

Through Agony

Claude McKay

I

All night, through the eternity of night,
Pain was my portion though I could not feel.
Deep in my humbled heart you ground your heel,
Till I was reft of even my inner light,

5 Till reason from my mind had taken flight,
And all my world went whirling in a reel.
And all my swarthy strength turned cold like steel,
A passive mass beneath your puny might.
Last night I gave you triumph over me,
10 So I should be myself as once before,
I marveled at your shallow mystery,
And haunted hungrily your temple door.
I gave you sum and substance to be free,
Oh, you shall never triumph any more!

II

15 I do not fear to face the fact and say,
How darkly-dull my living hours have grown,
My wounded heart sinks heavier than stone,
Because I loved you longer than a day!
I do not shame to turn myself away
20 From beckoning flowers beautifully blown,
To mourn your vivid memory alone
In mountain fastnesses austerely gray.
The mists will shroud me on the utter height,
The salty, brimming waters of my breast
25 Will mingle with the fresh dews of the night
To bathe my spirit hankering to rest.
But after sleep I'll wake with greater might,
Once more to venture on the eternal quest.

2 portion] , *add. Lib.*

6 .] , *Lib.*

10 ,] *om. Lib.*

15 do not fear] am not afraid *Lib.*

17 ,] *om. Lib.*

19 do not shame] am not ashamed *Lib.*

Textual Note

This poem also appears in *The Liberator* (December, 1921), where the first stanza is unnumbered.