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MODERNIST LITERATURE OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE

*Anthology of Poetry &
Short Fiction*



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Course Materials
Not for Sale

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Introductory Note on European Modernism

This collection captures in translation some of the best known modernist poets and short fiction writers from different countries and languages in Continental Europe, and relies on the implied judgment that the poets and writers chosen for translation must be the ones whose works are the most significant, not only for their own immediate communities but for the wider world. A course entitled European Continental Literature in the degree programme of a Nigerian university primarily answers to the function of internationalization, which does not stop at mentioning as many countries as possible, but entails recognition that there is something in literature that is universal, which the course should bring out and inculcate. The emphasis, therefore, is not *Europe*, but rather the nature of literature. A poet, as Czeslaw Milosz has stressed, 'participates in the management of the estate of poetry, of that in his own language and also that of world poetry' (*A Book of Luminous Things* xv); and great poets all the more so. There is much, therefore, that can be learned about the *estate* 'of world poetry' from the work of a single great poet and certainly from the work of a selection of significant poets of any age.

But the range of cultural phenomena encompassed in the term European Continental Literature obviously far exceeds what a single course of one semester can adequately account for. In spatial terms, it extends to the entire stretch from Iberia in the west to Russian Urals in the Far East and from the northern rim of the Mediterranean Sea to the Arctic Circle, and with a history of civilization going back at least to the eighth century BC and a huge variety of languages and linguistic traditions. However, a number of courses in the UNN English and Literary Studies Programme address some aspects of the vast literary tradition, namely Greek and Roman Literatures, Comedy: Moliere to Soyinka, and European Drama since Ibsen. To ensure that a course dedicated to the literatures of continental Europe is given sufficient coverage, the selections in this anthology are limited to one period of cultural history shared throughout the Continent and covering the main cultural capitals where the literary productions that might be considered to be representative of the literary practice associated with the period in question have taken place. The modernist period readily suggests itself because quite unlike the Renaissance which took five or six centuries to spread throughout Europe, human development was already so advanced in early modernism that its concerns and innovations appeared in many European capitals almost simultaneously.

Moreover, ELS 413: European Continental Literature is presented in the course description of the English and Literary Studies Programme as a complement to ELS 441: European Drama since Ibsen, although by nomenclature it ought to cover the almost 3000 years of European literary culture. As a complement to European Drama since Ibsen, the coverage is narrative and lyric mimesis of the period, which is roughly the modernist tradition. The main novels for the course are Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (1864), Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (1946) and *The Plague* (1948), Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus* (1948), and Joseph Breitbach, *Report on Bruno* (1964)

What is anthologized here is only poetry and short fiction of the modernist tradition, extending from the last three or four decades of the nineteenth century to the second half of the

twentieth century. This is not to say that Modernism ended in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Michel Foucault's tripartite analysis of European cultural history, following the structural changes occurring within language, Modernism is still ongoing. Some other scholars in the field of cultural studies refer to contemporary culture as *postmodern*. Dates offered in analyses based on major changes in world history include the post-Second World War world order and the post-Cold War world order. But according to Stuart Sim, the concept of postmodernism is basically what the individual researcher makes of it:

you may simply wish to range around in the various networks of information [*Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*] offers, in order to build up your own particular picture of what postmodernism involves: dictionaries provide just that creative possibility for each individual reader, and the choice is yours. (ix)

Sim's analysis is based on changes in the intellectual tradition, and includes Foucault himself in the intellectual tradition he calls postmodern:

Poststructuralism is a term that refers to a wide range of responses to the structuralist paradigm which dominated French thought during the middle decades of the twentieth century - responses such as the philosophically oriented 'deconstruction' of Jacques Derrida, the various 'archaeological' and 'genealogical' enquiries into cultural history of Michel Foucault, and the 'difference feminism' of such theorists as Luce Irigaray. It is always difficult to date movements such as this with any great precision, but poststructuralism has certainly been an influential part of the cultural scene since the 1960s.

It may well be that *poststructuralism* provided the inspiration and model for 'postmodernism' and a host of other similar notions announcing ways of seeing which lately held the ground but are now overtaken by perhaps another way of seeing that is yet indefinable, like post-Marxism, post-Humanism, Post-Christianity, post-metaphysics, and postcolonialism of course. Sim in the above does not give an idea what postmodernist art might look like: the focus is on methods and instruments that may be set to work in reading a variety of documents, including literature.

Bruce King, however, suggests that modernism is ongoing and may be regarded as the world standard of art phenomena. Discussing the state of disesteem the literatures of the former colonies had to contend with and try and overcome, he submits:

From the mid-1930s onwards the gap between metropolitan and colonial literary fashions decreased, a gap which had to be closed before authors from the new nations could be regarded as equals to their contemporaries elsewhere. Only after mastering modernism and giving it a local significance could the new literatures have joined the modern world. (1114)

Modernism, accordingly, is the art of the 'modern world' – the world, presumably, which has been shaped under Western political, cultural, economic, and intellectual influence. In King's terms, the artists who fail to master the practices associated with the art of modernism, and unable to play the game of poetry 'according to the current rules,' (Michel Beaujour (59), may still produce literary works, but whether such works could 'find preservers', 'such as respond to the truth happening in the work' (Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* 64), is a big question.

For an African, and a Nigerian, the idea of literary works finding or failing to find preservers must be concerning, considering the fate of the bulk of literary productions of the 1950s, the 1960s, and also the 1970s. Very little is heard of Amos Tutuola beyond *The Palm Wine Drinkard*; the same with Cyprian Ekwensi, John Munonye, Onuora Nzekwu, T.M. Aluko, Elechi Amadi, Nkem Nwankwo, Kola Omotosho, Obinkaram Echewa, while Flora Nwapa has been called back from forgetfulness by the feminists. For the most part, it has not been demonstrated that these are not worth preserving, that is to say, shown that there is no *happening of truth* in these works, and nothing to respond to. Other writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, possibly, are recognized because they first found preservers in the West!

Yet by its nature as something pertaining to the coincidence of beauty and truth (John Keats. 'The Grecian Ode'), art demands preserving; for:

Beauty is a fateful gift of the essence of truth, and here truth means the disclosure of what keeps itself concealed. The beautiful is not what pleases, but what falls within that fateful gift of truth which comes to be when that which is eternally non-apparent and therefore invisible attains its most radiantly apparent appearance. We are compelled to let the poetic word stand in its truth, in beauty. (*What is Called Thinking* 19)

Heidegger's *truth* here is not adequation or correspondence, but another kind, truth that manifests; thus a truth that confronts perception, confronts thought, and is contemplated. That the mind does not for any cause give it up is one way to characterize beauty as truth; truth as beauty. But Heidegger is saying that whether the thing of beauty holds its place in the mind cannot be by *our* decision. We *are* compelled to let it 'stand in its truth, in beauty'.

The art that is called *modernist* often displays no more than a tenuous link to things of experience. For some critics, that tenuous link is invitation enough to construct a utopic order as a supplementary patch on some model that has been made of human life or history. For many others, there is a call either to give all attention to that art object or else no attention at all.

Modernism in art and literature comprises a number of movements which swept through Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Some of the movements were centred in specific capitals and major cities or countries of Europe. For example, the Symbolist movement was mainly associated with Paris, while Expressionism and Futurism were associated with Germany and Russia respectively. They were basically ways of doing art, which were unafraid of being called in Benjamin Constant's famous phrase 'art for art's sake', being emphatically different from the trends in the history of literature, designated under realism, according to Milosz, 'a compromised term' (xv). These trends go back to the seventeenth century, and reflect a culture in which, according to the Soviet thinker G.V. Plekhanov, the artists were in 'tune with the society about them' (173). Breaking with the realist tradition, the new art rather aspired towards radical creativeness, with ideological underpinnings that had become discernible even in the early nineteenth century; for example in the argument of Victor Cousin in a Sorbonne lecture of 1818 where he states:

We must have religion for religion's sake, morality for morality's sake, as with art for art's sake ... the beautiful cannot be the way to what is useful, or to what is good, or to what is holy; it leads only to itself.

There is here answer to Benjamin Constant's idea above which he had published in a journal article in 1804 that 'Art for art's sake, with no purpose, for any purpose perverts art. But art achieves a purpose which is not its own'. Cousin's Lecture is entitled 'Du vrai, du beau, et du bien' ('Lecture on the true, the beautiful, and the good') and precedes John Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' by a couple of years, the poem with the famous line, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'. Whether it was expressionism, or surrealism, or Dadaism, or Vorticism, and so forth, it was an art that demanded total concentration – and more; an art that 'demands for itself that it be tended, cared for, husbanded in its own essential nature, by thought' (*What is Called Thinking* 121).

The seventeenth century trends in art and literature could range from what some called the 'realism of universals', whereby art explored the inner meaning of experience and phenomena, wholly an 'interpreted world' (Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies* I), to *naturalism* in which mimesis focused on the surfaces of things – things 'as they were', which then, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, engaged 'the reader's belief and evaluative system', leading to his 'active understanding' (*The Dialogic Imagination*). These interests, 'belief and evaluative system' and 'active understanding' are at best 'one-sided thinking' not part of what Heidegger calls 'devoted thought', (*What is Called Thinking* 32,11). The pattern of thinking, which Raymond Williams sees as *consumption* or *pseudo-consumption* of the work of art (189) is, according to Michel Foucault, precisely what modernism challenges and maybe even seeks to upset. In a key statement in which the values of modernism are set forth in stark details, Foucault writes:

From the Romantic revolt against a discourse frozen in its own ritual pomp, to the Mallarméan discovery of the word in its impotent power, it becomes clear what the function of literature was, in the nineteenth century, in relation to the modern mode of being of language. Against the background of this essential interaction, the rest is merely effect: literature becomes progressively more differentiated from the discourse of ideas, and encloses itself within a radical intransitivity; it becomes detached from all the values that were able to keep it in general circulation during the Classical age (taste, pleasure, naturalness, truth), and creates within its own space everything that will ensure a ludic denial of them (the scandalous, the ugly, the impossible); it breaks with the whole definition of genres as forms adapted to an order of representations, and becomes merely a manifestation of a language which has no other law than that of affirming – in opposition to all other forms of discourse – its own precipitous existence; and so there is nothing for it to do but to curve back in a perpetual return upon itself, as if its discourse could have no other content than the expression of its own form; it addresses itself to itself as a writing subjectivity, or seeks to re-apprehend the essence of all literature in the movement that brought it into being; and thus all its threads converge upon the finest of points – singular, instantaneous, and yet absolutely universal – upon the simple act of writing. At the moment when language, as spoken and scattered words, becomes an object of knowledge, we see it reappearing in a strictly opposite modality: a silent, cautious deposition of the word upon the whiteness of a piece of paper, where it can possess neither sound nor interlocutor, where it has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of its being. (*The Order of Things* 327)

We can see from the above what Heidegger means when he speaks of ‘the work of art’. It is certainly not the kinds of production that predated modernism, the ones that were kept ‘in general circulation during the Classical age’ by virtue of a dependent relationship or even providing an indicative arrow in the knowing of some state of affairs or value external to itself: ‘taste, pleasure, naturalness, truth’, but something that was radically intransitive and held itself in a ‘precipitous existence’. To Plekhanov whose ideas are still espoused by some intellectuals, this is ‘art for art’s sake’ and ‘arises where the artist is in discord with his social environment’ (172). But the state of mind of the artist is of much less interest to the philosophers of Modernism, if they may be so called, than ‘the work of art’ itself.

Modernism has provided both the ideological underpinning and the cultural space for art in its freedom and authentic standing for itself. This has consequences, as Heidegger spells out:

Nothing can be discovered about the thingly aspect of the work so long as the pure self-subsistence of the work has not distinctly displayed itself. Yet is the work ever in itself accessible?

To gain access to the work, it would be necessary to remove it from all relations to something other than itself, in order to let it stand on its own for itself alone. But the artist’s most peculiar intention already aims in this direction. The work is to be released by him to its pure self-subsistence. It is precisely in great art—and only such art is under consideration here—that the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge. (*Poetry, Language, Thought* 39)

Self-subsistence and self-sufficiency as a capacity derives from an essence, namely ‘truth happening’, happening here and now as this work; therefore, ‘for the first time’ (63). It is not that this greatness appears for the first time only in the modernist work. It goes with all great art, and is found in all ages. It does not matter that many of these may have been routinely read as if they existed ‘to achieve a purpose’, even a great purpose, ‘not its own’, according to Benjamin Constant. Works like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s and Friedrich Hölderlin’s in German Romanticism and Miguel de Cervantes’ of the Spanish early seventeenth century are great examples. The major works of these writers share with the pieces in this collection the character of self-contained and self-sustaining presence, and have come into being as *truth*.

In Foucault above, a literary work could not, without embarrassment in the Classical age, claim self-sustaining and self-contained existence for all justification: the age demanded that it reference ‘taste, pleasure, naturalness, truth’ as a *raison d’être*, and none of this happens within the work itself. Modernism resumes the career of *great* literature like a ‘schizo’ who, in the metaphor of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, ‘has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad’ (131). This statement crops up tellingly in their discussion of the whole signification process in literature, where signs have become shifty and undecidable:

That is what style is, or rather the absence of style—asyntactic, agrammatical: the moment when language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying

thing, but by what causes it to move, to flow, and to explode—desire. For literature is like schizophrenia: a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression. (133)

Modernism ought to be a style as literary movements generally are, but it may equally be an 'absence of style', first of all, there being many different styles gathered up in the notion, but also because of the violations of linguistic norms, not only syntactic or grammatical, but also discursive.

For example, in the opening paragraph of Joseph Breitbach's *Report on Bruno*, narration has a concrete feel. There is announcing of an issue of high political moment, involving struggle for power, forced abdication, and civil war. The language therefore activates a mode of reading in which, according to Northrop Frye, 'the verbal structure produces in its terms the body of phenomena it is describing, and a comparison between the two is implied throughout' (*The Great Code* 57). Narration does this in what is strictly called *history*, with a body of incidents belonging to a specific time and place. But this language does not permit that it be 'defined by what it says' because of the paragraph-initial *if*:

If my grandson Bruno Collignon should succeed in so stirring up the Chamber and the masses that our royal family were forced to renounce the throne and a republic were declared, then some degree of responsibility for the inevitable civil war would rest upon me. To my anguish, this conviction was confirmed by Bruno himself during the last session of Parliament. (7)

That initial *if* suspends reference, but without stopping signification. It continues to tell a story that could equally end in a civil war as not, but certainly not one of how a civil war was avoided, since to the narrator's anguish, his having 'some degree of responsibility for the inevitable civil war ... was confirmed by Bruno himself during the last session of Parliament'. At that 'last session of Parliament', the civil war is still *inevitable*, which is why the anguish the narrator suffers is from Bruno's confirmation that that civil war which is inevitable is in some degree his fault. We are looking at the 'pure functioning', as Jacques Derrida would say, of the world of a book (*Writing and Difference* 13), with its 'silent, cautious deposition of the word upon the whiteness of a piece of paper, where it can possess neither sound nor interlocutor, where it has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of its being' (Foucault), the normal state of affairs in the literature of modernism.

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Acknowledgments

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3. Austria

von HOFMANNSTHAL, Hugo (1874-1929)

The Gardener's Daughters (Die Töchter der Gärtnerin, 1891)

One fills the large Delft jugs,
Painted with blue dragons and birds,
With a loose sheaf of bright flowers:
Among them jasmine, ripe roses unfolding,
Dahlias, carnations and narcissus...

Tall daisies, lilac umbels and snowball Dance above
them, and

Stalks, silvery down and panicles sway...

A fragrant bacchanal...

The other with pale thin fingers picks

Long-stemmed rigid orchids,

Two or three for a narrow vase...

Rising up with fading colors,

With long styles, strange and winding,

With purple threads and garish dots,

With violet brown panther spots

And lurking, seductive chalices

Wanting to kill...

'Works' are Dead Rock («Werke sind totes Gestein», 1892)

'Works' are dead rock, sprung from resounding chisel,
When the master is at work, chipping away at his living
self.

'Works' announce the mind as pupas announce the
butterfly:

'Look, it left me behind – lifeless – and fluttered away.'

'Works' are like reeds, Midas' whispering reeds,

Spreading secrets long after having ceased to be true.

Written in a Copy of 'Yesterday' (In ein Exemplar von
'Gestern', 1892)

Thoughts are apples on the tree,

Not meant for anyone in particular,

But they end up belonging

To the one who takes them.

Truly, Many Have to Die Down Under

Truly, many have to die down under

Where the heavy rudders of ships glide,

Others live above beside the rudder,

Know the birds' flights and the countries of stars.

Many always lie with their limbs heavy, beside the
roots of entangled existence,
And the chairs are all prepared for others,
With the Sibyls, the Queens,
Where they sit as at home,
Light of head and with light hands.

But a shadow falls from the one existence
Over to the other existences,
And the light are bound to the heavy
As they are to earth and air:

Weariness of whole forgotten peoples
I can never remove from my eyelids
Nor withhold from my terrified soul
The taciturn downfall of distant stars.

Many fates are weaving away beside my fate,
Being interplays them all with each other,
And my part is more than the small flicker
Of this life or of my slender lyre.

Experience

A nameless homesickness for life was weeping
Within my soul, and it wept soundlessly,
As a man weeps, when, on board a great sailing-ship
With massive yellow sails, towards the evening,
Upon a dark blue water, he sails past
The town, his father town. And there he sees
The streets, hears all the fountains playing, smells
The fragrant lilac bushes, sees himself,
A child, stand on the shore, with a child's eyes,
Which fill with fear and want to cry, and sees
Through the wide-open window, light in his room—
But the great sea-ship bears him ever onward,
Gliding upon dark waters soundlessly
With massive yellow sails, of strange design.

The Actor Hermann Müller

Yet when the play was fading, and the curtain
Came down in silence like a painted eyelid
Over the magical cavern emptied now of life,
And he stepped out, a stage appeared before him
Like a wide, sleepless eye forever open
On which no curtain mercifully falls:

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The terrifying stage reality.
Then all the arts of transformation dropped
From him, and his poor soul walked quite unclothed
And gazed from a child's eyes.

Evening

Who can see much of importance where he roams?
Yet whoever utters 'Evening' says a great deal,
A word from which flows rare thought, rare sadness,
Like honey dripping from hollow combs.

Some Prose Poems

King Cophetua (König Cophetua, 1895)

The crown falls out of his indolent hand; the crown that is his beautiful city of Arles with its high walls and ponds and square paved dams, with the large Roman arena and a great number of black bulls, with the church of St. Trophime and the Alyscams, with the little yellow houses at night with whores pale as candle wax behind small windows in narrow back streets, with the street corners and river banks attached to the intimations of his childhood, and his favorite diseases: fever and the shivers, and the rivers, once so precious to him, in the distance between rocky mountains under a black and yellow evening sky, and all the statues he loved for no reason, and distant views from the arena tower, and a dim idea of the pains of others, all that drops out of his hand and leaves him entirely alone.

Creatures of Flame (Geschöpfe der Flamme, 1899)

We are all creatures of flame. The butterfly: the intensity of a short life and fragility become colour. My death is like shadow, my life aquiver, a pulse in the light; I am so close to death it makes me proud, cruel and demonic.

Unmoved, I flutter from Helen's lips to Adonis' wound.
I love my death, the flame, more than anything.

RILKE, Rainer Maria (1875-1926)

Knowing

Summer mountain, magic meadow, the mysterious weave of flowers
and grasses, and weeds,

the hard question of what is native

to this place, and what is not.

But does the botanist in me always have to point his finger inwardly, tapping off

whole indices of the species of pastures and fields like some might look for

all the A's or B-flats in
a symphony,

neatly sorted, counted, placed in a row?

If you ask him to sing the note of a particular plant, always, his pitch must be perfect.

But he'll probably never confess to you, although he'd like to, that, the more he seems to know, the more difficult it is to admit freely like a child to others, that,

this plant, the name of which seems to elude him, he now sees for the very first time.

Leaves

(1)
Sometimes,
even trees notice

there's a fence between them.

(2)
Small, quiet pond with roundwater drop of leaf,
no need of stem.

See it rise... into lance, feather,
perfected heart-shaped form.

(3)
Oak leaves, white, black,
red to scarlet and bur --

smooth lobes
to prickly bristles
and back,

bringing out the myriad accents
and turns of a phrase.

(4)

Perhaps leaves fall simply to carry away all that we
thought we needed to say.

And perhaps trees in this
way purify themselves each
year knowing that there is

no thought so large that it
cannot be written on
the smooth, plain surface
of but a single

leaf.

I Love You Gentlest Law

I love you, gentlest law, through which we yet were
ripening while it contended, you great homesickness
we have not transcended, you forest out of which we
never wended, you song that from our silence has
ascended, you sombre net
where feelings taking flight are apprehended.

You made yourself a so immense beginning the day
when you began us too,—and we beneath your suns
such ripeness have been winning have grown so
broadly and deep-rootedly, that you, in angels, men,
madonnas inuring,
can now complete yourself quite tranquilly.

Let your right hand on heaven's slope repose
and mutely bear what darkly we impose.

Behold the Sky

Behold the sky. Is there no constellation called
'Horseman?'

For we have been taught, singularly, to expect this: this
pride of earth, and his companion
who drives and holds him, and whom he carries.

Is he not, thus spurred and then reined in, like the
nervelike nature of Being?

Track and turn. But a pressure brings them together.
New expanse—and the two are one.

But *are* they truly? Or is the track they travel together
not the meaning of their way? Table and pasture part
them more than names.

Star patterns may deceive but it pleases us, for a while,
to believe in the figure. That's enough.

Childhood

The school's long stream of time and tediousness
winds slowly on, through torpor, through dismay. O
loneliness, O time that creeps away ... Then out at last:
the streets ring loud and gay, and in the big white
squares the fountains play, and in the parks the world
seems measureless.— And to pass through it all in
children's dress, with others, but quite otherwise than
they:—

O wondrous time, O time that fleets away,
O loneliness!

And out into it all to gaze and gaze: men, women,
women, men in blacks and greys, and children brightly
dressed, but differently; and here a house, and there a
dog, maybe, and fear and trust changing in subtle
ways:—

O grief uncaused, O dream, O dark amaze,
O still-unsounded sea!

And then with bat and ball and hoop to playing in
parks where the bright colours softly fade, brushing
against the grown-ups without staying when ball or
hoop their alien walks invade; but when the twilight
comes, with little swaying footsteps going home with
unrejected aid:— O thoughts that fade into the
darkness, straying
alone, afraid.

And hours on end by the grey pond-side kneeling with
little sailing-boat and elbows bare; forgetting it,
because one like it's stealing below the ripples, but
with sails more fair; and, having still to spare, to share
some feeling with the small sinking face caught sight of
there:— Childhood! Winged likeness half-guessed at,
wheeling, oh, where, oh, where?

God in the Middle Ages

And they'd got him in themselves upstored, and they
wanted him to reign forever, and they hung on him (a
last endeavour

to withhold his journey heavenward

and to have him near them in their slumbers) their
cathedrals' massive weights. He must merely wheel
across his boundless numbers
pointingly and, like a clock, adjust

what they daily toiled at or transacted. But he suddenly
got into gear,
and the people of the stricken town

left him—for his voice inspired such fear— running
with his striking-words extracted,
and absconded from his dial's frown.

Late Autumn in Venice

The city drifts no longer like a bait now, upcatching all
the days as they emerge. Brittlier the glassy palaces
vibrate now
beneath your gaze. And from each garden verge

the summer like a bunch of puppets dangles,
headforemost, weary, made away. Out of the ground,
though, from dead frost tangles
volition mounts: as though before next day

the sea-commander must have rigged and ready the
galleys in the sleepless Arsenal,
and earliest morning air be tarred already

by an armada, oaringly outpressing, and suddenly,
with flare of flags, possessing
the great wind, radiant and invincible.

The Insane

They are silent because the division walls are broken
down in the brain, and hours when they might be
understood at all begin and leave again.

Often when they go to the window at night, suddenly
everything seems right: their hands touch something
tangible, their heart is high and can pray,
the calmed eyes gaze

down on this unhopd-for, oft-distorted garden in this
peaceful square at rest, which in the reflex of this
foreign world
grows ever larger, never to be lost.

The Great Night

I'd often stand at the window started the day before,
stare and stare at you.

It still seemed to warn me off, the strange city, whose
unconfiding landscape gloomed as though I didn't
exist.

The nearest things didn't mind if I misunderstood
them.

The street would thrust itself up to the lamp, and I'd
see it was strange.

A sympathizable room up there, revealed in the
lamplight:

I'd begin to share: they'd notice, and close the shutters.
I'd stand.

Then a child would cry, and I'd know the mothers
in the houses, what they availed, and I'd know as well
the inconsolable grounds of infinite crying. Or else a
voice would sing, and what was expected be just a little
surpassed; or an old man coughed below, full of
reproach, as if his body were in the right against a
gentler world. Or else, when an hour was striking,
I'd begin to count too late and let it escape me.

As a strange little boy, when at last they invite him to join
them,

cannot catch the ball, and is quite unable to share the
game the rest are so easily playing, but stands and
gazes—whither?—I'd stand, and, all at once,
realize *you* were being friends with me, playing with
me,
grown-up

Night, and I'd gaze at you. While towers were raging,
and while, with its fate, a city stood round me, and
undividable mountains camped against me, and
Strangeness, in narrowing circles, hungrily prowled
round my casual flares of perception:

then, lofty Night,

you were not ashamed to recognize me. Your breathing
went over me; your smile upon all that spacious
consequence passed into me.

Cast Out on the Heart's Mountains

Cast out on the heart's mountains. See, how small
there, see: the last habitation of words, and higher, but
also so tiny, one last farmstead of feeling. Recognize it?
Cast out on the heart's mountains. Rock ground under
the hands. Something doubtless blooms here: from the
dumb precipice an ignorant plant is flowering
singly forth.

And the person with knowledge? Ah, the one who began to know
and is silent now, cast out on the heart's mountains.
Doubtless many a thing walks there with a clear
consciousness, many a safe mountain beast wandering,
lingering. And the great secure bird circles around the
summit's pure renunciation. —But insecure, and here
upon the heart's mountains ...

Going Blind

She sat at tea just like the others. First
I merely had a notion that this guest
Held up her cup not quite like all the rest.
And once she gave a smile. It almost hurt.

When they arose at last, with talk and laughter,
And ambled slowly and as chance dictated
Through many rooms, their voices animated,
I saw her seek the noise and follow after,

Held in like one who in a little bit
Would have to sing where many people listened;
Her lighted eyes, which spoke of gladness, glistened
With outward lustre, as a pond is lit.

She followed slowly, and it took much trying,
As though some obstacle still barred her stride;
And yet as if she on the farther side
Might not be walking any more, but flying.

Duino Elegies

The First Elegy

Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the Angelic
Orders? And even if one were to suddenly
take me to its heart, I would vanish into its
stronger existence. For beauty is nothing but
the beginning of terror, that we are still able to bear,
and we revere it so, because it calmly disdains
to destroy us. Every Angel is terror.
And so I hold myself back and swallow the cry
of a darkened sobbing. Ah, who then can
we make use of? Not Angels: not men,
and the resourceful creatures see clearly
that we are not really at home
in the interpreted world. Perhaps there remains
some tree on a slope, that we can see
again each day: there remains to us yesterday's street,
and the thinned-out loyalty of a habit

that liked us, and so stayed, and never departed.
Oh, and the night, the night, when the wind full of space
wears out our faces – whom would she not stay for,
the longed-for, gentle, disappointing one, whom the
solitary heart
with difficulty stands before. Is she less heavy for lovers?
Ah, they only hide their fate between themselves.
Do you not know yet? Throw the emptiness out of your
arms
to add to the spaces we breathe; maybe the birds
will feel the expansion of air, in more intimate flight.
Yes, the Spring-times needed you deeply. Many a star
must have been there for you so you might feel it. A wave
lifted towards you out of the past, or, as you walked
past an open window, a violin
gave of itself. All this was their mission.
But could you handle it? Were you not always,
still, distracted by expectation, as if all you experienced,
like a Beloved, came near to you? (Where could you
contain her,
with all the vast strange thoughts in you
going in and out, and often staying the night.)
But if you are yearning, then sing the lovers: for long
their notorious feelings have not been immortal enough.
Those, you almost envied them, the forsaken, that you
found as loving as those who were satisfied. Begin,
always as new, the unattainable praising:
think: the hero prolongs himself, even his falling
was only a pretext for being, his latest rebirth.
But lovers are taken back by exhausted Nature
into herself, as if there were not the power
to make them again. Have you remembered
Gastara Stampa sufficiently yet, that any girl,
whose lover has gone, might feel from that
intenser example of love: 'Could I only become like her?'
Should not these ancient sufferings be finally
fruitful for us? Isn't it time that, loving,
we freed ourselves from the beloved, and, trembling,
endured
as the arrow endures the bow, so as to be, in its flight,
something more than itself? For staying is nowhere.
Voices, voices. Hear then, my heart, as only
saints have heard: so that the mighty call
raised them from the earth: they, though, knelt on
impossibly and paid no attention:
such was their listening. Not that you could withstand
God's voice: far from it. But listen to the breath,
the unbroken message that creates itself from the silence.

It rushes towards you now, from those youthfully dead.
Whenever you entered, didn't their fate speak to you,
quietly, in churches in Naples or Rome?
Or else an inscription exaltedly impressed itself on you,
as lately the tablet in Santa Maria Formosa.
What do they will of me? That I should gently remove
the semblance of injustice, that slightly, at times,
hinders their spirits from a pure moving-on.
It is truly strange to no longer inhabit the earth,
to no longer practice customs barely acquired,
not to give a meaning of human futurity
to roses, and other expressly promising things:
no longer to be what one was in endlessly anxious hands,
and to set aside even one's own
proper name like a broken plaything.
Strange: not to go on wishing one's wishes. Strange
to see all that was once in place, floating
so loosely in space. And it's hard being dead,
and full of retrieval, before one gradually feels
a little eternity. Though the living
all make the error of drawing too sharp a distinction.
Angels (they say) would often not know whether
they moved among living or dead. The eternal current
sweeps all the ages, within it, through both the spheres,
forever, and resounds above them in both.

Finally they have no more need of us, the early-departed,
weaned gently from earthly things, as one outgrows
the mother's mild breast. But we, needing
such great secrets, for whom sadness is often
the source of a blessed progress, could we exist without
them?

Is it a meaningless story how once, in the grieving for
Linos,
first music ventured to penetrate arid rigidity,
so that, in startled space, which an almost godlike youth
suddenly left forever, the emptiness first felt
the quivering that now enraptures us, and comforts, and
helps.

The Second Elegy

Every Angel is terror. And yet, ah, knowing you, I
invoke you, almost deadly birds of the soul. Where are
the days of Tobias, when one of the most radiant of you
stood at the simple threshold,
disguised somewhat for the journey and already no
longer awesome

(Like a youth, to the youth looking out curiously). Let
the Archangel now, the dangerous one, from behind
the stars,
take a single step down and toward us: our own heart,
beating on high would beat us down. What are you?
Early successes, Creation's favourite ones, mountain-
chains, ridges reddened by dawns of all origin – pollen
of flowering godhead, junctions of light, corridors,
stairs, thrones, spaces of being, shields of bliss,
tempests of storm-filled, delighted feeling and,
suddenly, solitary mirrors: gathering their own out-
streamed beauty
back into their faces again. For we, when we feel,
evaporate: oh, we breathe ourselves out and away:
from ember to ember, yielding us fainter fragrance.
Then someone may say to us: 'Yes, you are in my
blood, the room, the Spring-time is filling with you'.....
What use is that: they cannot hold us,
we vanish inside and around them. And those who are
beautiful,
oh, who holds them back? Appearance, endlessly,
stands up,
in their face, and goes by. Like dew from the morning
grass,
what is ours rises from us, like the heat from a dish that
is warmed. O smile: where? O upward gaze:
new, warm, vanishing wave of the heart - : oh, we are
that. Does the cosmic space, we dissolve into, taste of
us then? Do the Angels really only take back what is
theirs, what has streamed out of them, or is there
sometimes, as if by an oversight, something of our
being, as well? Are we as mingled with their features,
as there is vagueness in the faces of pregnant women?
They do not see it in the swirling return to themselves.
(How should they see it?) Lovers, if they knew how,
might utter strange things in night air. Since it seems
everything hides us. Look, trees exist; houses, we live
in, still stand. Only we pass everything by, like an
exchange of air. And all is at one, in keeping us secret,
half out of shame perhaps, half out of inexpressible
hope. Lovers, each satisfied in the other, I ask you
about us. You grasp yourselves. Have you a sign?
Look, it happens to me, that at times my hands become
aware of each other, or that my worn face hides itself in
them. That gives me a slight sensation. But who would
dare to exist only for that? You, though, who grow in
the other's delight until, overwhelmed, they beg: 'No
more' -: you, who under your hands grow richer like

vintage years of the vine: who sometimes vanish,
because the other has so gained the ascendancy: I ask
you of us. I know you touch so blissfully because the
caress withholds, because the place you cover so
tenderly does not disappear: because beneath it you
feel pure duration. So that you promise eternity almost,
from the embrace. And yet, when you've endured the
first terrible glances, and the yearning at windows, and
the first walk together, just once, through the garden:
Lovers, are you the same? When you raise yourselves
one to another's mouth, and hang there – sip against
sip: O, how strangely the drinker then escapes from
their action.

Weren't you amazed by the caution of human gesture
on Attic steles? Weren't love and departure laid so
lightly on shoulders, they seemed to be made of other
matter than ours? Think of the hands how they rest
without weight, though there is power in the torso.
Those self-controlled ones know, through that: so much
is ours,
this is us, to touch our own selves so: the gods
may bear down more heavily on us. But that is the
gods' affair.
If only we too could discover a pure, contained human
place, a strip of fruitful land of our own, between river
and stone! For our own heart exceeds us, even as theirs
did. And we can no longer gaze after it into images,
that soothe it, or into
godlike bodies, where it restrains itself more
completely.

TRAKL, George (1887-1914)

De Profundis

There is a stubble field on which a black rain falls.
There is a tree which, brown, stands lonely here.
There is a hissing wind which haunts deserted huts---
How sad this evening.

Past the village pond
The gentle orphan still gathers scanty ears of corn.
Golden and round her eyes are gazing in the dusk
And her lap awaits the heavenly bridegroom.

Returning home
Shepherds found the sweet body
Decayed in the bramble bush.

A shade I am remote from sombre hamlets.

The silence of God
I drank from the woodland well.

On my forehead cold metal forms.
Spiders look for my heart.
There is a light that fails in my mouth.

At night I found myself upon a heath,
Thick with garbage and the dust of stars.
In the hazel copse
Crystal angels have sounded once more.

Decline

(To Karl Borromäus Heinrich)

Over the white pond
The wild birds have travelled on.
In the evening an icy wind blows from our stars

Over our graves
The broken brow of the night inclines.
Under oak trees we sway in a silver boat.

Always the town's white walls resound.
Under arches of thorns,
O my brother, blind minute-hands,
We climb towards midnight.

At Hellbrunn

Following once again the evening's blue lament
Along the hillside, along the vernal pond –
As if the shades of those long dead, the shades
Of prelates and of noble women hovered over them –
Their flowers are blooming already, the earnest violets
In the evening's depth, the blue wellspring's
Crystal wave purls on. So religiously
Do the oaks grow green over forgotten paths of the
dead,
The golden cloud over the pond.

Grodek

At nightfall the autumn woods cry out
With deadly weapons and the golden plains,
The deep blue lakes, above which more darkly
Rolls the sun: the night embraces
Dying warriors, the wild lament
Of their broken mouths.
But quietly there in the willow dell

Red clouds in which an angry god resides,
The shed blood gathers, lunar coolness. All the roads
lead to blackest carrion.
Under golden twigs of the night and stars
The sister's shade now sways through the silent copse
To greet the ghosts of the heroes, the bleeding heads;
And softly the dark flutes of autumn sound in the
reeds. A prouder grief! You brazen altars,
Today a great pain feeds the hot flame of the spirit,
The grandsons yet unborn

Klage (Lament)

Sleep and Death, the dusky eagles Circle nightlong
round this head:
Man's golden image
May be devoured by eternity's
Icy wave. On terrible reefs
The purple body breaks up.
And the dark voice laments across the sea.
Sister of stormy sorrow
See a tremulous bark goes down
Under stars,
The silent face of the night.

(another translation)

Dreamless sleep - the dusky Eagles nightlong rush
about my head, man's golden image drowned in
timeless icy tides. On jagged reefs his purpling body.
Dark
echoes sound above the seas.

Stormy sadness' sister, see our lonely skiff sunk down
by starry skies:
the silent face of night.

Song of Kaspar Hauser

He verily loved the sun which, purple, descended the
hill, The paths of the wood, the singing blackbird
And the joy of the green.

Earnestly he lived in the shadow of the tree
And his countenance was pure.
God spoke a soft flame to his heart:
O Man!

Silently, his step found the city in the evening.
The dark lament of his mouth:

I want to become a rider.
But bush and animal followed him,

House and dusky garden of white men
And his murderer sought him out.
Nights he remained with his star alone;

Saw, that snow fell into bare branches
And in the hall's half-light, the shadow of the
murderer.
Silver, the head of the unborn one sank away.

In The Village

1
Out of brown walls a village appears, a field.
A shepherd rots upon an ancient stone.
The forest edge enfolds blue animals,
The gentle leaves that into silence fall.

Brown foreheads of the farmers. Long tolls
The evening bell; lovely is pious custom,
The Saviour's black head in a clump of thorns,
The chamber cool which death redeems

How pale the mothers are. Blueness sinks down
On glass and chest cherished by their proud sense;
And a white head advanced in years stoops low
To grandchild which drinks milk and stars.

2
The poor man who in spirit lonely died,
Climbs waxen up an ancient path.
The apple trees sink bare and still
Into the colour of their fruit, which then turned black.

The roof of paltry straw still arches
Over the sleep of cows. The blind milkmaid
Appears in the yard; blue water that laments;
A horse's skull stares from a rotten gate.

The idiot with dark meaning speaks a word
Of love which dies away in the black bush,
Where she does stand in slender shape of dream,
The evening in moist blueness still rings on.

3
Branches flay windows stripped by the southern
breeze.
In the peasant woman's womb there grows a savage
pang.
Through her arms trickles black snow;
Golden-eyed owls flutter about her head.

The walls stare barren and besmirched with grey
Into cool darkness. In fevered bed freezes
The pregnant body, brazenly ogled by the moon.
Before her chamber a dog has breathed his wretched
last.

Three men step darkly through the gate
With scythes that have been broken in the field.
Through window rattles the red evening wind;
A black angel out of it appears.

4. France

MALLARMÉ Stéphane (1842-98)

*Salutation**

Nothing! this foam and virgin verse to designate
nought but the cup; such, far off, there plunges a troop
Of many Sirens upside down.
We are navigating, my diverse
Friends! I already on the poop
You the splendid prow which cuts
The main of thunders and of winters;
A fine ebriety calls me
Without fear of its rolling
To carry, upright, this toast
Solitude, reef, star
To whatever it was that was worth
Our sail's white solicitude.

Sonnet

(For your dead wife, her friend)

2 November 1877

'When sombre winter sweeps over the forgotten woods
you lament, O lonely prisoner of the threshold,
that this tomb for two, in which we will take pride alas!
is burdened only with the weight of absent bouquets.
'Heedless of Midnight tolling its vain number,
a vigil is rousing you never to close your eyes
till the final ember has illumined my Shadow
in the old armchair's embrace.
'Someone who longs to be Visited often should never
load too many flowers on the stone which my finger
is lifting with the weariness of a departed strength.
'To revive me, a soul trembling to sit at so bright a
fireplace,
I need only borrow from your lips
the breath of my name murmured all evening.'

Gift of the Poem

I bring you this child of an Idumaeen night!
black, with featherless wings bleeding and nearly
white,
through the glass burned with spices and with gold,
through the panes still, alas! dismal and icy cold, the
sunrise flung itself on the angelic
lamp, O you palms! and when it showed that relic
to this father attempting an unfriendly smile,
the blue and sterile solitude shivered all the while.
Woman lulling your little daughter, greet
a cruel birth, with the innocence of your cold feet and
your voice which both viol and harpsichord invest,
will you with shrivelled fingers press the breast from
which flows woman, Sibylline and white,
for lips starved of the virgin azure light?

THE AFTERNOON OF A FAUN
ECOLOGUE

The Faun

These nymphs I would perpetuate.
So clear
Their light carnation, that it floats in the air
Heavy with tufted slumbers. Was it a dream I loved?
My doubt, a heap of ancient night, is finishing
In many a subtle branch, which, left the true
Wood itself, proves, alas! that all alone I gave
Myself for triumph the ideal sin of roses. Let me reflect
. . . if the girls of which you tell Figure a wish of your
fabulous senses!
Faun, the illusion escapes from the blue eyes
And cold, like a spring in tears, of the chaster one:
But, the other, all sighs, do you say she contrasts
Like a breeze of hot day in your fleece!
But no! through the still, weary faintness
Choking with heat the fresh morn if it strives,
No water murmurs but what my flute pours
On the chord sprinkled thicket; and the sole wind
Prompt to exhale from my two pipes, before
It scatters the sound in a waterless shower, Is, on the
horizon's unwrinkled space, The visible serene
artificial breath
Of inspiration, which regains the sky.
Oh you, Sicilian shores of a calm marsh
That more than the suns my vanity havocs,
Silent beneath the flowers of sparks, RELATE

'That here I was cutting the hollow reeds tamed By talent, when on the dull gold of the distant Verdures dedicating their vines to the springs, There waves an animal whiteness at rest: And that to the prelude where the pipes first stir by who seeks the Ia: Then shall I awake to the primitive fervour, Straight and alone, 'neath antique floods of light, Lilies and one of you all through my ingenuousness. As well as this sweet nothing their lips purr, The kiss, which a hush assures of the perfid ones, My breast, though proofless, still attests a bite Mysterious, due to some august tooth; But enough! for confidant such mystery chose The great double reed which one plays 'neath the blue: Which, the cheek's trouble turning to itself Dreams, in a solo long, we might amuse Surrounding beauties by confusions false Between themselves and our credulous song; And to make, just as high as love modulates, Die out of the everyday dream of a back Or a pure flank followed by my curtained eyes, An empty, sonorous, monotonous line. Try then, instrument of flights, oh malign Syrinx, to reflower by the lakes where you wait for me! I, proud of my rumour, for long I will talk Of goddesses; and by picturings idolatrous, From their shades unloose yet more of their girdles: So when of grapes the clearness I've sucked, To banish regret by my ruse disavowed, Laughing, I lift the empty bunch to the sky, Blowing into its luminous skins and athirst To be drunk, till the evening I keep looking through. Oh nymphs, we diverse MEMORIES refill. 'My eye, piercing the reeds, shot at each immortal Neck, which drowned its burning in the wave With a cry of rage to the forest sky; And the splendid bath of their hair disappears In the shimmer and shuddering, oh diamonds! I run, when, there at my feet, enlaced, lie (hurt by the languor they taste to be two) Girls sleeping amid their own casual arms; them I seize, and not disentangling them, fly To this thicket, hated by the frivolous shade, Of roses drying up their scent in the sun Where our delight may be like the day sun-consumed.' I adore it, the anger of virgins, the wild Delight of the sacred nude burden which slips

This flight of swans, no! Naiads, flies Or plunges . . . ' Inert, all burns in the fierce hour Nor marks by what art all at once bolted Too much hymen desired To escape from my hot lips drinking, as lightning Flashes! the secret terror of the flesh: From the feet of the cruel one to the heart of the timid Who together lose an innocence, humid With wild tears or less sorrowful vapours. 'My crime is that I, gay at conquering the treacherous Fears, the dishevelled tangle divided Of kisses, the gods kept so well commingled; For before I could stifle my fiery laughter In the happy recesses of one (while I kept With a finger alone, that her feathery whiteness Should be dyed by her sister's kindling desire, The younger one, naive and without a blush) When from my arms, undone by vague failing, This pities the sob wherewith I was still drunk.' Ah well, towards happiness others will lead me With their tresses knotted to the horns of my brow: You know, my passion, that purple and just ripe, The pomegranates burst and murmur with bees; And our blood, aflame for her who will take it, Flows for all the eternal swarm of desire. At the hour when this wood's dyed with gold and with ashes A festival glows in the leafage extinguished: Etna! 'tis amid you, visited by Venus On your lava fields placing her candid feet, When a sad stillness thunders wherein the flame dies. I hold the queen! O penalty sure . . . No, but the soul Void of word and my body weighed down Succumb in the end to midday's proud silence: No more, I must sleep, forgetting the outrage, On the thirsty sand lying, and as I delight Open my mouth to wine's potent star! Adieu, both! I shall see the shade you became. - translated by Roger Fry

*The Tomb of Charles Baudelaire***

The buried temple through the sewer's dark Sepulchral mouth that drools out mud and rubies Reveals abominably some god Anubis His whole snout blazing with a savage bark Or should the new gas twist the filthy wick

Assuager so well known of shame long brooded
It kindles haggard an immortal pubis
Whose flight along the street lamps loiters awake
What dried leaves in the towns without the prayer
Of night can bless as it again must cling
In vain against the marble of Baudelaire
In veils that wreath its absence with shimmering
His own Shade this a guardian poison still
To breathe in always even though it kill.
Translated by Herbert Creekmore

"Lace Passes into Nothingness ..." Lace passes into
nothingness,
With the ultimate Gamble in doubt,
In blasphemy revealing just
Eternal absence of any bed.
This concordant enmity
Of a white garland and the same,
In flight against the pallid glass, Hovers and does not
enshroud.
But where, limned gold, the dreamer dwells,
There sleeps a mournful mandola, Its deep lacuna source
of song,
Of a kind that toward some window,
Formed by that belly or none at all, Filial, one might have
been born. translated by Patricia Terry and Maurice Z.
Shroder * From mallarmé: poems ©1951 by New
Directions translated by Roger Fry.
** from Stéphane Mallarmé: *Selected Poetry and Prose*
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VERLAINE, Paul (1844-1896)

Lassitude

(Poèmes Saturniens: Mélancholia V)

'For the wars of love a field of feathers'

Gongora

With sweetness, with sweetness, with sweetness!
Calm this feverish rapture a little, my charmer.
Even at its height, you see, sometimes a lover
Needs the quiet forgetfulness of a sister.

Be languid: make your caresses sleep-bringers,
Like your cradling gaze and your sighs.
Ah, the jealous embrace, the obsessive spasm,
Aren't worth a deep kiss, even one that lies!

But you say to me child, in your dear heart of gold
Wild desire goes sounding her cry.

Let her trumpet away, she's too bold!

Put your brow on my brow, your hand on my hand,
Make me those promises you'll break by and by,
Let's weep till the dawn, my little firebrand!

My Familiar Dream

(Poèmes Saturniens: Mélancholia VI)

I often have this dream, strange and penetrating
Of a woman, unknown, whom I love, who loves me,
and who's never, each time, the same exactly,
nor exactly different, she knows me, she's loving.

Oh she knows me, and my heart, growing
Clear for her alone, is no longer a problem,
For her alone, she alone understands, then,
How to cool the sweat of my brow with her weeping.

Is she dark, blonde, or auburn? – I've no idea.
Her name? I remember it's vibrant and dear,
As those of the loved that life has exiled.

Her eyes are the same as a statue's eyes,
And in her voice, distant, serious, mild,
The tone of dear voices, of those who have died.

Woman and Cat

(Poèmes Saturniens: Caprices I)

She was playing with her cat:
It was lovely to see
The white hand and white paw
Fight, in shadows of eve.

She hid – little wicked one –
In black silk mittens
Claws of murderous agate,
Fierce and bright as kittens'.

The other too was full of sweetness,
Sheathing her sharp talons' caress,
Though the devil lacked nothing there.

And in the bedroom, where sonorous
Ethereal laughter tinkled in air,
Shone four points of phosphorus.

Song of the Artless Ones

(Poèmes Saturniens: Caprices III)

We are the artless ones,
Hair braided, eyes blue,
Who live almost hidden from view
In novels barely read.

We walk, arms interlaced,
And the day's not so pure
As the depths of our thoughts,
And our dreams are azure.

And we run through the fields
And we laugh and we chatter,
From dawn to evening,
We chase butterflies' shadows:

And shepherdesses' bonnets
Protect our freshness
And our dresses – so thin –
Are of perfect whiteness.

The Don Juans, the Lotharios,
The Knights all eyes,
Pay their respects to us,
Their greetings and sighs:

In vain though, their grimaces:
They bruise their noses,
On ironic pleats
Of our vanishing dresses:

And our innocence still
Mocks the fantasies
Of those tilters at windmills
Though sometimes we feel

Our hearts beat fiercely
With clandestine dreams,
Knowing we'll be future
Lovers of libertines.

Claire De Lune (Fêtes Galants)
Your soul is the choicest of countries
Where charming maskers, masked shepherdesses,
Go playing their lutes and dancing, yet gently
Sad beneath fantastic disguises.

While they sing in a minor key
Of all-conquering love and careless fortune,
They seem to mistrust their own fantasy

And their song melts away in the light of the moon,

In the quiet moonlight, lovely and sad,
That makes the birds dream in the trees, all
The tall water-jets sob with ecstasies,
The slender water-jets rising from marble.

The Innocents

(Fêtes Galants)

High heels fought with their long dresses,
So that, a question of slopes and breezes,
Ankles sometimes glimmered to please us,
Ah, intercepted! – Dear foolishnesses!

Sometimes a jealous insect's sting
Troubled necks of beauties under the branches,
White napes revealed in sudden flashes
A feast for our young eyes' wild gazing.

Evening fell, ambiguous autumn evening:
The beauties, dreamers who leaned on our arms,
Whispered soft words, so deceptive, such charms,
That our souls were left quivering and singing.

The Sea-Shells

(Fêtes Galants)

Each shell, encrusted, we see,
In the cave where we sought love's goal,
Has its own peculiarity.

One has the purple colour of souls,
Ours, thief of the blood our hearts possess
When I burn and you flame, like hot coals.

That one affects your languorousness,
Your pallor, your weary form
Angered by my eyes' mocking caress:

This one mimics the charm
Of your ear, and this I see
Your rosy neck, so full and warm:

But one, among all of them, troubled me.

Cythera

(Fêtes Galants)

A summer-house's lattices
Tenderly hide our caresses,
Joy the rose-tree cools, sweet friend:

Scents of the rose, languidly,
Thanks to the passing summer breeze,
With her own fragrance blend:

As the promise her eyes gave,
Her courage is complete, while her
Lips yield exquisite fever:

And Love having sated all things save
Appetite: jams and sorbets here
Keep from us the ache of hunger.

The Moon, White...

(La Bonne Chanson: VI)

The moon, white,
Shines in the trees:
From each bright
Branch a voice flees
Beneath leaves that move,

O well-beloved.

The pools reflect
A mirror's depth,
The silhouette
Of willows' wet
Black where the wind weeps...

Let us dream, time sleeps.

It seems a vast, soothing,
Tender balm
Is falling
From heaven's calm
Empurpled by a star...

It's the exquisite hour.

It Rains In My Heart...

(Romances Sans Paroles: Arriettes Oubliées I)

'It rains softly on the town.'

Rimbaud

It rains in my heart
As it rains on the town,
What languor so dark
That soaks to my heart?

Oh sweet sound of the rain

On the earth and the roofs!
For the dull heart again,
Oh the song of the rain!

It rains for no reason
In this heart lacking heart.
What? And no treason?
It's grief without reason.

By far the worst pain,
Without hatred, or love,
Yet no way to explain
Why my heart feels such pain!

Sadness, the Bodily Weariness...

(Sagesse: X)

Sadness, the bodily weariness of man,
Have moved me, swayed me, made me pity.
Ah, most when dark slumbers take me,
When sheets score the skin, oppress the hand.

And how weak in tomorrow's fever
Still warm from the bath that withers
Like a bird on a rooftop that shivers!
And feet, in pain from the road forever,

And the chest, bruised by a double-blow,
And the mouth, still a bleeding wound,
And the trembling flesh, a fragile mound,

And the eyes, poor eyes, so lovely that so
Hint at the sorrow of seeing the end! ...
Sad body! So frail, so tormented a friend!

Circumspection

(*Jadis Et Naguère*)

Give me your hand, still your breath, let's rest
Under this great tree where the breeze dies
Beneath grey branches, in broken sighs,
The soft, tender rays of the moon caress.

Motionless, and lowering our eyes,
Not thinking, dreaming. Let love that tires
Have its moment, and happiness that expires,
Our hair brushed by the owl as it flies.

Let's forget to hope. Discreet, content,
So the soul of each of us stays intent
On this calm, this quiet death of the sun.

We'll rest, silent, in a peaceful nocturne:

It's wrong to disturb his sleep, this one,
Nature, the god, fierce and taciturn.

RIMBAUD, Arthur (1854-1891)

The Sleeper in the Valley

In a green hollow where a river sings,
Circling the grasses with specks of silver-white,
From his proud steep the sun ascendant flings
Splendour. The valley scintillates with lights.
Open-mouthed, capless, a young soldier lies
Where the fresh blue cresses cool his bare head;
Pale in the light raining down from the skies
He sleeps, stretched at length on his mossy bed.

His feet bruise the iris where he takes his nap
Smiling like a sick child on its mother's lap;
He heeds not the scents that ride about his head;
In the sun he dozes, hand on quiet breast.
In his right side two bullet holes have bled.

Dancing Girl

Is she a dancing girl? In dawn's blue hour She will
destroy herself as dies a flower ...
Before the open splendour where is heard
The thriving city's bosom hugely stirred!

Beauty too great, too great! But needed yet
For the Corsair's song, the Fisherwoman's net,
And the belief the last masks still confessed
In midnight revels on pure ocean's breast!

Vowels

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue—one day
Vowels, I shall disclose your occult springs: A—the black
velvet stomacher of wings
Where flies swarm round a stench of foul decay.

Black-shadowed pit; E—pure as steam, white kings
Tents, glacier's fang or blossom's trembling spray;
I—purple-red—split blood or smiles that play
On pretty lips in drink or quarrellings.
U—aeons, stirring of the sea's green wonder,
Peace of the pastured herds, the wrinkled grandeur
Alchemy graves on foreheads of the wise;
O—the great Clarion, harsh with chords unproved,
The silences where worlds and angels moved;
O—Omega, blue lightnings of Her Eyes!

The Gypsy Poet

Fists probing my torn pockets, off I'd wander,
My overcoat more holes than cloth and I
Poetry's bondsman under the open sky;
Oh lord, what splendid dreams of love I'd squandered!
Torn were my only trousers at the knees;
As inn-sign in the sky, the Great Bear shone
And stars, like twinkling silk, smiled down upon
Tom Thumb, the dreamer, shelling rhymes like peas.

I'd listen from the roadside on those fine
September nights while dew-drops' heady wine
Moistened my brow; fantastic shadows pressed
About me as in search of rhymes I'd tug
The laces of my worn-out boots and hug
One foot just like a lyre against my chest.

The Sly Girl

(La Maline)

In the brown dining-room, its perfumed air
Full of the smell of wax and fruit, at ease
I gathered a plate of who knows what Belgian
Dish, and marvelled in my enormous chair.
Eating I listened to the clock – silent, happy.
The kitchen door opened with a gust,
- And the serving girl came in, who knows why,
Shawl half-off, hair dressed cunningly.
And, touching her little finger tremblingly
To her cheek, a pink and white velvet-peach,
And making a childish pout with her lips,
She tidied the plates to put me at my ease:
- Then, just like that – to get a kiss, for certain –
Whispered: 'Feel: It's caught a cold, my cheek...'
Charleroi, October 70

Poets at Seven Years

(Les Poètes de Sept Ans)

And the mother, closing the work-book
Went off, proud, satisfied, not seeing,
In the blue eyes, under the lumpy brow,
The soul of her child given over to loathing.
All day he sweated obedience: very
Intelligent: yet dark habits, certain traits
Seemed to show bitter hypocrisies at work!
In the shadow of corridors with damp paper,
He stuck out his tongue in passing, two fists
In his groin, seeing specks under his shut lids.
A doorway open to evening: by the light

You'd see him, high up, groaning on the railing
Under a void of light hung from the roof. In summer,
Especially, vanquished, stupefied, stubborn,
He'd shut himself in the toilet's coolness:
He could think in peace there, sacrificing his nostrils.
When the small garden cleansed of the smell of day,
Filled with light, behind the house, in winter,
Lying at the foot of a wall, buried in clay
Rubbing his dazzled eyes hard, for the visions, He
listened to the scabbed espaliers creaking.
Pity! His only companions were those children
Bare-headed and puny, eyes sunk in their cheeks,
Hiding thin fingers yellow and black with mud
Under old clothes soiled with excrement,
Who talked with the sweetness of the simple-minded!
And if his mother took fright, surprising him
At his vile compassions: the child's deep
Tenderness overcame her astonishment.
All fine. She'd had the blue look, - that lies!
At seven he was making novels about life
In the great desert, where ravished Freedom shines,
Forests, suns, riverbanks, savannahs! - He used
Illustrated weeklies where he saw, blushing, Smiling
Italian girls, and Spanish women.
When the daughter of next door workers came by,
Eight years old - in Indian prints, brown-eyed,
A little brute, and jumped him from behind,
Shaking out her tresses, in a corner,
And he was under her, he bit her buttocks,
Since she never wore knickers:
- And, bruised by her fists and heels,
Carried the taste of her back to his room.
He feared the pallid December Sundays,
When, hair slicked back, at a mahogany table,
He read from a Bible with cabbage-green margins:
Dreams oppressed him each night in the alcove.
He didn't love God: rather those men in the dusk,
Returning, black, in smocks, to the outer suburbs
Where the town-crier, with a triple drum beat,
Made the crowds laugh and murmur at the edicts.
- He dreamed of the amorous prairies, where
Luminous swells, pure odours, gold pubescences,
Stirred in the calm there, and then took flight!
And above all how he savoured sombre things,
When, in his bare room behind closed shutters,
High, and blue, and pierced with acrid damp,
He read his novel, mooned over endlessly,
Full of drowned forests, leaden ochre skies,

Flowers of flesh opening in star-filled woods,
Dizziness, epilepsies, defeats, compassion!
- While the street noises rumbled on below,
Lying alone on pieces of unbleached canvas,
With a violent presentiment of setting sail!

The Drunken Boat

(Le Bateau Ivre)

As I floated down impassive Rivers,
I felt myself no longer pulled by ropes:
The Redskins took my hauliers for targets,
And nailed them naked to their painted posts.
Carrying Flemish wheat or English cotton,
I was indifferent to all my crews.
The Rivers let me float down as I wished,
When the victims and the sounds were through.
Into the furious breakers of the sea,
Deaf as the ears of a child, last winter,
I ran! And the Peninsulas sliding by me
Never heard a more triumphant clamour.
The tempest blessed my sea-borne arousals.
Lighter than a cork I danced those waves
They call the eternal churners of victims,
Ten nights, without regret for the lighted bays! Sweeter
than sour apples to the children
The green ooze spurting through my hull's pine,
Washed me of vomit and the blue of wine,
Carried away my rudder and my anchor.
Then I bathed in the Poem of the Sea,
Infused with stars, the milk-white spume blends,
Grazing green azures: where ravished, bleached
Flotsam, a drowned man in dream descends.
Where, staining the blue, sudden deliriums
And slow tremors under the gleams of fire,
Stronger than alcohol, vaster than our rhythms,
Ferment the bitter reds of our desire!
I knew the skies split apart by lightning,
Waterspouts, breakers, tides: I knew the night, The Dawn
exalted like a crowd of doves,
I saw what men think they've seen in the light!
I saw the low sun, stained with mystic terrors,
Illuminate long violet coagulations,
Like actors in a play that's very ancient
Waves rolling back their trembling of shutters! I dreamt
the green night of blinded snows,
A kiss lifted slow to the eyes of seas,
The circulation of unheard-of flows,
Sung phosphorus's blue-yellow awakenings!

For months on end, I've followed the swell
That batters at the reefs like terrified cattle,
Not dreaming the Three Marys' shining feet
Could muzzle with their force the Ocean's hell!
I've struck Floridas, do you know, beyond belief,
Where eyes of panthers in human skins, Merge with the
flowers! Rainbow bridles, beneath the seas' horizon,
stretched out to shadowy fins!
I saw the great swamps boil, and the hiss
Where a whole whale rots among the reeds!
Downfalls of water among tranquilities,
Distances showering into the abyss.
Nacrous waves, silver suns, glaciers, ember skies!
Gaunt wrecks deep in the brown vacuities
Where the giant eels riddled with parasites
Fall, with dark perfumes, from the twisted trees!
I would have liked to show children dolphins
Of the blue wave, the golden singing fish.
- Flowering foams rocked me in my drift,
At times unutterable winds gave me wings.
Sometimes, a martyr tired of poles and zones, The sea
whose sobs made my roilings sweet
Showed me its shadow flowers with yellow mouths
And I rested like a woman on her knees...
Almost an isle, blowing across my sands, quarrels
And droppings of pale-eyed clamorous gulls,
And I scudded on while, over my frayed lines,
Drowned men sank back in sleep beneath my hull!...
Now I, a boat lost in the hair of bays,
Hurled by the hurricane through bird-less ether,
I, whose carcass, sodden with salt-sea water,
No Monitor or Hanseatic vessel would recover:
Freed, in smoke, risen from the violet fog, I, who pierced
the red skies like a wall,
Bearing the sweets that delight true poets,
Lichens of sunlight, gobbets of azure:
Who ran, stained with electric moonlets,
A crazed plank, accompanied by black sea-horses,
When Julys were crushing with cudgel blows
Skies of ultramarine in burning funnels:
I, who trembled to hear those agonies
Of rutting Behemoths and dark Maelstroms,
Eternal spinner of blue immobilities,
I regret the ancient parapets of Europe!
I've seen archipelagos of stars! And isles
Whose maddened skies open for the sailor:
- Is it in depths of night you sleep, exiled,
Million birds of gold, O future Vigour? -

But, truly, I've wept too much! The Dawns
Are heartbreaking, each moon hell, each sun bitter:
Fierce love has swallowed me in drunken torpors.
O let my keel break! Tides draw me down!
If I want one pool in Europe, it's the cold
Black pond where into the scented night
A child squatting filled with sadness launches A boat as
frail as a May butterfly.
Bathed in your languor waves I can no longer
Cut across the wakes of cotton ships,
Or sail against the pride of flags, ensigns,
Or swim the dreadful gaze of prison ships.

The Song of the Highest Tower

(Chanson de la Plus Haute Tour)

1. (From: Fetes de la Patience) Idle Youth

By all things enslaved
Through sensitivity
I've wasted my days.
Ah! Let the moment come
When hearts love as one.
I told myself: wait
And let no one see: And without the promise of true
ecstasy. Let nothing delay
This hiding away.
I've been patient so long
I've forgotten even
The terror and suffering
Flown up to heaven,
A sick thirst again
Darkens my veins.
So the meadow
Freed by neglect
Flowered, overgrown
With weeds and incense
To the buzzing nearby
Of a hundred foul flies.
Ah! Thousand widowhoods
Of a soul so poor
It bears only the image
Of our Lady before!
Does one then pray
To the Virgin today?
Idle Youth
By all things enslaved
Through sensitivity
I've wasted my days.
Ah! Let the moment come

When hearts love as one.
2. (From: *Une Saison en Enfer*)
Let it come, let it come
The day when hearts love as one.
I've been patient so long
I've forgotten even
The terror and suffering Flown up to heaven,
A sick thirst again
Darkens my veins.
Let it come, let it come
The day when hearts love as one.
So the meadow
Freed by neglect
Flowered, overgrown
With weeds and incense
To the buzz nearby
Of foul flies.
Let it come, let it come
The day when hearts love as one.

Eternity

(L'Éternité)

1. (From: *Fetes de la Patience*)

It's found you see.
What? – Eternity.
It's the sun, free
To run with the sea.
Soul on watch
In whispers confess
To the empty night
To the day's excess.
From the mortal weal
From the common urge
Here you diverge
To fly as you feel.
Since from you alone
Embers of satin
Duty breathes down
With no 'at last' spoken.
There's nothing of hope,
No entreaty here.
Science and patience,
Torture is real.
It's found you see.
What? – Eternity.
It's the sun, free
To run with the sea.
2. (From: *Une Saison en Enfer*)

It's found you see!
What? – Eternity.
It's the sun, mingled
With the sea.
My immortal soul
Keep your vow
Despite empty night
And the day's glow.
Then you'll diverge
From the mortal weal
From the common urge,
And fly as you feel...
- No hope, never, No entreaty here.
Science and patience,
Torture is real.
No more tomorrow
Embers of satin
Your own ardour
The only duty.
It's found you see.
- What? - Eternity.
It's the sun, mingled
With the sea.

APOLLINAIRE, Guillaume (1888-1918)

The Farewell

I picked this fragile sprig of heather
Autumn has died long since remember
Never again shall we see one another
Odour of time sprig of heather
And remember I await our life together

The Betrothal

I no longer have pity for myself
Nor can I express my torment of silence
All the words I have to say have become tears
An Icarus tries to rise as high as each of my eyes
And like a sun god I flame between these two nebulae
What have I done to the theological beasts of the mind At
one time the dead come back to revere me
And I hoped for the end of the world
But mine arrived whistling like a hurricane

I have heard the courage to look behind me
At the corpses of my days
Which strew my path and I mourn them Some rot inside
Italian churches

Or else in little lemon groves
Which blossom and bear fruit
At the same time and in all seasons
Other days cried before they died in taverns
Where vivid bouquets were wheeling about
Before the eyes of a mulatto woman who improvised poetry
And the roses of electricity still open
In the garden of my memory

Templars I blaze among you on your pyre
Let us prophesy together O it is
For you Grand Master that I am on fire
And spin the night itself in this wild gyre

Flame frees my bonds
Only my breath
Can snuff the tongues that lick at forty dead
I sight both shame and glory in my death
And tilt at the quintain that the future holds
Doubt swooped like a feigned and painted bird
Love frolicked with the sun in the village street
Their gay outlandish children built and lit
This pyre of passion where my courage nests.

Hunting Horns

Our past is noble and tragic
Like the mask of a tyrant
No trick of chance or of magic
Nothing quite insignificant
Makes our love seem pitiful

And Thomas de Quincy drinking his
Sweet and chaste and poisoned glass Dreaming went to
see his Ann
Let us since all passes pass
I shall look back only too often

Memories are hunting horns
Whose sound dies among the wind

5. Germany

HEYM, George (1887-1912)

All Night

All night huge hordes of suicides venture out,
Those who pursue their lost selves;

Crookbacked they haunt south, west, east, north,
And with their arms for brooms they sweep the dust.

And the Horns of Summer Fell Silent

And the horns of summer fell silent in the death of the
meadows,
Into the darkness cloud upon cloud floated off.
But remotely the bordering forests were shrinking,
Muffled in mourning like men that follow a hearse.
Loud sang the gale in the terror of fields that were fading;
It drove into poplars to shape a white tower between boughs.
And like the sweepings of wind there lay in the waste
land
Below, a village, drab roofs in a huddle of gray.

But on and on, as far as the pallid horizon
The tents of autumn extended their fabric of corn,
The numberless cities, but empty, forgotten. And no one
was walking about the streets.

And the shade of the night sang. Only the ravens still drifted
Here and there under leaden clouds in the rain,
Alone in the wind, as down in the dark of our foreheads
Black thoughts revolve and recede in disconsolate hours.

The War

Now he has arisen: he, who slept so long,
from the depth arisen, out of arches strong.
Huge he stands and unknown in the twilight land,
and the moon he crushes in his blackened hand.

Broad on city's evening, broad and angrily
shadow falls, and frost of strange obscurity
makes the market's bustle stop in icy scare.
Silence reigns. They turn - and no one is aware.

In the street it comes to touch her shoulders light:
Just a question. Answerless. A face goes white.
From afar sound whining abbey bells so thin
and the beards are quaking round the pointed chin.

High up, on the mountains, he begins to dance,
and he cries: You fighters, rise up and advance!
Echoes sound: around his shaking, blackened head
swings a chain of skulls he wrenched from thousand
dead.

Tower-like he squashes embers' dying gleam
and, where day is fleeing, fills with blood the stream.
Countless are the corpses swept into the reeds,

covered by white feathers, where the vulture feeds.

He stands over ramparts blue of flames around,
over darkened streets with heavy weapons sound,
over broken gates where gatemens lie across,
over bridges bending under human dross.

Through the night he chases fire across the world:
red-fanged hound of hell with savage scream unfurled.
Out of darkness leaps dominion of night,
frightful at its border shine volcanoes bright.

And a thousand redcaps, pointed far and wide,
litter up the dark plain, flicker up astride.
Who below in alleys still runs to and fro
he sweeps in the fire, that it hotter grow.

And the flames are leaping, burning tree by tree.
Yellow bats of fire clawing endlessly.
And he thrusts his kiln-staff, dark and charcoal-bound
deep amongst the trees to stoke the flames around.

An important city, chocked in yellow glow,
jumped without a whisper to the depths below,
while he stands, a giant, over glowing urns,
wild, in bloody heavens, thrice his torch he turns

over stormstrung clouds reflecting fiery brands,
to the deadly dark of frigid desert sands,
down he pours the fires, withering the night,
phosphorus and brimstone on Gomorrha bright.

CELAN, Paul (1920-1970: Real name, Paul Antschel)

Eyes

Eyes, talked
over to blindness.

Their—'what
comes forth pure
is enigma'—
their memory of
swimming Hölderlin towers circled
by gulls.

A drowned joiner's visitations
to these
deep-delving words:

If there came,
if there came a man,
if there came a man, to the world, today, with
the patriarch's

beard of light: he could only,
were he to speak of this
time, he
could only
babble and babble
con-, con-
tinually, -ally.

('Pallaksch, Pallaksch.')

Psalm

No one kneads us anew of earth and clay,
no one conjures our dust.
No One.

Praised be You, No One.
For Your sake
we will bloom
towards
You.

A Nothing
is what we were, are, and will
remain, blooming:
the nothing's, the No One's
rose.

With our pistil soul-bright,
our stamen heaven-ravaged,
our crown reddened
by the purple word we sang
over, O over
the thorn.

Cauterized

Cauterized from
the raywind of your language
the bright chatter of ex-
perience—the hundred-
tongued false
poem, the noem.

Whirled
out,
free
the way through the human-
shaped snow,
the penitent's snow,

to the hospitable
glacier chambers and tables.

Deep
in time's crevasse,
by the
honeycomb ice
there waits, a crystal of breath,
your incontestable
witness.

I Know You

(I know you: you are the one bowed deeply,
I am the pierced one, subject unto you.
Where does a word flare out as both our witness?
You—quite, quite real. And I—mad through and
through.)

Give the word

Cut to the brains—half-way? Or three quarters?—
You give, benighted, the passwords, these ones:

'Tartar arrows.'
'Artificial marsh.'
'Breath.'

Everyone comes, no man or woman missing.
(The siphets and the probyls are all there.)

There comes a man.
World-apple-big the tear by your side,
tumultuously shot through
with answer,
answer,
answer.
Iced through—by whom?

'Pass by' you say,
pass by,
pass by.'
Still leprosy lifts itself from your palate
and fans light in your tongue's direction,
light.

Landscape

Landscape with urn beings,
Conversations
from smoke mouth to smoke mouth.

They eat:
the madhouse-inmate truffle, a piece
of disinterred poetry,
encountered tongue and tooth.

A tear rolls back into its eye.

The left-hand, orphaned
half of the pilgrim's
scallop—they gave it to you,
and then placed you in bonds—
lights up the space as it listens:

The clinker-game against death can begin.

Hunger for Brightness

Hunger for brightness—with this
I climbed up the bread
step,
under the bell
of the blind:

it, the water-
clear one,
inverts itself over
the climbed-to, climbed-
away freedom, upon which one of the heavens guzzled
itself,
the one I had allowed to arch over
the word-swimming
image track, blood track.

Pau, Later

In your eyes' corners, stranger:
the Albigensian shadow—towards
the Waterloo-Plein,
the orphaned
bark shoe, the
hawked amen thrown in too,
and into the everlasting
house-gap my song
directs you:

that Baruch, the never-
weeping
may grind to fit round you

the angular,
uncomprehended, visionary
tear.

There Will Be

There will be something, later on,
that fills up with you
and lifts itself up
to a mouth

From the splintered
delusion
I rise up
and stare at my hand
as it traces the one
lone
circle.

Crocus

Crocus,
glimpsed from the hospitable table:
sign-feeling
tiny exile
of a shared truth,
you need
every blade.

You Lie in the Great Listening

You lie in the great listening,
snowflakes, bushes, surround you.

Go to the Spree, to the Havel,
to the meat hooks
and to the red apple stakes
from Sweden—

There comes a table, gift-laden,
deflected by an Eden—

The man became a sieve, the woman
was forced to swim, the sow,
for herself, for no one, for everyone—

The Landwehr Canal will not make a sound.
dNothing
halts.

You, Poured Out of Lost Things

You, poured out of lost things,
as just as a mask, to be near to you
with my eyelid folded
along your eyelid,
to bestrew this and that trace with grey,
finally, in deadly fashion.

Break the Breath-Coin

Break the breath-coin
out of the air that is round you and round the tree:
so
much
is required of those
whom hope wheels up and down
the humped way of the heart ...

Leap-Centuries

Leap-centuries, leap-
seconds, leap-
births, novembering, leap-
deaths,

stacked in honeycomb troughs,
'bits
on chips*,

the menorah poem from Berlin

(Unasylumed, un-
archived, un-
welfare-attended? A-
live?),

reading stations in the late word,

saving flame points
in the sky,

comb lines under fire,

feelings, frost-
mandrelled,

cold start
with haemoglobin.

Chanson of a Lady in the Shade

When the silent one comes and beheads the tulips:

Who wins?

Who loses?

Who walks to the window?

Who's the first to speak her name?

He is one who wears my hair.

He wears it much as one wears the dead on one's hands.

He wears it much as the sky wore my hair that year when I loved.

He wears it like that out of vanity.

That one wins.

Doesn't lose.

Doesn't walk to the window.

He does not speak her name.

He is one who has my eyes.

He's had them since gates were shut.

He wears them like rings on his fingers. He wears them like shards of sapphire and lust: since the autumn he has been my brother;

He's counting the days and the nights.

That one wins.

Doesn't lose.

Doesn't walk to the window.

He's the last to speak her name.

He's one who has what I said.

He carries it under his arm like a bundle.

He carries it as the clock carries its worst hour.

From threshold to threshold he carries it, never throws it away.

With the Voice of a Fieldmouse

With the voice of a fieldmouse

you squeak up to me,

a sharp clip,

you bit your way through my shirt to the skin,

a cloth, you slide across my mouth midway through the

words I address to you, shadow,

to give you weight.

On Either Hand

On either hand, there where stars grew for me, far from

all heavens, near

all heavens:

How

one's awake there! How the world opens for us, right through the midst of ourselves!

You are where your eye is, you are above, are below, I find my way out. O this wandering empty hospitable midst. Apart I fall to you, you fall to me, fallen away from each other, we see through: One and the same has lost us, one and the same has forgotten us, one and the same

has - -

All Those Sleep Shapes, crystalline, that you assumed in the language shadow, to those I lead my blood, those image lines, them I'm to harbour in the slit-arteries of my cognition -, my grief, I can see, is deserting to you.

The Poles are inside us, insurmountable when we're awake, we sleep across, up to the Gate of Mercy, I lose you to you, that is my snowy comfort, say that Jerusalem is, say it, as though I were this your whiteness, as though you were mine, as though without us we could be we, I open your leaves, for ever, you pray, you bed us free.

6. Greece

CAVAFY, Constantine, P. (1868-1935)

Desires

Like beautiful bodies of the dead who did not grow old, and were shut away with tears in a splendid mausoleum, with roses at their head and jasmine at their feet that is what those desires are like, which have passed without fulfilment; not one of them ever granted 5 a pleasure's night, or a pleasure's radiant morn.

Voices

Ideal and dearly beloved voices of those who are dead, or of those who are lost to us like the dead.

Sometimes they speak to us in our dreams; sometimes in thought the mind hears them.

And for a moment with their echo other echoes return
from the first poetry of our lives—
like music that extinguishes the far-off night.

Candles

The days of our future stand before us like a row of little
lighted candles—
golden, warm, and lively little candles.

The days gone by remain behind us, a mournful line of
burnt-out candles; the nearest ones are still smoking,
cold candles, melted and bent.

I do not want to look at them; their form saddens me, and
it saddens me to recall their first light.
I look ahead at my lighted candles.

I do not want to turn back, lest I see and shudder— how
quickly the sombre line lengthens,
how quickly the burnt-out candles multiply.

The God Forsakes Antony

When suddenly, at the midnight hour
an invisible company is heard going past,
with exquisite music, with voices
your fate that's giving in now, your deeds
that failed, your life's plans that proved to be
all illusions, do not needlessly lament.
As one long since prepared, as one courageous,
bid farewell to the Alexandria that's leaving.
Above all, don't be misled, don't say it was
a dream, that your ears deceived you;
don't deign to foster such vain hopes.
As one long since prepared, as one courageous,
as befits you who were deemed worthy of such a city,
move with steady steps toward the window
and listen with deepest feeling, yet not
with a coward's entreaties and complaints,
listen as an ultimate delight to the sounds,
to the exquisite instruments of the mystical company,
and bid farewell to the Alexandria you are losing.

Supplication

The sea took a sailor to its deep. -
His mother, unsuspecting, goes to light

a tall candle before the Virgin Mary
for his speedy return and for fine weather -

and always she cocks her ear to windward.
But while she prays and implores,

the icon listens, solemn and sad, knowing well
that the son she expects will no longer return.

Waiting for the Barbarians

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?
The barbarians are due here today.

Why isn't anything going on in the senate?
Why are the senators sitting there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.
What's the point of senators making laws now?
Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

Why did our emperor get up so early,
and why is he sitting enthroned at the city's main gate,
in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and the emperor's waiting to receive their leader.
He's even got a scroll to give him,
loaded with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today
wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?
Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,
rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds?
Why are they carrying elegant canes
beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and things like that dazzle the barbarians

Why don't our distinguished orators turn up as usual
to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden bewilderment, this confusion?
(How serious people's faces have become.)
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,
everyone going home lost in thought?

Modernist Literature of Continental Europe: Anthology of Poetry and Short Fiction

Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.

And some of our men just in from the border say there are no barbarians any longer.

Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians? Those people were a kind of solution.

Ithaka

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon— don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
wild Poseidon— you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you're old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

The City

You said: 'I'll go to another land, I'll go to another sea,
Another city will be found, a better one than this.
My every effort is doomed by destiny
and my heart-like a dead man-lies buried.
How long will my mind languish in such decay?
Wherever I turn my eyes, wherever I look,
the blackened ruins of my life I see here,
where so many years I've lived and wasted and ruined.'

Any new lands you will not find; you'll find no other seas.
The city will be following you. In the same streets
you'll wander. And in the same neighbourhoods you'll
age,
and in these same houses you will grow grey.
Always in this same city you'll arrive. For elsewhere—do
not hope—
there is no ship for you, there is no road.
Just as you've wasted your life here,
in this tiny niche, in the entire world you've ruined it.

7. Poland

LEŚMIAN, Bolesław (1878-1937)

In My Dream

In my dream, at both ends empty chambers are open.
Though it's night, they are sultry with heat of the noon.
Silence. In the mirrors evil flowers multiply.
Midnight strikes. Sleep's vacuum is peopled suddenly.

They steal from the shadows—blind, quick and
successive—
Figures whose active pallor and gait
Recall a person who dies in a hopeless
Night, when all should have died except him.

Their white garments bearing a black mark's insignia,
Their deliberate faces avert towards dream,
Moving across floors with a faith and a purpose
As if wishing to show they are what they are not ...

And not only the mirrors, also the blind fittings
Reflect in a fashion vague and incomplete
These people who pass from abyss to abysses
And would like to erase their reflections and traces ...

I know that they fear the moment closing in now
When my palm will reach outward and displace the first

From the ledge, the first dream in a dreamlike succession,
And ask him his name and gaze into his eyes!

But which it will be—no one knows or divines it ...
They pass, their fates muffled up in coats of white.
And helplessly I extend my late hand now
To those who are passing, have already gone ...

Refrain

Furred into a shallow flower, Head held in a double grip,
The bee before it's seized by flight,
Washes in the sun, like cats—
Strips off its unwound wings to nakedness.
Any breeze now—any—
Would fright the gang of sparrows,
And the dog flower draws shade
Nearly the same shape everyday,
And the dung beetle on its back plays dead.

The pond drifts with a cloud,
Its father the mill's wheel;
Forests murmur outside forest,
Time now whispers outside time—
The road strung out with poplars dreams, reaches no end
...

Fatigue-melancholy,
The horse, forever harnessed,
Numbed unlooking at a cart,
Shut its eyes in the birch shade—
Its short cough drones like bagpipes at the sun.

Let the bench's shadow lengthen
For the grasses to relax in!
Head on paws, the skinny dog
Sleeps at paws' end like a log—
As if the trackless earth stopped at that point!
Herbs in ravines, O herbs!
Whence all your bridal mirth?
Let the heat and wind increase,
Forest and ravine increase,
Along with all things else which yet may be!

In the Field

The two of us in this field's corner seclusion.
The stream burns blindly towards the sun.
On the leaf that cuts across the waves' current
An emerald damsel fly's travelling, whirling.

The grass at the river's bank, hanging down, touches
Its own reflection with its greyed tip,
To which a snail, bulging with the heat,
Has stuck its shell with its body and slime.

Darting, turning, swifter than lightning:
From time to time, silver slivers of roach. Look!
Underwater white sand shines
And stones with beards of moving moss.

Why has your head dropped into your hands?
There's the scent of grass and the water's sand—
There's the water's mirror—brightly lined—
Exhaling haze of peace, glare, cool.

These oak leaves above the bank of the river—
Caterpillars' greed gnawed them, holed them
To lace—keep their gauze ever-hanging
Above their own shadows, which nettles have fixed.
From these nettles I scoop up the spell of oak shadow,
Lift it up to my breast, which heaves in the sun;
My lips now touch the boundless green
Whose juice and silence yearn for me.

I press my flushed brow to the flowers,
I hear the droning horseflies, gnats,
And I will watch the ooze of cloves
Among the glares, dripping bright pitch.

And I will watch the poppies and sorrel
Grow faint beneath our bodies' perfume,
And I will trail your white hand through
The grass expanse, the unknown grass.

The Saw

Through the forest strolls that nightmare with its
saw-like waist,
That draws boys on with flashing teeth and knows the
charms of graves.

And she espied a ploughboy walking on the sloping
valley—
'I yearn for you, you are my sole dream—o you, dilly dilly.'

I will arm bright kisses for you, boy, in harshest steel:
Ever threshing, gleaming white, my teeth are never still!

Just look and gloat on what you've never seen!
Dare dream the dreams you never have dreamed!

Lie down in knapweed and in poppied rest,
In the sweat of your brow and forest gloam—let me feel your
caress!

'I'll love you with the strength of one who fights,
I'll kiss you as no man has kissed as yet!

I'll chuck the girls who tread upon my heels
And moan with love as if they'd fallen ill.

My body wants to test itself against a new caress,
My lips—to crimson with blood's eagerness!

For your sake, just for fun, I will create another me,
To thrill against your teeth with shudderings of ecstasy!

She ground her teeth and sharpened them for joy—
'As once I set about a tree, I go to love a boy!'

Above them a willow tree waved its golden tresses;
The boy learned the strength of loving steel when it caresses.

Her love bites bit him into ones and twos:
'Ha! More than one soul will come out of you!'

Her kisses tore him into little bits—
'O little ones, I hope in death you have a good time of it!'

She divided him up and flung him to opposite lands:
'Let God collect you again, offal of mankind!'

Bits tried to scrape their well-known shapes together,
But in the wide world could not find each other.

To start with, eyelids blinked against the dust.
Quite *who* blinked—no one knew. No man, at least!

Bumping swiftly down a dike, the head was looking
where
Its neck was—like the pumpkin you can't catch at the fair.

Ravines employ a borrowed chest—breathe deep;
Willows listen with ears that flew into trees.

Eyes decay, divorced, grow lustreless:
One buzzes in a cobweb; one sleeps in an ants' nest.

Beneath the trees one leg twists itself into a dance;
The other drags itself kneeling across the corn's stands.

And the hand upraised in vacancy over the road
Made the sign of the cross where nobody stood.

Uninhabited Ballad

Beyond the reach of human eyes, where nobody could
tread,

A meadow's emerald seclusion infinitely spread.
A stream lit out with ever-altered patches through the
green,

And from behind the grass the cloves blossomed like
cherry trees!

The jaws of the dew-bloated cricket darkened with foam.
Milk-drops topping slivers of stalks: the dandelions
shone

...
The meadow breathed heat's live ferment, fermented and
breathed,

And there was nobody around to hear a thing or see.

Where are my June-warmed breasts? Why does my
mouth not exist?

Why have I no hands there on the meadow
To gather the flowers up where they grow?

Out of the midst of hemlock something wondrous
divined,

A girlish sort of mistiness in want of lips or eyes.
And one could sense her painful will to self-create, to
incarnate,

Just once—wear golden-braided hair, display a breast of
white.

And one could sense the anguish heaving, panting,
in her womb—

Until her strength gave way for ever—left her unbecome!
But just there where she might have been some whispers
of existence

Kept a blank space for that soul—for that body, a
fragrance.

Where are my June-warmed breasts?
Why does my mouth not exist?

Why have I no hands there on the meadow
To gather the flowers up where they grow?

Attracted by strange whispers, every herb and insect
came apace,
Converging there in ferment, scenting an unheard-of
trace,
The spider set his net in nothingness to catch her
shadow's shade,
The bittern trumpeted the feast of fulfilment of the
unmaid,
Dung-beetles played a passing, and crickets a welcome,
song;
Ah! Flowers wound themselves in wreaths to lie her
grave along.
Collected on that sun-soaked spot, they all observed the
festival—
Except for her, the might-have-been, who never came and
never will.

Where are my June-warmed breasts?
Why does my mouth not exist?
Why have I no hands there on the meadow
To gather the flowers up where they grow?

Transformations

This night past the sultry darkness panted with desire;
In instant dawns of dry lightning cornflowers
suddenly
Found a way through to the eye of this deer
Which fled into the forest depths, scared by its alien eye:
As they dye its head blue like the deer they flit by, Gaze
on the world with cornflowers greedy eyes.

A poppy, finding itself lost in fields,
With a racket that no ear perceived as a sound,
Bloodied itself, purpled out with feathers, cockereled,
And shook its scarlet crest out wide until the blood
dripped down,
And crowed in the gloaming, fear-poisoned, wide-
beaked,
Until some real cockerels crowed an answer back.

And barley, desire deep-gliding its husk,
Fearsomly spread out its aggravated spikes,
To a golden hedgehog crunchingly crushed
Itself, ran off spearing the herbs' fragile dikes,
And whimpered and pouted at flowers, hog-bristled,

And will what they experienced always remain a riddle?

And I—in what place was I stung, at what hour,
To make me creep by, through boundary strips, secretly?
Why is there suspicion in the eyes of the flowers?
Do they know of a night self of mine—unknown to me?
What is it I've done that my hands clutch my brow?
What thing was I last night, gone forever now?

Evening

The sun in its setting tugs across meadows
A large cloud's shadow, pulls it up hills
Which are knit with the sky—the sky which prolongs
Life guttering out when the colours compel,
Into depths of dream—to make seen from afar
The lone purple shawl of a girl around here,
Where her arms have gracefully gathered her knees
To her chin. Under heaven's tent she has grown
Ever more lonely in this clime and remoteness,
Having long preserved the same posture and dream,
Drinking in the numbed spell of just looking
At everything, and yet no single thing ...
Nearby, scarce resembling itself,
Enormous against the vacuum of world,
A speckled cow grows red in the light,
Slicing half the sun off with one horn
As its other encumbers a distant pear tree—
The drowsy stupor and hum of the insects
Nourishes emptiness, feeds the solitude
That leans upon hayricks bound up inside poles.
Successive breaths of distant herbs
Pass over fields, bringing the seasoning sweat
Of fresh-ploughed earth, stitched up by the crows' flights,
Which heavily steams and cools gradually.

The Girl

Twelve brothers who gave credence to dreams tested
the wall out from the dream's side.
For on its other side they heard a trapped girl as she
cried.

They came to love her voice's sound, thought on her
eagerly,
And guessed her lips' shapes from the way her song died
mournfully.

They said, 'She weeps, therefore she is.' And that was all
they said.

They bade farewell to the whole world—and the world
was amazed.
Their calloused fists gripped hammers, loudly battered at
the wall.
And could the blind night not tell hammer from human
at all?

'O quickly crush the cold stone lest death's rust consume
the maid!
Thus—beating at the wall—one brother to the others
said.

But all their strivings were in vain, in vain their
instruments and arms.
They gave their bodies to the dream that had enticed
them with its charms.

Their ribs collapse; bones crumble; hands—are dust, and
faces—pale ...
One day they died and passed into the same night, one
and all.

And yet their dead shadows—O my God!—would not let
the hammers go.
The hammers just sound different now, time alters in its
flow.

Ahead they sound—on all sides pound—and all around
they thunder.
And could the blind night not tell where a shade became
a hammer?

'O quickly crush the cold stone lest death's rust consume
the maid!
Thus—as he beat the wall—one addressed all the other
shades.

But all at once their strength gave out, and shadows can't
resist the dusk!
And so they died away again, because we never die
enough:

Never enough, and never just quite as the dying man
wanted.
Their substance vanished—no trace left—and so their
story's ended.

But the brave hammers—O my God!—did not succumb
to feeble grief.

They beat against the walls themselves—bronze echoed
on itself.

They banged by night, by blazing light, and dripped with
human sweat.

And could blind night not tell what's left of hammers that
are not?

'O quickly crush the cold stone lest death's rust consume
the maid!
Thus—beating at the wall—one hammer to the others
said.

The wall fell down, a thousand echoes shook the hills and
dales!

But on the far side: just a void. No living soul. No girl.

Nobody's eyes or mouth; no bed-of-roses destiny.
There'd been a voice, and just a voice, and nothing else
you see.

Nothing—but grief and loss and tears and ignorance and
night.
Such is the way of this evil world. Why isn't it put right?

Confronted with the dream's clear lie, with wonders
wasted on a void,
The mighty hammers lay down in rows, as if well
employed.

Sudden silence horribly fell. All Heaven became a
vacuum.
Why do you mock the vacuum that has never ever
mocked you?

The Drowned Man

Among the billowing fescue, amidst a forest glade,
Where a meadow's likeness rises unexpected from the
wood,
Lie the remains of a traveller, a corpse that nobody needs.
He wandered the entire world, both head and foot in
clouds,
Until impatient melancholy urged him suddenly
To stride in spirit through the Green of Greens.
The demon of Green, meanwhile, with the forests for his
breath,

Enwrapped him when he halted by a tree along his path,
And lured him with a haste of ceaseless bloomings
And charmed with panting lips' secret unsmiling.
And tantalised him with the fragrant wrecks of the
unbeen
To draw him deeper and deeper—into the Green!
And so he ran across the shore of worlds that ever
differed,
Unmanning soul and breath amidst the flowers,
Until he stumbled on such berries in unsounding jugs,
On such a fern-dark, such a moundy hush,
On such a vegetable unworld, such an undawn's
deafness,
On such a congregation of the last blizzards' whispers,
That he plunged down dead through abysses of
hundreds of springs:
Shadowy, like woods in woods—a drowned greeny
thing.

Urszula Kowchanowska

When I arrived in Heaven's wilderness when I was dead,
God took a long look at me and He stroked me on the
head.
Come closer to me, Ursula! You look the old live you ...
Whatever you may wish for to be happy, that I'll do.
Make things - O Lord - I whispered -so that in Heaven's
place
It's just the same as there - in Czarnolas.
But fearfully I halted there; my eyes looked up to test
He felt no anger over my request.
He smiled and gave the sign -and by God's grace
A house rose - brick for brick like Czarnolas.
Its furniture, its flowerpots, its herbs:
So much the same, my joy could know no words.
He said: Look - flowerpots and furniture.
Just wait and see, your yearning parents will be here.
And I, each time I rearrange the stars,
Will sometimes knock to see just how you are.
He left; I did my best to tidy up -
I cleaned the floor and put out all the cps -
My body in a bright pink skirt I drape-
Shake off eternal rest - and sit and wait -
The kindlings of the dawn are on the walls,
And I hear footsteps, knocking at the door...
I jump up. All across the skies winds toll.
My heart stops ... No! It's God - not them at all.

Martin Freedom

A landslide came injuring God from the hills;

Into the abyss Martin Freedom was spilled.
As he tumbled he felt his embodied bones' riot,
Crashed into the earth with his last mist of spirit.
Mortally shattered, he made to grapple pain,
And round pain began to collect his mash of man.
A smashed hand lodged there like a knife in hot bread!
It scrabbled, messed about ... then crawled on ahead.
In this way the misshapen body's ulcered scrawl
Laboriously came to the feet of a girl.
The lips rocks had ravaged and thickets had bruised
Whispered out the name of the form so abused.
She balked at this sore amidst orchards, and paled.
'Stop scaring the flowers with wounds, cripple! Away!
Bleed away from my feet! Seek physic in the skies!
No point mouthing your name. You are not recognised!' -
But God called down from Heaven, 'Fie, lady, for shame!
You don't know him? I do! Martin Freedom -the same!'
The girl paled and cried, 'By all things heavenly
This body cannot represent Martin to me! ... '
And so God slid towards him a tomb's wide abyss
To bring nearer the death the body sorely wished.
And so the poor body the girl would not know
Gave a whisper - its name - and into the gulf flowed.

Pan Blyszczynski

Pan Blyszczynski's garden is greening in the outdusk
Where miracle distends to horrid lawlessness.
He extroded it with his flashing eyes from nothing's
husk
And fixed it under trees upon dreamt-up grass.

When the nightmares are all busy with a quickened
maring
Between the mist and the water, between mist and sky,
The hands of a green phantom disembody amid weeping
Above where pigweed, nettles and ferns lie.

At some such time did God, deep in eternal recollection,
Fly past - along a wandering undercloud.
He halted where two starry yearnings made an
intersection
Where gleaming ghosts have always anyoldhowed.

Things rustled there like sycamores, in sycamores'
despite,
With the very clamour of silence, of silence and loss ...
'Who stamped his rustling mark on the creations of
My might?
Who disvoided this garden and this grass? .. '

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Silence ... Nobody replies. The clouds and hours
drift past ...

All distances of heaven are the dead's.
Pan Blyszczynski stepped into the world through
trembling grass
And whispered, 'O my God!' - and then he said,

The afterworld was full of dreams and gales and
magic storms.

Lord, do not take away my fulfilled dreams!
'Twas I gave body to these trees. My motions they,
my thoughts. ,
My wonders and my dews ... we are the same.

These sadnesses and lineage less shadows - Lord, oh
pardon

The misformed flowers I spun from the void.
The fault is mine. Lord, come into the garden,
The garden, which is mine, is mine ... O Lord.

I confess that frivolously, densely, I believe
In afterlives of flowers and butterflies.
Come into my garden, though mere magic gave it life ...
Though it be but the folly of a day! ... '

He entered bushes busy rustling signs from life's beyond.
They were alone - alone, and face to face.
Saying nothing, darkening, together they walked on
Down alleyways that followed alleyways.

The garden dreamed itself ... Here and there oaks
withered, died - overdreamt.
The look of afterworlds was on each bush.
The boughs were thick with owls and many wandering
silences.
No cricket and no finch ruffled the hush.

The heavens fled to seek protection with the farthest star.
The gold-horned moon prodded clouds mistily.
Dead souls fluttered in the sand, desired
Their deaths renewed and - in the gloom - posthumous
liberties.

Something like a golden island crawls in alleys far.
An island such as takes fright when brows raise . . .
In a moment midnight creeps into the green with glow-
worms' stars,
Disturbing the forest overgrowth's intricacies.

Pan Blyszczynski checked the garden for its magic fit

That sounds and after-sounds quite really seemed –
And that fungus on the oak, that deadly derelict,
Bit deep into false bark and trunks of dreams.

He checked the lily-bird trill was a lark's,
And that the tulip's snake-head indicated spring,
And with a glance he brought reluctant trees up to the
mark:
More or less the same as the real thing ...

Unheard-of fallacious flowers ramped wondrously
enough.
A burden of bad eternity weighed down each bough.
At the feet of passers-by, the sand's uncertain snuff
Only existed as much as its being snuffed out.

Onward they trod, coming to the spot on which - rank
fantasy-
A girl's shade lit up, eyes far-glistening:
Her lips and her breasts and her arms and her dreams
Were such that she loved everything ...

So gold her lashes they could flash to light
Dreamed depths of lakes, in which a dreamed Death
glooms –
Her braids like waves upon the wings of fright
Were always fleeing, and always re-meeting, her arms.

God watched as she emerged from swaddling haze:
As on blue voids her dreamt eyes opened wide.
'Who created her?' 'No one; she was lifeless when she
came,
She has no death, she neither lived nor died ...

In vain I've combed her braids for being's traces,
crumbs of dream,
In vain I yearn to stroke her goldern curls.
And her unbeing moves me. Wondrous maid of the
unbeen! ...
Be good to the unbeen ... I know You will ...

I drew this garden from the dusk, detracted from the
causal,
Flowered the gulf about, and multiplied roads-
And now I comprehend all things, all things except this
girl -
This girl I love' The Lord said not a word.

'I know the toils of dreamy things, the dead ones'
weariness.

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At times my garden would prefer - unleaving ...
O God in heaven, when you bless and curse, be generous
To those who know they aren't and wish for being.

Throughout your vast spaces something has happened:
mists demand miracles ...
Beyond the world's far side the blizzards pray.
And in these terrible un times, so suddenly, a girl
Goes and bodies forth outside life - heedlessly!

Draw closer to her, dark ravine! And you, O stream so
blue!
Why does my dog so howl at her mouse-quiet charms?
Perhaps her cold lips bear the last rites to
Those who trust only sadnesses and dooms?

I know ascension's woe, the woe of mouths that are
reborn,
The tears in forests green, the orphans' deaths –
And all this pains me! I myself am pain!
He cried to God and to the boundlessness.

But God was gone. An emptiness lay upon all the
flowers.
Tree phantoms whispered, 'Have mercy on us!'
With blessings for all fantasies, the air around aquiver,
He flew on to some other universe.

From heaven one could see -that the world fades,
That dreams are lit by - water over stones ...
Pan Blyszczynski whispered to the dumb lips of the
maid,
'Poor shadow, poor sad shadow, wondrous one!

Shine bright blue -and then shed that blue ... Tell all-and
do not say.
Is this the cosmos where your lost self lies?
Perhaps you own another green, a void, another sky,
Somewhere in another immensity?

You haven't started being yet in any halfdream, any
tomb, Your steps aren't yet recorded in the flowers.
Whilst you have been unbeing here I fell in love with you,
Laying open an obscure body to the hereafters!

Should I go into pain's depths with you, or that other
valley's depth
Before earth dies the death scrolled in the clouds? ...
And how can I get through to you, O unbeen girl - your
breath

So dear to me, my mist, my gold-mist-shroud!

Observe my destiny in rags: dark nights and carrion days.
Observe the state of my magic: love-wounded, it flutters.
From nothingness and to your lips - is but a step away:
From gulf - to gulf, amidst many a shudder.

The leaves dream -of infinity. Oars: of boats, waters deep.
Once cast-off, dawns become pallid forever ...
Whether death derides us into naught or sews us up
To weep - no matter -last breath - there's no matter.

Night does not use a sword to kill us but a lily, jasmine,
The hush of graves and what orchards exhale.
Seize, caress and then destroy the things the night
contains,
So not one single trace of it remains.

All phantoms yearn to die just some such sudden multi-
death,
Take leave of dreams and lift the cares of day.
My ghost he sleeps in a ravine, beside the grassy sedge:
When you find him, vacant shadow, hold him, when he
wakes.

On high, and on the highest heights - 'twixt sky and
overtrees –
In silver, fleetingness and silence rove.
So little do I know of you that somehow, wondrously,
My ignorance is nothing else but love.'

Suddenly he halted, stared to where the distance stops.
There was a teem of destinies and lights.
Meanwhile he loved her at her feet and at her breasts and
lips
Throughout a hundred thousand different times.

He clasped her up into his arms: his lips her figure traced.
He gave her eyes the gold of watching stars.
The shade within his arms grew ever lonelier, more
waste,
Unknowing what love and caresses are.

Night wove a knout of omens, mist and sparks
To punish any none-too-eager tombs.
The moon's straits and bays lit up on its chart
Where there is naught but distance, mourning, gloom.

The void whistled through maples; in the hollow oak,
dusk whined;

The moon illumined -death and a spider's web ...
Pan Blyszczynski understood, began to wring his hands
And thought, 'She's slipping into nothingness.'

She blew to nothing, with all of the charms heaven
wrought;
Along with her breast, and the pink juiciness at its tip.
In terrible self-pity, the body fell apart –
Half ignorant of that pity. And that - was it ...

She did not die, but in the lake there perished her
reflection.
The afterworld closed down with the girl's miracle ...
Eternities, eternities, you too were in the garden.
And Pan Blyszczynski looked very, very pale.

Bees

In underground seclusion, in a dark and lived-in depth,
Where the dead man has no roof above his head
but nothingness

Upon a certain Night Eternal - round July for us -
Something buzzes ... And Death hears and quickens
up his step.

It's - bees, who have strayed from the pathway of being,
Sidetracked to wastes that are like malign hives.
So strange is the glittering swarm's humming jive
One is fearful of watching it eagerly gleaming! ...
And the dead, quite delighted, eyes flickering wide,
Their dry stick hands raised up as shields from the glare,
Crowd shade upon shade and concertedly cry,
'They're bees! You remember? They're bees; that's for
sure!'

The pangs sleep once smothered consume them anew.
As they thank each small insect for each wakened wound
Every ounce of their voided strength watches their light
Zig a gold into death and then zag out alive ...
Once upon a time they knew this wondrous gold litter
But now, desolate, wrapped up in ungodly mist,
They marvel over the winged charade's glitters
And over the speeding teaser's humming wisps.
But now in the void the bees catch at a scent:
The exit! And shine on in crowds that grow thinner.
On reaching the world their light dies at the corner.
All gone! And the dead watch and watch where
they went ...

8. Portugal

PESSOA, Fernando (1888-1935—of Jewish descent)

Ye Who Believing in Christs

Ye who believing in Christs and Marys
Trouble the limpid water of my spring
Merely to tell me
That there are waters of another kind
Bathing meadows in better times,—
Why speak to me of those other regions
If these waters, these meadows
Are of here and now and delight me?

Ye who vainly woo what is better than life,
Leave life to believers in older things
Than Christ and his cross,
And Mary weeping.

Ceres, mistress of the fields, be my comfort,
Apollo and Venus too, and aged Uranus, And the
thunderbolts which fascinate
By coming from the hand of Jove.

Nothing Knows Me

Nothing knows me, save the moment.
My memory itself is void, I feel
That who I am and who I was
Are different dreams.

The Muse

The ancients used to invoke the Muses: We invoke
ourselves.

I don't know if the Muses ever came—

It would of course depend on who was invoked and how—

But we don't come, I'm sure of that.
How many times have I peered
Into the well I fancy that I am
And plaintively cried 'Aah!', hoping for an echo
Yet heard no more than what I saw—
The dim dark brightness of a gleam of water,
Down in the pointless depths ...
No echo for me ...
Just an ill-defined face
Which must be mine (if not, whose could it be?).
It's something I can hardly see at all,
Except as clearly as I see
Down there ...
In the bottom's silence and deceptive light ...
Some Muse!

Epitaph for Bartholomew Diaz

Here, on the small strand of the extreme distance,
Lies the Captain of the End. When the Dread has passed,
The sea remains the same: let no one hereinafter fear it!
Another Atlas, he shows the world carried high on his
shoulder.

Between Sleep and Dream

Between sleep and dream,
Between me and that which is in me,
The Who I suppose myself to be,
An endless river flows.

It passed by other banks,
Diverse and distant,
In those different travels
That every river takes.

It arrived where now I live,
The house I am today.
It passes if I meditate on myself;
If I wake, it has passed away.

And he who I feel myself to be and who dies
In that which ties me to myself, Sleeps where the river
flows—
That river without end.

The Poet

The poet's good at pretending,
Such a master of the art
He even manages to pretend
The pain he really feels is pain.

And those who read his written words
Feel, as they read of pain,
Not the two kinds that were his
But only the kind that's not theirs.

And so around his little track,
To entertain the mind,
Runs that clockwork train of ours,
The thing we call the heart.

Portuguese Sea

O salty sea, how much of thee
Portugal shed as tears!

Because we crossed thee, how many mothers wept,
How many sons prayed to no avail!
How many plighted maids remained unwed
That we might possess thee, O sea!

Was it worth while? All is worth while
If only the soul be not base.
He who would sail beyond Cape Bojador
Must sail beyond the bourn of grief.
God gave the sea its dangers and its deeps,
But in it he mirrored heaven's own face.

This

They say that all I ever write
Is but pretence and lies. Not so.
It's simply that I feel
With the imagination.
I do without the heart.

All I dream or live through
All I lack, all that falls short,
Is as it were a terrace
With a view of something more—
And *that's* a thing of beauty.

So when I write I'm in the midst
Of what is far from me,
Completely uninvolved myself,
In earnest for no reason.
Feelings? They're for the reader!

I Am Tired

I am tired, that is clear,
Because, at certain stage, people have to be tired.
Of what I am tired, I don't know:
It would not serve me at all to know
Since the tiredness stays just the same.
The wound hurts as it hurts
And not in function of the cause that produced it. Yes, I
am tired,
And ever so slightly smiling
At the tiredness being only this -
In the body a wish for sleep,
In the soul a desire for not thinking
And, to crown all, a luminous transparency
Of the retrospective understanding ...
And the one luxury of not now having hopes?
I am intelligent: that's all.

I have seen much and understood much of what I
have seen.
And there is a certain pleasure even in tiredness
this brings us,
That in the end the head does still serve for something.

I Have a Terrible Cold

I have a terrible cold,
And everyone knows how terrible colds
Alter the whole system of the universe,
Set us against life,
And make even metaphysics sneeze.
I have wasted the whole day blowing my nose.
My head is aching vaguely.
Sad condition for a minor poet!
Today I am really and truly a minor poet.
What I was in old days was a wish; it's gone.
Goodbye for ever, queen of fairies!
Your wings were made of sun, and I am walking here.
I shan't get well unless I go and lie down on my bed.
I never was well except lying down on the Universe.
Excusez un peu ...
What a terrible cold! ... it's
physical!
I need truth and aspirin.

Crown Me with Roses

Crown me with roses,
Crown me really
With roses -
Roses which burn out
On a forehead burning
So soon out!
Crown me with roses
And with fleeting leafage.
That will do.

Hate You, Christ, I Do Not

Hate you, Christ, I do not, or seek. I believe
In you as in the others gods, your elders.
I count you as neither more nor less Than they are,
merely newer.
I do hate, yes, and calmly abhor people
Who seek you above the other gods, yours equals.
I seek you where you are, not higher
Than them, not lower, yourself merely.
Sag god, needed perhaps because there was
None like you: one more in the Pantheon, nothing

More, not purer: because the whole
Was complete with gods, except you.
Take care, exclusive idolater of Christ: life
Is multiple, all days different from each other,
And only as multiple shall we
Be with reality and alone.

As She Passes

When I am sitting at the window,
Through the panes, which the snow blurs,
I see the lovely images, hers, as
She passes ... passes ... passes by ...
Over me grief has thrown its veil:-
Less a creature in this world
And one more angel in the sky.
When I am sitting at the window,
Through the panes, which the snow blurs,
I think I see the image, hers,
That's not now passing ... not passing by ...

I Know, I Alone

I know, I alone
How much it hurts, this heart
With no faith nor law
Nor melody nor thought.
Only I, only I
And none of this can I say
Because feeling is like the sky -
Seen, nothing in it to see.

Should Somebody One Day

Should somebody one day knock at your door
Announcing he's an emissary of mine,
Never believe him, nor that it is I;
For to knock does not go with my vainglory,
Even at the unreal door of the sky.
But should you, naturally and without hearing
Anyone knock, come to your door, unbar it
And find somebody waiting (it appears)
To dare to knock, give it some thought. It was
My emissary and I and the retinue of my glorying
In what drives to despair and what despairs.
Unbar to who does not knock at your door!

9. Russia

MANDELSTAM, Osip (1891-1938)

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What if...

What if the star that glitters
Constantly above that modish shop
Were suddenly to plunge
A long hat-pin into my heart?

The Horse-shoes

The horse-shoes still ring with the old days.
The doormen sleep on the counters
like bales of furs.

And the porter, weary as a king, hears knocking at the
iron gate, gets up yawning like a barnyard —
they've waked the old Scythian!

So Ovid with his waning love wove Rome with snow on
his lines and sang of the ox-cart
in our wild wagon-trains.

To Cherish Children's Books

To cherish children's books
Childish dreams and cogitations; throw
Out everything grown-up and clocks;
Grow out of deeply rooted sorrow.

I am tired to death
of life, and welcome nothing it can give me.
But I adore the poor earth:
There is no other earth to see.

In a garden far-off I swung
On a simple wooden swing,
And I remember dark tall firs
In hazy fevers.

Awe

Few live for Always
But if the passing moment makes you anxious
Your lot is terror and your house precarious.

The Shy Speechless Sound

The shy speechless sound
of a fruit falling from its tree, and around it the silent
music
of the forest, unbroken ...

The Admiralty

In the northern capital a dusty poplar languishes. The
translucent clockface is lost in the leaves, and through the
dark green a frigate or acropolis
gleams far away, brother of water and sky.

An aerial ship and a touch-me-not mast, a yardstick for
Peter's successors, teaching that beauty is no demi-god's
whim,
it's the plain carpenter's fierce rule-of-eye.

The four sovereign elements smile on us, but man in his
freedom has made a fifth. Do not the chaste lines of this
ark deny the dominion of space?

The capricious jellyfish clutch in anger, anchors are
rusting like abandoned ploughs — and behold the locks of
the three dimensions are sprung
and all the seas of the world lie open.

The Casino

(Unpremeditated Happiness)

The wind is playing with a corrugated cloud,
The anchor scrapes the ocean bottom;
Lifeless as linen, my wine-struck mind
Hangs over nothingness.

But I revel in the Casino on the dunes:
The vast view from the misty window,
A thin ray of light on the crumpled table cloth.

And, with greenish water suspended all around,
When the wine flashes crystal like a rose,
I like to soar — the grey gull's shadow.

'On the pale-blue enamel'

On the pale-blue enamel, that April can bring, birch
branches' imperceptible sway, slipped towards evening.
A network of finely etched lines, is the pattern's finished
state, the carefully-made design, like that on a porcelain
plate, the thoughtful artist set, on the glazed firmament,
oblivious to sad death,
knowing ephemeral strength.

'What shall I do with this body they gave me,' What shall
I do with this body they gave me, so much my own, so
intimate with me? For being alive, for the joy of calm
breath, tell me, who should I bless? I am the flower, and

the gardener as well, and am not solitary, in earth's cell.
My living warmth, exhaled, you can see, on the clear
glass of eternity. A pattern set down, until now,
unknown. Breath evaporates without trace,
but form no one can deface.

'A speechless sadness'

A speechless sadness opened two huge eyes. A vase of
flowers woke: splashing crystal surprise. The whole room
filled, with languor - sweet potion! Such a tiny kingdom
to swallow sleep's ocean. Wine's slight redness, May's
slight sunlight - fingers, slender, and white, breaking
wafer-fragments.

'There is no need for words'

There is no need for words: nothing must be heard. How
sad, and fine, an animal's dark mind. Nothing it must
make heard: it has no use for words, a young dolphin,
plunging, steep, along the world's grey deep.

Silentium

She has not yet been born:
she is music and word,
and therefore the un-torn,
fabric of what is stirred.

Silent the ocean breathes.
Madly day's glitter roams.
Spray of pale lilac foams,
in a bowl of grey-blue leaves.

May my lips rehearse
the primordial silence,
like a note of crystal clearness,
sounding, pure from birth!

Stay as foam Aphrodite - Art -
and return, Word, where music begins:
and, fused with life's origins,
be ashamed heart, of heart!

The Shell

Night, maybe you don't need
me. From the world's reach,
a shell without a pearl's seed,
I'm thrown on your beach.

You move indifferent seas,
and always sing,

but you will still be pleased,
with this superfluous thing.

You lie nearby on the shore,
wrapped in your chasuble,
and the great bell of the waves' roar,
you will fasten to the shell.

Your murmuring foam will kiss
the walls of the fragile shell,
with wind and rain and mist,
like a heart where nothing dwells.

'Orioles are in the Woods, and in Tonic Verse'

Orioles are in the woods, and in tonic verse
the length of vowels is the only measure.
Once in each year nature's drawn to excess,
and overflows, like Homer's metre.

Today yawns, like the caesura's suspense:
From dawn there's quiet, and laborious timelessness:
oxen at pasture, and golden indolence;
from the reed, to draw a whole note's richness.

Tristia

I have studied the Science of departures,
in night's sorrows, when a woman's hair falls down.
The oxen chew, there's the waiting, pure,
in the last hours of vigil in the town,
and I reverence night's ritual cock-crowing,
when reddened eyes lift sorrow's load and choose
to stare at distance, and a woman's crying
is mingled with the singing of the Muse.

Who knows, when the word 'departure' is spoken
what kind of separation is at hand,
or of what that cock-crow is a token,
when a fire on the Acropolis lights the ground,
and why at the dawning of a new life,
when the ox chews lazily in its stall,
the cock, the herald of the new life,
flaps his wings on the city wall?

I like the monotony of spinning,
the shuttle moves to and fro,
the spindle hums. Look, barefoot Delia's running
to meet you, like swansdown on the road!
How threadbare the language of joy's game,
how meagre the foundation of our life!
Everything was, and is repeated again:

it's the flash of recognition brings delight.

So be it: on a dish of clean earthenware,
like a flattened squirrel's pelt, a shape,
forms a small, transparent figure, where
a girl's face bends to gaze at the wax's fate.
Not for us to prophesy, Erebus, Brother of Night:
Wax is for women: Bronze is for men.
Our fate is only given in fight,
to die by divination is given to them.

'I don't remember the word I wished to say.'

I don't remember the word I wished to say.
The blind swallow returns to the hall of shadow,
on shorn wings, with the translucent ones to play.
The song of night is sung without memory, though.

No birds. No blossoms on the dried flowers.
The manes of night's horses are translucent.
An empty boat drifts on the naked river.
Lost among grasshoppers the word's quiescent.

It swells slowly like a shrine, or a canvas sheet,
hurling itself down, mad, like Antigone,
or falls, now, a dead swallow at our feet.
with a twig of greenness, and a Stygian sympathy.

O, to bring back the diffidence of the intuitive caress,
and the full delight of recognition.
I am so fearful of the sobs of The Muses,
the mist, the bell-sounds, perdition.

Mortal creatures can love and recognise: sound may
pour out, for them, through their fingers, and overflow:
I don't remember the word I wished to say,
and a fleshless thought returns to the house of shadow.

The translucent one speaks in another guise,
always the swallow, dear one, Antigone...
on the lips the burning of black ice,
and Stygian sounds in the memory.

10. Spain

MACHADO, Antonio

A Young Face One Day Appears

A young face one day appears before our house. We tell
her: why do you return to the old home?

She opens a window and all the fields in light and
fragrance waft inside. On the white path the tree trunks
grow black; the top leaves
are green smoke dreaming far away. A pond seems like a
broad river in the white mist of morning. Across the livid
mountains another chimera.

Naked is the Earth

Naked is the earth, and the soul howls to the pale horizon
like a hungry she-wolf. Poet, what do you seek
in the sunset?

Bitter walking, for the road weighs upon the heart. The
frozen wind and coming night, and the bitterness
of distance! On the white road

a few stiff trees blacken; in the distant mountains there is
gold and blood. The sun is dead. Poet, what do you seek
in the sunset?

And He was the Devil of My Dreams

And he was the devil of my dreams, the handsomest
angel. His eyes of victory shone like steel, and bloody
flames from his torch
lighted the deep crypt of my soul.

'Will you come with me?' 'Never.
Tombs and the dead terrify me.' Yet the ferrous fingers
seized my right arm.

'Will you come with me?' — And in my dream
I went forward, blinded by his red lantern. And in the
crypt I heard the ringing chains
and the stirring of imprisoned beasts.

Rainbow at Night

for Don Ramón del Valle-Inclán

The train moves through the Guadarrama
one night on the way to Madrid.
The moon and the fog create
high up a rainbow.
Oh April moon, so calm,
driving up the white clouds!

The mother holds her boy
sleeping on her lap.
The boy sleeps, and 'nevertheless
sees the green fields outside,

and trees lit up by sun,
and the golden butterflies.

The mother, her forehead dark
between a day gone and a day to come,
sees a fire nearly out
and an oven with spiders.

There's a traveller mad with grief,
no doubt seeing odd things;
he talks to himself, and when he looks
wipes us out with his look.

I remember fields under snow,
and pine trees of other mountains.

And you, Lord, through whom we all
have eyes, and who sees souls,
tell us if we all one
day will see your face.

Summer Night

A beautiful summer night.
The tall houses leave
their balcony shutters open
to the wide plaza of the old village.
In the large deserted square,
stone benches, burning bush and acacias
trace their black shadows
symmetrically on the white sand.
In its zenith, the moon; in the tower,
the clock's illuminated globe.
I walk through this ancient village,
alone, like a ghost.

O Solitude and Now My One Companion!

O solitude and now my one companion!
O muse of wonder offering the word
I never asked for to my voice! A question:
Who am I talking to? And am I heard?
Abstracted from the noisy masquerade,
I turn my sadness, punctured by no friend,
to you, lady of the veiled face, in shade,
who when you talk to me are always veiled.
Today I think: who I am I don't care;
it's not my grave enigma when I stare
into my inner mirror but the mystery
of your warm loving voice. Now clear the glare

and show your face to me. I want to see
your eyes made out of diamonds fixed on me.

Rose of Fire

Lovers, you are a weaving of the spring,
woven of earth and water, wind and sun.
The mountains in your panting chests, and spun
into your eyes the fields are blossoming.
Go out and walk with spring and share the season,
and fearlessly keep drinking the sweet milk
which the lewd panther offers you, the treason
of beasts, before she traps you in black silk.
Stroll when the axis of the planet bends
into the solstice days of summer, when
the almond trees are green and violets gone,
when thirst is near and water soaks the land.
Walk toward love's afternoon, fulfilled, and on
and on, the rose of fire inside your hand.

To the Great Zero

When *Being that is himself* made nothing, he
lay down to rest (and thoroughly deserved),
day owned the night, and man lost company.
Only through absence was his love preserved.
Fiat umbra! And human thought was born.
A universal egg arose, empty
and colorless and cold, deprived of form
and filled with an unsubstantial mistiness.
Take the number zero, hollow sphere,
which, if you see it, will be standing near.
Now shoulders are the back of your wild
beast,
a miracle of non-being born. Now feast,
drink, poet, and sling out a border song
to death, to silence and to oblivion.

LORCA, Federico Garcia (1898-1936) From Moon Songs

The moon lays a long horn, of light, on the sea.
Tremoring, ecstatic, the grey-green unicorn. The sky
floats over the wind, a huge flower of lotus. (O you,
walking alone,
in the last house of night!)

Dream

My heart rests, by the cold fountain. (Fill it with threads,
spider of silence.)
The fountain-water sang it the song. (Fill it with threads,
spider of silence.)

My heart, waking, sang its desires. (Spider of nothingness, spin your mystery.)
The fountain-water listened sombrely. (Spider of nothingness, spin your mystery.)
My heart falls into the cold of the fountain. (White hands, far-out, hold back the water.)
The water carries it, singing with joy. (White hands, far-out,
nothing there in the water!)

Wish

Just your hot heart, nothing more. My Paradise, a field, no nightingales, no strings, a river, discrete, and a little fountain. Without the spurs, of the wind, in the branches, without the star, that wants to be leaf. An enormous light that will be the glow of the Other, in a field of broken gazes.
A still calm
where our kisses, sonorous circles of echoes, will open, far-off. And your hot heart,
nothing more.

The Little Ballad of the Three Rivers

The Guadalquivir's river runs past oranges and olives. The two rivers of Granada, fall, to wheatfields, out of snow. Ay, Love, that goes, and never returns! The Guadalquivir's river has a beard of clear garnet. The two rivers of Granada one of sorrow, one of blood. Ay, Love, vanished down the wind! For the sailing-boats, Seville keeps a roadway: Through the waters of Granada only sighs can row. Ay, Love, that went, and never returned! Guadalquivir – high tower, and breeze in the orange-trees. Dauro, Genil – dead turrets, dead, above the ponds. Ay, Love, vanished down the wind! Who can say, if water carries a ghost-fire of cries? Ay, Love, that went, and never returned! Take the orange petals, take the leaves of olives,
Andalusia, down to your sea. Ay, Love, vanished on the wind!
Paso (The Images of the Passion)
Virgin in a crinoline, Virgin of Solitude, spreading immensely like a tulip-flower. In your boat of light, go - through the high seas of the city. through turbulent singing, through crystalline stars. Virgin in a crinoline through the roadway's river you go,
down to the sea!

The Dawn New

York's dawn holds four mud pillars, and a hurricane of black doves,
paddling in foul water. New York's dawn moans on vast stairways, searching on the ledges, for anguished tuberoses.
Dawn breaks and no one's mouth breathes it, since hope and tomorrow, here, have no meaning. Sometimes coins, furiously swarming, stab and devour the abandoned children. The first to go outside know in their bones Paradise will not be there, nor wild loves. They know they go to the swamp of law, and numbers, to play without art, and labour without fruit. The light is buried by chains and by noise, in the shameless challenge, of rootless science. All across the suburbs, sleepless crowds stumble,
as if saved, by the moment, from a shipwreck of blood.

Gacela of the Flight

Often I lost myself in the sea, my ears filled with fresh-cut flowers my tongue filled with love and anguish. often I lost myself in the sea, as I am lost in the hearts of children. No one when giving a kiss fails to feel the smile of faceless people. No one who touches a newborn child, forgets the immobile skulls of horses. Because the roses search the forehead, for the toughened landscapes of bone, and Man's hands have no fate, but to imitate roots, under the ground. As I am lost in the hearts of children, often I lost myself in the sea. Ignorant of water, I go searching,
for death, in light, consuming me.

Gacela of the Terrible Presence

I want the river to lose its way.
I want the wind to quit the valley. I want the night to lose its sight, and my heart its flower of gold; the cattle to speak to the great leaves, and the worm to die of shadows; the teeth on the skull to shine,
and the silk to be drowned in yellows. I can see wounded midnight's duel struggling, knotted, with noon light. I resist the broken arch, where time suffers, and the green venom of twilight. But do not make a black cactus, open in reeds, of your nakedness. Leave me afraid of dark planets,
but do not show me your calm waist.

Sonnet of the Wreath of Roses

The wreath, quick, I am dying!

Weave it quick now! Sing, and moan, sing! Now the shadow is darkening my throat, and January's light returns, a thousand and one times. Between what needs me, and my needing you, starry air, and a trembling tree. A thickness of windflowers lifts a whole year, with hidden groaning. Take joy from the fresh landscape of my wound, break out the reeds, and the delicate streams, and taste the blood, spilt, on thighs of sweetness. But quick! So that joined together, and one, time will find us ruined, with bitten souls, and mouths bruised with love.

The Poet asks his Love to write

Visceral love, living death, in vain, I wait your written word, and consider, with the flower that withers, I wish to lose you, if I have to live without self. The air is undying: the inert rock neither knows shadow, nor evades it. And the heart, inside, has no use for the honeyed frost the moon pours. But I endured you: ripped open my veins, a tiger, a dove, over your waist, in a duel of teeth and lilies. So fill my madness with speech, or let me live in my calm night of the soul, darkened for ever. Song

The girl with the lovely face, goes, gathering olives. The wind, that towering lover, takes her by the waist. Four riders go by on Andalusian ponies, in azure and emerald suits, in long cloaks of shadow. 'Come to Cordoba, sweetheart!' The girl does not listen.

Three young bullfighters go by, slim-waisted in suits of orange, with swords of antique silver. 'Come to Sevilla, sweetheart!'

The girl does not listen. When the twilight purples, with the daylight's dying, a young man goes by, holding roses, and myrtle of moonlight. 'Come to Granada, my sweetheart!'

But the girl does not listen. The girl, with the lovely face, goes on gathering olives, while the wind's grey arms go circling her waist.

Juan Breva

(From: Flamenco Vignettes, for Manuel Torres) Juan Breva had the body of a giant and the voice of a young girl. Nothing was like his warbling. It was itself pain singing behind a smile. He evoked the lemons of Málaga, the sleepy one, and had in his weeping tones the brine of the ocean. Like Homer, he sang blind. His voice held something of sea with no light and an orange squeezed dry.

Earth We travel over a mirror without silver, over a crystal without cloud. If the lilies were to grow upside down, if the roses were to grow upside down, if all the roots were to face the stars and the dead not shut their eyes, we would be like swans.

Berceuse for a Mirror sleeping

Sleep. Do not fear the gaze that wanders. Sleep. Not the butterfly or the word or the furtive ray from the keyhole will hurt you. Sleep. As my heart so you, mirror of mine. Garden where love awaits me. Sleep without a care, but wake when the last one dies the kiss on my lips.

The Garden

Never born, never!
But could come into bud. Every second it is deepened and renewed. Every second opens new distinct pathways. This way! That way!
Go my multiplying bodies. Traversing the villages or sleeping in the sea. Everything is open! There are locks for the keys. But the sun and moon lose us and mislead us. And beneath our feet the roadways are confused. Here I'll contemplate all I could have been. God or beggar, water or ancient pearl. My many pathways lightly tinted make a vast rose round my body. Like a map, but impossible, the garden of the possible. Every second it is deepened and renewed. Never born, never!
But could come into bud.

Romance de la Luna, Luna The moon comes to the forge, in her creamy-white petticoat. The child stares, stares. The child is staring at her. In the breeze, stirred, the moon stirs her arms shows, pure, voluptuous, her breasts of hard tin. - 'Away, luna, luna, luna. If the gypsies come here, they'll take your heart for necklaces and white rings.' - 'Child, let me dance now. When the gypsies come here, they'll find you on the anvil, with your little eyes closed.' - 'Away, luna, luna, luna, because I hear their horses.' - 'Child, go, but do not tread on my starched whiteness.' The riders are coming nearer beating on the plain, drumming. Inside the forge, the child has both his eyes closed. Through the olive trees they come, bronze, and dream, the gypsies, their heads held upright, their eyes half-open. How the owl is calling.

Ay, it calls in the branches! Through the sky goes the moon, gripping a child's fingers. In the forge the gypsies are shouting and weeping. The breeze guards, guards. The breeze guards it.

Romance Sonámbulo

Green, as I love you, greenly.

Green the wind, and green the branches. The dark ship on the sea and the horse on the mountain. With her waist that's made of shadow dreaming on the high veranda, green the flesh, and green the tresses, with eyes of frozen silver. Green, as I love you, greenly. Beneath the moon of the gypsies silent things are looking at her things she cannot see. Green, as I love you, greenly. Great stars of white hoarfrost come with the fish of shadow opening the road of morning. The fig tree's rubbing on the dawn wind with the rasping of its branches, and the mountain thieving-cat-like bristles with its sour agaves. Who is coming? And from where...? She waits on the high veranda, green the flesh and green the tresses, dreaming of the bitter ocean. - 'Brother, friend, I want to barter your house for my stallion, sell my saddle for your mirror, change my dagger for your blanket. Brother mine, I come here bleeding from the mountain pass of Cabra.' - 'If I could, my young friend, then maybe we'd strike a bargain, but I am no longer I, nor is this house, of mine, mine.' - 'Brother, friend, I want to die now, in the fitness of my own bed, made of iron, if it can be, with its sheets of finest cambric. Can you see the wound I carry from my throat to my heart?' - 'Three hundred red roses your white shirt now carries. Your blood stinks and oozes, all around your scarlet sashes. But I am no longer I, nor is this house of mine, mine.' - 'Let me then, at least, climb up there, up towards the high verandas. Let me climb, let me climb there, up towards the green verandas. High verandas of the moonlight, where I hear the sound of waters.' Now they climb, the two companions, up there to the high veranda, letting fall a trail of blood drops, letting fall a trail of tears. On the morning rooftops, trembled, the small tin lanterns. A thousand tambourines of crystal wounded the light of daybreak. Green, as I love you, greenly.

Green the wind, and green the branches.

They climbed up, the two companions. In the mouth, the dark breezes left there a strange flavour, of gall, and mint, and sweet-basil. - 'Brother, friend! Where is she, tell me, where is she, your bitter beauty? How often, she waited

for you! How often, she would have waited, cool the face, and dark the tresses, on this green veranda!'

Over the cistern's surface the gypsy girl was rocking.

Green the flesh is, green the tresses, with eyes of frozen silver. An ice-ray made of moonlight holding her above the water. How intimate the night became, like a little, hidden plaza.

Drunken Civil Guards were beating, beating, beating on the door frame. Green, as I love you, greenly.

Green the wind, and green the branches. The dark ship on the sea,

and the horse on the mountain.

Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias

1. Cogida and Death

At five in the afternoon.

It was exactly five in the afternoon.

A boy brought the white sheet
at five in the afternoon.

A frail of lime ready prepared
at five in the afternoon.

The rest was death, and death alone
at five in the afternoon.

The wind carried away the cottonwool
at five in the afternoon.

And the oxide scattered crystal and nickel
at five in the afternoon.

Now the dove and the leopard wrestle
at five in the afternoon.

And a thigh with a desolate horn
at five in the afternoon.

The bass-string struck up
at five in the afternoon.

Arsenic bells and smoke
at five in the afternoon.

Groups of silence in the corners
at five in the afternoon.

And the bull alone with a high heart!
At five in the afternoon.

When the sweat of snow was coming
at five in the afternoon,

when the bull ring was covered in iodine
at five in the afternoon.

death laid eggs in the wound
at five in the afternoon.

At five in the afternoon.

Exactly at five o'clock in the afternoon.

A coffin on wheels is his bed
at five in the afternoon
Bones and flutes resound in his ears
at five in the afternoon.
Now the bull was bellowing through his forehead
at five in the afternoon.
The room was iridescent with agony
at five in the afternoon.
In the distance the gangrene now comes
at five in the afternoon.
Horn of the lily through green groins
at five in the afternoon.
The wounds were burning like suns
at five in the afternoon,
and the crowd was breaking the windows
at five in the afternoon.
At five in the afternoon.
Ah, that fatal five in the afternoon!
It was five by all the clocks!
It was five in the shade of the afternoon!

2. *The Spilled Blood*

I will not see it!

Tell the moon to come
for I do not want to see the blood
of Ignacio on the sand.

I will not see it!

The moon wide open.
Horse of still clouds,
and the grey bull ring of dreams
with willows in the barreras.
I will not see it!

Let my memory kindle!
Warn the jasmines
of such minute whiteness!

I will not see it!

The cow of the ancient world
passed her sad tongue
over a snout of blood
spilled on the sand,

and the bulls of Guisando,
partly death and partly stone,
bellowed like two centuries
sated with treading the earth.
No.

I do not want to see it!
I will not see it!

Ignacio goes up the tiers
with all his death on his shoulders.
He sought for the dawn
but the dawn was no more.
He seeks for his confident profile
and the dream bewilders him.
He sought for his beautiful body
and encountered his opened blood.
Do not ask me to see it!
I do not want to hear it spurt
each time with less strength:
that spurt that illuminates
the tiers of seats, and spills
over the corduroy and the leather
of a thirsty multitude.
Who shouts that I should come near!
Do not ask me to see it!

His eyes did not close
when he saw the horns near,
but the terrible mothers
lifted their heads.
And across the ranches,
an air of secret voices rose,
shouting to celestial bulls,
herdsmen of pale mist.
There was no prince in Seville
who could compare with him,
nor sword like his sword
nor heart so true.
Like a river of lions
was his marvellous strength,
and like a marble torso
his firm drawn moderation.
The air of Andalusian Rome
gilded his head
where his smile was a spikenard
of wit and intelligence.
What a great torero in the ring!
What a good peasant in the sierra!

How gentle with the sheaves!
How hard with the spurs!
How tender with the dew!
How dazzling in the fiesta!
How tremendous with the final
banderillas of darkness!

But now he sleeps without end.
Now the moss and the grass
open with sure fingers
the flower of his skull.
And now his blood comes out singing;
singing along marshes and meadows,
sliding on frozen horns,
faltering soulless in the mist,
stumbling over a thousand hoofs
like a long, dark, sad tongue,
to form a pool of agony
close to the starry Guadalquivir.
Oh, white wall of Spain!
Oh, black bull of sorrow!
Oh, hard blood of Ignacio!
Oh, nightingale of his veins!
No.
I will not see it! No chalice can contain it,
no swallows can drink it, no frost of light can cool it, nor
song nor deluge of white lilies,
no glass can cover it with silver.
No.
I will not see it!

3. *The Laid Out Body*

Stone is a forehead where dreams grieve
without curving waters and frozen cypresses.
Stone is a shoulder on which to bear Time
with trees formed of tears and ribbons and planets.

I have seen grey showers move towards the waves
raising their tender riddled arms,
to avoid being caught by the lying stone
which loosens their limbs without soaking the blood.

For stone gathers seed and clouds,
skeleton larks and wolves of penumbra:
but yields not sounds nor crystals nor fire,
only bull rings and bull rings and more bull rings without
walls.

Now Ignacio the well born lies on the stone.
All is finished. What is happening? Contemplate his face:
death has covered him with pale sulphur
and has placed on him the head of a dark minotaur.

All is finished. The rain penetrates his mouth.
The air, as if mad, leaves his sunken chest,
and Love, soaked through with tears of snow,
warms itself on the peak of the herd.

What are they saying? A stenching silence settles down.
We are here with a body laid out which fades away,
with a pure shape which had nightingales
and we see it being filled with depthless holes.

Who creases the shroud? What he says is not true!
Nobody sings here, nobody weeps in the corner,
nobody pricks the spurs, nor terrifies the serpent.
Here I want nothing else but the round eyes
to see this body without a chance of rest.

Here I want to see those men of hard voice.
Those that break horses and dominate rivers;
those men of sonorous skeleton who sing
with a mouth full of sun and flint.

Here I want to see them. Before the stone.
Before this body with broken reins.
I want to know from them the way out
for this captain strapped down by death.

I want them to show me a lament like a river
which will have sweet mists and deep shores,
to take the body of Ignacio where it loses itself
without hearing the double panting of the bulls.

Loses itself in the round bull ring of the moon
which feigns in its youth a sad quiet bull:
loses itself in the night without song of fishes
and in the white thicket of frozen smoke.

I don't want them to cover his face with handkerchiefs
that he may get used to the death he carries.
Go, Ignacio; feel not the hot bellowing.
Sleep, fly, rest: even the sea dies!

4. *Absent Soul*

The bull does not know you, nor the fig tree,
nor the horses, nor the ants in your own house.
The child and the afternoon do not know you
because you have died for ever.

The back of the stone does not know you,
nor the black satin in which you crumble.
Your silent memory does not know you
because you have died for ever.

The autumn will come with small white snails,
misty grapes and with clustered hills,
but no one will look into your eyes
because you have died for ever.

Because you have died for ever,
like all the death of the Earth,
like all the dead who are forgotten
in a heap of lifeless dogs.

Nobody knows you. No. But I sing of you.
For posterity I sing of your profile and grace.
Of the signal maturity of your understanding.
Of your appetite for death and the taste of its mouth.
Of the sadness of your once valiant gaiety.

It will be a long time, if ever, before there is born
an Andalusian so true, so rich in adventure.
I sing of his elegance with words that groan,
and I remember a sad breeze through the olive trees.

11. Sweden

TRANSTRÖMER, Tomas (b. 1931)

Track

2 A.M. moonlight. The train has stopped
out in a field. Far off sparks of light from a town,
flickering coldly on the horizon.
As when a man goes so deep into his dream
he will never remember he was there
when he returns again to his view.
Or when a person goes so deep into a sickness
that his days all become some flickering sparks, a swarm,
feeble and cold on the horizon
The train is entirely motionless.
2 o'clock: strong moonlight, few stars.

Under Pressure

The blue sky's engine-drone is deafening.
We're living here on a shuddering work-site
where the ocean depths can suddenly open up
shells and telephones hiss.
You can see beauty only from the side, hastily.
The dense grain on the field, many colours in a yellow
stream.
The restless shadows in my head are drawn there.
They want to creep into the grain and turn to gold.
Darkness falls. At midnight I go to bed.
The smaller boat puts out from the larger boat.
You are alone on the water.
Society's dark hull drifts further and further away.

National Insecurity

The Under Secretary leans forward and draws an X
and her ear-drops dangle like swords of Damocles.
As a mottled butterfly is invisible against the ground
so the demon merges with the opened newspaper.
A helmet worn by no one has taken power.
The mother-turtle flees flying under the water.

The Stones

The stones we have thrown I hear
fall, glass-clear through the year. In the valley
confused actions of the moment
fly howling from tree-top
to tree-top, quieting
in air thinner than now's, gliding
like swallows from mountain-top
to mountain-top till they
reach the furthest plateaus
along the edge of existence. Where
all our deeds fall
glass-clear
to no ending
except ourselves.

The Indoors is Endless

It's spring in 1827, Beethoven
hoists his death-mask and sails off.

The grindstones are turning in Europe's windmills.
The wild geese are flying northwards.

Here is the north, here is Stockholm
swimming palaces and hovels.

The logs in the royal fireplace

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collapse from Attention to At Ease.

Peace prevails, vaccine and potatoes,
but the city wells breathe heavily.

Privy barrels in sedan chairs like paschas
are carried by night over the North Bridge.

The cobblestones make them stagger
mamselles loafers gentlemen.

Implacably still, the sign-board
with the smoking blackamoor.

So many islands, so much rowing
with invisible oars against the current!

The channels open up, April May
and sweet honey dribbling June.

The heat reaches islands far out.
The village doors are open, except one.

The snake-clock's pointer licks the silence.
The rock slopes glow with geology's patience.

It happened like this, or almost.
It is an obscure family tale

about Erik, done down by a curse
disabled by a bullet through the soul.

He went to town, met an enemy
and sailed home sick and grey.

Keeps to his bed all that summer.
The tools on the wall are in mourning.

He lies awake, hears the woolly flutter
of night moths, his moonlight comrades.

His strength ebbs out, he pushes in vain
against the iron-bound tomorrow.

And the God of the depths cries out of the depths
'Deliver me! Deliver yourself!'

All the surface action turns inwards.
He's taken apart, put together.

The wind rises and the wild rose bushes
catch on the fleeing light.

The future opens, he looks into
the self-rotating kaleidoscope

sees indistinct fluttering faces
family faces not yet born.

By mistake his gaze strikes me
as I walk around here in Washington

among grandiose houses where only
every second column bears weight.

White buildings in crematorium style
where the dream of the poor turns to ash.

The gentle downward slope gets steeper
and imperceptibly becomes an abyss.

The Half-Finished Heaven

Despondency breaks off its course.
Anguish breaks off its course.
The vulture breaks off its flight.

The eager light streams out,
even the ghosts take a draught.

And our paintings see daylight,
our red beasts of the ice-age studios.

Everything begins to look around.
We walk in the sun in hundreds.

Each man is a half-open door
leading to a room for everyone.

The endless ground under us.

The water is shining among the trees.

The lake is a window into the earth.

The Blue House

It is night with glaring sunshine. I stand in the woods
and look towards my house with its misty blue walls. As
though I were recently dead and saw the house from a
new angle.

Modernist Literature of Continental Europe: Anthology of Poetry and Short Fiction

It has stood for more than eighty summers. Its timber has been impregnated, four times with joy and three times with sorrow. When someone who has lived in the house dies it is repainted. The dead person paints it himself, without a brush, from the inside.

On the other side is open terrain. Formerly a garden, now wilderness. A still surf of weed, pagodas of weed, an unfurling body of text, Upanishades of weed, a Viking fleet of weed, dragon heads, lances, an empire of weed.

Above the overgrown garden flutters the shadow of a boomerang, thrown again and again. It is related to someone who lived in the house long before my time. Almost a child. An impulse issues from him, a thought, a thought of will: "create. . .draw. . ." In order to escape his destiny in time.

The house resembles a child's drawing. A deputizing childishness which grew forth because someone prematurely renounced the charge of being a child. Open the doors, enter! Inside unrest dwells in the ceiling and peace in the walls. Above the bed there hangs an amateur painting representing a ship with seventeen sails, rough sea and a wind which the gilded frame cannot subdue.

It is always so early in here, it is before the crossroads, before the irrevocable choices. I am grateful for this life! And yet I miss the alternatives. All sketches wish to be real.

A motor far out on the water extends the horizon of the summer night. Both joy and sorrow swell in the magnifying glass of the dew. We do not actually know it, but we sense it: our life has a sister vessel which plies an entirely different route. While the sun burns behind the islands.

Outskirts

Men in overalls the same color as earth rise from a ditch. It's a transitional place, in stalemate, neither country nor city.

Construction cranes on the horizon want to take the big leap, but the clocks are against it.

Concrete piping scattered around laps at the light with cold tongues.

Auto-body shops occupy old barns.

Stones throw shadows as sharp as objects on the moon surface.

And these sites keep on getting bigger like the land bought with Judas' silver: 'a potter's field for burying strangers.'

After Death

Once there was a shock that left behind a long, shimmering comet tail. It keeps us inside. It makes the TV pictures snowy. It settles in cold drops on the telephone wires.

One can still go slowly on skis in the winter sun through brush where a few leaves hang on. They resemble pages torn from old telephone directories. Names swallowed by the cold.

It is still beautiful to hear the heart beat but often the shadow seems more real than the body. The samurai looks insignificant beside his armor of black dragon scales.

November in the Former DDR
The almighty cyclop's-eye clouded over
and the grass shook itself in the coal dust.

Beaten black and blue by the night's dreams
we board the train
that stops at every station
and lays eggs.

Almost silent.
The clang of the church bells' buckets
fetching water.
And someone's inexorable cough
scolding everything and everyone.

A stone idol moves its lips:
it's the city.
Ruled by iron-hard misunderstandings
among kiosk attendants butchers
metal-workers naval officers
iron-hard misunderstandings, academics!

How sore my eyes are!
They've been reading by the faint glimmer of the glow-worm lamps.

November offers caramels of granite.
Unpredictable!

Like world history
laughing at the wrong place.

But we hear the clang
of the church bells' buckets fetching water
every Wednesday
- is it Wednesday? -
so much for our Sundays!

The Couple

They switch off the light and its white shade
glimmers for a moment before dissolving
like a tablet in a glass of darkness. Then up.
The hotel walls rise into the black sky.
The movements of love have settled, and they sleep
but their most secret thoughts meet as when
two colors meet and flow into each other
on the wet paper of a schoolboy's painting.
It is dark and silent. But the town has pulled closer
tonight. With quenched windows. The houses have
approached.
They stand close up in a throng, waiting,
a crowd whose faces have no expressions.

12. Czechoslovakia

KAFKA, Franz (of Jewish descent 1883-1924) **The Judgment** (short story) **for Miss Felice B.**

It was a Sunday morning at the most beautiful time in spring. George Benderman, a young merchant, was sitting in his private room on the first floor of one of the low, poorly constructed houses extending in a long row along the river, almost indistinguishable from each other except for their height and colour. He had just finished a letter to a friend from his youth who was now abroad, had sealed in a playful and desultory manner, and then was looking, elbows propped on the writing table, out of the window at the river, the bridge, and the hills on the other shore with their delicate greenery.

He was thinking about how this friend, dissatisfied with his progress at home, had actually run off to Russia some years before. Now he ran a business in St. Petersburg, which had gotten off to a very good start but which for a long time now had appeared to be faltering, as his friend complained on his increasingly rare visits. So he was wearing himself out working to no purpose in a foreign land. The exotic full beard only poorly concealed the face George had known so well since his childhood

years, and the yellowish colour of his skin seemed to indicate a developing sickness. As he explained it, he had no real connection to the colony of his countrymen in the place and also hardly any social interaction with local families and so was resigning himself to being a permanent bachelor.

What should one write to such a man, who had obviously gone off course, a man one could feel sorry for but could not help. Should one perhaps advise him to come back home again, shift his life back here, take up again all the old friendly relationships—there was certainly nothing to prevent that—and in addition rely on the help of friends? But that amounted to the same thing as saying to him—and the more gently one said it, the more wounding it would also be—that his previous attempts had been unsuccessful, that he should finally give them up, that he must come back and allow everyone to gape at him as an eternal returned prodigal, that only his friends understood anything, and that he would be an overage child, who should simply obey his successful friends who had stayed home. And then was it certain that all the misery one would have to put him through had a point? Perhaps it would not even succeed in bringing him back home at all—he said himself that he no longer understood conditions in his homeland—so then he would remain in his foreign country in spite of everything, embittered by the advice and a little more estranged from his friends. But if he really followed the advice and became depressed here—not intentionally, of course, but because of his circumstances—could not cope with life, with his friends or without them, felt ashamed, and had, in fact, no homeland and no friends any more, was it not much better for him to remain abroad, just as he was? Given these facts, could one think that he would really advance himself here?

For these reasons, if one still wanted to maintain some sort of relationship by correspondence, one could not provide any real news, the way one would without any inhibitions to the most casual acquaintance. It was already more than three years since his friend had been home, and he explained this with the very inadequate excuse of the uncertainty of the political conditions in Russia, which would not allow even the briefest absence of a small businessman, while it permitted hundreds of thousand of Russians to travel around peacefully in the world. But in the course of these three years much had changed for George. Since his mother's death, which had taken place about two years earlier, George had lived with his old father in a household they shared. His friend had naturally learned about it and had expressed his sympathy

in a letter with such a dry tone that the reason could only have been that the sadness of such an event is completely inconceivable in a foreign country. But since that time George had tackled both his business dealings and everything else with greater determination. Perhaps while his mother was still alive, his father's unwillingness to accept any point of view in the business except his had prevented George from developing a real project of his own; perhaps his father, since his mother's death, had grown slacker, although he still worked all the time in the business; perhaps fortunate circumstances had played a much more important role—something which was, in fact, highly likely—but in any case in these two years the business had developed very unexpectedly. They had had to double the staff, the cash turnover had increased fivefold, and there was no doubt that further progress lay ahead.

His friend, however, had no idea of these changes. Earlier, perhaps for the last time in that letter of condolence, he had wanted to persuade George to migrate to Russia and had expanded upon the prospects which existed in St. Petersburg for George's particular line of business. The figures were minute compared to the scale which George's business had now acquired. But George had had no desire to write to his friend about his commercial success, and if he were to do it now belatedly, it would have looked really odd.

So George limited himself to writing to his friend only about insignificant details, the kind which pile up at random in one's memory when one is thinking things over on a peaceful Sunday. The only thing he wanted was to leave undisturbed the picture which his friend must have created of his home town during the long interval and which he would have learned to live with. And so it happened that George had announced three times to his friend in fairly widely spaced letters the engagement of an unimportant man to an equally unimportant young woman, until, quite contrary to George's intentions, the friend really began to get interested in this curious event.

But George preferred to write to him about such things rather than to confess that he himself had become engaged a month ago to a Miss Frieda Brandenfeld, a young woman from a prosperous family. He often spoke to his fiancée about this friend and about the unusual relationship he had with him in their correspondence. "Then there's no chance he'll be coming to our wedding," she said, "and yet I have the right to meet all your friends." "I don't want to upset him," George replied. "Don't misunderstand me. He would probably come, at least I think so, but he would

feel compelled and hurt and would perhaps envy me—he'd certainly feel unhappy and incapable of ever coping with his unhappiness and would travel back alone. Alone—do you know what that means?" "Yes, but can't he find out about our wedding in some other way?" "That's true, but I can't prevent that. However, given his lifestyle it's unlikely." "If you have friends like that, George, you shouldn't have gotten engaged at all." "Well, we're both to blame for that, but now I wouldn't want things to be any different." And then when she, breathing rapidly under his kisses, kept insisting "Still, it truly does upset me," he really thought it would be harmless to write everything to his friend. "That's what I am and that's just how he'll have to accept me," he said to himself. "I can't carve out of myself another man who might perhaps be more suitable for a friendship with him than I am."

And, in fact, he did inform his friend about the engagement which had taken place in the long letter which he had written that Sunday morning, in the following words "The best piece of news I have saved until the end. I have become engaged to a Miss Frieda Brandenfeld, a young woman from a well-to-do family, who first settled here long after your departure and thus whom you could hardly know. There will still be an opportunity to tell you more detailed information about my fiancée. Today it's enough for you to know that I am truly fortunate and that, as far as our mutual relationship is concerned, the only thing that has changed is that in me you will now have, instead of a completely ordinary friend, a happy friend. Moreover, in my fiancée, who sends her warm greetings and will soon write to you herself, you acquire a sincere female friend, something which is not entirely without significance for a bachelor. I know that there are many things hindering you from coming back to visit us, but wouldn't my wedding be exactly the right opportunity to throw aside these obstacles for once? But whatever the case, do what seems good to you, without concerning yourself about anything"

George sat for a long time at his writing table with his letter in his hand, his face turned towards the window. He barely acknowledged with an absent-minded smile someone he knew who greeted him from the lane as he walked past.

Finally he put the letter in his pocket and went out of his room, angling across a small passageway into his father's room, which he had not been in for months. There was really no need to do that, since he was always dealing with his father at work and they took their noon meal at the same time in a restaurant. In the evenings, of course, they each did as they wished, but for the most part, unless

George was with friends, as was most frequently the case, or was now visiting his fiancée, they still sat for a little while, each with his own newspaper, in the living room they shared.

George was surprised how dark his father's room was, even on this sunny morning. So that was the kind of shadow cast by the high wall which rose on the other side of the narrow courtyard. His father was sitting by the window in a corner decorated with various reminders of his late lamented mother and was reading a newspaper, which he held in front of his eyes to one side, attempting in this way to compensate for some weakness in his eyes. On the table stood the remains of his breakfast, not much of which appeared to have been eaten.

"Ah, George," said his father, coming up at once to meet him. His heavy night shirt opened up as he moved and the ends of it flapped around him. "My father is still a giant," said George to himself.

Then he spoke up: "It's unbearably dark in here."

"Yes, it certainly is dark," his father answered.

"And you've shut the window as well?"

"I prefer it that way."

"Well, it is quite warm outside," said George, as if continuing what he'd said earlier, and sat down.

His father cleared off the breakfast dishes and put them on a cupboard.

"I really only wanted to tell you," continued George, who was following the movements of the old man quite absent mindedly, "that I've now sent a report of my engagement to St. Petersburg." He pulled the letter a little way out of his pocket and let it drop back again.

"Why to St. Petersburg?" his father asked.

"To my friend," said George, trying to look his father in the eye. "In business he's completely different," he thought. "How sturdily he sits here with his arms across his chest."

"Ah yes, to your friend," said his father, with emphasis.

"Well, father, you know at first I wanted to keep quiet to him about my engagement. Out of consideration, for no other reason. You yourself know he's a difficult person. I said to myself he could well learn about my engagement from some other quarter, even if his solitary way of life makes that hardly likely—I can't prevent that—but he should never learn about it from me."

"And now you're thinking about it differently?" the father asked. He set the large newspaper on the window sill and on top the newspaper his glasses, which he covered with his hand.

"Yes, now I've been reconsidering it. If he's a good friend of mine, I said to myself, then a happy engagement for me is also something fortunate for him. And so I no longer hesitated to announce it to him. But before I send the letter, I wanted to tell you about it."

"George," said his father, pulling his toothless mouth wide open, "listen to me! You've come to me about this matter, to discuss it with me. No doubt that's a credit to you. But it's nothing, worse than nothing if you don't now tell me the complete truth. I don't want to stir up things which are not appropriate here. Since the death of our dear mother certain nasty things have been going on. Perhaps the time to talk about them has come and perhaps sooner than we think. In the business, a good deal escapes me. Perhaps it's not hidden from me—at the moment I'm not claiming it's done behind my back—I am no longer strong enough, my memory is deteriorating, I can't keep an eye on so many things any more. First of all, that's nature taking its course, and secondly the death of our dear mother was a much bigger blow to me than to you. But since we're on the subject of this letter, I beg you, George, don't deceive me. It's a trivial thing, not worth mentioning. So don't deceive me. Do you really have this friend in St. Petersburg?"

George stood up in embarrassment. "Let's forget about my friend. A thousand friends wouldn't replace my father for me. Do you know what I think? You're not taking enough care of yourself. But old age demands its due. You are indispensable to me in the business—you're very well aware of that—but if the business is going to threaten your health, I'll close it tomorrow for good. That won't happen. We must set up a different life style for you. But something completely different. You sit here in the dark, and in the living room you'd have good light. You nibble at your breakfast instead of maintaining your strength properly. You sit by the closed window, and the air would do you so much good. No, my father! I'll bring in the doctor, and we'll follow his instructions. We'll change your room. You'll move into the front room. I'll come in here. For you there won't be any change. Everything will be moved over with you. But there's time for all that. Now I'll set you in bed for a little while. You need complete rest. Come, I'll help you get undressed. You'll see. I can do it. Or do you want to go into the front room right away. Then you can lie down in my bed for now. That would make a lot of sense."

George stood close beside his father, who had let his head with its tousled white hair sink onto his chest.

"George," said his father faintly, without moving.

George knelt down immediately alongside his father. He saw the enormous pupils in his father's tired face staring right at him from the corners of his eyes.

"You don't have a friend in St. Petersburg. You have always been a joker and even with me you've not controlled yourself. So how could you have a friend there! I simply can't believe that."

"Think about it for a moment, father," said George. He raised his father from the arm chair and took off his nightgown as he just stood there very weakly. "It will soon be almost three years since my friend visited us. I still remember that you did not particularly like him. At least twice I kept him away from you, although he was sitting right in my room. It's true I could understand your aversion to him quite well. My friend does have his peculiarities. But then you later had a really good conversation with him yourself. At the time I was so proud of the fact that you listened to him, nodded your head, and asked questions. If you think about it, you must remember. That's when he told us some incredible stories about the Russian Revolution. For example, on a business trip in Kiev during a riot he saw a priest on a balcony who cut a wide bloody cross into the palm of his hand, raised his hand and appealed to the mob. You've even repeated this story yourself now and then."

Meanwhile, George had succeeded in setting his father down again and carefully taking off the cotton trousers which he wore over his linen underwear, as well as his socks. Looking at the undergarments, which were not particularly clean, he reproached himself for having neglected his father. It certainly should have been his responsibility to look after his father's changes in underwear. He had not yet talked explicitly with his fiancée about how they wished to make arrangements for his father's future, for they had tacitly assumed that his father would remain living alone in the old apartment. But now he quickly came to the firm decision to take his father with him into his future household. When one looked more closely, it almost seemed that the care which he was ready to provide for his father there could come too late. He carried his father to bed in his arms. He experienced a dreadful feeling when he noticed, as he took a couple of paces to the bed, that his father was playing with the watch chain on his chest. He could not put him in the bed right away, so firm was his father's grip on this watch chain.

But as soon as he was in bed, all seemed well. He covered himself up and then even pulled the bedspread unusually high up over his shoulders. He looked up at George in a not unfriendly manner.

"You do still remember him, don't you?" said George, nodding his head in encouragement.

"Am I well covered up now?" asked the father, as if he could not check whether his feet were sufficiently tucked in.

"So you feel good in bed now," said George and arranged the bedding better around him.

"Am I well covered up?" the father asked once more and seemed particularly keen to hear the answer. "Just rest for now. You're well covered up."

"No!" cried his father, cutting short George's answer to the question. He threw back the covers with such force that in an instant they had completely flown off, and stood upright on the bed. He steadied himself with only one hand lightly touching the ceiling. "You wanted to cover me up—I know that, my little offspring—but I am not yet under the covers. And even if this is the last strength I have, it's enough for you, too much for you. Yes, I do know your friend. He'd be a son after my own heart. That's why you've been betraying him for years. Why else? Do you think I've not wept for him? That's the reason you lock yourself in your office—no one should disturb you, the boss is busy—that's the only way you can write your two-faced little letters to Russia. But fortunately no one has to teach a father to see through his son. Just now when you thought you'd brought him down, so far down that your buttocks could sit on him and he wouldn't move, at that point my son the gentleman has decided to get married!"

George looked up at the frightening spectre of his father. The friend in St. Petersburg, whom the father suddenly knew so well, seized his imagination as never before. He saw him lost in the broad expanse of Russia. He saw him at the door of an empty, plundered business. Among the wreckage of his shelves, the shattered goods, the collapsed gas brackets, he was still standing, but only just. Why did he have to go so far away!

"But look at me," cried his father, and George ran, almost distracted, to the bed to take everything in, but he faltered half way. "Because she hoisted up her skirts," the father began in an affected tone, "because she hoisted up her skirts like this, the repulsive goose," and in order to imitate the action, he raised his shirt so high one could see the scar from his war years on his thigh, "because she hoisted her dress up like this and this, you chatted her up, and that's how you could satisfy yourself with her without being disturbed—you've disgraced our mother's memory, betrayed your friend, and stuck your father in bed, so he can't move. But he can move, can't he?" And he stood

completely unsupported and kicked his legs. He was radiant with insight.

George stood in a corner, as far away as possible from his father. A long time before he had firmly decided to observe everything closely, so he would not be surprised somehow by any devious attack, from behind or from above. Now he recalled again this long-forgotten decision and forgot it, like someone pulling a short thread through the eye of a needle.

"But now your friend hasn't been betrayed at all," cried the father—his forefinger, waving back and forth, emphasized the point. "I've been his on-the-spot representative here."

"You comedian!" George could not resist calling out. He recognized immediately how damaging that was and bit down on his tongue, only too late—his eyes froze—until he doubled up with pain.

"Yes, naturally I've been playing a comedy! Comedy! A fine word! What other consolation remained for an old widowed father? Tell me—and while you're answering be my still living son—what else was left to me in my back room, persecuted by a disloyal staff, old right down to my bones? And my son goes merrily through the world, finishing off business deals which I had set up, falling over himself with delight, and walking away from your father with the tight-lipped face of an honourable gentleman! Do you think I didn't love you, me, the one from whom you came?"

"Now he'll bend forward," thought George. "What if he falls and breaks apart!" These words hissed through his head.

His father leaned forward but did not fall over. When George did not come closer, as he had expected, he straightened himself up again.

"Stay where you are. I don't need you! You think you still have the strength to come here and are holding yourself back only because that's what you want. But what if you're wrong! I am still much stronger than you. Perhaps all on my own I would have to have had to back off, but your mother gave me so much of her strength that I've established a splendid relationship with your friend and I have your customers here in my pocket!"

"He even has pockets in his shirt!" said George to himself and thought with this comment he could make his father look ridiculous to the whole world. He thought this for only a moment, because he constantly forgot everything.

"Just link arms with your fiancée and cross my path! I'll sweep her right from your side—you have no idea how!"

George made a grimace, as if he didn't believe that. The father merely nodded towards George's corner, emphasizing the truth of what he'd said.

"How you amused me today when you came and asked whether you should write to your friend about the engagement. For he knows everything, you stupid boy, he already knows everything! I've been writing to him, because you forgot to take my writing things away from me. That's why he hasn't come for years. He knows everything a hundred times better than you do yourself. He crumples up your letters unread in his left hand, while in his right hand he holds my letters up to read."

In his enthusiasm he swung his arm over his head. "He knows everything a thousand times better," he shouted.

"Ten thousand times," said George, in order to make his father appear foolish, but in his mouth the phrase had already acquired a deathly tone.

"For years now I've been watching out for you to come with this question! Do you think I'm concerned about anything else? Do you think I read the newspapers? There!" and he threw a newspaper page which had somehow been carried into the bed right at George—an old newspaper, the name of which was completely unknown to George.

"How long you've waited before reaching maturity! Your mother had to die. She could not experience the joyous day. Your friend is deteriorating in his Russia—three years ago he was already yellow enough to be thrown away, and, as for me, well, you see how things are with me. You've got eyes for that!"

"So you've been lying in wait for me," cried George.

In a pitying tone, his father said as an afterthought, "Presumably you wanted to say that earlier. But now it's totally irrelevant."

And in a louder voice: "So now you know what there was in the world outside of yourself. Up to this point you've known only about yourself! Essentially you've been an innocent child, but even more essentially you've been a devilish human being! And therefore understand this: I sentence you now to death by drowning!"

George felt himself hounded from the room. The crash with which his father fell onto the bed behind him he still carried in his ears as he left. On the staircase, where he raced down the steps as if it were an inclined plane, he surprised his cleaning woman, who was intending to tidy

the apartment after the night before.

"Jesus!" she cried and hid her face in her apron. But he was already past her. He leapt out the front door, driven across the roadway to the water. He was already clutching the railings the way a starving man grasps his food. He swung himself over, like the outstanding gymnast he had been in his youth, to his parents' pride. He was still holding on, his grip weakening, when between the railings he caught sight of a motor coach which would easily drown out the noise of his fall. He called out quietly, "Dear parents, I have always loved you nonetheless" and let himself drop.

At that moment an almost unending stream of traffic was going over the bridge.

13. Italy

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936)

War

The passengers who had left Rome by the night express had had to stop until dawn at the small station of Fabriano in order to continue their journey by the small old-fashioned local joining the main line with Sulmona.

At dawn, in a stuffy and smoky second-class carriage in which five people had already spent the night, a bulky woman in deep mourning was hoisted in—almost like a shapeless bundle. Behind her, puffing and moaning, followed her husband—a tiny man, thin and weakly, his face death-white, his eyes small and bright and looking shy and uneasy.

Having at last taken a seat he politely thanked the passengers who had helped his wife and who had made room for her; then he turned round to the woman trying to pull down the collar of her coat, and he politely inquired:

"Are you all right, dear?"

The wife, instead of answering, pulled up her collar again to her eyes, so as to hide her face.

"Nasty world," muttered the husband with a sad smile.

And he felt it his duty to explain to his travelling companions that the poor woman was to be pitied, for the war was taking away from her her only son, a boy of twenty to whom both had devoted their entire life, even breaking up their home at Sulmona to follow him to Rome, where he had to go as a student, then allowing him to volunteer for war with an assurance, however, that at least for six months he would not be sent to the front and now, all of a sudden, receiving a wire saying that he was due to leave in three days' time and asking them to go and see him off.

The woman under the big coat was twisting and wriggling, at times growling like a wild animal, feeling certain that all those explanations would not have aroused even a shadow of sympathy from those people who—most likely—were in the same plight as herself. One of them, who had been listening with particular attention, said:

"You should thank God that your son is only leaving now for the front. Mine has been sent there the first day of the war. He has already come back twice wounded and been sent back again to the front."

"What about me? I have two sons and three nephews at the front," said another passenger.

"Maybe, but in our ease it is our *only* son," ventured the husband.

"What difference can it make? You may spoil your only son with excessive attentions, but you cannot love him more than you would all your other children if you had any. Paternal love is not like bread that can be broken into pieces and split amongst the children in equal shares. A father gives *all* his love to each one of his children without discrimination, whether it be one or ten, and if I am suffering now for my two sons, I am not suffering half for each of them but double ..."

"True . . . true ..." sighed the embarrassed husband, "but suppose (of course we all hope it will never be your case) a father has two sons at the front and he loses one of them, there is still one left to console him . . . while ..."

"Yes," answered the other, getting cross, "a son left to console him but also a son left for whom he must survive, while in the case of the father of an only son if the son dies the father can die too and put an end to his distress. Which of the two positions is the worse? Don't you see how my case would be worse than yours?"

"Nonsense," interrupted another traveller, a fat, redfaced man with bloodshot eyes of the palest gray.

He was panting. From his bulging eyes seemed to spurt inner violence of an uncontrolled vitality which his weakened body could hardly contain.

"Nonsense," he repeated, trying to cover his mouth with his hand so as to hide the two missing front teeth. "Nonsense. Do we give life to our children for our own benefit?"

The other travellers stared at him in distress. The one who had had his son at the front since the first day of the war sighed: "You are right. Our children do not belong to us, they belong to the Country. ..."

"Bosh," retorted the fat traveller. "Do we think of the Country when we give life to our children? Our sons are born because . . . well, because they must be born and when

they come to life they take our own life with them. This is the truth. We belong to them but they never belong to us. And when they reach twenty they are exactly what we were at their age. We too had a father and mother, but there were so many other things as well . . . girls, cigarettes, illusions, new ties . . . and the Country, of course, whose call we would have answered— when we were twenty— even if father and mother had said no. Now at our age, the love of our Country is still great, of course, but stronger than it is the love for our children. Is they any one of us here who wouldn't gladly take his sons place at the front if he could?"

There was a silence all round, everybody nodding as to approve.

"Why then," continued the fat man, "shouldn't we consider the feelings of our children when they are twenty? Isn't it natural that at their age they should consider the love for their Country (I am speaking of decent boys, of course) even greater than the love for us? Isn't it natural that it should be so, as after all they must look upon us as upon old boys who cannot move any more and must stay at home? If Country exists, if Country is a natural necessity, like bread, of which each of us must eat in order not to die of hunger, somebody must go to defend it. And our sons go, when they are twenty, and they don't want tears, because if they die, they die inflamed and happy (I am speaking, of course, of decent boys). Now, if one dies young and happy, without having the ugly sides of life, the boredom of it, the pettiness, the bitterness of disillusion... what more can we ask for him? Everyone should stop crying; everyone should laugh, as I do... or at least thank God—as I do—because my son, before dying, sent me a message saying that he was dying satisfied at having ended his life in the best way he could have wished. That is why, as you see, I do not even wear mourning. ..."

He shook his light fawn coat as to show it; his livid lip over his missing teeth was trembling, his eyes were watery and motionless, and soon after he ended with a shrill laugh which might well have been a sob.

"Quite so . . . quite so . . ." agreed the others.

The woman who, bundled in a corner under her coat, had been sitting and listening had—-for the last three months—tried to find in the words of her husband and her friends something to console her in her deep sorrow, something that might show her how a mother should resign herself to send her son not even to death but to a probably dangerous life. Yet not a word had she found amongst the many which had been said . . . and her grief

had been greater in seeing that nobody-is she thought— could share her feelings.

But now the words of the traveller amazed and almost stunned her. She suddenly realized that it wasn't the others who were wrong and could not understand her but herself who could not rise up to the same height of those fathers and mothers willing to resign themselves, without crying, not only to the departure of their sons but even to their death.

She lifted her head, she bent over from her corner trying to listen with great attention to the details which the fat man was giving to his companions about the way his son had fallen as a hero, for his King and his Country, happy and without regrets. It seemed to her that she had stumbled into a world she had never dreamt of, a world so far unknown to her and she was so pleased to hear everyone joining in congratulating that brave father who could so stoically speak of his child's death.

Then suddenly, just as if she had heard nothing of what had been said and almost as if waking up from a dream, she turned to the old man, asking him: "Then ... is your son really dead?"

Everybody stared at her. The old man, too, turned to look at her, fixing his great, bulging, horribly watery light gray eyes, deep in her face. For some little time he tried to answer, but words failed him. He looked and looked at her, almost as if only then—at that silly, incongruous question—he had suddenly realized at last that his son was really dead—gone for ever—for ever. His face contracted, became horribly distorted, then he snatched in haste a handkerchief from his pocket and, to the amazement of everyone, broke into harrowing, heartrending, uncontrollable sobs.