



FRONA LANE

# *Collected Poems*

THREE BOOKS, PERIODICAL POEMS, AND ARCHIVAL RECORD

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EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:  
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

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# *Extremes and Moderations*

Early Southern California Poetry

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Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

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*Edited by Brian Kim Stefans*

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FRONA LANE

# *Collected Poems*

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Extremes and Moderations:  
Early Southern California Poetry

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# LIFE AND WORK

*A biographical account arranged by stages, followed by archival images.*

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## *From Texas to the Pacific Coast, 1903–1939*

Frona Belle Lane was born in 1903 in or near Austin, Texas, to Henry and Lula Lane. Her earliest located poems appeared under the name Frona Belle Lane in Oregon newspapers in 1922. In 1924 she married Percy Algiers Bray; their son, Arthur Percy, was born in Oregon in 1929. The marriage ended in divorce in 1931. During these years Lane wrote verse, dramatic sketches, and radio material: a 1930 listing names her song “My Girl Has It,” although its lyrics have not yet been recovered.

## *Teaching and the first books, 1940–1957*

By the early 1940s Lane had married Charles Wickliffe and moved to California; their daughter, Marylyn Julia Wickliffe, was born in Los Angeles in 1942. Lane taught English, poetry, dramatics, and public speaking in the Los Angeles adult-school system, notably at Franklin School for Adults. Her students’ anthology *The Contemporary Scene* (1954) preserves her compact statement of poetics, attentive to crossed images, verbal conceits, free association, and modern rhythm. Her own sequence of surviving books moves from the devotional triolets of *Apples of Gold* (1945) to the surreal, psychologically charged poems of *The Third Eyelid* (1951) and the hand-set Vermont edition *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (1957).

## *Chaparral networks and later life, 1958–2005*

Lane’s marriage to Wickliffe ended in 1958. That year she served as president of the California Federation of Chaparral Poets, an organization central to the region’s network of magazines, workshops, readings, and contests. In 1967 she married the Dutch-born jeweler and writer Aarno B. Davidson at the federation’s convention in Long Beach. Contemporary

accounts describe Lane as a poet, lecturer, critic, radio worker, and longtime language teacher; family and press accounts also identify her as holding a master's degree. Her radio work included writing, producing, and directing in Oregon and the San Francisco area. She and Davidson later issued the travel memoir *Shipsshape Honeymoon Diary* (1970). Lane received an honorable mention in an American Heritage poetry competition in 1971, entered civic politics in San Marcos in 1978, and appeared in literary and commemorative programs in the 1980s. Davidson died in 1994. Lane died in Los Angeles on November 12, 2005, and is buried at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale as Frona Lane Wickliffe.

## Archival Images

*A short selection from the source record*

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*Frona Lane and Aarno B. Davidson, in a newspaper photograph published around the time of their marriage.*



*Frona Lane in later life. This distinct portrait is reproduced once in the edition.*

The Silver Jubilee Celebration

IONIAN SOCIETY

June 6, 1930

*Out of the shadowy hall of the past  
Comes Memory.  
Into the sunlit garden of the future  
Steps Hope.*

—FRONA BELLE LANE

- 1 Ionian Society Traditions—Harry Kaplan, President
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- 5 Reminiscences—President W'97 Dan McDonald  
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President W'26 Edmund Hoag  
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- 6 a Service (Charles Wakefield Cadman)  
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- 7 Presentation of the Ionian Society Jubilee Gift—Harry Kaplan, President of the Ionian Society
- 8 Acceptance of Gift—Fred Rodriguez, President of the A.S.B.O.
- 9 The Poly News Reel 1930  
Projected by the Poly Projection Club—Truman Welch at the Organ
- 10 Polytechnic—The Boys' Gym Club
- 11 The Seal of Polytechnic
- 12 Hail, Polytechnic High—The School

•(213)•

*Polytechnic High School's 1930 Ionian Society program, preserving Lane's four-line epigraph on memory and hope.*

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# EARLY PERIODICAL VERSE

1922–1943 | *Poems published before Apples of Gold.*

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## *Men Must Toil*

You need not think you can win the day  
By a little laugh and a little play.  
You need not think the world's all song—  
Why, men must work as they go along.  
For what would be the aim in life  
If man won fame without some strife?

You need not think you're flying high  
Because men bow as you pass by.  
If the wealth you have is not self-made  
The glories of it are sure to fade.  
For just what is the gain in life  
When man wins wealth without some strife?

You need not think you can sail along  
With a little laugh and a little song;  
You need not think you'll win great fame  
Until you've toiled for an honest name.  
For what would be the joy of life  
If man has known no toil or strife?

---

**Publication.** *Albany Daily Democrat* (Albany, Oregon), October 1, 1922, p. 10; signed Frona Belle Lane, Smithville, Texas.

## *The Awakening*

The ebony fingers of night  
Gripped fiercely white-throated day.  
The earth looked tremblingly up  
In a moment's sport to be crushed.  
While hideously danced the ghostly shape  
Of winter's cruel night.

Dawn-inspired Aurora waved her sceptre on high,  
Piercing the black, angry night.  
The exultant earth looked up  
And greeted triumphant day.  
While gayly danced the fairy forms  
Of summer's awakening.

---

**Publication.** *Albany Daily Democrat* (Albany, Oregon), December 17, 1922, p. 4; signed Frona Belle Lane.

## *[Out of the Shadowy Hall of the Past]*

Out of the shadowy hall of the past  
Comes Memory.  
Into the sunlit garden of the future  
Steps Hope.

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**Publication.** Polytechnic High School, Ionian Society Silver Jubilee program, June 6, 1930, p. 213;  
signed Frona Belle Lane.

## *Names of These Spell Death*

Spell the names of these

Men with bodies like stalks . . .

As a siren

War walks.

These are the thorn men.

Bed the roses with heels

Invulnerable while

Jezebel deals!

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**Publication.** *Oakland Tribune*, October 17, 1943, p. 22.

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## *APPLES OF GOLD*

1945 | *The complete text of Lane's first surviving separately printed collection.*

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## *Apples of Gold*

A word fitly spoken  
Is an apple of gold.  
Love needs a token.  
A word fitly spoken  
Can heal the broken  
And warm the cold!  
A word fitly spoken  
Is an apple of gold!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 4.

## *A Singing Heart*

For a heart that sings  
I fervently pray.  
A song has wings!  
For a heart that sings  
There are lovely things.  
O, loveliness, stay!  
For a heart that sings  
I fervently pray!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 5.

## *The Singers Went Before*

The players on instruments followed  
after.

Like some proverbial lore

The singers went before.

Their voices transformed the core

Of our sorrow into laughter.

The singers went before,

The players on instruments followed  
after.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 6.

## *Behold the Stars*

Is not God in the height of heaven?  
And behold the height of the stars.  
Purge the old leaven.  
Is not God in the height of heaven?  
Unto men all things are given.  
Man should stop his greed and wars.  
Is not God in the height of heaven?  
And behold the height of the stars I

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 7.

## *Peace Can Be a Comet*

Peace can be a comet of desire

Irradiating the sad earth.

Love can be a singing lyre!

Peace can be a comet of desire

Setting hate and war on fire!

Love can have a new birth!

Peace can be a comet of desire

Irradiating the sad earth!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 8.

## *Peace Can Be Had*

Let the heavens be glad  
And let the earth rejoice.  
Let man no longer be sad.  
Let the. heavens be glad!  
If men will, eternal peace can be had!  
Then shall man shout with one voice:  
Let the heavens be glad  
And let the earth rejoice!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 9.

## *Blessed Are the Meek*

For they shall inherit the earth  
God spoke and again shall speak:  
Blessed are the meek!  
Men shall have what they seek  
But not by force or girth.  
Blessed are the meek  
For they shall inherit the earth!

---

Publication. From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 10.

## *The Sun Set Like a Sigh*

And left me in a curve of wonder—  
(Why should men fight and die?)  
The sun set like a sigh.  
The last breath of day passed by.  
(Did I hear distant thunder?)  
The sun set like a sigh  
And left me in a curve of wonder. . .

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 11.

## *Song in the Night*

I call to remembrance my song in the night  
And I commune with my heart.  
One little song, with wings in flight—  
I call to remembrance my song in the night.  
Oh, to sing it at all was hardly right,  
With grief still plucking its wings apart!  
I call to remembrance my song in the night  
And I commune with my heart.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 12.

## *As a Man Thinketh*

As a man thinketh in his heart  
So is he.  
Every symphony has had its start.  
As a man thinketh in his heart—  
The thought and the man can never part!  
The man he is, he wills to be!  
As a man thinketh in his heart  
So is he.!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 13.

## *The Fool Hath Said*

The fool hath said in his heart:

There is no God!

Man is Supreme and apart,

The fool hath said in his heart.

Man can make his own art

Out of the plastic sod!

The fool hath said in his heart:

There is no God!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 14.

## *Let Us Give Thanks*

Let us give thanks today  
And make the day a prayer.  
All along the way  
Let us give thanks today.  
Silently, we pray:  
Love, go everywhere!  
Let us give thanks today  
And make the day a prayer.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 15.

## *Finis*

All flesh shall perish together  
And man shall turn unto dust,  
Regardless of time or weather.  
All flesh shall perish together I  
Oh, bury me under the heather  
And cover me, if you must!  
Our flesh shall perish together  
And dust commingle with dust.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 16.

## *For All Things*

Kindness, like the honeysuckle,  
Climbs upward.

Sadness, like a withering rose,  
Curves downward.

Happiness, like the sunflower,  
Faces the sun.

Love, climbing upward,  
Love, curving downward,  
Love, facing sunward,  
Humbles and circumscribes,  
Accords and sublimates,  
All things as one.

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**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 18.

## *Tripoli*

The briny taste of ridicule  
Made me bristle;  
Tore my pulsing heart  
Into a bursting thistle.

A pulsing thistle  
Struck my briny heart.  
The bursting taste of ridicule  
Tore my world apart.

My world was torn apart  
By bristling ridicule,  
But polished into substance  
By nature's whetting-wheel!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 19.

## *Friends*

Friends mean more  
Than words can say.  
Friends who keep faith  
In the midst of doubt.  
Friends who trust  
When all about  
Wonder and go their way.  
I count them truly  
Friends of mine  
And know such friendships  
Are divine.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 20.

## *I Wonder*

I wonder if by looking down  
I shall miss the laurel crown.  
I wonder if by looking up  
I shall tread the buttercup.  
Or if by looking up and down  
And looking down and up  
I shall wear the laurel crown  
And kiss the buttercup.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 21.

## *Ambition*

Ambition is a dragon  
With teeth of fire.  
While it pursues  
Men shall never tire.  
When it overtakes  
Man is consumed.  
When it is gone  
He is doomed.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 22.

## *Prayer for Faith*

For Faith—I pray.  
Faith—so clear—  
That I can close my eyes and see  
Beyond the Here!

For Faith—I pray.  
Faith—so high—  
That I can close my eyes and see  
Beyond the sky!  
God, give me eager perception to hearken  
And sight that no earthly dazzle can  
darken.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 23.

## *Unity*

How small the intricate patterns of fate.  
How large the designs of man.  
Interwoven they leave no room for hate  
If God interlace the span.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 24.

## *Night with Rain*

I trudge this morning down the path  
The night with rain left blighted,  
But I know that soon I shall return  
To the house that love has lighted.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 24.

## *Christ Smiled on the Lily*

*(An Easter Song)*

I think Mary held a lily  
When she visited the grave.  
Christ looked at her and said,  
“Weep not, Mary, be brave -”  
Then He smiled on the lily.  
It bowed and turned pale,  
And ever since that lily  
Has worn a virgin’s veil.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 25.

## *Hold the Candle High*

Burn the last limb of the twelve-branched palm.

The young fir must stand tall again!

Hang the stocking low for the fairy

Belfana to fill.

Every child's eyes must be bright

again!

Hold the candle high. Let its flame

flare far.

The earth long in fog must have light

again!

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 26.

## *Love*

A river of hate  
    May run by the door,  
But an ocean of love  
    Still tugs at the core.  
Some day that river  
    Will no longer be  
A part of the earth,  
    But part of the sea.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 27.

## *To the Returning*

Your eyes rope continents;  
orb them; shape them;  
say shibboleth: unhinge hate.  
O victors, (ah, victorious!)  
return. Turn the earth's table.  
Yours the encompassing eye.  
You, the world-welders, return.  
The earth on a pivot needs now  
to be turned to the stars.

---

**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 30.

## *Niobe-Night*

This your Niobe-night, O world.  
These your sons and daughters  
twice multiple of seven—slain.  
This your whirl-wind hour

Niobe, mother of stone,  
O, motherless mountain,  
forever enduring your stone pain,  
weep. Weep again the world into flower.

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**Publication.** From *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945), p. 31.

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# *VARIATION:* UNCOLLECTED POEMS

1948 | *Poems not republished in Lane's surviving books.*

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## *Rape of Nymphaea*

Sky assaults pond.  
Water is no longer still.  
Pond with wind  
attacks lilies.

Morning retires:  
sky to noon.  
Pond without lilies  
meets deferred sun  
quietly.

---

**Publication.** *Variegation*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Winter 1948), p. 17.

## *The Two Voices*

Now in this place at this time  
all people are my people.

Look,  
look among grasses concealing accusations  
along the most private path of serpents,  
come,  
pity the bloom-gone unpetaled promise.

Now in this place at this time  
all times are mine.  
All people are my people.  
Even he is mine privately  
with the bridge of gold gulls  
in San Francisco  
or Brooklyn . . .

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**Publication.** *Variegation*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Spring 1948), p. 15.

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# *THE THIRD EYELID*

1951 | *The complete Alan Swallow collection.*

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## *No Visible Green*

*(Honoring the memory of Lt. J. G. Donald V. Wane, whose ship, the minesweeper Magpie, was sunk off Korea October 1, 1950)*

Sorrow in an envelope entered this house  
and a doorstep missile: "Missing. . ."

Feet of leaves come softly, scattering petals.  
Head out of the forest quickly, moving branches.  
Hands of poppies bouqueting the home path  
and holding tomorrow like a lantern  
against the surrounding dark reaches,  
comfort me now; keep me remembering  
bright genesis, green-growing. . .

Under the ground there is no visible green  
and under the lidded earth the long sleep stretches. . .

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 7.

## *Thus—I*

Believing that I once was spun  
out of earth gossamer, in heaven's name;  
believing that all things blend as one,  
even hate and love, I know I came

capering. I know I came—crying  
into space devoid of beauty, abhorring light,  
I know I came with lynx eyes—spying.  
Demon of heaven, angel of night.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 8.

## *And Their Voices Were of Frogs*

And they made frogs of their voice and their voices were of frogs  
and their tongues were long and scooped out like the hollow hearts of logs.  
I saw they were frog-like people mantilla-covered and raven  
with faces of alabaster and no hair all of it shaven.  
I said: where is your island and who are the frogs that run it?  
They said: no island has them. They are freedom.

Frogs have won it,  
Freedom? I asked. From what? And they stared their eyes of marble.  
They gulped their throats from sound no bird was known to warble.  
I knew from the lump their voice no bird had nested in it.  
No sky had given them home. No frog beside the linnet.  
The freedom of a frog? From his pond no frog can rise  
but linnet give voice to frog and wings and ponds to skies—  
We do not want the skies they croaked and their voices were of frogs  
and their tongues were long and scooped out like the hollow hearts of logs.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 9.

## *The Wrath of Rosalyn*

The wrath of Rosalyn is a pure flame  
scorching the green forest of my heart.  
The wrath of Rosalyn is a bird of prey  
pecking the lips that held my prayer.  
I look at Rosalyn but she is not my love  
came blowing the light piccolos of her hair.  
I look at Rosalyn and she is not the one  
whose olive-eyes tore my breath apart.  
The rose that was Rosalyn is red with wrath.  
Red petals fall loud on a lead path.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 10.

## *Let Day Pass*

Under the sky-leaf frescoes of dawn I lay,  
breaking into small details the new lawn,  
uprooting, tearing tender blades of Blue Grass  
into parts the size of my thoughts of you, you  
after—(how can I endure the word after?) the shield  
of you rubbed thin, revealed underneath brass.  
O seeds of grass, new planted seeds of Blue Grass,  
sprout quickly and cover me.  
Cover the small tendrils of these broken blades.  
Cover me quickly, conceal my thoughts, grass.  
O sky leaves against dawn of the day,  
blind me. Tide me in your wind-ward wake.  
Dawn, do not completely break unless you break  
to let day with her eyes; her peacock eyes, pass.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 11.

## *Lands without People*

They knew they had war in their bones;  
    touched their eyes  
Felt the hinged lids open.  
Felt the unmuscl'd arms. . .  
Said: no need for muscle.  
    Choose the smooth eyelid always.  
    Surround the boneless.  
Said: Move men without hands—  
    lands without boundaries.  
    Pick the fertile for defilement  
    before old men hide their eyes in ice  
    and young eyes ferret continents.  
    (They see the witches—their stalks of hours; the nighthawks—their V's of  
    mouths; zebra fields turn cobrafeed like the mongoose, the bittern)  
Take from the child candy hours;  
From the young harvest days;  
From the old year's spring—  
Be as the fifth day before man—  
Lands without people to pasture.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 12.

## *Two Towns*

The women walk with hips in that town;  
the children with knees,  
hop-scotching the walk squares—  
danger only in the lines there.

The women walk with vertebrae in that other town;  
the children behind hands  
stare from grottos of eyes  
through stalactite tears.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 13. First published in *Variegation* (January 1946), p. 17; no substantive variant has been adopted.

## *Man Mourning*

Old man, immovable mountain,  
snow-crowned, blizzard-bent,  
mute as marble,  
stoic as stone,  
eyes color of earth through ice—  
witness in the numb noon  
shape of unmelting mourning.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 14.

## *Polyhedral City*

City with misty eyes, city with several faces,  
juggling sun, mumbling moon,.  
is Atlas balancing goblets on toadstools;  
jangling bones of headless men.

Corner the rabbit. Butcher the lamb.  
Bag the possum. Salt the sparrow's tail.  
Potpourri on a single platter.  
Pile up. Pile up, death, pell-mell.

Spokes of fingers on wheels of. hands.  
Count the lucre, ignore the losses.  
Music with flesh. Flesh with music.  
Pile up. Pile up, neatly, crosses.

Look this way, that way, quickly, reveler.  
Death pries an intimate door.  
Pile up flowers in woven circles.  
Pile up. Pile up more, more.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 15.

## *Family Letter*

Yes, we have been wondering  
    why we haven't heard.  
Why we haven't seen you  
    or had a word.  
Glad to know its little things  
    like Jill being in heat  
and you didn't dare bring her  
    or trust her to Pete.  
And we can understand why,  
    what with one thing and another,  
you didn't think to ask us  
    why we didn't drive over  
and not wait for your invitation.  
    To tell you the truth,  
you know we're never that casual,  
    and then there's Ruth  
who has to do something about the cat  
    before we can do something about the bird,  
and so you see that's why  
    you never had a word  
from us, either. Do something about that dog.  
    Build a fence this very day.  
Don't let her have a litter  
    or you'll never get away.  
And come before you wean Jeanne.  
    Milk is hard to get here. Don't try it.  
It's much easier, I tell you,  
    if you don't have to buy it.  
And it's easier by far to travel  
    by the light of the moon.  
Besides, it's less bother to have you for breakfast  
    than for dinner. See you soon.

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**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 16.

## *Clothes Line and a Balcony*

In the little light between tall flowers  
I could see a split body standing and a half body dangling.  
The split body pulled in the half body,  
swimming in its sea of sky.

Behind bars of the canary-cage side of the house  
part of a woman of no dimension turned between the flowers;  
climbed walls of the house of pigeons  
and walked through the little light.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 17.

## *Dirge for Those Wearing Their Skeletons Outside*

Earth is a skeleton of buried bones.  
It wears some of them on the outside.  
Distinctly heard

saw

the old man blow his trumpet nose.  
(It is rubbing the legs together  
makes the cricket sound!)

Not meaning of words makes them heard.  
Not meaning of things can be truly defined.  
Look for definition.

Finding none, look for cause.

Lacking, believe what you hear

see

all the old voices beginning to shake.  
Hear them plainly in the thump of air.  
Even wind wears the dying sound.  
Dry leaves.

Their definite articulation  
is not in definable words.

Twigs—

hear their bending groan.

The butterfly is entirely visible in the curl of noon.

Even color cannot hide his exoskeleton.

Every old blade

points to something divisible and dust-turning.

Old man,

dead since the last full moon;

(drops of his white frozen corpuscles  
sound a crystal gong;

his dry pods of thought can be distinctly seen  
rattling each separate cell)

is yet somehow wholly alive;

is yet at this moment

blowing his trumpet nose;

shaking his bleached bones.

Each bone has its own strange gesture.  
Each bone makes its cumulative dirge.  
Each rings its own. beamed bell.

---

Publication. From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), pp. 18–19.

## *Even as the Scorpion*

Mother of vinegar said:  
    prevent me with salt,  
infant having been proscribed  
    day of conception.  
Sam came forth from Sue  
    claiming no fences;  
climbed the beam of her body  
    to nipple.  
Wormwood bloomed in his brain,  
    the thorn not yielding.  
Under the hedge of unlove  
    convened scorpions of hate,  
and from the once-stoned fruit,  
and over the emasculate flower,  
    the flood . . . .

Sue turned her face from Sam—  
    claimed no connation.  
Pebble, Sam, grew to be  
    stone in her image,  
rolling and crushing the bright  
    night-blooms.

Hid in the hedgerow Sam,  
    with forks for fingers,  
awaited falling fruit,  
    unyielding thorn.  
Near the hedgerow Sue,  
    with fingers twining,  
paused for pliant loveflowers . . . .  
    then over the oft-stoned fruit,  
and under the emasculate flower,  
    fountained the last torn blood.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), pp. 20–21.

## *Tiger Came Late*

Setting sun is the period after the sentence of this day.  
Herd boys on the sliding mountain are calling in owl-feathering lambs.  
Trees without leaves are gathering moss skirts tight about withering limbs.  
Unbroken yang, divided yen, unite;  
flow eastward into the sky. Two butterflies lock the lids of my eyes.

### *Spring*

This day began as Spring  
with jewels of morning flashing  
peacock skies;  
with Emperor Dragon riding  
mountable air  
and three-legged toads a surprise  
from moon cleft cloud.

Life was charmed with jade;  
Spring, peony-perfumed.  
I could not tell at dawning  
branch from bird,  
but could feel invisible Dragon-breath  
become erasable word.

### *Summer*

I saw the Empress Phoenix—  
her bright talons of sun—  
rise high and hover over  
westward-whirling wheels.  
Hope then was feathered song,  
pinioning wish and word.

But owl of ill omen dealt death-ace  
to Autumn. All the young owls  
devoured their mother. Lotus-Summer  
said fugitive farewell, and leaving  
shot down her own bloodless bird.

### *Autumn*

Dragonfly with her needle

took tethers from the sea—  
feathers from the sky—  
made sky and water one. Between  
was no visible seam.  
One chrysanthemum stood flowering  
after harvest was done.

But Tiger that ruled Autumn  
too late escaped his lair.  
Hope became half-syllabled.  
Courage but an alp of air.  
Toward West, the sun was leaning  
heavily, without meaning.

*Winter*

I saw eight sacred Tortoise  
crack the nut of their shell;  
walk length of the land,  
leaving strength behind them;  
ace-trigraph in the sand.

But sea's jade arms were stronger  
than frozen legs of the land.  
Eight Tortoise erased each trigraph  
as they crawled back over the strand.  
Lao-tse, born under a plum tree,  
froze in his grave.

Now, petals of the magnolia are folding like fingers over a thumb.  
... "eight dynasties after the Chou and all wars over. . ."  
and no sign left in the sand, *Peace* is but a word.  
Millions of butterflies are closing millions of eyes.

As the seven stone drums of Hsüan Wang are beating  
their poems deep into the heart of hills, day descends.  
Night, long tongue of night, is voiceless still  
to pronounce sentence with a period where this sentence ends.

---

Publication. From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), pp. 22–24.

## *Rhythm of Sound*

No sound to the slow slide of fingers over wood—  
only the sound of lead over words,  
each word having a sliding and separate sound,  
each thought having a spaced sound.

And then the rain. It came on a wind wave.  
I looked and saw the sky turn.  
Seaward I saw the sky move, looked and saw the ground stir.  
Seaward I saw the ground move.

And then I heard the sounds—the sliding and separate sounds,  
the spaced and leaden sounds.  
I looked and saw my name there, saw my name in lead there;  
I heard it moving toward the sea.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 25. First published in *Variegation*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Winter 1947), p. 7; the book text is used here, with narrow-column wraps rejoined.

## *Mute Evidence*

See them move lips without talking—  
talk without moving lips.

They are not saints anywhere walking  
with ball-bearing boneless hips.

Not WHY I came is surprise.

WHEN I came lingers.

They know me with Gandhi eyes—  
sparrow-quick fingers.

Know me. See them shake tongues—  
eyes between marble.

That said is not said with words  
but bird-throated warble.

They are not ghosts anywhere walking  
with hinged and hollow hips.

See them move lips as mute evidence—  
speak without moving lips.

---

Publication. From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 26.

## *First Quarrel*

Words, one-syllabled and hard as knuckles,  
beat on the thin skull, reason.

Tons of eyes and tongues:  
strike like hail out of season.

Fathom the flames how they wither  
the bridal bouquet of intention  
till love, still-born, is a corpse  
piled high with a shroud of convention.

Angels, your wings make the music  
of bees and of birds shot from perches.  
The demanding flesh has stripped  
leaves from heaven's white birches.

Spare me the lash of light  
that whips the body bare.  
Bring me the candle of night;  
leave it leeward on the stair.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 27.

## *Niobe-Night*

This your Niobe-night, O world.  
These your sons and daughters  
twice multiple of seven—slain.  
This your whirl-wind hour. . .

Niobe, mother of stone,  
O, motherless mountain,  
forever enduring your stone pain,  
weep. Weep again the world into flower.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 28.

## *Toward a Brighter Sun*

Yesterday roofs of all the houses were green through trees;  
faces of children were flowers in a frame of leaves,  
but today below the heavy hill of your hand  
five tendrils are curled into a valley of fate.  
Sun sets in the weathered heart of the land.  
Dogs bark each other down through fences of hate.  
Is there no fertile field—hope furrowing night toward dawn?  
No sunflower turning toward a brighter sun?

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 29.

## *Central Scene*

Old men threw their bones on the ground  
and later the crows came bringing caws.  
Here, love, I made a moon for you  
of my long and luminous hair.  
The Sahara your heart bloomed for me;  
blossomed for me the sundial mouth.  
Leaning on a bar of wind you sang to me.  
My cricket heart chirped love.  
O my love  
all the sands among their grains of song;  
all the distant horns of hills  
trumpeting your night long to its ending—  
this your long night my central scene  
O too brilliant sun face ascending.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 30.

## *The Poet's Ear Is Leaning*

The poet's ear is a leaning Pisa  
towering the sky,  
yet no one would mistake it for Pisa.  
Pisa is marble, with a marble base,  
while the poet's face  
is a bower that blooms in season  
with rhyme and reason.

Galileo tenured the tower  
to determine the velocity of falling bodies.  
The poet tenures his ear  
to determine direction of all bodies.

I hope the inclination of the poet's ear  
will not, like Pisa's tower,  
increase seventeen feet through centuries of leaning  
for, without provocation, the ear  
would undoubtedly be marble bier  
for his face most completely.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 31.

## *Alien Atmosphere*

The mind's antennae make their own crevices  
in the cranium wall.

Admire the pierced and pieced skull,  
how it holds the morning brain  
a caged moth or a behemoth.

Mistake no perfoliate for antennae.

Antennae seek an aerial comfort.

Likewise give courteous attention  
to the moth-fabric of fashion.

In silence the fabric is consumed.

Not so the brain's periblem.

It holds motes like a well  
water.

It is becoming fashionable again this season  
to shape one's antennae in butterfly knobs,  
instead of in points like the moth.

But the point is: they both point just the same  
to an altogether alien  
atmosphere.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 32.

## *Case Histories from Private Files of Dr. X*

### *Case 1—Son (Ref: Freud)*

Give in to your unnatural impulses,  
if you wish to eliminate your troubles.  
Sublimate them and they will make beautiful bubbles.  
Child will no longer hate father, love mother,  
if he but substitute one thing for another.  
Rx for Son: Transfer libido to Fido.

### *Case 2—Sue (Ref: Adler)*

The inferior child seeks to dominate, to be on top.  
His conduct is ruled by Ego and Will to Power.  
Psyche suffers. Esteem is lowered. Watch him cower.  
Then comes struggle for self-preservation.  
Patient becomes bill-board marked: Reservation.  
Rx for Sue: (and memo to me:—*This could be you!*)  
Symptoms pure. Doubtful cure.

### *Case 3—Mr. B. (Ref: Rivers)*

Disturbance of another instinct than Freud's sex—  
one more fundamental, and much more serious than halitosis,  
and caused by reawakening instinct of danger, is war neurosis.  
Danger and repressed fear vs. social standards, cause loss of skin,  
hearing, speech, etc which unfits for war (&/or work), win or no win.  
Rx for Mr. B: Coffee to tea.

### *Case 4—Jim Moore, alias Harry (Ref: Jung)*

Regression to the infant, to the mother,  
and failure to adapt, cause hysterical temperament.  
If character is not to suffer further dent,  
child must be reborn from Terrible Mother, then forget her.  
She is his anima. Too bad he ever met her.  
Rx for Jim, alias Harry: Marry.

### *Case 5—Inactive. (Reference Private.) Patient Died.*

### *Case 6—Bobby X (Ref: Morton)*

No child is immoral, just amoral, nothing more.

Repressed fear is his trouble; regression to infancy,  
hence his nightmares; cannot solve problems; cannot free self from self;  
has no mother, no father, fixation to cope with. (In this case no known  
relation.)

Rx for Bobby: Take up hobby.

(Memo: Nix! Bobby X has no Oedipus Complex,  
no Terrible Mother, no *public* vices, so why bother?)

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), pp. 33–34.

## *The Stag*

The stag brought horns out of trees,  
the tips shining sharp and sudden  
from his small coned head.  
Leaves of ears shook stars.  
Horns, like hands,  
separate, received sky;  
diminished the drapery of night.  
where morning came.  
Eyes held dawn in small circumference  
marking this moment.  
The stag turned—  
his shadow moved and grew.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 35.

## *Scene in Passing*

Not a hill without its stretch of turkeys dusting the low sun;  
hummingbirds flashing thickets;  
mockingbirds singing trees;

The near-night smell of grass, (rippling like willows the wind,  
or sails the sea);  
and the heather smell of bees.

The country rolled shadow, and us into a tunnel of trees,  
with willows, a cornice  
and us, a frieze.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 36.

## *Morning Walk at the Surf*

Look how sand goes back after water  
where footprints small pools shadow.  
Rock and shell that were not before waves  
are sharp to bare feet that bed them.  
Little mounds under feet flatten.  
Holes cover weeds, or sticks, or feathers.  
Look how walls fall, grain by grain,  
yet sand-flea not seen stirs them.  
Sun moves water far out to sky.  
Where they meet the sky is water;  
Stars go away, taking horizons,  
but leaving blue without boundaries.  
No night is left to visor the day;  
No night looks with eyes like morning.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 37.

## *Fruit of This Hour*

In the blue-bulb night we share  
  pastel petals of laughter,  
  silver speech, lavender love.  
  Eyes soft as silence, we gaze  
through curtains of iris.  
The fruit of this hour is lush  
  and ready for the feast.  
The forest of fancy is green  
  and all the leaves lamps.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 38. First published in *Variation* (April 1946), p. 15; no substantive variant has been adopted.

## *Flight*

Lift hills with your eyes.

See the bird with the shot breast  
split the flower-blue skies.

Hear the wind hound west.

Go at once the wing-way.

See smoke divide the migrant flock.:  
Where night parts day,  
a single star moves the eagle rock.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 39.

## *Song of the Third Eyelid*

If I were fly I would view you  
through eight thousand lenses.

If chicken I would never, never  
raise my lower lid to you.

I would never close my eyes  
to such beauty, beauty,  
but declare you over and over  
in all the tenses.

If I were frog I would stop, O  
all normal breathing.

I would hibernate with you, with you,  
and breathe through my skin.

Were I hummingbird I would beat my wings  
twelve thousand times a minute  
to match my heart, my love,  
and its beating.

Were I convoy fish I would keep you  
close and swim forever.

To Venus I would take you, where a day  
is as two hundred.

If camel, I would draw for shade  
my third eyelid, my love,  
to shield from all weather, whither  
we go together.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), pp. 40–41.

## *Black Vision of Heaven*

He was a God-loving old Negro  
and so his thoughts were of God,  
as his gnarled, ebony fingers  
turned eyes up in the sod,—  
earthy eyes that saw only blackness  
then quickly disappeared,  
(to them the hands were a harrow  
somber, distorted and weird)  
but the old gardener did not see them  
nor did he intend any harm  
as his eyes sought the eyes of his Maker,  
(eyes he knew were dark, but warm!);  
    . . . a face he knew  
was black, but linked with kindness;  
    . . . a form he knew  
was black but full of understanding;  
    . . . the fineness  
of Him (etched against parchment skies),  
smiling from the third landing of paradise.  
    . . . the archangels seven  
opened the eastern gate of heaven . . .  
Earth eyes closed under ten ebon branches,  
their boring lightened with a new-made leaven.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 42.

## *Blind Dreamer*

Faith, cabalistic dreamer, blind with the seeing eye,  
blind with the eye seeing, mangler of height;

Faith, sleep-walker, having no monocle, needing no monocle,  
stalking blind but straight, devouring the night;

Faith, carrier-pigeon, almoner of Allah, fly straight.  
Fly straight, I pray, into the morning, and drink the morning light.

---

**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), p. 43.

## *Ritual of Purification*

### I

#### FIRST DREAM INTERLUDE

#### *Voice of the Square People Searching for the Absolute*

We are the square people  
hopping squares of light—  
green yellow red  
red yellow green  
searching for the square of light  
that must be  
BLUE;  
searching for the square of space  
that must be you, God,  
YOU.

You are here, here. We know you are here, God,  
propelling cubic space;  
occupying a dimensional place  
within the cubic heart;  
emitting the light that blots  
each projected pulse;  
surveying the mandala that surrounds  
each concealed self.

We are the square people  
hopping squares of light  
alchemistic projection  
green yellow red  
red yellow green  
(lion, eagle, ox  
square evangels of night,  
hopping cubes of light  
air water fire  
fire water air  
searching for square and solid bodies,  
solid and square earth bodies,  
through cubes of changing light.)

Where is that other evangel,

that angel of heaven-blue?  
Where is that complete quaternity  
that must be, God, the whole of—  
the substance of  
YOU?

*Evolution of the Intentional Process*

then  
the lion hopped into my mandala.  
His square of light  
filled the box of my ego.

I am a lion.  
Not the lion-hearted  
but the lion-light,  
the lion-light searching  
through yellow fire  
for the blue of heaven—  
the blue square face of God.

*Incantation to My Lion-Self*

Caves, caves hide me  
from my lion-self.  
Eagle, eagle take me  
into eagle-air.  
Red rays find me  
a blue square place to rest.  
Yellow fire consumes me.  
No cave can hide my self.

I am an eagle.  
The square red ray of light  
gives courage to my flight.  
Eagle-light, searching  
through the square red air  
for the blue of heaven—  
the square blue face of God.

*Incantation to My Eagle Self*

Air, air hide me  
from my eagle self.  
Ox, ox take me

into waters green.  
Green light find me  
a blue square place to hide.  
Red air consumes me.  
I find no place to lie.

I am an ox  
walking green light—  
the square green light of waters  
on serpents of the sea.  
Ox-light searching  
through bellies of green fish  
for the blue square of heaven—  
the square blue face of God.

*Incantation to My Ox-Self*

Waters, waters hide me  
from my green ox-self.  
Green slime take me  
from my ox-green self.  
I have no place to hide  
this slime green self.

*Revelation of Primary Identity*

finally  
from under green water  
through red rays of air  
across yellow fire  
my identities have come together,  
one by one dissolving  
water air fire  
fire air water  
leaving me to face  
the square blue face of God.

II

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

*DIRGE, to Oblivion*

Make no mention—no mention of GARNET.  
Take no CRYSTAL—no CRYSTAL from bone.

Make no mention—no mention of these.  
 This is Babel—Babel of stone.  
 Make no mention—no mention of EMERALD,  
 No mention of PEARL—or MOTHER-OF-PEARL.  
 No talk of JASPER—JASPER’S Napoleon—  
 Napoleon among JADE, AMBER, and BERYL.  
 Make no mention—no mention of OPAL.  
 OPAL is Helen. She needs no throne.  
 Give her a stick—a stick will do nicely.  
 A scepter or horse, a foolscap or cone.  
 Make no mention—no mention of RUBY.  
 No roubles are needed—just a few bones.  
 No mention of these. They feed on starfish  
 in this Lethe oblivion—this Lethe of stones.

## III

## SECOND DREAM INTERLUDE

*Song of the Round People Dealing with Abstraction:*

We are the round people—  
 stones of rolling light—  
 deep blue circles of light  
 in a strong and decided wind—  
 in a Trinity of searching winds,  
 (each with wind-face of its own—  
 three heads on one body of gold—  
 of refracted blue and gold.)  
 Round as the earth is round  
 we roll with the curving sea.  
 When we give birth  
 it is to substance not of earth.  
 We are spirit of stone and sea.  
 Nothing of earth are we.  
 We are the virgin matrix.  
 No evil defines our purpose.  
 We curl in sleep like the serpent  
 yet touch no thing but our image.  
 We are the egg of creation,  
 the defined, yet undefinable.  
 We have no autonomy of duty

but move in blue circles of beauty.

*Evolution of the Extensional Process*

Blue light blinds me!

I am become as dust.

*Chant to my Earth-Self*

I am the earth—

the round, the rolling earth—

stone of rolling light—

facing a wind of gold—

(wind with a Trinity of heads

on a body of blue and gold.)

I am the spirit of stone.

I roll with the curve of the sea.

I curl in sleep like the serpent

with nothing to torture me.

I am the egg of creation—

round in the perfect sky.

I move in a circle of beauty;

erase from creation the WHY.

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**Publication.** From *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), pp. 44–48.

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# RECURRENCE: UNCOLLECTED POEM

1953 | *A poem not republished in Lane's surviving books.*

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## *Ledge of Memory*

Through opening eye of morning  
I saw love, bright bird,  
perch on the ledge of memory.

Dust's dominion  
held dimension of smile  
grooved on the sill  
with point of a pinion,  
leaving, left me  
legacy of twilight birds,  
lunacy of familiar song  
in unfamiliar faces,  
hunger in narrow niche of heart,  
fastened now to unaccustomed places.

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Publication. *Recurrence*, vol. 3, no. 11 (Winter 1953), p. 74.

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# *WORM, FEED GENTLY, AND OTHER POEMS*

1957 | *The complete Green Leaf Press collection.*

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## *This Fence Is Guaranteed*

When the salesman said to me Lady  
this fence is guaranteed to protect you  
in four distinct places  
I said to him Sir which places?  
Here where my neighbor has two faces?  
There where the he-dog pants and paces?  
There where the devil-grass grows disgraces?  
Or here where I hang my dainty laces?  
I said said the salesman Lady  
this fence is guaranteed to protect you  
in four distinct places.

---

**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 7.

## *The Turning Spade*

We remember when the world began—  
we who are here at its ending.

This crash of planets is not a new sound.  
We have heard it rumble the distant hills  
but never guessed it could spark our names  
against the sky or cause the rending  
of all the little bells of innocence  
and all the big promises. . .

This was to have been our world  
whirling and us with it,  
over and over in the high blue hemisphere.

Touch one star I said and you came near  
and touched one star.  
Now touch one planet I said. Don't be afraid.  
But you leaned too far and touched the spade  
of the mighty plow in the hand of God.  
We witnessed then the turning of the last clod. . .

Two people stood trembling on the crashing sphere  
clinging, clinging to the deep edge of fear.

---

**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 8.

## *The Path I Walk*

The coiling, sliding grass  
Hisses as I pass.  
The path I walk upon  
Becomes but sole pawn.  
There on small matted mound,  
there over measured ground—  
the cricket sound.

O circle of cricket grass  
between  
sight and the unseen  
chirp me on.

---

**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 9.

## *What Might Be Is Crouching to Be Born*

I passed by the red rock  
and the fields the sun makes  
and the numberless little rivers and the numerous great lakes.

Up, then, up the road by the long-horned steers  
with the road turning left of south and climbing the sky  
and I climbing with it  
to the place naked eye meets naked eye.

There, there the sky and I beholding  
and the sky fleeing and I fleeing its red anger.

Down, down the bare-backed mare of road  
to the rivers the sun makes disappear with the sun,  
to the path the snake makes disappear with the snake,  
to the steers disappearing. . .

Time, then, time to behold the light,  
the little light burning up the east  
as it slides down the great hump of day.

O little light delay,  
O linger, aspen night of Appian stars.  
What might be hidden in the dark door of the mountain  
crouching to be born.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 10.

## *Worm, Feed Gently*

Worm, feed gently on my heart today.  
If you must feed, worm, feed lovingly.  
Sparrow, pecking, pecking, my heart away.  
If you must peck, sparrow, peck aimlessly.

Heart, beat low, beat low today,  
If you must hurt, heart, hurt silently.  
Life, deal softly with me, I pray.  
Worm, feed gently on my heart today.

---

**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 11.

## *Parrot My Name*

I heard my good name repeated by parrots  
in the vacant lot at the end of the block  
but my true one is still in the family plot.  
I heard my good name called by parents  
of parents in the public park  
but the church tower has never tolled my dark.

I took the good name of another all in vain.  
I know not whether John coming upon  
my private face in the open park, will depart, and explain.  
I know not whether Margaret coming down the stars  
in a white sail and a borrowed bell  
will come upon my secret in the leaves, and tell.

---

**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 12.

## *Dirge for This Machine Age*

And all the gears began to rattle  
with not a man to hear them  
and one by one the milling machines  
milled with no man near them.

Hour by hour they made meal for bread  
until meal turned into weevil  
and this is what the weevil said:  
“Now which is the greater evil?

For man to eat his weevil-bread  
or weevil grow as fast as he can  
into a monstrous devil  
then turn and make a meal of man?”

And all the gears began to rattle  
with not a man to hear them  
and one by one the milling machines  
milled with no man near them.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 13.

## *I Listened*

I listened with my plastic ears  
through all the months, through all the years,  
for a voice that I had heard  
without a face, without a word.

Now I know that should I deign  
to remove the plastic pane  
there would be no voice at all  
sounding down and up the hall.

There would be no part of me  
left to claim identity.  
There must be, for my own sake  
a voice to shout myself awake.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 14.

## *To Any Duck in Anybody's Pond*

Why, why must you pick the hip-pocket of a far sky  
when earth's haven is everybody's heaven? And why ask why  
when the mind's eye, dull from staring beyond reason  
returns, in due season, to the same desolation, the same pond?

Why mind the black squall, or any squall at all,  
or for that matter, any weather, and why ask whether  
it all adds up to the same ache of limb-ache of eye.

Seeing as you see, see I. Seeing as I see, oh come now, call  
any duck by name going anywhere this summer  
or if not this summer, this fall,  
and see if he answers from a far place a far cry.

Over any desolate pond, behold  
the seasons blossom from each frond of heaven  
under the same sky, or no sky at all.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 15.

## *Love Song*

I plucked a blooming rosebush from my breast,  
said, "Take it, dear. Plant it flowering west.  
You'll need a blaze of burning burning blush  
before night nocturnes final hollow hush."  
(Oh, never never let him guess he's never guessed!)

I leaned my heavy hump against the hay,  
said, "Dear devil Dan you must not must not stay  
where tramps have tricked and bedded up the night  
and shed their snaky skins of summer light."  
( Oh, never never let him see he's blind with sight!)

I crossed my pillaged purple trousered legs,  
said to myself, Perch, hennaed head, upon his pogo-pegs.  
Bob a million mullioned light-lunged yeas  
to all his gossooned gamma gamma brays  
( but never never let him see your barbed beta-rays!)

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 16.

## *A Hand Reaches*

A hand in space reaches,  
reaches for the one-faced-moon.  
A hand full of stars stirs and no cloud  
over and no cloud covers  
the primitive face, the rugged man  
face of the moving moon. Only a hand,  
a hand of spilling stars stirs  
breathless, oceanless, moleculed space.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 17.

## *Man Down Under*

The swan's neck moved a water-line  
inverting itself in the sun on water.  
The man stood thin by the still lagoon  
floating wide in the shine of water.  
As he turned away from the lake of swans  
his shadow flat on the lake went under.  
The swan left circles on water-shine  
as it followed the form of the man down under.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 18.

## *We Ripple the Same*

I am one with people crisscrossing the rain;  
bodkins of weavers, weaving cellophane;  
feet of rubber, umbrellas for heads  
(who knows Jane from Agnes or which wave length is Ted's?)  
We splash, splash, splash on the sidewalk of rain,  
each his own splash, but each ripple the same.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 19.

## *Crucifix*

Though he was innocent as innocent petal-stripped dawn,  
they hanged Him, hanged Him naked, naked body eyes of neon  
Pilate, his hands again, said: Robe Him for shroud,  
as winter saplings' bare limbs, skull-brain, cloud-sun.

But first he marched—marched with spittle cheeks, about-face,  
crushed by hissing lash, tiger-eyes, skull-thorns' leopard sky,  
depressing shoulder-arms, limbs under wood—a wooden synonym  
a crucifix of marching men, for marching men a why.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 20.

## *Penultimate Light*

Let love's petals of light  
be slow to blossom.  
Let no storm blow  
the luminous leaves  
from earth-bending boughs  
of ultimate fruition.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 21.

## *This Pretzel Self*

The self can twist into such pretzel lies  
The first cry can be heard in blade of night  
But no man later knows just when surprise  
First hid its face beneath a fold of fright.  
Like spurt of fueled fire or sudden bark  
Of pup to find the bone he hid was got  
From hiding place—who knows when, what dark;  
Had thought: no one, no thing could find the spot.

The first twist is the hardest trick to learn  
For soon the self can lean a little toward  
The offered hand, the searching eye, but spurn  
At once and for all time the well-meant word.  
When mind then seeks to free itself from self  
It finds it has been trapped on lowest shelf.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 22.

## *In Favor of Your Smile*

The ether hour has gone.  
The sun has sunk twenty-five thousand days  
and we are heading now for two moonstone bays.  
Love, against every storm, has won.  
Hand, hold while there is time to be . . .  
Oh, long-loved one still mine a while,  
I finesse in favor of your smile,  
knowing it will stretch across any sea.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 23.

## *Hello, Without the O*

The o would be an apology  
and what for?  
He may look sad, sometimes glad,  
and at times wise  
but never, in the broadest sense,  
should you expect the honorable cat  
to apologize.

His mew is kittenish when young  
but beware! he is catty and bolder  
when older and his fare  
is ratty.

He can Cummings you  
and Pound you  
all in one debonair, eye-browish  
touch-me-if-you-dare  
stare.

Hello is what a cat says  
without the o.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 24.

## *From Spring's Calendar*

When spring was being sized to a day  
to be remembered as one particular day  
when one leaf fell into the bay  
of silence and slipped past your wall  
of surprise, I fled, afraid. . .  
afraid of your two opening eyes  
and love lost in the haze  
of one dead leaf falling  
from Spring's green calendar of days.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 25.

## *Into Wider Arias*

From this narrow spondee of space, step  
into wider arias, into limitless harmonies.  
Solo to self, become now  
concert-timed to meter of rubatos;  
tuned to transcription of symphonies. Bars  
that once held feet fast,  
become now lines leaping the staff  
in unequal pursuit of that final score,  
of that final chord of music that crashes  
and sparks, lighting the latent stars.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 26.

## *Double Aspect*

Yours was a clock-wise mind  
Which the lacquered fingers of time  
could not unwind.  
His was a triple-locked heart  
which the clutching fingers of time  
could not pluck apart.  
Your mind and his heart met. . .  
the spider fingers of time  
held you in a lacquered net.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 27.

## *Spies and Irises*

All the old fossils are lifting lids  
from caverns of eyes,  
small rivers of veins—  
crossbones in catacombs  
of the leaded tombs.

Drip, drip from cataracts  
leaping caves of spies—  
spies and irises—  
into all the crevices of the leaning floors  
and the lifting domes.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 28.

## *Lost Self*

Not mine but a thousand other voices cried your name.  
Not you but a thousand other yous answered, came,  
stood before me, snatched at me, said:  
“Give me back myself. The I-that-was-I is not dead  
but is part of you, who knew me to be the same  
as I knew myself before I lost my name.”  
Cried: “Hear one voice above the Judas crowd—  
the lost voice that shrieks from a vanishing cloud.  
Lift me from myself. Say I am not you.  
Give me back my self before you slip completely from view.”

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 29.

## *And On and On*

The cheep of, nothing can stop. Nobody.  
The rhythm of, native, naked; the face of;  
the definable, indefinable, something-nothing of.  
Nobody, not even you, I, they,  
nor the earth-bound beauty of, stop it.  
Nothing can stop it, nobody. It goes,  
and goes, like Summer, Autumn, Summer,  
and Spring, like Spring it does spring, will spring  
like grass, the new-born wail of it, mast of it, sail of it,  
heart of, mind of, cheep of, nothing  
can stop it. Nobody can stop it. Nothing.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 30.

## *Unfinished Business*

And then from the river  
such power, such speed.  
No stopping the water  
by heroic deed.  
Just unfinished business,  
and last command.  
Then from under earth's blanket  
still pointing—one hand.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 31.

## *I, Too, Mary*

Once again the world bids "Merry Christmas"  
but the world is full of crucifixions  
and dark the earth. . .

I, too, Mary, have a son.  
I, too, remember his birth  
and the hope I had for the first-born-one.  
O, Mary, today a gun  
is in his hands and one points his way.

Once, Mary, you looked and saw the sun  
fade; the earth and sky  
tremble. It was your son, Mary,  
your Gethsemane hour.

Merry Christmas?  
Yes, to all the neighbors.  
See! I gather poinsettias to lay  
about a cardboard stable;  
to decorate a crucified tree  
and a long flat table.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 32.

## *Woman Rocking the Sky*

I sit here rocking in my cradle-chair—  
rocking my eyes, their rhythms part of the hills, of the skies,  
of the morning, of wind parting the upper, rolling air.  
The planes could be birds in the fog, the birds could be birds without eyes.  
(He might come. Oh, surely he might come with the dawn.  
Watch for him. Wait for him. Sweep the clouds with your eyes!)

Many cricket hours have passed. The grass still struggles, the lawn.  
(He might be coming today. He might be homing the skies!  
Watch for him. Wait for him. Call him back with your eyes!)

I sit here rocking the dawn, the noon, the night skies.  
The hem of my cloak sweeps the lawn clean for a finger's length but height  
is all my eyes can measure as they search for him day and night.  
(Surely he will fly over. After many dawns, many noons, many nights—  
surely he will come today—or tomorrow.)

So I sit here rocking and listening and watching with pendulum eyes.  
Every hum in the ether may be my own flesh parting the skies.

---

**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 33.

## *The World No Bigger than an Eyeball*

and round in the sky's eye,  
moves between fringed lids, wise  
and always closed a little in disguise.

And I, microscopic to the withering eye,  
am nevertheless viewed microscopically  
and constantly because, being multiple and parasitic  
and also wise, I and mine cling, in disguise,  
and clang the radiant metallic curtain  
that protects the transparent retina  
of the red sky's weathering eye.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 34.

## *The Noon Side Of*

It is the day the very day the dragon flies.  
It is the time of the moth turning into wool-fag  
    (gold thread only whole skeins of.)  
It is the sweat-beaded time of the lizard  
    the turned turtle,  
the blush-black day-cheek choke-cherry.  
Turn up the stone worm the face grimacing.  
Lean on the bent side of wind turning sunflowers  
down from the up side of day bringing noon in.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 35.

## *Who Eats Who?*

Dogs eat dogs and men  
eat dogs with buns and mustard.  
I eat fish. Fish, me.  
Some fish jump out of the sea.  
Tell me, where shall I run to?

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 36.

## *Two Themes on the Same Subject*

### I

The summer sun was good to us,  
or so we thought that day,  
and my brown skin was browner browned  
and yours was new-mowed hay.

And so I closer drew to you  
and you came close to me  
and both of us, so much in love,  
were swept into the sea.

### II

And when the wild sea called to us  
we gladly went her way—  
you, with earth-born fragrance;  
me, with smell of hay.

So that is why the flowers grow  
right out of the sea  
and that is why seahorses come,  
forever nibbling me.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 37.

## *The Knuckled Years*

These are the knuckled years,  
the lean years of the fat Goliath  
where Kong is king. . .

But all the lambs, little David, are yours  
to herd, to keep from harm. Each riot  
of little rivers is yours to tame and the unkind.  
bristling ground. Grow tall,  
little David. Tall-ly protect the helpless beast  
from the giant gnat. Tell  
the mountain towers to hover  
close, David. They know best  
which wind blows the clover,  
which chases the tiger home.  
Hum, David, hum all the bees in.  
There must be honey for the winter bin.

Grow tall. Cover a cave, David.  
Take up the iron staff.  
Put on the iron boots. Divide  
dreams awake. Count the black goats  
white. Blessed be the black goats.  
The white goats have passed beneath the sword.  
Who gets the sword ready for the black goats?  
Grow fast, David. Grow strong, slim.  
The big challenge must be answered.  
The Giant must be slain.  
Yours must be the sword of light struck  
again and again. . .

The boy David raised his shepherd's staff.  
Goliath within his cave stumbled,  
missed the path. And then?  
And then the world's globe trembled.

How long, how long, David? The world must know  
how long it takes a boy to grow.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), pp. 38–39.

## *Night in Bloom*

I lay me where the night in bloom  
briefly petalled to the moon.

I lay me there among the scent  
of spice and pine and misted mint,

nor rose to greet the silvering light  
that climbed the avenues of night.

Last among the leaves was I  
underneath the breathing sky.

There among the leaves I lay  
and closed my eyes and far away  
and faint upon the languid night  
could almost hear the climb of light,

could almost see bright fingers shake  
and gently nudge all life awake.

Ah, then I reached up high and high  
and touched the last star in the sky.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 40.

## *Anxiety*

I saw anxiety open the door  
and stick out its tongue at me.  
I dropped my book and ran  
but always I could see  
anxiety's anxious axled eye  
turning to glare at me.  
I knew that I must face it  
so squared myself about  
and went and locked the door  
that closed anxiety out.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 41.

## *Uncertain Cloud*

The cat twitches sleep—  
his eye on the wary  
unseen canary.

The child torments the sheet—  
body-bent against the cold  
cloud of his dream.

Man travels by day a one tracked  
trolley but by night wanders  
uncharted yonders,  
giving to himself what reason lacked  
but keeping his eye on the wary  
unseen canary  
and bodying the holy shroud  
of an uncertain cloud.

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**Publication.** From *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957), p. 42.

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## LATER PERIODICAL VERSE

1963 | *A poem published after Lane's three surviving scanned collections.*

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## *Gerund Among the Idioms*

My beloved has both feet in the syntax of my heart.  
He stands there, stronger than any conjugation—  
Taller than any exclamation!  
Though fingers are alphabets in his interrogative palms,  
Feet kick moods against their own subjunctive sills,  
Eyes dash no farther than the apostrophes in his eyes,  
Though negative openings, punctuations and tag endings deny him,  
Present participles strike against his past time continuous,  
His contractions are not one scan removed from my own future perfect.  
Though positives, comparatives and superlatives degree him conditionally,  
Direct and indirect objects (in parenthesis) partition him partly,  
Reflexives, singular against his plurals, split all his infinitives,  
He stands there, nominative absolute, gerund among the idioms,  
Expletive among all my proper and improper nouns—  
Conjunction of all my personal and impersonal pronouns.

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**Publication.** *The Clearing House*, vol. 38, no. 2 (October 1963), p. 92.

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# EDITORIAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

*Textual method, variants, and the present limits of the collection.*

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## *Text and arrangement*

The edition is chronological at the section level. Each surviving book has its own section and retains its original order. Magazine and newspaper verse is separated by period. Every poem begins on a new page; longer poems continue naturally. Line breaks, stanza divisions, italics, and clearly authorial indentation have been checked against the scans. Mechanical wraps caused by narrow original columns have been rejoined, and typographic small capitals at poem openings have been normalized to ordinary capitalization. Closed-up em dashes follow the evidence of the printed sources.

## *Variants*

Three poems first printed in *Variegation*—"Two Towns," "Rhythm of Sound," and "Fruit of This Hour"—were later collected in *The Third Eyelid*. Comparison revealed no substantive revisions requiring a parallel text; the later book versions are printed once, and their earlier appearances are recorded after the poems. The two verified *Variegation* poems not collected in the surviving books are printed in their own section. The same policy governs "Ledge of Memory" from *Recurrence*.

## *Unrecovered books and pamphlets*

The local scans do not exhaust Lane's separately published work. Library and bookseller records identify *Eve Made Wise* (1947) and *Make-Believe* (1955) as additional poetry books; *Trace* advertised *Make-Believe* as a Different Press volume. Catalog records also list *Mommy Dear* (1948), *Hold the Candle High: Twenty Years of Christmas Poems* (1955), *One Prayer Not Wasted* (Newspaper

*Verse*) (1972), and *Pattern for Peace: Prize Poems* (1985). Their precise extent and contents remain to be verified from copies. A poem titled “Frank” is indexed in *Premier Poets: Ninth Biennial Anthology* (1986), but no complete text has been located. These titles are documented here rather than silently represented as present.

### *Principal sources*

Frona Lane, *Apples of Gold* (Los Angeles: Welty Printing Co., 1945); *The Third Eyelid* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951); *Worm, Feed Gently, and Other Poems* (Cabot, Vermont: The Green Leaf Press, 1957); Lane’s contributions to *Variegation*, *Recurrence*, *The Clearing House*, and the newspaper and school-program scans preserved with the project; Frona Lane’s preface to *The Contemporary Scene* (1954); local biographical files and contemporary press notices; WorldCat catalog records; and the Kate Rennie Archer papers finding aid at the Huntington Library.

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## *Colophon*

Compiled from the Frona Lane materials and journal scans preserved in the BKS Extremes project, with additional bibliographic research, August 2026. Designed in EB Garamond at six by nine inches. Cover artwork is derived from the user's Frona Lane graphic. This edition is intended to remain extensible as further verified books and periodical witnesses are recovered.