'd never been here, nothing would have been the same.
You'd not be hurt, you'd be riding on the hill.
Oh, how I wish I had died in misery before you saw me,
(Dream-like, with growing intensity.)

I wish you had seen me
lying five days dead in the jagged mountain,
I wish you had seen me
Blackening on a white rock in a dry place,
the vultures dipping their white beaks in my eyes,
their red heads in my side,
you'd make them raise the great wings and soar!
And if you had seen me
lying black-mouthed in the filth of death,
you'd not have wanted me then,
and nothing would be as it is,
but you'd be lucky and I quiet.
(Shuddering.)

What's all this troublesome affair of living,
what's it all about, what's it for?
Do you know something that's hidden from the weak like me?
Or do we live for no other reason than because we dread to
die?

(With her hands at her throat.)

I dread it so...I can't bear it,
For now it seems that all the billion and a half of our
lives on earth,
And the more that died long ago, and the things that
happened and will happen again, and all the beacons of time
Up to this time look very senseless, a roadless forest full
of cries and ignorance.

(Haunted, with mad gaiety)

I used to wish for round jewels and a fur cloak, and a set
of laughing friends to fool with, and one of those long low
stream-lined cars
That glide quietly and shine like satin: So, maybe, just
maybe, life might have been precious
At the best.

(Coming back to reality.)

But can life be precious at the worst?
Maybe death is...
death is...

(HELEN fishes out REAVE's hunting knife from
her pocket, hiding it from REAVE's view. She

sways upright and goes around him to
approach him from the upstage side, so that
her right hand is visible downstage under
his chin when she kneels down and kisses
him.)

HELEN (continued)

For love, for love!
I do this for love!

[This aria is constructed from several of Helen Thurso's speeches in Robinson Jeffers'
narrative poem *Thurso's Landing*.]