

THE PAGEANT

Wesley Lambert

In Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes
and grime all scrubbed away,
with honeysuckles in our hair,
we saddled up the gray.

We plodded through those moted beams—
light fingers of the sun—
in heels run-down and frayed dresses,
in rustic threads homespun.

We saw wisterias in bloom
who bowed their royal heads
in honor of the pageant set
beyond our meek farmstead.

In time, the forest path revealed
an oak, and wood-lined dell
more picturesque than painted strokes
this side of Doré's Hell.

A swaybacked nag stood cropping grass
as people gathered 'round,
and in her saddle tensed a gent
whose hands were harshly bound.

His eyes glared wide and beseeched us
for haven or respite,
and perspiration soaked him through
in terror of his plight.

His countenance a mask of stone,
the sheriff plied his quirt
and seared the old mare's withered flanks
and spurred her from its hurt.

The rider hung in place beneath
the oak's stoutest limb,
a sullied pear in noon's stiff breeze,
a pendulum so grim.

His feet danced to a voiceless tune,

solemn and undefined,
a threnody of other spheres,
a rhythm of the mind.

Like muted wraiths we filed away.
The rite had run its course.
The victim of our parted guest
reclaimed his stolen horse.

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