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Three Poems

Jessamyn West

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THREE POEMS

BIOGRAPHY WITH FLOWERS

My cow slip brain, my daisy chain,
 sweet nosegay of unreason,
 my lily of the valley where
 intelligence is treason.

My harebell mind with simples twined,
 my branch of flowering bane,
 my garland where the maiden hair
 with bleeding heart has lain.

My garden wrought without a thought,
 rank volunteer of unwitting
 my aconite, my bloom by night,
 my mourning bride of spirit.

My Venus trap, great botany's map
 for planting common rue:
 now night shade's spread and cockscombs tread
 where candy tuft once grew.

TIME IS THE ATLAS

Time is the Atlas death keeps;
 Bony, his finger points to the edges
 Of the known lands: traces the ridges
 The traveler crosses and sleeps.

Deserts of years and seconds as wide
 As a sea, he scans. Only the rivers
 He can not ascend. There the lovers
 By waters eternal abide.

L A M E N T

Loving, the god was mine
and I did eat;
blood warm from his great heart
in mine did beat.

Beloved, I was the god
the bread, the bride:
and daily was devoured
and daily died.

O let me love again
and no god be:
unloved, but nourished by
divinity.

JESSAMYN WEST

LUCRETIUS, III, 1053-1076

Baudelaire knew what it was like,
The typewriter keys red hot,
All the paint brushes a yard long,
The paint mixed with chewing gum.
I write letters and don't send them;
Dream away my poverty;
Make dozens of incredibly
Bad sketches; reread the great
Masterpieces; review my
Greek and Chinese, and discover
My vocabulary is gone;
Take my pulse; start out on walks,
And return home; my mind deep
And clear like the Deipnosophists.
Jean-Jacques, Amiel, Bashkirtsev,
It is possible to produce