

JEAN COCTEAU

2 poems from Jean Cocteau's Gondola of the Dead

GOLDOLA OF THE DEAD

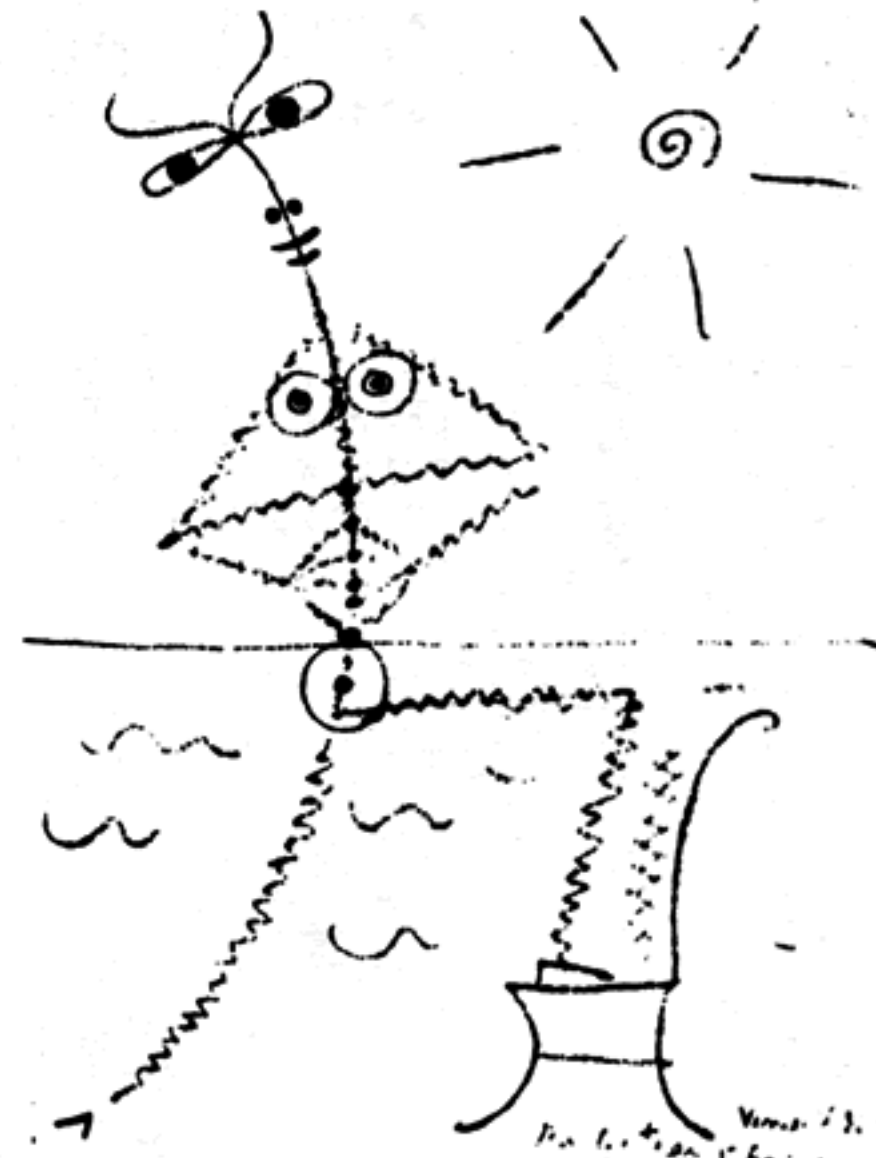
Just as beneath the inverted sky
 we saw black with ink the river
 of the dead with a famous
 scorpion apt
 to bite its own tail
 on whose tip a bust is flying
 Saw furthermore those souls
 certain to become
 by the privilege of tanning
 sisters of don Giovanni at the poop
 Lord Byron and Wagner standing
 and all their beautiful dead women
 chins on diamonds nostrils
 palpitating eyes
 struck to velvet
 by your fist Eros and the slap
 of innumerable pigeons walking
 hands to backs on the marble
 to and fro and suddenly
 in a storm of silk
 rejoin the apteria sheltering
 on the cornices



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beautiful Adriatic women
 Venus come from the mother-of-pearl
 Will she go place on your fingers
 (the seaweeds of sleep)
 Doge, your deep ring?

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translated by Tony Montague