

# The New Criterion

## Poems

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### Small things

by [John Simon](#)

The thorn in Rilke's finger,  
The boil on Scriabin's lip,  
Were enough to wrest the singer  
From his musicianship.

Airiest Isadora  
Gave up her dancing breath  
When motoring she wore a  
Red scarf that caught on death.

Small things speed our departure:  
A scarf, a boil, a thorn;  
But were they any larger,  
The things by which we are born?

**John Simon's** collections of film, theater, and music criticism are available from Applause.

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