Two Songs from Silas Marner
Texts by George Eliot (1819-1880)

I. At Night Came His Revelry

The livelong day he sat in his loom, his ear filled with its monotony, his eyes bent down on the slow growth of sameness in the brownish web, his muscles moving with such even repetition that their pause seemed almost as much a constraint as the holding of one's breath. But at night came his revelry: at night he closed his shutters, and made fast his doors, and drew out his gold...He loved the guineas best, but he would not change the silver...he loved them all. He spread them out in heaps and piled his hands in them; then he counted them and set them up in regular piles...and thought fondly of the guineas that were coming slowly through the coming years, through all his life, which spread far away before him, the end quite hidden by countless days of weaving.

II. The Bewilderment of Waking

...to his blurred vision, it seemed as if there were gold on the floor in front of the hearth. Gold—his own gold—brought back to him as mysteriously as it had been taken away! His heart began to beat violently, and for a few moments he was unable to stretch out his hand and grasp the restored treasure. The heap of gold seemed to grow and get larger beneath his agitated gaze. He leaned forward at last, and stretched out his hand; but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft warm curls...It was a sleeping child—a round, fair thing, with soft yellow rings all over its head.

Exiles

I. Exile
Text by Conrad Aiken (1889-1973)

These hills are sandy. Trees are dwarfed here. Crows Caw dismally in skies of an arid brilliance, Complain in dusty pine-trees. Yellow daybreak Lights on the long brown slopes a frost-like dew, Dew as heavy as rain; the rabbit tracks Show sharply in it, as they might in snow. But it's soon gone in the sun—what good does it do? The houses, on the slope, or among brown trees, Are grey and shriveled. And the men who live here Are small and withered, spider-like, with large eyes. Bring water with you if you come to live here— Cold tinkling cisterns, or else wells so deep That one looks down to Ganges or Himalayas. Yes, and bring mountains with you, white, moon-bearing, Mountains of ice. You will have need of these Profundities and peaks of wet and cold. Bring also, in a cage of wire or osier, Birds of a golden colour, who will sing Of leaves that do now wither, watery fruits That heavily hang on long melodious boughs In the blue-silver forests of deep valleys.

I have now been here—how many years? Years unnumbered. My hands grow clawlike. My eyes are large and starved. I brought no bird with me, I have no cistern Where I might find the moon, or river, or snow. Some day, for lack of these, I'll spin a web Between two dusty pine-tree tops, and hang there Face downward, like a spider, blown as lightly As ghost of leaf. Crows will caw about me. Morning and evening I shall drink the dew.

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II. Exile (after the Chinese)
Text by Hart Crane (1899-1932)

My hands have not touched pleasure since your hands — No, nor my lips freed laughter since 'farewell', And with the day, distance again expands Voiceless between us, as an uncoiled shell. Yet love endures, though starving and alone. A dove's wings cling about my heart each night With surging gentleness, and the blue stone Set in the tryst-ring has but worn more bright.