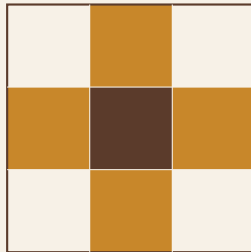


A DIGITAL READING-EDITION ANTHOLOGY

PEGASUS

SELECTED POEMS

San Diego, 1923-1924



THIRTY-TWO POEMS FROM SEVEN SURVIVING ISSUES

EDITORIAL NOTE

This anthology gathers thirty-two poems from the ninety-nine credited poems in the seven surviving individual issues used for the Pegasus reading editions: Volume I, Numbers 1-6, and Volume II, Number 1. Selection inevitably involves judgment. The guiding considerations here were verbal precision, rhythmic and formal control, vividness of image, historical interest, and the ability of a poem to remain compelling outside the immediate circumstances of its magazine appearance.

The result is not a ranking or a substitute for the complete issues. It is a reading path through the magazine at its most concentrated: California desert and coastal landscapes, city modernism, intimate lyric, satire, translation, classical monologue, and ambitious sequences. Several poets appear more than once when their work marks a distinctive strength of Pegasus; other choices preserve the range of the editorial circle rather than reducing the magazine to its most familiar names.

Every poem begins on a new page. The heading at each opening retains the form 'Issue p. 97 · Scan p. 15,' allowing direct comparison with the original scan. Titles, bylines, italics, meaningful indentation, numbered sections, punctuation, and stanza spacing are carried forward from the corrected reading editions. Source page numbering at the foot has been replaced by continuous anthology pagination.

Because this is a newly assembled reading anthology, the section openings and contents pages are new. The poem pages themselves preserve the typography already verified against the scans.

SELECTION PRINCIPLES

Craft · image · historical interest · regional character · range

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SELECTED FROM

VOLUME I, NUMBER I

January 1923

The inaugural number moves between compressed lyric, desert and harbor imagery, intimate encounter, and editorial satire.

IN THIS SECTION

Life

ERNEST WALSH

Encounter

DOROTHY PAGE

Crossing the Mojave

LILA SERLES

Night-Skies

AMY SEBREE SMITH

Bombast

FRED GRONBERG

Issue p. 2 · Scan p. 4.

LIFE

Ernest Walsh

It is a meaningless repetition,
A surging forward,
Only to slip back
And return to the unsounded sea:
Or do we,
Like waves,
Sometimes break more inland than the rest
Upon indifferent shores,
Touching the foundations of an ancient growth
Until, in time, it falls,
And is drawn with us
Into the depths—

We, to rise,
And surge forward again,
Depositing new foundations,
On which new things grow
And thrust ascending life,
As a challenge,
Before spacious horizons of unreckoned distance?

I do not know,
I only know
That as I rise
High-crested on the upward impulse of a sea,
I glimpse,
For a moment,
The far-reaching goal before me.
And with a shout,
Hopefully,
And dizzily as one stirred by wine,
I leap...

Issue p. 4 · Scan p. 6.

ENCOUNTER

Dorothy Page

I followed all alone, one April day
The tender, upward gesture of a hill;
Prim-roses frolicked laughing, in my way
And lush grass shivered with a passing thrill.

And one wild plum tree caught me, like a lad
Of ancient Grecian beauty, white and gold,
And oh! the tree was exquisitely mad
With wine of late Spring wind, wine sweet and cold...

Cloud shadows trailed the fabric of their lace,
The tree-lad swayed until it touched my hair,
And drifted petals on my upturned face
Until they brushed my mouth and rested there.

Hot tears clung startled to my lashes tips...
Had not a wild plum tree just kissed my lips?

Issue p. 6 · Scan p. 8.

CROSSING THE MOJAVE

Lila Serles

Look at the line of mountains
Crawl like a blue snake across the distance,
The trees far up in the hills
Like fountains
Splash in the sun.

Down here the sage-brush burns
Like a heart, thirsty for its Love.
Do not try to touch it...

Night steals over the world,
The desert sleeps languorously,
Embraced by the cool nodding stars.

Issue p. 7 · Scan p. 9.

NIGHT-SKIES

Amy Sebree Smith

I lifted my face to the night-skies,
As to the petals of a mysterious flower,
Blue-purple, velvety,
And cool with the dew of star-beams.

Issue p. 8 · Scan p. 10.

BOMBAST

Fred Gronberg

When this migratory, labored sphere
In cooling, laid its crust,
It was that
I might firmly stand thereon
To ridicule
The Divine Designer's abortive handicraft.

And when the ancient, lumbering saurian
From the primordial ooze
Crawled out
Blinking insouciantly
At nimble-flitting dragon-flies,
Much comfort overwhelmed me
And I was filled
With felicitous jocosity.

And when
An hundred thousand sweating slaves
Went down to early rot
To rear a pyramid;
The sturdy Cheops
Benevolently stroked his paunch
And insolently
Poked a digit in my ribs
And in unison
We raucously guffawed.

And even today
Within my cloistered crypt,
Though maddened still
By man's embalmed stupidity—
Even today
I can sit aloof
And tolerantly smile.

SELECTED FROM

VOLUME I, NUMBER 2

March 1923

These selections favor the issue's most concentrated images and its strongest experiments in urban, industrial, and dramatic rhythm.

IN THIS SECTION

Snow-Piece

JOHN DRURY

Indifferent

ROLFE HUMPHREYS

The Wild-Cat Oil Well

RUTH CLAY PRICE

One Day

DOROTHY PAGE

Issue p. 1 · Scan p. 3.

SNOW-PIECE

John Drury

The snow drifts
Silently
Like tiny petals
From the vast floating
White rose-gardens of clouds
Hidden above in black night.
The snow drifts
Slantingly
Across bland milky faces
Of street-lamps
And lies in sparkling points of light
Upon the dim-lit street.
The snow drifts
Dreamily
While furtive figures in black
Appear in the light and disappear—
Dark notes
That break the silent symphony of white.

Issue p. 2 · Scan p. 4.

INDIFFERENT

Rolfe Humphreys

I toss back chatter in the cheerful faces
Of those whom your departure does not stir,
And desperately I avoid the places
Where you were.
I grin at foolish things they say about me
Oh, I am very gay and very bright,
But—I think I'll let the sunset do without me
Tonight.

Issue p. 3 · Scan p. 5.

THE WILD-CAT OIL WELL

Ruth Clay Price

Relentlessly,
Relentlessly,
Pound down, pound, pound;
Pound down, pound, pound:
Relentlessly
The engines sound,
Relentlessly
They pound the ground.
Tormentingly,
Tormentingly,
With tools profound,
The men around,
Tormentingly
Attack the ground,
Tormentingly
For treasure bound.
Resentfully,
Resentfully,
The earth gives ground
Before each wound:
Resentfully
On each rebound,
Resentfully
Its ways confound.
Contentedly,
Contentedly,—
The treasure found,
Tho' earth has frowned;—
Contentedly
The men around,
Contentedly
Their plans expound.
Triumphantly,
Triumphantly,
Earth's laws profound,
By Nature crowned;
Triumphantly
These men have bound,
Triumphantly,
With the wealth they found!

Issue p. 6 · Scan p. 8.

ONE DAY

Dorothy Page

He garbed his youngster's soul in stately gloom
And said, "The world's a bubble filled with dust."
And wearing sorrow like a purple plume,
He trod a Stygian way... as young souls must.
He scaled philosophies, oh! steep and grim!
And, balanced on a lonely eminence
Of thought, he felt the stars must envy him,
As he stood there, aloof, remote, intense...
Then smiling with the twisted smile of pain
(The thing to do) he took illusion's flower,
Crushed it and from a still hand let it rain
Upon the ground, a broken, golden shower.
Oh tragic youth! Oh time of splendid woe,
What pride was his that he should suffer so!

2

But as he sorrowed, Spring came strolling up,
Her white feet bare and blossoms in her arms,
Her slender hands curved to a gracious cup
Filled to the brim with subtle, healing charms.
Long spikes of yellow broom, three drops of dew,
Gold pollen and a thread of dawn-mist lace,
And as she met the Gloomy One, she threw
A bud that struck him fairly in the face!
He gasped and tumbled from his lonely height,
"Why... why... it's you! Whatever brought you here?"
She answered laughing, poised for instant flight,
"Oh... bless you, Sir, I come this way each year!"
The new moon found him whistling, lost from care
While young Spring tangled broom-flowers through his hair.

SELECTED FROM

VOLUME I, NUMBER 3

May 1923

The May number is represented by psychologically spare lyrics, city fragments, and poems testing the expressive possibilities of free verse.

IN THIS SECTION

Echo

DOROTHY PAGE

Conundrum

HELENE MULLINS

Unframed

HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING

In Passing

H. THOMPSON RICH

To a Nearly Completed Skyscraper

CHALLISS SILVAY

Issue p. 1 · Scan p. 3.

ECHO

Dorothy Page

O beauty trembles through each hour, a gong
Of troubling sweetness, calling one to thought,
Half thought that swirls confusedly along
With here and there a fragile cadence caught
And held, a fragment of the lovely whole,
And as an echo yields the tone again,
So I, with sentient body, mind and soul
Respond to beauty with a throb of pain.

Issue p. 2 · Scan p. 4.

CONUNDRUM

Helene Mullins

Why do
Bright pink
Hollyhocks
Cast grotesque
Grey shadows
Before them
In the dust?
Why do
Opal
Tinted dreams
Trail grotesque
Grey shadows
After them
In my life?

Issue p. 4 · Scan p. 6.

UNFRAMED

Howard McKinley Corning

How foolish we are
To take pictures of the sea
And put them in frames...

Issue p. 6 · Scan p. 8.

IN PASSING

H. Thompson Rich

*"I have lived long enough, having seen one thing,
that love hath an end." —Swinburne.*

I—TWILIGHT

If it be true that you no longer care—
That Love is arid at its fountain-head,
That all the sacred words we softly said
Are perishable as those petals there;
If it be true that all our dreams are air
And all our memories are shameful things,
Bats haunting ruined towers with hideous wings,
Then have I come at last to know Despair.

Then am I mocked and muted utterly,
And silence is the one thing left to me
Worthy the goal that I had thought to win:
The lyre lies broken and the golden song
Fades on the air... gay Pan has lived too long,—
Now is the Twilight of the Gods set in.

II—AND AFTER TWILIGHT

Now lay upon my brows the ivy leaf
And put me down in purple and brocade,
And set beside the tombstone of carved jade
A lighted tall black candle for your grief;
And place, where my white hands are crossed, a sheaf
Of hawthorne...and beneath some loud cascade
Let me with solemn canticle be laid,
And with a prayer that life was kindly brief.

For I have lived it all in the few days
Of loving you, and the one gorgeous dream
That saved the grim years has come grandly true:
And as I lived it in a golden haze,
So let me die it in a silver stream—
Out-flowing to the Infinite from you.

Issue p. 10 · Scan p. 12.

TO A NEARLY COMPLETED SKYSCRAPER

Challiss Silway

Stretch your arms heaven-ward,
Nose up to the sky,
Cry out in anguish for full birth!
I know so well your desire
To rise above less fortunate fellows—
To call out
 See! I am the last word
In the work of man—
I lift him closer to God!
You glutton for height!
He shall look down on you
And laugh at your absurdity!

SELECTED FROM

VOLUME I, NUMBER 4

July 1923

Regional landscape, translation, nocturnal city imagery, classical allusion, and the quiet edge of the lagoon define this group.

IN THIS SECTION

Carriso Gorge

BEN FIELD

The Cathedral Window

JOSÉ MARIA DE HEREDIA · TRANSLATED BY LILIAN WHITE SPENCER

Segments

HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING

Circe

WILLIAM GRIFFITH

Lagoon

SAMUEL M. SARGENT, JR.

Issue p. 3 · Scan p. 5.

CARRISO GORGE

Ben Field

Eastward the wise men sought to find a pass
Where steel could lie and stretch its glistening limbs,
Where steam could whistle from its lips of brass
And continental traffic shriek its hymn;
But from the javelined San Diego bay
Across the chaos of the mountains' girth
There is no place where nature made a way
To reach her empire burgeoned on the earth.
A hundred million boulders piled on high
While over age-dead heights the eagles pass,
God's hands flung down these mountains burnt and dry—
Yet in the canyons' depths grow tufts of grass,
Then came a man whose dream was not forespent—
Where mauve and orange lit the panicked forge
He built a road that is time's monument
And spun his steel along Carriso Gorge.

Issue p. 6 · Scan p. 8.

THE CATHEDRAL WINDOW

José Maria de Heredia · translated by Lilian White Spencer

This old stained glass saw folk of high degree,
Beneath its lucent azure, pearl and flame,
Incline for churchly blessings; knight and dame,
Resplendent in the pomps of chivalry.

Then, they went forth; horns sounding merrily;
Upholding cross or sword or falcon tame,
Toward field and wood or wars of holy fame,
To hunt the heron or Christ's grave to free.

And now... The Lords beside their ladies sleep;
At heel, their hounds eternal virgil keep
All sepulchred on pavements black and white.

Deaf, dumb and still they lie. From every tomb
Stone eyes regard with never gleam of sight
The great rose window and its fadeless bloom.

Issue p. 7 · Scan p. 9.

SEGMENTS

Howard McKinley Corning

A Portfolio of the City by Night

MIRAGE

The lighted city
Is a mirage
Of the stars:
Gaunt buildings
With tapers in their eyes
Reach black roots,
Tenaciously,
Toward oblivion.

ARC LIGHTS

Swollen cats' eyes
That cut
Like darts
Through obscurity.

DARK ALLEYS

Coffins
From which the corpses
Have been stolen.

EMPTY STREETS

Moments
Struck out of time.

Issue p. 9 · Scan p. II.

CIRCE

William Griffith

She was a spirit in eclipse at noon,
Hidden and lost in solar hours of light;
Waning by day and waxing in the night,
Too soon she came, and then she went—too soon.
A sort of glory such as, seen in June,
Enchants the vision of an anchorite,
This woman made the darkness strangely bright,
Whose beauty shone on mortals like the moon.
Caresses such as hers are seldom felt,
Such kisses have been sought but rarely found,
Except by those who, goblinwise, have dwelt
Half in the air and halfway underground;
And who have clutched, been staggered and been hurled
Backward by that sham enemy, the world.

Issue p. 11 · Scan p. 13.

LAGOON

Samuel M. Sargent, Jr.

Splashes of amber from the moon,
And etchings of grey and of blue;
And mirrored in the mute lagoon
There is painted the look of you.
Off on a far and haunted isle
Glow the embers of other days,
End of a path to buried things,
Blurred in the fog and misty haze.
Down on a lone and haunted isle
Where the moonlight shines amber bright,
With grey palms in the rhythmic swing
Of the stars in a tropic night.
Far in a nooked-in shoreline cool,
In the world of the years slipped on,
The black waves cool, the moon a jewel
In the dark of a snuffed out sun.
There the look of the vanished you
That was mine in the days ago,
The days before the blurred mist came
And the years crept carelessly on.
There is never a road that never forks,
Nor a laneway that never parts—
The knife of time is sharp and cruel,
And it drew the blood of our hearts.
Far on an isle of dim, dim mist
That rides like a veil on the sea
I gaze in the blue of a blue lagoon
With your eyes smiling out at me...

SELECTED FROM

VOLUME I, NUMBER 5

October 1923

The October issue is at its best when theatrical darkness, devotional imagery, and ecological unease become formally compressed.

IN THIS SECTION

The Valley of the Muted Songbirds

HENRI FAUST

Dusk

MARGARET TOD RITTER

Interlude

LILIAN WHITE SPENCER

The Master Earth

BEN FIELD

Issue p. 3 · Scan p. 3.

THE VALLEY OF THE MUTED SONGBIRDS

Henri Faust

Beyond all sorrow-singsings and all silences
Of those who mourn in exile
And the pale stained meadows of Nirvana
Where the flame of rapture dies—
Deep plunged in an utter stillness,
In vast windless groves
That sigh not nor give incense
Unto the night
But hallow a listening void—
Is the Valley of the Muted Songbirds.
Here are the robin and the lark,
Nightingale, bluebird, bobolink,
Woodthrush, oriole, red-eyed vireo,
Cardinal, grosbeak, yellow-throated warbler,
The Wren and the jay.
Silence broods,
Tiredly they draw their beaks
Into their shrunk breasts—
Their eyes stir not,
They build no nests,
But sit in motley company
And dream...
Dream of the lost enchanted hillsides,
White rivers spinning in the spring,
Bloom-foam of the haw lanes in the spring,
Retreats under the wide cool eaves
Of poplars shingled jade and silver
Jade and silver in the censer of the spring...
What madrigals of the dawn!
What delights of the drowsy noon!
They swoon at remembrance of passion
In the azure-dim hour of twilight...
Their dreams are wrung with music,
Strange holy chords—
Whether grass or tree the habitat
They hear delirious flutings of the fields,
Wild intimate cravings
Of the old loved symphony...
Tiredly they draw their beaks
Into their shrunk breasts,
And dream.
The vast windless groves sigh not
Nor give incense unto the night
In the Valley of the Muted Songbirds.

Issue p. 6 · Scan p. 6.

DUSK

Margaret Tod Ritter

A tree
Against the sky
And then no tree at all
But just an inky silhouette
On grey.

Issue p. 7 · Scan p. 7.

INTERLUDE

Lilian White Spencer

HOSPITAL

Grim Cloisters
Where miracles are wrought
Among maimed proselytes;
But these, made whole,
Are thrust out again
To the torturer.

SURGEONS

White robed gamblers
In white hells
At white tables
Play with death
And cheat.

NURSES—TRAINING

Youth, in stripes,
Serves two hard masters.
Setting her cap for both,
She smiles.

CONVALESCENCE

Reprieve!
O God, I would not sit quiet in
 prison!
Send me out to break stones
For new roads.
Then, I shall sing
Under the lash!

Issue p. 13 · Scan p. 13.

THE MASTER EARTH

Ben Field

It lies there coarse and sprawling
Where God flung it down to its fate,
A Gargantuan live thing
Of lust and love and hate.
Its hairy limbs are mountains,
 Its breast is the valleys below,
Its passion is the fountains
 That run and race and flow.
The sea is a clinging woman
Who glides to her lover's breast,
A desire-exhausted woman
 Who lies on the earth to rest.
And the earth is brutal and spurns her.
After he has made her his bride;
Sobbing and crying, she turns her
 Wet face to the ebbing tide.
I said: "The sea is weeping
 As it steals from its master's shore"—
Then I saw the water creeping
 To the earth's embrace once more.

SELECTED FROM

VOLUME I, NUMBER 6

January-February 1924

The close of Volume I brings together a major California poet, desert modernism, Chinese translation, and a striking sequence of fragments.

IN THIS SECTION

Earth-Worms

GEORGE STERLING

A Day

VIRGIL GEDDES

Three Desert Songs

AGNES CORNELL

Old Mortality

TU FU · TRANSLATED BY WITTER BYNNER AND KIANG KANG-HU

Fragments

E. RICHARD SHIPP

Issue p. 3 · Scan p. 3.

EARTH-WORMS

George Sterling

Perhaps, for all we say that they are blind,
They have their own fruition of the days—
Sunsets of matter, dawn of chemic rays,
And flowers of an empire undefined.
Mute are the tiny mouths, and yet they grind,
Century long, the huge globe's iron crust,
In that attrition of the needful dust
From which are made the thrones of flesh and mind.
We say their country is a darkened one,
Nor know what star is given them for sun;
But when we go to share that realm of night,
Humble as they and feebler shall we come,
Our hunger stilled, our lips forever dumb,
Our eyes no more in bondage to the light.

Issue p. 5 · Scan p. 5.

A DAY

Virgil Geddes

I am walking in the rain.

The rain is cold
With a slow, indifferent falling.
It falls with a curious abandon,
And I lift my face
To feel its careless motion.

The rain is rain, above me;
The earth is earth, beneath me;
I walk in the rain,
And it all resolves
Into a steady equilibrium.

All day I have been still-born,
Drawn between earth and sky
In a strange abortion.

I do not know what for,
But I have come out in the rain;
Not to die, perhaps to awake,
But surely, above all else,
To caress its damp effusion.

This is beauty of a kind
That precludes sight or sound;
The thrust of eager hands into a foam,
White, chilled as spawn.
A place of many loves,
Where I fall and gently follow.

Issue p. 6 · Scan p. 6.

THREE DESERT SONGS

Agnes Cornell

I

Vastness immeasurable

Silence:

Sky and sand are one

Silence:

I am begot and die and come again to earth...

Yet I make no move.

Vastness immeasurable

Silence:

Sky and sand are one

Silence:

Now a bird and another rise

And lose themselves in the horizon.

Silence:

I am begot and die and come again to earth...

Yet I make no move.

II

I often go that way at sundown

I know the way—

I know the way that takes the last shift of the hill.

From there on is nothing but the sheer horizon's rim—

Nothing but the silence—silence—

And my soul along the sand,

Or may be now and then a bird.

III

It wouldn't be there if I went back

And remembering would kill me:

Only the shadows would creep on the floor

And the wind cry at the door.

It wouldn't be there if I went back,

And remembering would kill me.

Issue p. 9 · Scan p. 9.

OLD MORTALITY

Tu Fu · translated by Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu

Ten thousand valleys and ranges lead to the Ching Gate,
And the village where the Lady of Light was born and bred.
She went from the purple palace into the desert-land,
And has now become a green grave in the yellow dusk.
Her face—can you picture a wind of the spring?
Her spirit by moonlight returns with a tinkling
Song of the Huns on her jade guitar,
Telling forever of her grief.

II.

Chu-ke's prestige transcends the earth
And reverence obeys his face—
Yet his will, among three realms at war,
Was as one red feather against a flaming sky.
He was brother of men like Yi and Lu
And in time would have outdone Hsiao and Ts'ao:
With the line of Han irretrievably ending,
He wielded his mind for it, yielded his life

(Chu-ke Liang was the famous premier of Shu, who vainly tried to consolidate the Three Kingdoms. The four men named were celebrated early statesmen, the latter two being the greatest of the Han Dynasty.)

Issue p. 10 • Scan p. 10.

FRAGMENTS

E. Richard Shipp

A NIGHT IN JUNE

Beneath a sharp-cut midnight moon
The lilac waves her purple plumes;
Both time and place are opportune—
I hear the chime of wedding bells.

LONELINESS

The stars that sail on the sea
Shining from each curling wave,
Wink their eyes and beckon me
Standing lonely on the beach.

DOWN A COUNTRY LANE

A light for my wayward feet,
Candles burn in the midnight sky;
Golden flutes in a field of wheat
Croon an exultant melody.

SUNRISE

The silent king, riding bareback,
Flaunting his gold laced cloak,
Rushes swiftly to the attack
As the bewildered queen retreats.

THE LOBO CALL

Across the plain a grim voice rolls,
Echoes and re-echoes in the hills
Weirdly as the cries of lost souls—
An old sheep dog barks excitedly.

SELECTED FROM

VOLUME II, NUMBER I

March-April 1924

The second volume opens ambitiously, from extended nocturne and mountain portrait to narrative experiment and classical monologue.

IN THIS SECTION

In Praise of My Glorious Queen the Night

MATHURIN DONDO

Sawtooth and Violet

SAMUEL PUTNAM

Epic

MARGIE-LEE RUNBECK

Octavia

LILIAN WHITE SPENCER

Issue p. 3 · Scan p. 5.

IN PRAISE OF MY GLORIOUS QUEEN THE NIGHT

Mathurin Dondo

Queen all glorious,
Omnipotent,
Mysterious!
Your dominion unfathomable
Extends over the earth,
Over seas and oceans,
Over the planets and over the suns,
Your sovereign empire
Is incommensurable.
Over all things and over all beings,
Over mind and matter,
Beasts and men and gods
You reign supreme,
Without beginning and without end,
Eternally.
The universe
Is the flickering emanation
Of your violet eyes,
An effulgence
Always changing,
Ebbing and flowing,
Always resorbed.
Into your own immutable being.
You are All,
And you are Nothing,
And you are hidden behind the seven veils.
You sit enthroned
In a wondrous palace,
A diadem of stars encircles your forehead,
And seven moons lie at your feet.
Queen compassionate,
Send me the messenger
Bearing the golden key,
Which shines over your breast.
Mother of sleep,
Fold me in your mantle,
I am your child:
Whom the visions of day
Frighten.

Mother of dreams
Lull me in your soft arms
And sing me the slow song
Of forgetfulness.
Mother of love,
Draw me close to your heart,
From you I came,
To you I shall return
With joy.

Issue p. 8 · Scan p. 10.

SAWTOOTH AND VIOLET

Samuel Putnam

Then, place
the cold keen edge
to the white throat of Expectancy,
stay
the madness-wombing drop, drop
of unfulfilled surprise,
the pendulous drab return
of plundered tears.
Have you not numbered,
can you not number
the serrated approaches of the years?
Do they still hold for you some sudden flower
to be dew-plucked on the mountainside
of an astonished dream?
Have you not strewn the wind with the petaled slightness
of each vague murmuring hour,
grey-dusted with a pollen no bee stings,
with no near brush of wings?
Then, place the cold keen edge —
to Expectancy's white throat,
stay the pendulum, and scatter
the withering petals on the winds,
where Laughter dies and Weeping, and Weeping laughs to die,
and Peace, mist-eyed, smiles through.

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EPIC

Margie-Lee Runbeck

Out of nothingness

Suddenly I was,
A chaotic mite of personality,
Reflecting God, they say,
And wondering.
There were nine days in my life.
If I understood them,
I could understand myself.
There was a day
When the poignancy
Of pear blossoms
Whipped me to numbness.
I fled, aching with beauty,
Where I could not see.
In that day I became
Beauty's slave.
There was a day
When I felt a stir of creation
Within me.
I was humble
With the self-effacement
Of ambition.
I was passionate
With the desire
To express.
There was a day
When despair,
Blinded me.
I tossed my head wretchedly.
I paced swiftly among the places
I loved.
But I could not shake her off.

There was a day
When my power
Intoxicated me.
I drank the poisonous
Champagne of success
Till I was mad with power.
Even God was smaller
Than I
That day!

There was a night,
Windless and listening
When love came to me.
The stars were unborn kisses.
My soul, a prayer-clad virgin,
Reached dewey-eyed toward God,
And tremulously pledged herself
Forever.

There was a day
Of agonizing holiness.
Of quivering with the desire
To be better.
Faith was my breath
Then,
And devotion my food.

There was a night
When I lay, broken,
Beside the anguished sea.
Exhausted with sorrow,
I could not pray—
Never that, any more.
For God had laughed at me,
And taken my beloved.
God had played with my prayers
Like strings of opalescent beads,
And had broken them with his fingers.

They beat down upon me,
Bruising me like hail.
I could not even cry out
Against him.
There was a day
When first I learned
To pretend.
I wound my eyes skillfully
In a veil
That made my weeping
Seem like laughter,
And my mocking
Like mirth.
There was a day
When the veil strangled me.
I ripped it from me,
But it was too late.
I had forgotten how to live without it.
In that day I died,
Wearily eager to cease struggling
If I could.
Back into nothingness
Suddenly I went,
A chaotic mite of personality,
Reflecting God, they say,
And wondering.

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OCTAVIA

Lilian White Spencer

White rose of Rome, old shadows shroud you while
Fame's bright appareling invests the fate
Of him who tossed you lightly by and ate
That amorous magic lotus of the Nile,
Drugging with scarlet dreams his gray exile.
To those dark loves the ages dedicate
Raptures of song but none commemorate
Your tears for time to pity or revile.
The generations banish one who gave
Her all, a Caesar's all, to treachery
And yet, though Cleopatra's banners wave
Forever, is not prouder majesty
In this furled standard? Theirs, the joy, the grave;
Hers, the long grief, the lonely tragedy.