



THE ANCHOR ANTHOLOGY of

FRENCH POETRY

FROM NERVAL TO VALERY IN
ENGLISH TRANSLATION

EDITED BY ANGEL FLORES

INTRODUCTION BY PATTI SMITH

PREVIOUSLY TITLED AN ANTHOLOGY OF FRENCH POETRY

*The Anchor Anthology
of French Poetry*

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From Nerval to Valéry
in English Translation*

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INTRODUCTION BY PATTI SMITH



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Acknowledgments

Preface

The poets who appear in this volume form a varied tradition which has been responsible for much of the vitality of modern poetry, not only in France, but throughout the countries of the West. The revolution, or series of revolutions, in European poetry which took place between Baudelaire and Valéry is a revolution which still continues, and has been the greatest force in giving poetry its effective modern voice.

Some of the poets—Baudelaire in part of his work, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Valéry—can be loosely grouped together as “Symbolists.” Though Symbolism is not susceptible of clear definition and never established a definite program, these poets have in common a sense of the function of poetry which is adumbrated in Baudelaire’s *Correspondances* (pp. 21, 22). United in their protest against positivistic philosophy, sentimentalism, and didacticism, they conceive poetry as a search for the mystery of reality which underlies and interpenetrates the world of phenomena. The main instruments in the quest are the music of poetry and the poetic symbol, in which, by intuitive “correspondence,” the emotional experience finds its truth and being in an image drawn from the external world. Suggestiveness and reverberation of meaning replace direct statement; analogy and insight replace logic.

Others among the poets—above all Apollinaire and Laforgue—are involved in an even more radical quest and rebellion, which turns them in fact against the transcendent element in Symbolist poetry itself in an effort to find an immediate voice for the arduous and complex realities of contemporary life.

The reader who wishes to pursue the questions raised by Symbolism and modern French poetry is referred to the brief biographical notes preceding the selections from each poet, and to the list of critical works in the bibliography at the end of the volume.

A substantial selection from the work of nine major poets, in translations by contemporary English and American poets, is presented in this volume in order to introduce the English reader to their most significant work. The translations have been chosen to stand as independent poems in their own right, and not merely as aids to the reading of the French.

Introduction

BY PATTI SMITH

When I was sixteen, working in a non-union factory in a small South Jersey town, my salvation and respite from my dismal surroundings was a battered copy of Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, which I kept in my back pocket. Though I did not comprehend all that I read, it drew me into a world of heightened poetical language where I was more at home than with the crude argot that spewed from my fellow workers.

In the fall of 1964 I entered Glasboro State Teachers College in New Jersey. As an aspiring young artist, I felt estranged in the conventional setting of a teachers' college. I sought kinship by attempting to sign up as a volunteer worker for the college literary journal, *The Avant*. I remember the excitement of opening the door to its office, only to find the room empty. But on an old wood table I spied a humble paperback, pink and gray in color, with a sketch of a dreamy young poet gazing into the distance: *An Anthology of French Poetry from Nerval to Valéry*. I opened randomly to the poem "Shame," a poem by my sole inspiration Arthur Rimbaud, that I had never read.

The joy I felt in finding new poems by Rimbaud, as well as those written by poets he had so admired—Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Gérard de Nerval—was incalculable. I must admit that I pocketed this book as my own and it became the bible in my life. Edited by the aptly named Angel Flores, this anthology introduced me to some of the greatest poets in French literature, translated by the likes of Louise Varèse, Daisy Aldan, Richmond Lattimore, W. S. Merwin, Vernon Watkins, and Muriel Kittel.

I discovered Mallarmé, whose title alone "A Throw of the Dice Never Will Abolish Chance," charged my hungry mind. Through "Moon Solo" by Jules Laforgue I was made privy to the roots of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T. S. Eliot. I was introduced to the dark beauty of Nerval and Verlaine and the lyric charm of Guillaume Apollinaire.

Through the mid-sixties only the work of John Coltrane and Bob Dylan matched the importance of this anthology in my growth as an artist and my appreciation of the work of others. It is my pleasure now to reintroduce this humble yet significant volume, so long out of print, to you now. And may I use this as an opportunity to salute and thank that unidentified soul who left this book upon a table in 1964.

Patti Smith
December 1999

*The Anchor Anthology
of French Poetry*

Gérard de Nerval

1808–1855

GÉRARD DE NERVAL

1808-1855

Obscured among the minor Romantic poets of the younger generation until late in the century when some of the Symbolists claimed him as a precursor—as the Surrealists were to do later with equally good reason—Gérard remains among the most perfect and the most pathetic of poets.

This amiable eccentric was a poet of dream, of a reality just beyond the edges of experience, of the fusions of dream with reality, and of nostalgia. His separation from the Romantics is to be measured in terms of imagination and of art, of his "method." Where the Romantics tend to be banal and explicit, Gérard is visionary and obscure, in poetry which, he said, would lose its charm if it were explicated—if it could be. This is not to say that his verse, or his prose, is merely atmospheric, for it deals boldly and precisely with its materials. It is the latter ultimately which refuse to lend themselves to explanation. Nerval is thus among the first to present a poetry dealing purposefully and nearly exclusively with what has always been the material of poetry *qua* poetry: those things to which prose is not adapted.

In this sense at least, modern poetry begins with this Bohemian with his background of German Romanticism, oriental mysticism, medieval recollections to be found in the folklore of his own country, this exquisite poet who, when reality finally became more real than—or indistinguishable from—the invisible world behind the gates of horn and ivory, hanged his humble and gentle self in a cellar in the rue de la Vieille-Lanterne on a freezing January morning.

THE BEWITCHED HAND

La Main enchantée

EXCERPT

. . . On the morning of his execution Eustache Bouteron, who had been kept locked up in a dark cell, was visited by a father confessor who mumbled some spiritual consolations which, however, had little effect on him.

The confessor belonged to one of those families who, for the greater glory of their name, always make an abbot of one of their sons. His collar was embroidered, and he wore a smooth, tapering, perfumed beard, and a pair of mustachios elegantly trimmed. His hair was curly, and he strove to talk in a mellow voice which would sound affectionate.

Seeing him so dandified and superficial, Eustache found himself unable to drum up enough courage to confess. Instead he resolved to obtain God's pardon by means of his own prayers.

The priest gave him absolution, and then, to while away the two hours he would have to spend with the condemned man, he brought out a book entitled *The Tears of the Penitent Soul; or The Sinner's Return to God*. Eustache opened to the chapter on royal prerogatives and read remorsefully from the beginning: "Henry, King of France and Navarre, to my beloved, loyal subjects . . ." etc., down to the phrase "In these trials and wishing to treat favorably the said petitioner . . ." At this point he could not contain his tears and returned the book to the priest, saying how extremely touching it was and that he feared he would weaken if he read any more. Then the confessor drew from his pocket a very smart-looking deck of cards and proposed that his penitent play a few games. Thus the good priest took the liberty of winning from Eustache some money which Javotte had sent him to alleviate his wants. Eustache paid little attention to the game and seemed indifferent to his loss.

At two o'clock Eustache was taken from the Châtelet and led to the Place des Augustins, located between the two arches that form the entrance to the Rue Dauphine

and the Rue du Pont-Neuf, where he was honored with a scaffold made of stone. Since so many people were watching him—the Place des Augustins was the most popular spot for executions—he showed considerable firmness in climbing the stairs. However, since one delays as much as possible before his “leap into nothingness,” just as the executioner was about to throw the rope around his neck, as ceremoniously as if he were about to decorate him with the Golden Fleece—for such men, when performing before a large public do their work very ably and with no little grace—Eustache begged him to tarry a bit so that he would have time to say a couple of prayers to St. Ignatius and St. Louis de Gonzaga whom he had kept for last since they had not been canonized until 1609; but the executioner replied that the folks stationed there had their chores to do and that it would not be proper to keep them waiting, especially for such a paltry spectacle: a single hanging. Meanwhile, he tightened the rope, shoved him off the ladder, and drowned out Eustache’s petition. . . .

We knew for a fact that when all was over and the executioner on his way home, Maître Gonin peered out of a window of the Château Gaillard overlooking the square.

Just then, although Eustache’s body was perfectly rigid and inanimate, his arm lifted up and his hand waved gleefully, like a dog’s tail in his master’s presence. This drew from the crowd a shout of consternation, and those who were leaving turned back hurriedly, like theatergoers who think the play is over, only to discover that a few acts are still to come.

The executioner put back the ladder, climbed up, and touched the feet of the hanged man. He felt the pulse of the ankles. There was no throbbing. Just to make sure, he severed an artery, but no blood flowed and the arm continued to shake wildly.

The executioner was not the kind of fellow who frightens easily: he climbed up on the shoulders of his victim amid the public outcry.

The hand irreverently stroked the executioner’s pimply face.

Indignantly he whipped out a big knife which he always

carried under his coat and cut off the bewitched hand with two clean-cut slashes.

The hand gave an amazing leap and fell, bloodstained, in the middle of the crowd, which dispersed, terrified. Then, sauntering along, thanks to the elasticity of the fingers and to the path opened for it by everyone, it soon found itself at the foot of the little tower of the Château Gaillard. Next, the hand climbed up by its fingers, like a crab, along the rough, cracked walls and reached the window sill where Maître Gonin was waiting for it.

ANGEL FLORES

FANTASY

Fantaisie

There is an air for which I'd gladly give
All Mozart, all Rossini, all Von Weber,
A languid, ancient, solemn-sounding air
That yields its secret charm to me alone.

Each time it happens that I hear it played
My heart grows younger by two hundred years:
I live in former times . . . and see portrayed
A green slope gilded by the setting sun,

And then a feudal castle flanked with stone,
Its windows tinted to a glowing rose,
Bounded by spacious parks and with its feet
Bathed by a stream that through a garden flows.

And then a lady in a window high,
Fair-haired, dark-eyed, and dressed in ancient style . . .
Whom, in another life, perhaps I've seen,
And whom I now remember with a sigh.

ANTHONY BOWER

THE CYDALISES

Les Cydalises

Where are our sweethearts?
They are in the grave:
They are more fortunate
In a better place!

They dwell near angels,
In the depth of the blue sky,
And they sing praises
Of the Mother of God!

O pure betrothed!
O young maid in flower!
Forsaken loved one,
Blighted by grief!

Profound eternity
Smiled in your eyes . . .
Lights smothered by the world,
Be rekindled in heaven!

DAISY ALDAN

THE DARK BLOT

Le Point noir

He who has gazed against the sun sees everywhere
he looks thereafter, palpitating on the air
before his eyes, a smudge that will not go away.

So in my days of still-youth, my audacity,
I dared look on the splendor momentarily.
The dark blot on my greedy eyes has come to stay.

Since when, worn like a badge of mourning in the sight
of all around me where my eye may chance to light,
I see the dark smudge settle upon everyone.

Forever thus between my happiness and me?
Alas for us, the eagle only, only he
can look, and not be hurt, on splendor and the sun.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

EL DESDICHADO

El Desdichado

I am the dark, the widowed, the disconsolate.
I am the prince of Aquitaine whose tower is down.
My only star is dead, and star-configure
my lute wears Melancholy's mark, a blackened sun.
Here in the midnight of the grave, give back, of late
my consolation, Pausilippe, the Italian
sea, with that flower so sweet once to my desolate
heart, and the trellis where the vine and rose are one.
Am I Love? Am I Phoebus, Biron, Lusignan?
Crimson the queen's kiss blazes still upon my face.
The siren's naked cave has been my dreaming place.
Twice have I forced the crossing of the Acheron
and played on Orpheus' lyre in alternate complaint
Mélusine's cries against the moaning of the Saint.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

MYRTHO

Myrtho

I think of you, Myrtho, divine enchantress,
On lofty Posilipo with its thousand fires,
Of your forehead reflecting the radiance of the East,
And black grapes entangled with your golden tress.

In your cup I discovered the rapture of drunkenness,
And in the secret glint of your smiling eye,
When I knelt in prayer before the shrine of Bacchus,
For the Muse has made me one of the sons of Greece.

I know why that volcano is aflame . . .
Your light foot, passing, touched it yesterday,
And ashes fell like rain on the horizon.

A Norman duke once smashed your gods of clay;
Since then, beneath the boughs of Virgil's laurel,
Green myrtle and pale hydrangea intertwine.

BARBARA HOWES

HORUS

Horus

The god Kneph, trembling, rocked the universe.
Isis, the mother, arose then from her couch,
Gestured in hatred at her savage spouse,
While an ancient ardor stirred in her green eyes.

"Look at him now," she cried, "the old pervert dies,
All the cold of the world has passed through his mouth;
Tie down his twisted foot, blind his squinty eye,
For he is the king of winter, volcano's god.

Already the eagle passes, a new spirit calls;
For him have I donned the garments of Cybele,
For this child, beloved of Hermes and Osiris . . .”

So saying the goddess fled on her golden shell;
The sea brought back to us her divine likeness,
And the heavens streamed radiant from the scarf of Iris.

BARBARA HOWES

ANTEROS

Antéros

If you ask why my heart so swells with rage
And why, on its pliant neck, my head is unbowed;
It is that I boast of Antacus' lineage,
And hurl back at the conqueror his thunderous arrows.

Yes, I am one the Avenger has possessed,
And he has stamped my brow with his fevered mouth,
Beneath the pallor of Abel, bloodstained alas,
Rises the relentless flush of Cain, my brother!

The last one, Jehovah, vanquished by your genius,
Who, from the depths of hell, cried "Tyranny!"
He is my father Dagon or forebear Belus . . .

In the waters of Coeytus three times they plunged me
down;
Now, as sole protector of the Amalekite, my mother,
The ancient dragon's teeth I have sown again.

BARBARA HOWES

DELPHICA

Delfica

Do you remember, Daphne, that archaic strain
 by the sycamore base, by pale laurels, below
 the olive tree, the myrtle or disturbed willow,
 that song of love forever rising once again?
 Do you remember that huge court, the god's domain,
 those bitter lemons where the marks your teeth made show,
 the cave whose rash indwellers found death long ago
 where sleeps the seed primeval of the dragon slain?
 They will come back, those gods whom you forever mourn,
 for time shall see the order of old days reborn.
 The earth has shuddered to a breath of prophecy.
 And yet the sybil with her Latin face serene
 lies sleeping still beneath the arch of Constantine
 where no break mars the cold gateway's austerity.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

ARTEMIS

Artémis

The Thirteenth has come again . . . But is still the first,
 And is always the only one—at the one moment.
 But art thou, oh my Queen, the first or the last?
 Art thou, King, the sole or the final lover?

Love her who loves you from the cradle to the grave;
 She whom alone I love, loves me most tenderly:
 Death she is, or the dead . . . Oh delight, oh torment!
 The rose that she holds is the Mallow, the one in many.

Holy Neapolitan with your hands full of fire,
 Rose with a violet heart, Saint Gudule's flower;
 Have you discovered your cross in the desert of sky?

Wither, white roses, fall; you insult our gods!
Fall, white phantoms, out of your burning sky;
—The saint of the abyss is more saintly to my eye!

BARBARA HOWES

GOLDEN VERSES

Vers dorés

Man, free thinker! do you believe you alone can reason
In this world where life surges everywhere?
The forces that are yours are ordered by your freedom,
But the Universe is missing from all your deliberations.

Respect an active spirit in the beast:
Each flower is a soul open to Nature;
In metal dwells a mystery of love;
“All things are sentient!” And mold your being.

Beware of a spying gaze in the blind wall:
The Word is bound to matter . . .
Do not set it to profane usage!

Often in the meanest being a God is hidden;
And as the eyelid covers the nascent eye,
The Spirit grows under the surface of stones!

DAISY ALDAN

Charles Baudelaire

1821–1867

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

1821-1867

The crucial figure at the beginning of modern art, the first and perhaps the greatest of modern poets, as considerable a critic—of art as well as letters—as he was a poet, Baudelaire in an unparalleled fashion resumes the tendencies of the past and introduces those which were to be the modern.

At times at least for the Romantic it is the passing of beauty which is a source of anguish, and the poet recalls youth and joy with nostalgia. Baudelaire, on the contrary, tends to see experience as sordid, nature as inherently evil, and it is in man's occasional transformations of experience into art—or civilization—that he finds beauty. At the same time Baudelaire is acutely conscious of the damage we continually do our better, our potential, selves. Man is a divided being, drawn always toward both God and Satan. The ideal and the sensual being equally potent for Baudelaire, much of his poetry investigates the one or the other, or attempts reconciliation of the two. Clear as the polarity is, reconciliation becomes possible, and is a function of art, because Baudelaire also believed in the unity of all existence, in the correspondence of all phenomena. Even opposites are functions, analogues, somehow, of each other, and Baudelaire's vision of the world represents a contribution to the understanding of its complexities which, given the intensity of his creation of a view of modern man, has had an incalculable effect, not only upon the arts, in the modern world.

TO THE READER

Au Lecteur

Ignorance, error, cupidity, and sin
Possess our souls and exercise our flesh;
Habitually we cultivate remorse
As beggars entertain and nurse their lice.

Our sins are stubborn. Cowards when contrite
We overpay confession with our pains,
And when we're back again in human mire
Vile tears, we think, will wash away our stains.

Thrice-potent Satan in our cursèd bed
Lulls us to sleep, our spirit overkissed,
Until the precious metal of our will
Is vaporized—that cunning alchemist!

Who but the Devil pulls our waking-strings!
Abominations lure us to their side;
Each day we take another step to hell,
Descending through the stench, unhorried.

Like an exhausted rake who mouths and chews
The martyred breast of an old withered whore
We steal, in passing, whatever joys we can,
Squeezing the driest orange all the more.

Packed in our brains incestuous as worms
Our demons celebrate in drunken gangs,
And when we breathe, that hollow rasp is Death
Sliding invisibly down into our lungs.

If the dull canvas of our wretched life
Is unembellished with such pretty ware
As knives or poison, pyromania, rape,
It is because our soul's too weak to dare!

But in this den of jackals, monkeys, curs,
 Scorpions, buzzards, snakes . . . this paradise
 Of filthy beasts that screech, howl, grovel, grunt—
 In this menagerie of mankind's vice

There's one supremely hideous and impure!
 Soft-spoken, not the type to cause a scene,
 He'd willingly make rubble of the earth
 And swallow up creation in a yawn.

I mean *Ennuil* who in his hookah-dreams
 Produces hangmen and real tears together.
 How well you know this fastidious monster, reader,
 —Hypocrite reader, you!—my double! my brother!

STANLEY KUNITZ

BENEDICTION

Bénédiction

When, by pronouncement of almighty powers,
 The Poet appears among us in this tired world,
 His outraged mother, racked by blasphemies,
 Clenches her fists to God, who pities her:

—“Ah, I should have borne a string of vipers
 Rather than suckle this foul mockery!
 Damn that night of itching, short-lived pleasure
 When my gaping womb conceived this misery!

Since, of all women, you have chosen me
 To be my suffering husband's black disgust,
 And since I cannot fling into the fire
 This stunted monster, like a letter's lust,

I shall make your heavy hate rebound
Upon the damned instrument of your spite,
And I shall twist this miserable tree:
It will not bud forth, stinking, a green blight!”

She swallows, thus, the froth of her bilious hate,
And, unaware of what the sky designs,
Herself prepares in the lowest pit of hell
The fires reserved for cold, maternal crimes.

However, under unseen Angel care,
The poor Child raptures in a glorious sun,
And in all he drinks and eats he finds again
His home's red nectar and ambrosia.

He plays with the wind, converses with a cloud,
And joys in singing of the Cross and the road;
The Spirit that guards him on his pilgrimage
Weeps to see him gay, a bird in the wood.

Those he wants to love observe him through their fear
Or, emboldened by his rare tranquillity,
Goad him into wretched wails, complaints,
And use him as a test of their ferocity.

In the bread and wine intended for his mouth
They mix foul spittle, cinder, bitter ash;
Pretending fear of dirt, they throw away
The things he uses and avoid his path.

His wife goes shouting through the public squares:
“Since he finds beauty in me to adore,
I shall assume the pose of ancient idols
And, like them, ask to be redone in gold;

And I shall glut myself with nard, incense, and myrrh,
With genuflections, meat, and spicy wine,
To see if, even as I laugh at him,
I can usurp the homage of the divine!

And, when I tire of these impious farces,
 I shall seize him in my delicate, strong hands;
 And my nails, the nails of harpies, will then start
 To dig a bloody pathway to his heart.

Like a young bird, trembling, fluttering in the hand,
 I shall tear out that red heart from his breast,
 And throw it with disdain upon the ground
 To fill the belly of my favorite hound!"

Skyward, where he sees a splendid throne,
 The Poet serenely lifts his pious arms,
 And the vast illuminations of his lucid soul
 Conceal men's pushing fury and alarms.

"Be praised, my God, who gives us suffering
 Like a sovereign remedy for our impurities,
 Which like the best and purest essence makes
 Strong men fit for holy ecstasies!

I know that, for the Poet, you must keep
 A joyous place among the holy Hosts,
 And will invite him to the eternal feast
 Of Virtues, Dominations, glorious Thrones.

I know that sorrow is nobility
 Which neither earth nor hell can ever corrode,
 And that the plaiting of my mystic crown
 Enlists all space and all time's pain-filled roads.

Neither the lost jewels of old Palmyra,
 Nor unknown metals, nor the pearls of the sea,
 As mounted by your hand, could ever compare
 With this bright diadem, so beautiful and clear;

For it will be composed of purest light,
 Drawn from the holy spring of primal fire,
 Compared to which the splendors of our mortal eyes,
 At best, are but a tarnished mirror's lie!"

THE ALBATROSS

L'Albatros

Ofttimes, for diversion, seafaring men
Capture albatross, those vast birds of the seas
That accompany, at languorous pace,
Boats plying their way through bitter straits.

Having scarce been taken aboard
These kings of the blue, awkward and shy,
Piteously their great white wings
Let droop like oars at their sides.

This wingèd voyager, how clumsy he is and weak!
He just now so lovely, how comic and ugly!
One with a stubby pipe teases his beak,
Another mimics, limping, the cripple who could fly!

The Poet resembles this prince of the clouds,
Who laughs at hunters and haunts the storms;
Exiled to the ground amid the jeering pack,
His giant wings will not let him walk.

KATE FLORES

CORRESPONDENCES

Correspondances

Nature is a temple from whose living columns
Commingle voices emerge at times;
Here man wanders through forests of symbols
Which seem to observe him with familiar eyes.

Like long-drawn echoes afar converging
 In harmonies darksome and profound,
 Vast as the night and vast as light,
 Colors, scents and sounds correspond.

There are fragrances fresh as the flesh of children,
 Sweet as the oboe, green as the prairie,
 —And others overpowering, rich and corrupt,

Possessing the pervasiveness of everlasting things,
 Like benjamin, frankincense, amber, myrrh,
 Which the raptures of the senses and the spirit sing.

KATE FLORES

THE ENEMY

L'Ennemi

My youth was no more than a dark, looming storm
 Made bright here and there by transitory suns;
 Thunder and rain have made such havoc of its form
 That my garden scarcely shows what red fruits it had once.

So at last I have come to the Autumn of ideas,
 And I must make use of the spade and the rakes
 To restore the flooded ground till its form reappears
 Where hollows great as tombs the delving water makes.

And who knows if the new flowers that dreaming I see
 Will discover in this soil washed like sand on a bay
 The mystic nutriment that would set their force free?

—O sorrow! O sorrow! Time eats life away
 And the Enemy in hiding who gnaws at our side
 On the blood we are losing grows and is fortified.

VERNON WATKINS

THE FORMER LIFE

La Vie antérieure

Long years I lived under vast porticoes
That thousand fires of ocean suns stained bright.
Their huge, straight, stately columns, at twilight,
As if in grottoes of basalt uprose.

The coursing waves, where rolled the imaged skies,
Mingled in their mysterious, solemn modes
Reverberant music, surging strophic odes,
With sunset colors flashing on my eyes.

There dwelt I in the long voluptuous calms
Amid those splendors, azure skies, the waves,
And bodies heavy with perfumes, nude slaves

Who fanned my forehead with great leaves of palms
And knew one care alone: that secret anguish
To fathom that made all my being languish.

DWIGHT DURLING

BEAUTY

La Beauté

Beautiful am I, oh, mortals, like a dream of stone!
And my breast, where each in his turn has been broken,
Is made to inspire a love in the poet
Eternal and mute as matter is lasting and still.

In the azure enthroned, an inscrutable sphinx,
I join a heart of snow and the whiteness of swans;
Movement I hate when it tampers with line,
And never do I weep and never do I laugh.

The poets, before my insolent poses,
Borrowed it seems from the proudest of statues,
Will consume all their days in rigorous trials;

For I, to fascinate these docile lovers—
Pure mirrors in which all things shine—
Have my eyes, my wide eyes, transparent forever.

BERT M-P. LEEFMANS

POSTHUMOUS REMORSE

Remords posthume

When you shall sleep, my faithless one, under
A monument built all of gloomy marble,
And when for room and mansion you shall have
Only a false hollow, a rainy cave;

When the stone your timid chest oppressing,
And your flanks that nonchalance makes supple,
Shall keep your heart from beating and wishing,
Your feet from running their adventurous course,

The tomb, confidant of my infinite dream
(The tomb that always understands the poet),
Through the long nights when sleep is banished,

Will say to you: "Of what use, courtesan,
Not to have known what the dead were weeping?"
—And the worm will gnaw your flesh like a remorse.

BARBARA GIBBS

I OFFER YOU THIS VERSE . . .

Je te donne ces vers . . .

I offer you this verse so that if once my name
Beaches with good fortune on epochs far away
And makes the minds of men dream at the close of day,
Vessel to whose assistance a great tempest came,

The memory of you, like fables indistinct,
May weary the reader like a tympanum's refrain,
And by a fraternal and most mystical chain
Still seem as though hanging, to my lofty rhymes linked;

Accurst being to whom, from the depth of the abyss
To the height of the sky, nothing but me responds!
—O you who like a shade whose trace none may retard,

Trample with a light foot and serene regard
The mortal dolts who judged you bringer of bitterness,
Statue with eyes of jet, great angel browed with bronze!

VERNON WATKINS

THE VIAL

Le Flacon

There are potent perfumes to which nothing
Is impervious. They penetrate glass, it is said.
Opening a little coffer come from the East,
Its lock creaking and groaning reluctant,

Or some dark dusty cupboard in a derelict house
Suffused with the acrid aroma of time,
Sometimes one finds an old reminiscent vial
From which surges vibrant a spirit returned.

Darkling chrysalids, a thousand thoughts slumbered,
 Soft in the dismal shadows throbbing,
 Which loosen their wings now soaring aloft,
 Azure-tinged, glazen rose, dappled with gold.

Intoxicating remembrances flutter
 In that disquieted air; the eyes close; vertigo
 Seizes the soul overcome and thrusts it with two hands
 Toward a chasm dim with human miasma,

Pitching it to the brink of a centenary pit,
 Where, scented Lazarus breaking through its shroud,
 There stirs in its waking the spectral cadaver
 Of an old moldering love, enticing and entombed.

Thus when I am lost to the memory of men,
 When to the corner of some grim cupboard
 I am tossed, old devastated vial,
 Decrepit, dirty, dusty, abject, viscous, cracked,

I shall be your coffin, amiable pestilence!
 Witness of your virulence and power,
 Dear poison by the angels compounded, potion
 Gnawing me away, O life and death of my heart!

KATE FLORES

INVITATION TO THE VOYAGE

L'Invitation au voyage

My child, my sister, dream
 How sweet all things would seem
 Were we in that kind land to live together
 And there love slow and long,
 There love and die among
 Those scenes that image you, that sumptuous weather.
 Drowned suns that glimmer there
 Through cloud-disheveled air

Move me with such a mystery as appears
 Within those other skies
 Of your treacherous eyes
When I behold them shining through their tears.

There, there is nothing else but grace and measure,
Richness, quietness, and pleasure.

 Furniture that wears
 The luster of the years
Softly would glow within our glowing chamber,
 Flowers of rarest bloom
 Proffering their perfume
Mixed with the vague fragrances of amber;
 Gold ceilings would there be,
 Mirrors deep as the sea,
The walls all in an Eastern splendor hung—
 Nothing but should address
 The soul's loneliness,
Speaking her sweet and secret native tongue.

There, there is nothing else but grace and measure,
Richness, quietness, and pleasure.

 See, sheltered from the swells
 There in the still canals
Those drowsy ships that dream of sailing forth;
 It is to satisfy
 Your least desire, they ply
Hither through all the waters of the earth.
 The sun at close of day
 Clothes the fields of hay,
Then the canals, at last the town entire
 In hyacinth and gold:
 Slowly the land is rolled
Sleepward under a sea of gentle fire.

There, there is nothing else but grace and measure,
Richness, quietness, and pleasure.

MUSIC

La Musique

On music drawn away, a sea-borne mariner
Star over bowsprit pale,
Beneath a roof of mist or depths of lucid air
I put out under sail;

Breastbone my steady bow and lungs full, running free
Before a following gale,
I ride the rolling back and mass of every sea
By Night wrapt in her veil;

All passions and all joys that vessels undergo
Tremble alike in me;
Fair wind or waves in havoc when the tempests blow

On the enormous sea
Rock me, and level calms come silvering sea and air,
A glass for my despair.

ROBERT FITZGERALD

THE CRACKED BELL

La Cloche fêlée

It is bitter and sweet, during the Winter nights,
To listen, by the quivering and smoking hearth-log,
To the memories withdrawn that ascend in slow flights
On the carillons whose music sings out through the fog.

Thrice fortunate the bell with a vigorous throat
That, in spite of old age, alert and still robust,
Flings faithfully the challenge of its religious note,
Like a veteran campaigner keeping watch at his post.

As for me, my soul's cracked, and when in gloom it longs
To people the chill air of the night with its songs,
It often befalls me that its enfeebled call

Seems a wounded man's rattle, forgotten by all
By a lake of blood under a vast heap of dead,
And who dies, without moving, in immense throes of dread!

VERNON WATKINS

SPLEEN

Spleen

When the oppressive sky weighs like a cover
On the sick spirit, in the toils of ennui,
And embracing the horizon's curve
Pours on us, sadder than nights, a dark day;

When earth becomes a humid dungeon
Where Hope like a bat strikes her timid
Wing against the walls and beats on
The decaying ceiling with her head;

When the rain spreading its immense trails
Imitates a vast prison of bars,
And a mute crowd of infamous spiders
Comes to hang its threads at the back of our brains,

Bells suddenly leap furiously,
Launching a dreadful clamor to heaven,
Like wandering spirits without a country
Who start to complain stubbornly.

—And long hearses without drums or music drag
In slow file through my soul; Hope vanquished
Weeps, and atrocious, despotic Anguish
Plants on my bowed head her black flag.

BARBARA CIBBS

HEAUTONTIMOROUMENOS

L'Héautontimorouménos

I shall strike you without anger
 And without hate, as a butcher strikes,
 As Moses struck the rock!
 And from your opened eye,

To water my Sahara,
 Shall flow the waters of our suffering.
 My desire, swelled with hopefulness,
 Upon your salt tears shall swim

Like a vessel which moves to sea,
 And in my heart drugged by them
 Your dear sobs will sound
 Like a drum beating the advance!

Am I not a dissonance
 In the divine symphony
 Thanks to the hungry Irony
 Which shakes me and which tears me?

It is in my voice, screeching!
 It is my very blood, black poison!
 I am the hateful mirror
 Where the Fury scans herself!

I am the wound and the knifel
 I am the blow and the cheek!
 I am the limbs and the wheel,
 And condemned and executioner!

I am the vampire of my heart:
 One of the lost forever,
 Condemned to eternal laughter
 And who can never smile again.

LANDSCAPE

Paysage

I want, the more chastely to compose my verse,
To sleep close to the sky, like the astrologers,
And, neighbor of steeples, as I dream, to attend
To their grave anthems carried away by the wind.
Chin in hands, from the height of my garret I'll discern
The workshop that sings and that gossips in turn,
The pipe-stacks, the steeples, those masts of the city,
And the great skies that foster dreams of eternity.

It is sweet, through the mists, to see begin to glow
The star in azure dark, the lamp at the window,
The rivers of coal-smoke ascending to the height
And the moon with enchantment spending her pale light.
I shall witness the Springs, the Summers, the Falls;
And when Winter comes with monotonous snowfalls
I shall close all around me shutters and lattices
To build into the night my fairy palaces.

Then I'll dream of horizons the blue of heaven controls,
Of gardens, fountains weeping in alabaster bowls,
Of kisses, of birds singing morning and eve,
And of all that's most childlike the Idyll has to give.
The tumult at my window vainly raging grotesque
Shall not cause me to lift my forehead from my desk;
For I shall be absorbed in that exquisitely still
Delight of evoking the Spring with my will,
Of wresting a sun from my own heart and in calm
Drawing from my burning thoughts an atmosphere of balm.

THE SWAN

*Le Cygne**To Victor Hugo*

I

Andromache, I think of you! —This little stream,
Poor wretched mirror resplendent once
With all the grandeur of your widow's grief,
This deceptive Simois, heightened with your tears,

Has suddenly, as I wandered through the new Carrousel,
Restored a fertile memory of mine.
—Old Paris is no more (the contours of a city
Change, alas! more quickly than a mortal heart);

Only in spirit do I see that regiment of booths,
That array of makeshift capitals and posts,
The turf, the rough stones greened by the puddle waters,
And, gleaming in the cases, the jumbled bric-a-brac.

There at one time a menagerie stood;
There I saw one morning, at the hour when, under cold
clear skies,
The working world awakes, and the cleaners of the streets
Hurl into the quiet air a dismal hurricane,

A swan who had escaped his cage,
And, padding the dry pavement with his webbed feet,
Trailed his snowy plumage along the scraggly ground.
Beside a waterless gutter the creature opened his beak

And tremulously bathing his wings in the dust, cried,
His heart full of the lovely lake of his birth:
“Water, when the deluge? Tempests, when do you
thunder?”

I can see that hapless one, strange and fatal myth,

Toward the heavens, sometimes, like Ovid's man,
Toward the heavens ironical and cruelly blue,
Bend his thirsting head upon his convulsive neck,
As though addressing reproaches unto God!

II

Paris changes! but my melancholy alters not a whit!
New palaces, scaffoldings, stocks,
Old neighborhoods to me are all allegory now,
And now my cherished remembrances are heavier than
rocks!

Thus before this Louvre an image dejects me:
I think of my glorious swan, with his mad gestures,
Like the exiled, ridiculous and sublime,
And wrung by a truceless yearning! and then of you,

Andromache, fallen from a mighty husband's arms,
A lowly creature, beneath the hand of supernal Pyrrhus,
Bending down distraught beside an empty tomb;
Widow of Hector, alas! and wife to Helenus!

I think upon the Negress, tubercular and wasted,
Groveling in the mud, and seeking, with haggard eye,
Beyond the massive wall of mist,
Magnificent Africa's absent coconut palms;

Of all who have lost what cannot ever be regained,
Not ever! of those who drink their fill of tears
And suckle of Sorrow like a good she-wolf!
Of scrawny orphans desiccating like flowers!

Thus in the forest of my spirit's exile
An old Remembrance echoes full blast like a horn!
I think upon sailors forgotten on isles,
Of the captured, the defeated! . . . and of so many more!

THE SEVEN OLD MEN

*Les Sept vieillards**To Victor Hugo*

Teeming city, full of dreams, where in broad
Daylight the specter grips the passer-by!
Mystery flows everywhere like sap
In the ducts of the mighty colossus.

One morning when mist in the gloomy street
Made the houses seem taller, like the two
Quays of a swollen river; when—décor
In harmony with the state of my soul—

A foul, yellow fog inundated space,
I went, steeling my nerves like a hero,
Disputing with my Soul, already weary,
Along the faubourg jarred by heavy carts.

Suddenly I saw an old man, in rags
Of the same yellow as the rainy sky,
Whose aspect would have made alms rain down
Except for the wicked gleam in his eye.

You might have thought the pupils of his eyes
Were soaked in bile; his gaze sharpened the sleet,
And his beard of long hairs, stiff as a sword,
Jutted forward like the beard of Judas.

He was not bowed, but broken, for his spine
Made a perfect right angle with his leg,
So that his staff, completing his presence,
Gave him the bearing and the clumsy gait

Of a crippled dog or three-legged Jew.
He stumbled over the snow and mud as though
He were grinding the dead under his shoes,
Hostile to life, more than indifferent.

His like followed him: beard, eye, back, staff, rags,
Nothing distinguished, come from the same hell,
This centenarian twin, and these specters
Walked with the same step towards an unknown goal.

Of what infamous scheme was I the butt
Or what ill chance humiliated me?
Full seven times, from minute to minute,
I saw this old man multiply himself!

Let him who laughs at my disquietude
And is not seized by a fraternal chill
Ponder that, for all their decrepitude,
These seven monsters appeared eternal!

Would I, and lived, have beheld the eighth
Counterpart, ironical and fatal,
Vile Phoenix, father and son of himself?
—I turned my back on the procession.

Enraged as a drunk man who sees double,
I went inside and closed my door, frightened,
Sick and chilled, my mind feverish and turbid,
Offended by the senseless mystery!

In vain my reason tried to take the helm;
The tempest rollicking led it astray,
And my soul danced, danced, like an old lighter
Without masts, on a monstrous, shoreless sea!

THE LITTLE OLD WOMEN

*Les Petites vieilles**To Victor Hugo*

I

In the winding folds of old capitals,
 Where horror itself turns to enchantment,
 Following my fatal moods, I spy on
 Certain beings, decrepit and charming,

Misshapen creatures, these were once women,
 Eponine or Lais! Broken or humped,
 Or twisted, let us love them! they are souls.
 Whipped by iniquitous north-winds they creep

In their tattered skirts and chilly fabrics,
 Shaken by the din of omnibuses,
 Clasp to their sides like relics tiny
 Bags embroidered with flowers or rebuses;

They toddle like little marionettes,
 Or drag their bodies like hurt animals,
 Or dance without wishing to dance, poor bells
 Swung by a pitiless demon! Broken

As they are, they have eyes that pierce like drills
 And glimmer like the holes where water sleeps
 At night; the divine eyes of little girls,
 Who laugh with amazement at shiny things.

Have you noticed how the coffins of old
 Women are often as small as a child's?
 Canny Death in these like biers evinces
 A bizarre and captivating taste,

And whenever I see one of these ghosts
 Threading the teeming tableau of Paris,
 It seems to me that the fragile creature
 Is going softly towards a new cradle;

Unless, meditating on geometry,
I conjecture from the discordant limbs
How many times the workman must vary
The shape of the box that will hold these forms.

—Their eyes are ponds made of a million tears,
Crucibles spangled with a cooled metal . . .
Mysterious eyes, invincibly charming
To one suckled by austere misfortune!

II

Enamored vestal of the old Frascati;
Priestess of Thalia, alas! whose name
The dead prompter knows; famed butterfly
Whom Tivoli once sheltered in her prime,

All intoxicate me! but of these frail
Creatures some, making a honey of grief,
Have cried to the Devotion that lent them wings:
Great Hippogriff, carry me to heaven!

One educated to adversity,
One loaded with sorrow by her husband,
One a Madonna, transpierced for her child,
All might have made a river with their tears!

III

Ah how many of them I have followed!
And one, at the hour when the sinking sun
Bloodied the sky with vermillion wounds,
Sat thoughtfully by herself on a bench

To hear one of those concerts rich with brass
With which the soldiers sometimes flood our parks,
Pouring on golden evenings a kind of
Heroism in the hearts of burgesses.

She, still straight, proud, and feeling the rhythm,
Drank in avidly the bright, warlike song,
Her eye opening like an old eagle's,
And her brow as if made for the laurell

IV

You go your way, stoic and uncomplaining,
Threading the chaos of living cities,
Mothers of the bleeding heart, courtesans
Or saints, whose names were once on every tongue.

You who were all of grace or all of glory,
None recognizes you! A rude drunkard
Mocks you in passing with a show of love;
A wretched child runs skipping at your heels.

Ashamed to be alive, shrunken shadows,
Fearful, with bent backs you hug the walls;
And no one speaks to you, strangely destined!
Human debris ripe for eternity!

But I, who watch tenderly, anxiously
At a distance your uncertain footsteps,
As if I were your father, what marvell
Without your knowledge, taste clandestine pleasures:

I watch your novice passions unfolding;
Dark or bright, I summon up your lost days;
My heart, multiplied, revels in your vices!
My soul grows resplendent with your virtues!

O ruins! congeneric brains! each night I
Take solemn adieu of you! Where will you be
Tomorrow, octogenarian Eves,
On whom the dreadful claw of God lies heavy?

THE LOVE OF DECEIT

L'Amour du mensonge

Whenever I see you pass, dear indolent one,
Amidst the surge of music in breaking waves,
Dangling your somnolent and slow allure,
Flaunting the ennui of your moody gaze,

When under the yellow gaslights I observe
Your pale forehead in a delicate artifice
Of torches that kindle an illusive dawn,
And your eyes like a portrait's cryptic glance entice,

I muse: How lovely she is, how fresh, bizarre!
The massive tower of memory looms above
And regally crowns her. Bruised as a fallen peach,
Her heart is ripe as her body for subtlest love.

I think of mellowed savors of autumn fruit,
A burial urn no rite of tears yet showers,
Scents that evoke the distant oases of dreams,
Caressing pillows, harvests of gathered flowers.

I know there are eyes like wells of melancholy
That hold no secrets rich as our surmise,
Jewelless coffers, locket-reliquaries,
Deeper and emptier than yourselves, O Skies!

Shall not the semblance alone suffice for me,
To rejoice my heart, since Verity I forswore?
What matters stupidity or indifference?
Hail, mask, dear counterfeit! I bow, adore!

I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN . . .

Je n'ai pas oublié . . .

I have not forgotten, neighboring the town,
 Our white house, diminutive, yet where peace brims,
 Its plaster Pomona and its Venus age-worn
 In a mean, wasted shrubbery hiding their naked limbs,
 And at evening the sun, pouring light in disdain,
 Which, behind the rich window that broke up its grain,
 Seemed, great prying eye in the sky's curious urn,
 To watch our slow dinners, prolonged and taciturn,
 Displaying its fair, waxen rays to the verge
 Of the set, frugal cloth and the curtains of serge.

VERNON WATKINS

MORNING TWILIGHT

Le Crépuscule du matin

Reveille rang out in the barracks-courts,
 And the morning wind blew on the street lamps.

It was the hour when injurious dreams
 Twist the brown adolescents on their pillows;
 When, like a bleeding, palpitating eye,
 The lamp makes a red spot against the day;
 When the soul, weighted down with the dull body,
 Imitates the struggle of lamp and day.
 Like a tear-drenched face dried by the breezes,
 The air fills with the shiver of flying things;
 Man tires of writing, woman of making love.

Here and there the houses begin to smoke.
Women of pleasure, their eyelids livid,
Slept with open mouths their stupefied sleep;
The beggar girls, dragging their thin, cold breasts,
Blow on their brands and blow on their fingers.
At that hour, with cold and frugality,
The pains of women in labor grow worse;
Like a sob sliced in two by foamy blood
A rooster's far-off cry rends the misty air;
Buildings are bathed in a sea of fog,
And deep in the poorhouses the dying
Give out their last rattle in broken hiccups.
The debauchees come home, spent with their toil.

Dawn, shivering in pink and green garments,
Comes slowly over the deserted Seine,
And, rubbing its eyes, a somber Paris
Takes up its tools like an old laborer.

BARBARA GIBBS

BEATRICE

La Béatrice

In a hard, burned land of ash, stripped of leaves,
As I groaned one day to acres of charred trees,
Wandering aimlessly, broken by my thoughts,
Which slowly sharpened daggers at my heart,
I saw descending over me, at noon,
A black cloud, storm-wide, carrying a troop
Of vicious demons, stunted like old dwarves,
Who, cruelly curious, pried into my wounds.
Proudly and coldly they examined me,
And, like pedestrians staring at a madman,
I heard them laugh and whisper savagely.
They made lewd signs and winked disdainfully:

“Let us study well this caricature of man,
 This shadow Hamlet, posturing as he moans,
 Looking so undecided, letting the wind shake
 His locks. Isn't it funny to see this rake,
 This tramp, this clown, this laid-off mountebank,
 Pretend, because he plays his role with wit,
 To interest eagles, flowers, brooks, and crickets
 In his stale recitals of imagined pain
 And tries beguiling even us with shows,
 Tricks that we invented long ago?”

I would have turned my sovereign head aside
 (My pride could dominate, as from a mountaintop,
 That cloud of demons and their disturbing cries)
 Had I not seen among that obscene troop—
 Ah, crime that strangely did not stagger the sun!—
 The empress of my heart, with crystal eyes,
 Who, laughing with them, mocked my black distress
 And pitched them, now and then, a lewd caress.

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV

A VOYAGE TO CYTHERA

Un Voyage à Cythère

My heart, like a bird, ahover joyously,
 circled the rigging, soaring light and free;
 beneath a cloudless sky the ship rolled on
 like an angel drunk with blazing rays of sun.

What is that black, sad island? —We are told
 it is Cythera, famed in songs of old,
 trite El Dorado of worn-out roués.
 Look, after all, it's but a paltry place.

—Isle of sweet mysteries and festal loves,
above your waters antique Venus moves;
like an aroma, her imperious shade
burdens the soul with love and lassitude.

Green-myrtled island, fair with flowers in bloom,
revered by every nation for all time,
where sighing hearts send up their fervent praises
afloat like incense over beds of roses

or like a ringdove's endless cooing call!
—Cythera now was but a meager soil,
a flinty desert moiled with bitter cries.
And yet, half-glimpsed, a strange shape met my eyes.

It was no temple couched in shady groves
where the young priestess, lover of flowers, moves,
her body fevered by obscure desires,
her robe half opened to the fleeting airs;

but as we passed, skirting the coast so near
that our white canvas set the birds astir,
we saw it was a three-branched gibbet, high
and black-etched, like a cypress, on the sky.

Perched on their prey, ferocious birds were mangling
with frenzied thrusts a hanged man, ripe and dangling,
each driving like a tool his filthy beak
all through that rot, in every bleeding crack;

the eyes were holes, and from the ruined gut
across the thighs the heavy bowels poured out,
and crammed with hideous pleasures, peck by peck,
his butchers had quite stripped him of his sex.

Beneath his feet, a pack of four-legged brutes
circled and prowled, with upraised avid snouts;
a larger beast was ramping in the midst
like a hangman flanked by his apprentices.

Child of Cythera, born of so fair a sky,
you suffered these defilements silently:
atonement for your impure rituals
and sins that have forbid you burial.

Ridiculous corpse, I know your pains full well.
At sight of your loose-hanging limbs I felt
the bitter-flowing bile of ancient grief
rise up, like a long puke, against my teeth;

poor wretch, so dear-remembered, in your presence
I felt each beak-thrust of those stabbing ravens,
and the black panthers' jaws—each rip and gash—
that once took such delight to grind my flesh.

The sky was suave, and level was the sea,
yet all was blood and blackness then to me,
alas! and my heart in this parable,
as in a heavy shroud, found burial.

On your isle, Venus, I saw but one thing standing,
gallows-emblem from which my shape was hanging . . .
God! give me strength and will to contemplate
heart, body—without loathing, without hate.

FREDERICK MORGAN

THE VOYAGE

*Le Voyage**To Maxime du Camp*

I

To the child, in love with maps and pictures,
The universe is vast as his appetite.
Ah how immense the world is by lamplight!
How small the world is in recollection!

One morning we set out, our brains full of fire,
Our hearts swollen with rancor and harsh longing,
And we go, following the wave's rhythm,
Cradling our infinite on the seas' finite:

Some are glad to leave a squalid birthplace,
Or their abhorred cradles; some, astrologers
Drowned in a woman's eyes, their tyrannical
Circe of the dangerous perfumes.

Not to be turned to beasts, they make themselves
Drunk on space and light and the flaming skies;
The frost that bites them, the suns that tan them,
Slowly wear away the marks of kisses.

But the true travelers are those who leave
For leaving's sake; light hearts like balloons,
They never swerve from their fatality,
And say, without knowing why: "Let us go on!"

Those whose desires have the shape of clouds,
Who dream, like a recruit of the cannon,
Of boundless, changing, unknown pleasures
Whose name the human mind has never known!

II

We imitate—horror!—the top and ball,
Waltzing and skipping; even in our sleep
Curiosity torments and rolls us
Like a merciless Angel whipping suns.

Strange lot, in which the goal displaces itself,
And being nowhere may be anywhere!
In which Man, whose hope never flags, goes always
Running like a madman in search of rest!

Our soul's a ship seeking its Icaria;
A voice shouts from the bridge: "Open your eyes!"
From the top, ardent and mad, another cries:
"Love . . . glory . . . happiness!" Hell is a sandbar!

Each island signaled by the man on watch
Is an Eldorado promised by Fate;
Imagination, preparing her feast,
Sees only a reef in the dawning light.

Poor lover of chimerical countries!
Must we toss him in chains, or in the sea, this
Inventor of Americas, this drunken
Sailor whose vision poisons the abyss?

Such is the old vagrant who paws the mud
And dreams, nose in air, of dazzling Edens;
His bewitched eye beholds a Capua
All around, where the candle lights a hovel.

III

Marvelous travelers! What noble tales
We read in your eyes profound as oceans!
Show us your chests of splendid memories,
Astounding jewels, made of wind and stars.

We will sail without steam or canvas!
Enliven the boredom of our prisons;
Pass across our spirits, stretched like canvases,
Your memories in their frames of horizons.

Tell us, what have you seen?

IV

“We have seen stars
And billows; and we have also seen sands;
And, despite shocks and unforeseen disasters,
We were often bored, as you were here.

The sun's splendor above violet seas,
The splendor of cities in the setting sun,
Made our hearts burn with restless ardor
To plunge into a sky of seductive light.

The richest cities, the noblest landscapes,
Never possess the mysterious
Attraction of those chance makes out of clouds.
And desire kept us forever anxious.

—Enjoyment augments the strength of desire.
Desire, ancient tree that thrives on pleasure,
All the while your bark thickens and hardens,
Your branches would look more closely on the sun!

When will you stop growing, great tree, longer
Lived than the cypress? —Yet we were careful
To cull a few sketches for your album,
Brothers who think all that's exotic fair!

We bowed before idols with trunks, and
Thrones constellated with shining jewels,
And carven palaces whose fairy pomp
Would make your bankers ruinous dreams.

Costumes like a drunkenness for the eyes
We say; women with painted teeth and nails,
And skilled fakirs whom the snake caresses."

V

And then, after that what?

VI

"O childish brains!

Lest we forget the most important thing,
Everywhere, without wishing to, we viewed,
From top to bottom of the fatal ladder,
The dull pageant of everlasting sin:

Woman, conceited slave, neither amused
Nor disgusted by her self-worship;
Man, hot, gluttonous tyrant, hard and grasping,
Slave of a slave, gutter in the sewer;

The hangman enjoying, the martyr sobbing,
The fete that spices and perfumes the blood;
The despot unnerved by power's poison,
The mob in love with the brutalizing whip;

A great many religions like our own,
All scaling heaven; Holiness seeking
Its pleasure in nails and haircloth, as a
Delicate wallows in a feather bed;

Babbling Mankind, drunk with its own genius,
And mad as it ever was, crying out
To God, in its furious agony:
'O my fellow, my master, I curse thee!'

And the less stupid, bold lovers of Madness,
Fleeing the herd fenced in by Destiny,
To take refuge in a vast opium!
—Thus the everlasting news of the whole globe.”

VII

A bitter knowledge we gain by traveling!
The world, monotonous and small, today,
Yesterday, tomorrow, reflects our image:
Dreadful oasis in a waste of boredom!

Shall we depart or stay? Stay if you can;
Depart if you must. Some run, others crouch
To deceive the watchful, deadly foe, Time!
There are those, alas! who run without rest,

Like the wandering Jew and the apostles,
Whom nothing suffices, carriage or ship,
To flee that base retiairy; others
Wear him out without leaving their cradles.

When at last he has his foot on our backs,
Then we'll be able to hope and cry: on!
Just as we used to set out for China,
Eyes fixed on the horizon and hair streaming,

We will embark on the sea of Darkness
With the joyous hearts of young passengers;
Listen to those charming, mournful voices
Singing: “Come this way, who desire to eat

The perfumed Lotus! Here are gathered the
Miraculous fruits your hearts hunger for;
Come and grow drunk on the strange mildness
Of this afternoon without an ending.”

We know the ghost by its familiar speech;
Our Pylades stretch out their arms to us.
"To renew your heart, swim towards your Electra!"
Cries she whose knees we kissed in former days.

VIII

Death, old captain, it's time to weigh anchor!
This country bores us, O Death! Let us set sail!
If the sea and sky are as black as ink,
Our hearts, you know well, are bursting with rays!

Pour your poison on us; let it comfort
Us! We long, so does *this* fire burn our brains,
To dive into the gulf, Hell or Heaven,
What matter? Into the Unknown in search of the *new!*

BARBARA GIBBS

LESBOS

Lesbos

Mother of the Roman games and Greek pleasures,
Lesbos, where the kisses, gay or languishing,
Burning as suns or cool as watermelons,
Are ornaments for the nights and splendid days;
Mother of the Roman games and Greek pleasures;

Lesbos, where the kisses are like fresh torrents
That cast themselves down bottomless abysses,
And run on, sobbing and cackling fitfully,
Stormy and secretive, turbulent and deep;
Lesbos, where the kisses are like fresh torrents!

Lesbos, where the Phrynes lure one another,
Where no sigh ever went without an echo,
The stars admire you as they do Paphos,
And Venus may well be jealous of Sappho!
Lesbos, where the Phrynes lure one another,

Lesbos, island of those hot, languorous nights
That make, before their mirrors, hollow-eyed girls,
Enamored of their bodies—sterile pleasure!—
Caress the ripe fruits of their nubility;
Lesbos, island of those hot, languorous nights,

Let Plato cast up a disapproving eye;
You win pardon by the excess of your kisses,
Queen of the soft empire, friendly, noble land,
And by your ever-flowering refinements.
Let Plato cast up a disapproving eye;

You win pardon through the eternal martyrdom,
Relentless punisher of ambitious hearts,
That never lets us see the radiant smile
We have glimpsed on the shores of other skies!
You win pardon through eternal martyrdom!

Who among the Gods, Lesbos, will dare judge you,
And condemn the pale forehead of your travail,
If his gold balances have not weighed the torrent
Of tears your rivers emptied into the sea?
Who among the Gods, Lesbos, will dare judge you?

What have laws of right and wrong to do with us?
Noble virgins, pride of the archipelago,
Your religion is august as another,
And love will make mockery of Heaven and Hell!
What have laws of right and wrong to do with us?

For Lesbos has chosen me, of all on earth,
To sing the secret of her virgins in flower,
And from childhood I've known the black mystery
Of frantic laughter mingled with somber tears;
For Lesbos has chosen me, of all on earth.

Since then I've watched from the summit of Leucate,
Like a sentinel with a sure, piercing eye,
Who night and day looks out for tartan or brig,
Whose forms tremble in the blue at a distance;
Since then I've watched from the summit of Leucate,

To learn if the sea is indulgent and good,
And if, while the rocks reverberate with sobs,
One evening there will return to pardoning Lesbos
The adored body of Sappho, who set out
To learn if the sea is indulgent and good!

Of the male Sappho, the lover and poet,
Fairer, with her mournful pallors, than Venus!
The blue eye yields the palm to the black, tarnished
By the dark circle traced by the sorrows
Of the male Sappho, the lover and poet!

Fairer than Venus standing above the world,
Pouring the treasures of her serenity
And all the radiance of her golden youth
On old Ocean, delighted with his daughter;
Fairer than Venus standing above the world!

—Of Sappho who died the day of her blasphemy,
When, insulting the rite and the devised cult,
She let her lovely body be the pasture
Of a brute whose pride punished the impiety
Of her who died the day of her blasphemy.

And it is from that time that Lesbos has mourned,
And despite the admiration of the world
Intoxicates herself each night with the cry
Of torment that escapes from her empty shores!
And it is from that time that Lesbos has mourned!

BARBARA GIBBS

LETHE

Le Léthé

Come to my heart, cruel, sullen soul,
Adored tiger, indolent monster;
I would bury my trembling fingers
In the thickness of your heavy mane;

In your skirts laden with your perfume
I would wrap up my aching head,
And inhale the sweet, musty odor,
Like a faded flower, of my dead love.

I long to sleep! sleep sooner than live!
In sleep sweet as death I will lay out
My kisses without remorse upon
Your lovely body, smooth as copper.

Naught so well as the abyss of your couch
Can swallow up my abating sobs;
Oblivion inhabits your mouth,
And Lethe oozes from your kisses.

My destiny, henceforth my delight,
 I will obey like one predestined;
 Docile martyr, condemned innocent,
 Whose fervor excites the tormentor,

I will suck, to deaden my rancor,
 Nepenthe and complaisant hemlock
 At the tips of that pointed bosom,
 Which has never imprisoned a heart.

BARBARA GIBBS

EPIGRAPH FOR A CONDEMNED BOOK

Épigramme pour un livre condamné

Reader placid and bucolic,
 Sober, guileless man of the good,
 Fling away this saturnine book,
 Orgiastic and melancholic.

Unless with Satan, wily master,
 You have studied your rhetoric,
 Fling it away! You will understand none of it,
 Or think me hysteric.

But if you are able, unenticed,
 To plunge your eye in the depths,
 Read me, that you learn to love me;

Inquiring soul who suffers
 And goes seeking your paradise,
 Pity me! . . . If not, be damned!

KATE FLORES

MEDITATION

Recueillement

Be wise, my Sorrow; oh, more tranquil bel
 You yearned for day's decline; it comes, is here:
 Steeping the town, the darkening atmosphere
 Brings peace to some, to some despondency.

While now base human multitudes obey
 The torturer's lash of Pleasure, never released,
 Go gathering new remorse in the slavish feast,
 My Sorrow, give me your hand and come this way—

Come far from them. Now lean the departed years
 In outworn robes from the balconies of sky;
 Smiling Regret looks out from the waters' deeps;

The dying light under an archway sleeps;
 And from the East, the long shroud trailing by—
 Listen, my dear—with soft step the night nears.

DWIGHT DURLING

THE GULF

Le Gouffre

Pascal had his gulf, wandering with him.
 —Alas! 'Tis all abyss—action, dream, desire,
 Word! And oftentimes I sense across my hair,
 Arisen all on end, the breath of Fear.

Above, below, on every side: the fathomless, the verge,
 Silence, enthralling insidious space . . .
 In the pith of my nights God with His knowing finger
 Truceless a manifold nightmare shapes.

Sleep gapes appalling as a cave no one knows,
Suffused with impalpable horror, leading endlessly;
Through all the windows I see merely infinity,

And my being, reeling vertiginous ever,
Covets insensible nullity.
—Ahl to leave Numbers and Entities never!

KATE FLORES

AT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

À Une Heure du matin

At last! Alone! There is no longer anything to be heard but the rattling of a few belated and exhausted cabs. For a few hours we shall possess silence, if not repose. At last! The tyranny of the human face has disappeared, and I shall suffer no longer except by myself.

At last! So it is permitted that I rest in a bath of darkness! First, to double-lock the door. It seems to me that this turn of the key will increase my solitude and strengthen the barricades which separate me now from the world.

Horrible life! Horrible life! Let us sum up the day: to have seen several men of letters, one of whom asked whether it were possible to go to Russia by land (doubtless he was taking Russia for an island); to have argued amiably with the director of a review, who to each objection answered, "We are on the side of the decent people," which implies that all other journals are edited by rascals; to have raised my hat to some twenty people, of whom fifteen are unknown to me; to have shaken hands in the same proportion, and this without having taken the precaution of buying gloves; to have paid a visit, to kill time, to a little dancer who begged me to design a Venus costume for her; to have paid court to a theatrical director, who said upon

dismissing me, "You might do well to speak to Z—; he is the dullest, the stupidest, and the most famous of all my authors; with him you might end up by getting somewhere. Talk to him and then we will see"; to have boasted (why?) about several sordid acts I have never committed, and to have denied like a coward a few other misdeeds committed with joy: the offense of bragging, the crime of respect for men; to have refused a friend an easy service and given a written recommendation to a consummate knave; ah! is it really well over with?

Discontented with everyone and discontented with myself, I should like to redeem myself and rebuild my pride a little in the silence and solitude of the night. Souls of those I have loved, souls of those I have sung, strengthen me, support me, remove from me falsehood and the corruptive mists of the world; and you, oh, Lord my God, accord me the grace to produce a few lovely verses which will prove to me that I am not the last of men, that I am not inferior to those I scorn.

BERT M-P. LEEFMANS

BE DRUNK

Enivrez-vous

Be drunk, always. Nothing else matters; this is our sole concern. To ease the pain as Time's dread burden weighs down upon your shoulders and crushes you to earth, you must be drunk without respite.

Drunk with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you please. But be drunk.

And if sometimes, on the steps of palaces, on the green grass in a ditch, in the dreary solitude of your room, you should wake and find your drunkenness half over or fully gone, ask of wind or wave, of star or bird or clock, ask of all that flies, of all that sighs, moves, sings, or speaks, ask them what time it is; and wind, wave, star, bird, or clock

will answer: "It is time to be drunk! To throw off the chains and martyrdom of Time, be drunk; be drunk eternally! With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you please."

WILLIAM M. DAVIS

ANYWHERE OUT OF THE WORLD

Anywhere Out of the World

This life is a hospital where every patient longs desperately to change his bed. This one would like to suffer opposite the stove, and that one is sure he would get well if placed by the window.

Somehow I get the feeling that I should be better elsewhere than where I am, and this question of moving is one which I am always discussing with my soul.

"Tell me, poor chilled soul, how would you like to live in Lisbon? It must be warm there, and you could bask in the sun as blissfully as a lizard. The city is on the coast. They say it is built of marble, and that its people have such a horror of vegetation that they uproot all the trees. Here is a landscape just suited to your taste: a landscape made of light and minerals, with water to reflect them."

My soul makes no reply.

"Since you love tranquillity, and the sight of moving things, do you wish to live in Holland, that heavenly land? Perhaps you will be happy in that land whose image you have so often admired in museums. What do you say to Rotterdam, you who love forests of masts, and ships that are moored at the doors of the houses?"

My soul remains silent.

"Perhaps you would prefer Batavia? There, moreover, we would find the wit of Europe wedded to the beauty of the tropics. Not a word. Can my soul be dead?"

"Have you sunk into so deep a stupor that you find satisfaction only in your unhappiness? If such is the case, let us flee to those lands in the likeness of Death. I know just

the place, poor soul! We shall pack our bags for Tornéo. Let us go even farther, to the utmost limits of the Baltic; farther still, from life, if possible; let us set up housekeeping at the Pole. There the sun all but grazes the earth obliquely, and the slow alternations of light and night make variety impossible and increase that monotony which is the other half of nothingness. There we can bathe deep in darkness, while sometimes, for our diversion, the Aurora Borealis will send up its rosy sheafs, like reflection of the fireworks of Hell!"

Finally, my soul explodes, crying: "Anywhere! Anywhere! As long as it be out of this world!"

WILLIAM M. DAVIS

Tristan Corbière

1845–1875

TRISTAN CORBIÈRE

1845-1875

Born in Brittany, the son of seafarers and fascinated by the sea, Corbière spent most of his rather short life there. Largely unknown until he was discovered by Verlaine and included among the latter's *Poètes maudits* (1884), Corbière has been and continues to be an influence on modern poetry. Verlaine, Laforgue markedly, and others echo the sardonic view of this curious combination of Bohemian and sailor in the wild seas off his native coast.

These two aspects of Corbière are reflected in his poetry, which is at once a sharp attack, sarcastic and by caricature, upon Romantic sentimentality, Hugo's in particular, and an attempt to return to immediacy, to life itself as it has always been felt and experienced by those more directly involved with it than Corbière could believe the Romantics, and most other poets, ever really were.

Recalling Villon, among others, Corbière was influenced by Baudelaire, but although he sympathized with the latter's attacks on Romantic anti-intellectualism, he felt that Baudelaire went too far in the other direction, that his poetry also became too distant from experience, if in a different way. And Corbière was no defender, either, of art as the highest form of man's endeavor, indeed, in his concerns, no artist. His images, his rhythms, are dynamic and immediate, not literary; his concern is life, not art, and his attempt is to rehabilitate mankind by rejecting the notion that man's creations are somehow superior to man himself.

AFTER THE RAIN

Après la pluie

I love the little rain
Which dries itself
With a cloth of tattered blue!
I love love and the breeze,
When it just grazes . . .
And not when it shakes you.

—Like an umbrella of arrows,
You get dry,
O great sun! wide open . . .
Soon the green parasol
Wide open!
Of spring—the winter's summer—

Passion is the thunderstorm
That drenches!
But woman is just a spot:
Beauty spot, spot of madness
Or of rain . . .
Spot of storm—or of calm—

In a bright spoke of mud
Fans out her charms
In great array
—Feather and tail—a chick
Who splashes;
A sweet dish for the sun!

—“Annel or whoever you are, dear . . .
Or not dear,
Who has been had for free . . .
Well . . . Zoé! Nadjejdal Jane!
Look: I'm strolling here
Lined with gold like the skies!

English spoken? —Spanish? . . .

Batignolle? . . .

Lift up the canvas

That covers your wares,

O Marquise

Of Amaëgul! . . . Wiggly!

Monkey-name or archangel's name?

Or both at once? . . .

Little name in eight parts?

Name that shouts, or name that sings?

Lover's name? . . .

Or utterly impossible name?

Will you, with a faithful love,

Eternall

Adore me for this evening? . . .

For your two little boots

Which you're getting muddy

Take my heart and the sidewalk!

Aren't you doña Sabine?

Carbine?

Say: would you like the heaven

Of the Odéon?—extravagant

Voyage! . . .

They take away your cabbage."

At this point is unsheathed

The old line:

—"You are mistaken!" Such emotion!

"Let me alone . . . I'm a respectable woman . . ."

"Not so dumb!"

"—Who do you take me for?" "For me! . . ."

"Wouldn't you take a drink of something

That's sprinkled

With no matter what . . . some

Pearl juice in cups

Of gold? . . . You cut!

But me, Mina, will you take me?"

—"Why not? that goes without saying!"—

"—That smile . . .

And me, besides! . . .

Hermosa, you seem to me to have a frank-
ness about your flank!

A pedant would be offended by it!"

—"But my name is Aloïse . . ."

"Héloïse!

Will you, for the love of art

—Abelard without the title—

Let me

Be a little bit your Abelard?"

.....
.....

And like a white squall which dies

The sweet dream

Lay down there, without a dark cloud . . .

Gives to my appeased mouth

"The dew

Of a rising-kiss— Good night—"

"It is the song of the lark,

Juliet!

And it's the song of the turkey . . .

I give you, like the dawn

Which gilds you,

A circle of gold on your eiderdown."

INSOMNIA

Insomnie

Insomnia, impalpable Creature!
Is all your love in your head
That you come and are ravished to see
Beneath your evil eye man gnaw
His sheets and twist himself with spleen,
Beneath your black diamond eye?

Tell me: why, during the sleepless night,
Rainy like a Sunday,
Do you come to lick us like a dog?
Hope or Regret that keeps watch,
Why, in our throbbing ear
Do you speak low . . . and say nothing?

Why to our parched throat
Do you always tilt your empty cup
And leave us stretching our neck,
Tantaluses, thirsters for chimeras—
Amorous philter or bitter dregs,
Cool dew or melted lead!

Insomnia, aren't you beautiful? . . .
Well, why, lascivious virgin,
Do you squeeze us between your knees?
Why do you moan on our lips,
Why do you unmake our bed,
And . . . not go to bed with us?

Why, impure night-blooming beauty,
That black mask on your face? . . .
To fill the golden dreams with intrigue? . . .
Aren't you love in space,
The breath of Messaline weary
But still not satisfied?

Insomnia, are you Hysteria? . . .
 Are you the barrel organ
 Which grinds out the hosanna of the elect? . . .
 Or aren't you the eternal plectrum
 On the nerves of the damned-of-letters
 Scraping out their verses—which only they have read?

Insomnia, are you the troubled donkey
 Of Buridan—or the firefly
 Of hell? —Your kiss of fire
 Leaves a chilled taste of red-hot iron . . .
 Oh, come perch in my hovell . . .
 We will sleep together a while.

KENNETH KOCH AND GEORGES GUY

THE TOAD

Le Crapaud

A song in a windless night . . .
 —The moon plates in metal bright
 The cut-out images of dark green.

. . . A song; sudden as an echo, quick,
 Buried, there, under the thick
 Clump. It stops. Come, it's there, unseen . . .

—A toad! —There in shadow. Why this terror
 Near me, your faithful soldier? —Spring!—
 Look at him, poet clipped, no wing,
 Nightingale of the mud . . . Horror!—

. . . He sings. Horror! —Horror! But why?
 Don't you see that eye of light, his own?
 No: he goes, chilled, beneath his stone.
 Good night. That toad you heard is I.

VERNON WATKINS

HOURS

Heures

Alms to the highwayman in pursuit!
 Evil eye to the luring eye!
 Blade against blade with the avid swordsman!
 —My soul is not in a state of grace!—

I am the fool of Pamplona,
 Afraid of the Moon's laughter,
 Hypocritical, in black crepe . . .
 Horror! is everything, then, beneath a candle snuffer?

I hear a noise like a rattle . . .
 It is the evil hour which calls me.
 In the pit of nights falls: one knell . . . two knells.

I have counted more than fourteen hours . . .
 Each hour a tear. You are weeping,
 My heart! . . . Keep singing, go on— Don't count.

KENNETH KOCH AND GEORGES GUY

TO MY MOUSE-COLORED MARE

A ma Jument souris

No spur or whiplash needed now,
 Is there, darling mouse-and-pink?
 They're good for prodding some old cow,
 But not my gray little mare, I think.

No bridle for that poor mouth of yours:
 My love's enough, and my helpful thigh.
 I'll put no stirrup, no saddle on:
 Just a touch of my boot, and off you fly
 On your prettily steel-shod hooves. (Of course,
 I'm not a fussy equestrian.)

Whoops! We're off on the dusty track!
 My head's lost in your mane somewhere,
 My arms are a circlet for your neck.
 Whoops! We took that hedge for fair!

Whoops! We're over the hurdle now!
 Stay under me, my head's awhirl—
 Whoops! and there's the ditch below . . .
 We're arsy-varsy! . . . Hold it, girl!

DUDLEY FITTS

RHAPSODY OF THE DEAF MAN

Rapsodie du sourd

The specialist told him: "Fine, let's leave it at that.
 The treatment is done: you're deaf. That's how
 It is you have quite lost your hearing."
 And he understood only too well, not having heard.

—Well, thank you, sir, for deigning to make
 A fine coffin of my head.
 Now I shall be able, with legitimate pride,
 To understand all on trust. . . .

Indeed *by eye*.^{*} —But watch that jealous eye, serving
 For your hocked ear! . . . Ah, no . . . What good is
 showing off?
 If I whistle too loudly in ridicule's face,
 To my face, and lowly, it can spit in my eye! . . .

* i.e. *free of charge*. This stanza is a series of typical Corbièrian word-plays dependent on the figurative meanings of phrases involving the eye, ear, and face; they cannot be conveyed when English lacks the figurative equivalents. In the next stanza *vieux pot* (old pot) is a friendly appellation, but the French also say "Deaf as a pot" as we say "Deaf as a post."

A dumb puppet, I, on a banal string! —Tomorrow,
 Along the street, a friend could take my hand
 And call me old post . . . or, more kindly, nothing;
 And I'd come back with: Not bad, thanks, and you!

If someone shouts a word at me, I'm mad for understanding;
 If another says nothing: could it be out of pity? . . .
 Always, like a rebus, I struggle to catch
 A word catercorner . . . No— They left me out!

Or—reverse of the coin—some officious stuffed shirt,
 His lower lip wagging as though he were grazing,
 Fancies himself conversing . . . And I, gnawing within,
 keep still:
 A grinning idiot—looking intelligent!

—Gray woolen cap pulled down over my soul!
 And—the donkey's kick . . . Giddyap! —A good lady,
 Old Lemonade Peddler, and of Passion, too!
 Might come up to drool her sanctimonious sympathy
 In my Eustacian tube—full blast, like a horn—
 And I not even able to step on her corn!

—Silly as a virgin, aloof as a leper,
 I'm there, but absent . . . Is he a dunce, they want to know,
 A muzzled poet, or just a crab? . . .
 A shrug of the shoulders, and that means: Deaf.

—Frenzied torment of an acoustic Tantalus!
 I see words flying I cannot snatch;
 Impotent flycatcher, eaten by a mosquito,
 Target-head with free pot shots for all!

O heavenly music: to hear a sea shell
 Grate on plaster! A razor, a knife
 Scrape in a cork! A couplet on the stage!
 A live bone being sawn! A gentleman! A rondeau!

—Nothing— I babble to myself . . . Words I toss to the
air

Off the cuff, not knowing if I speak Hindu,
Or perhaps duck talk, like the clarinet
Of a blockhead blindman mistaking the stops.

Go then, tipsy pendulum gone loose in my head!
Beat up this fine tom-tom, cracked tinny pianola
That renders a woman's voice a doorbell,
A cuckool . . . Sometimes: a buzzing gnat . . .

—Lie down, my heart, and beat your wing no more.
In the dark-lantern let us snuff the candle out,
And all that once vibrated there—I know no longer where—
Dungeon where they come to draw the bolt across the door.

—Be mute for me, pensive Idol.
Both of us, for each other's sake, forgetting to speak,
Say not a word to me: nothing will I answer . . .
And nothing then can mar our understanding.

Silence is golden (St. John Chrysostom).

KATE FLORES

TO MOUNT ÆTNA

*À l'Ætna**Sicelides Musae, paulo majora canamus.*

VIRGIL

Ætna—I've been up Vesuvius . . .
 Vesuvius has shrunk, it seems:
 There was more heat in me than streams
 From that wounded crater in hot pus . . .

—They say you're like a woman. —What?
 —Your age, I suppose—? or maybe that cooked
 Pebble, your heart? . . . Well, it's a thought . . .
 Laugh? I thought I'd come apart!

—That dirty grin of yours, that cough
 Thick as the phlegm of a senile lust;
 Your old breast cancer draining off
 Lava from under its scabby crust.

Comrade, let's go to bed together,
 My hide against your sick hide; yes,
 I swear by Venus you're my brother,
 Vulcan! . . .

A little more . . . or less . . .

DUDLEY FITTS

EVIL LANDSCAPE

Paysage mauvais

Beach of old bones—The tide gasps
 Death-knells: croaking sound on sound . . .
 —Pale marsh, where the moon swallows
 Big worms to make the night pass.

—Calm of plague, where fever
 Burns . . . The cursed will-o'-the-wisp fades away.
 —Stinking grass where the hare
 Is a cowardly sorcerer who flees . . .

—The white Washerwoman spreads out
 The dead's dirty linen
 In the *sun of wolves* . . . —The toads,

Little melancholy chanters,
 With their colics poison
 The mushrooms, their stools.

KENNETH KOCH AND GEORGES GUY

BLIND MAN'S CRIES

Cris d'aveugle

To the Low Breton tune: "*Ann hini goz*"

The murdered eye is not dead
 A spike still splits it
 Nailed up I am coffinless
 They drove the nail in my eye
 The nailed eye is not dead
 And the spike still enters it

Deus misericors

Deus misericors

The hammer pounds my wooden head
 The hammer that will make the cross

Deus misericors

Deus misericors

The undertaker birds
 Are thus afraid of my body
 My Golgotha is not over
Lamma lamma sabachani
 Doves of Death
 Be thirsty for my body

Red as a gun-port
 The sore is on the edge
 Like the drooling gum
 Of a toothless laughing old woman
 The sore is on the edge
 Red as a gun-port

I see circles of gold
 The white sun bites me
 I've two holes pierced by an iron bar
 Reddened in the forge of hell
 I see a circle of gold
 The sky's fire bites me

In the marrow twists
 A tear which comes out
 I see inside paradise
Miserere de profundis
 In my skull twists
 A sulfur tear which comes out

Blessèd the good dead man
 The saved dead man who sleeps
 Happy the martyrs the chosen
 With the Virgin and her Jesus
 Oh blessèd the dead man
 The judged dead man who sleeps

A Knight outside
Reposes without remorse
In the hallowed cemetery
In his granite siesta
The man of stone outside
Has two eyes without remorse

Oh I feel you still
Yellow moors of Armor
I feel my rosary in my fingers
And Christ in bone on the wood
I gape at you still
O dead Armor sky

Pardon for praying hard
Lord if it is fate
My eyes two burning holy-water fonts
The devil put his fingers inside
Pardon for crying loud
Lord against fate

I hear the north wind
Which bugles like a horn
It is the hunting call for the kill of the dead
I bay enough on my own
I hear the north wind
I hear the horn's knell

LETTER FROM MEXICO

Lettre du Mexique

Veracruz, February 10

"You put the kid in my care. —He's dead.
 And more than one of his pals with him, poor dear soul.
 The crew . . . there ain't any more. A few of us,
 Maybe, will get back. —It's fate—

"Nothing as beautiful as that—Sailor—for a man;
 They'd all like to be one on land—you bet.
 Without the discomfort. Nothing but: You can see
 How already the apprenticeship's tough!

"I weep to be writing it, me, old *Shore-Brother*.
 I'd gladly have given my skin, without ado,
 To send him back to you . . . Me, it ain't my fault:
 You can't argue with this sickness.

"The fever here is regular as Lent in March.
 You go to the cemetery to get your ration.
 The Zouave called it—Parisian at that—
 'The Garden of Acclimatization.'

"Console yourselves. They're dropping off here like flies.
 . . . I found in his satchel some souvenirs of his heart:
 A girl's picture, and two little babouches,
 And: marked—*Gift for my sister*.

"He wants his Mom to be told: that he said his prayers.
 And his Dad: that he'd rather have died in a war.
 Two angels were with him in his last hour:
 A sailor. An old soldier."

KATE FLORES

CABIN-KID

Le Mousse

Your old man's a sailor, I suppose? . . .
—A fisherman. A long time dead.
He left my mother's side one night,
And sleeps in the breakers now instead.

Up in the graveyard there's a tomb
Ma keeps for him—it's empty, though—
I'm all the husband that she has
To help her while the children grow.

Two little ones. —Nothing was found
Along the beach where he was drowned? . . .
—Only his pipe-case and a shoe . . .

When Sundays come, Mother can stop
And cry for rest . . . But when I grow up
I'll get revenge—a sailor too!

DUDLEY FITTS

THE END

La Fin

Oh! how many mariners, how many captains
 Who set off lighthearted for faraway journeys
 Are vanished in this mournful horizon! . . .

.
 How many skippers dead with their crews!
 The Ocean took all the pages of their lives
 And with one puff scattered them over the waves.
 None will know their end sunk in the deep . . .

.
 None will know their names, not even the humble stone
 In the narrow cemetery where echoes answer us,
 Not even the green weeping willow shedding its leaves in the fall,
 Not even the plaintive monotonous song
 Of the blindman singing in the corner of an old bridge.

VICTOR HUGO: *Oceano nox*

Well now, these mariners—sailors, captains,
 All in their great Ocean swallowed forever . . .
 Who left nonchalant for their faraway journeys,
 Are dead—as true as they left.

What then! It's their trade; they died with their boots on!
 Their snifters to their hearts, all alive inside their capotes . . .

—*Dead* . . . No thanks: Lady Death has no sea legs;
 Let her sleep with you: She's your good wife . . .

—As for them, none of it: Completel washed away by the
 wave!

Or lost in a squall . . .

A squall . . . that's death, you think? The lower sail
 Pounding across the water! —That's *floundering* . . .

A blast of the leaden sea, then the high mast
 Whipping at wave level—and that's *foundering*.

—Foundering. —Fathom this word. Your *death* is mighty
pale

And nothing much on board, in a raging gale . . .

Nothing much against the great bitter smile

Of the sailor struggling. —Come now, make way!—

Death the windy old phantom changes face:

The Seal . . .

Drowned? —Aw, go on! You drown in *fresh* water!

—Sunk! Crew and cargo! And, down to the little ship's-boy,

Defiance in their eyes, in their teeth curses!

Spitting a death-rattle quid to the spume,

And downing without puking *the big salty cup* . . .

—The way they downed their snifters—

—No six-foot-under for them, or cemetery rats:

Them, they head for the sharks! The soul of a sailor,

Instead of oozing in your potatoes,

Breathes with every wavel

—See there on the horizon the billow heaving;

The amorous belly, you'd say,

Of a whore in heat, half-soused . . .

They're there! —The billow has a cave—

—Listen, listen to the storm bellow! . . .

Their anniversary. —It returns quite often—

O poet, keep your blindman's songs to yourself;

—For them: the *De Profundis* the wind trumpets!

. . . Let them roll eternally in the virgin spaces! . . .

Let them roll green and bare,

Without pine and without nails, without lid, without
candles . . .

—O let them roll, parvenu landlubbers!

PARIS AT NIGHT

*Paris Nocturne**It's not a city, it's a world*

—It is the sea: dead calm—and the spring tide
With a far-off roaring has departed.
The surge will come back rolling in its noise—
Do you hear the scratching of the crabs of night?

—It is the Styx run dry: The ragpicker Diogenes,
Lantern in hand, roams about unperturbed.
All along the black stream depraved poets
Fish; from empty skulls they bait their lines.

—It is the field: To glean the dirty rags
The turning flight of hideous Harpies swoops;
The alley cat, on the lookout for rats,
Flees Bondy's criminal sons, nocturnal vintagers.

—It is death: Here lie the police. —Up there, love
Siestas, sucking the meat of a heavy arm
Where the quenched kiss leaves its red mark . . .
The hour is alone—Listen . . . not a dream is moving.

—It is life: Listen: the live stream is singing
The eternal song on the slimy head
Of a sea-god stretching his limbs naked and green
On a bed of the Morgue . . . With his eyes wide open!

KENNETH KOCH AND GEORGES GUY

RONDEL

Rondel

It's dark, child, snatcher of sparks!
 No more are there nights, days are no more;
 Sleep . . . waiting for everyone to come
 Who said: Never! Who told you: Forever!

Do you hear their steps? . . . How far away they are:
 Oh, the delicate tread! —Love has wings . . .
 It's dark, child, snatcher of sparks!

Do you hear their voices? . . . Coffins have no ears.
 Sleep: They weigh but little, all your immortal flowers;
 Nor will they be coming, your friends the bears,*
 To tumble their cobblestone over your fair ones . . .
 It's dark, child, snatcher of sparks!

KATE FLORES

SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP . . .

Do, l'Enfant do . . .

Buona vespre! Sleep: Your candle-end,
 They set it there, then they left.
 You'll not be afraid by yourself, poor little one? . . .
 It's the candlestick for your bed at the inn.

Fear no longer the pen-pusher's lash,
 Go! . . . To wake no more isn't so reckless.

Buona sera! Sleep: Your candle-end . . .

Is dead. —Here no doorkeeper longer attends:
 Just the wind from the north, the wind from the south
 Comes to quiver a gossamer thread.

Shhh! To the scoundrels, your ground is accursed.

—*Buona notte!* Sleep: Your candle-end . . .

KATE FLORES

* Allusion to La Fontaine's fable "The Bear and the Garden Lover," in which a lonely gardener makes friends with a lonely bear who, attempting to kill a fly on the sleeping gardener's nose, accidentally kills him with a cobblestone.

KAZOO

Mirliton

Sleep in love, naughty tuner of cicadas!
 Under the quitch-grasses covering you,
 The cicada will sing for you too,
 Merrily, with his little cymbals.

The dew will have tears in the morning;
 And lilies-of-the-valley make a sweet winding-sheet . . .
 Sleep in love, naughty tuner of cicadas!

There will be wailing droves of squalls . . .

The Muse of Death will set the pitch.
 She will still bring to your darkened lips
 Those rhymes that make the pale-faced twitch . . .
 Sleep in love, naughty tuner of cicadas!

KATE FLORES

SMALL DEATH TO LAUGH

Petit Mort pour rire

Away, airy comber of comets!
 The grass in the wind will be your hair;
 From your gaping eyes will-o'-wisps
 Will rise, prisoners in the poor heads . . .

Graveyard flowers called Little Flirts
 Will overgrow your earthy laugh . . .
 And forget-me-nots, those flowers of dungeons forgot . . .

Make light of it: poets' coffins
 Are but toys to pallbearers,
 Violin cases with an empty sound . . .
 They'll think you're dead—the bourgeois are dull—
 Away, airy comber of comets!

KATE FLORES

Paul Verlaine

1844—1896

PAUL VERLAINE

1844-1896

The key to Verlaine's best poetry is an exquisite music which has never been matched in any verse, an intimate expression of his own nostalgia and his own torment, together at times with a simplicity of vocabulary and an apparent simplicity of form which conceal his mastery both of poetic tradition and of his own means.

Born of a comfortably-off bourgeois family, Verlaine became more and more troubled, his life more and more scandalous, as time went on, despite the fact that his poetic stature and reputation were growing as he escaped the Parnassian influences he had begun by following in order to produce an altogether original sound in French verse. Shortly after the one wholly happy period of his life, his engagement and the first year of his marriage, Verlaine ran off to England with the young Rimbaud, beginning an existence of alternate debauchery and sincere if unavailing attempts at his own rehabilitation. Divorced by his wife while he was in prison for having wounded Rimbaud in a quarrel, Verlaine lost his last steady influence in 1886 when his mother died. From then on his drinking, which had always been prodigious, led to poverty and illness relieved only by the homage of a younger generation which saw him as the Prince of Poets.

Anything but an intellectual, developer of no system nor of any school, too original to be copied with success, Verlaine left no direct disciples.

MY RECURRING DREAM

Mon Rêve familier

Often I have this strange and penetrating dream
Of an unknown woman I love and who loves me,
And each time she is neither quite the same
Nor quite another, but she loves and understands.

For she does understand, and my heart, lucid
Alas, only for her, is a problem no longer,
But only for her, and the fever of my pale brow
Only by her can be cooled, as she weeps.

Is she dark, fair, or red-haired? I know not.
Her name? I remember it is sweet and singing
Like those of loved ones whom Life has banished.

Her gaze is like the gaze of statues,
And her voice, distant, calm, and low,
Has the inflection of dear voices that are stilled.

MURIEL KITTEL

ANGUISH

L'Angoisse

Nature, nothing in you moves me, not the fruitful
Fields, not the roseate echo of the pastorales
Of Sicily, not the grandeur of the dawns,
Not the solemn ruefulness of sunsets.

I laugh at Art, I laugh at Man too, and at songs,
At verse, at Greek temples and the spiraled towers
Cathedrals spread across the empty sky,
And I see good men and evil with identical eye.

I do not believe in God, I deny and abjure
All thought, and as for Love, that old
Irony, would I might hear of it no more.

Weary of living, fearing to die, like
A lost barque a plaything of the tides,
My soul to dread disaster seems to ride.

KATE FLORES

THE SHEPHERD'S HOUR

L'Heure du berger

The moon is red through horizon's fog;
In a dancing mist the hazy meadow
Sleeps; by green rushes a frog
Calls, there where movement quivers;

Water flowers fold their petals now;
In the distance, tall and in close array
Poplars outline their shadowy forms;
Towards the thickets the fireflies stray;

The screech owls wake, and soundlessly
Beat the dark air with heavy wings,
And the heaven is filled with muffled light.
Pale, Venus appears, and it is Night.

MURIEL KITTEL

THE NIGHTINGALE

Le Rossignol

Like a clamorous flock of startled birds,
All my memories swoop upon me,
Swoop among the yellow foliage
Of my heart, watching its bent alder-trunk
In the purple foil of the waters of Regret
That flow nearby in melancholy wise;
They swoop, and then the horrid clamor,
That a moist breeze calms as it rises,
Dies gradually in the tree—until
At the end of a moment nothing more is heard,
Nothing but the voice hymning the Absent One,
Nothing but the voice—the languishing voice—
Of the bird that was my Earliest Love,
Singing still as on that earliest day;
And in the sad magnificence of a moon
That rises with pale solemnity, a
Summer night, heavy and melancholy,
Full of silence and obscurity,
Lulls in the sky that a soft wind caresses
The quivering tree and the weeping bird.

MURIEL KITTEL

IN THE WOODS

Dans le Bois

Other people—innocents or lunatics—
Find in the woods only pallid charms,
Fresh breezes and warm scents. They are fortunate!
Others, dreamers, are seized with mystic dread.

They are fortunate! While I, nervous, maddened
By a vague, terrifying, and relentless remorse,
Tremble in the forest: I am like a coward
Who fears an ambush or thinks he sees a corpse.

These huge branches, ever restless as the sea,
Whence dark silence falls with shadows yet
Darker: all this dim, sinister scenery
Fills me with horror at once trivial and profound.

The worst are summer evenings: the red of sunset
Dissolves into gray-blue mists, which it dyes
With fire and blood; the angelus, ringing far off,
Seems an approaching plaintive cry.

The wind rises, heavy and warm; a shiver passes
And repasses, ever increasing, in the denseness
Ever deepening of the tall oaks: it possesses
And is dispersed like a miasma into space.

Night comes, the owl takes flight. This is the moment
When old wives' tales throng into the mind . . .
Under a thicket, over there, over there, spring waters
Sound like waiting assassins plotting to strike.

MOONLIGHT

Clair de lune

Your soul is a landscape rare
Where masks and bergamasks charming pass,
Playing the lute and dancing, and almost
Sad beneath their fancy dress.

And while they sing on a minor note
Of conquering love and a favorable life,
They seem not to believe their happy lot,
And their song mingles with the soft moonlight.

With the calm moonlight, beautiful and sad,
That brings dreams to the birds in the trees
And sobs of ecstasy to the fountains,
To the tall fountains, slender among the statuary.

MURIEL KITTEL

SENTIMENTAL DIALOGUE

Colloque sentimental

In the old park, frozen and deserted,
Two shapes have just slipped by.

Their eyes are dead and their lips are limp,
And their words can scarcely be heard.

In the old park, frozen and deserted,
Two wraiths have recalled the past.

“Do you remember our old delight?”
“Whyever should I remember it?”

"Does your heart still throb at my very name?
Do you still see my soul in your dreams?" "No."

"Ah, the fine days of unspeakable joy
When our lips met!" "Perhaps."

"How beautiful the sky was, how great our hope!"
"Hope has fled, defeated, to the dark sky."

They wandered on through the wild oats
And only the night listened to their words.

MURIEL KITTEL

THE WHITE MOON

La Lune blanche

The white moon
Gleams in the wood;
From every branch
There comes a voice
Beneath the bower . . .

O my love.

The pond reflects,
Shimmering mirror,
The silhouette
Of the dim willow
Where the wind laments . . .

Let us dream, it is the hour.

Vast and tender
An appeasement
Seems to lower
From the firmament
Star-bedecked . . .

Exquisite hour.

KATE FLORES

THE NOISE OF THE CABARETS . . .

Le bruit des cabarets . . .

The noise of the cabarets, the muck of the sidewalks,
The shrunken plane-trees shedding their leaves in the foul
air,
The omnibus, hurricane of junk-iron and mud,
That grates, badly seated on its four wheels,
And rolls its eyes slowly red and green,
The workers on their way to the club, puffing
Their stubby pipes at the noses of the police,
Leaky roofs, dripping walls, slippery cobblestones,
Worn-out pavements, gutters overflowing the sewers,
That's how my route lies—with paradise at the end.

KATE FLORES

TEARS FLOW IN MY HEART . . .

*Il pleure dans mon cœur . . .**It rains softly on the town*

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

Tears flow in my heart
 As rain falls on the town;
 What languor is this
 That creeps into my heart?

Gentle sound of the rain
 On earth and roofs!
 For an aching heart
 Is the song of the rain!

Tears flow senseless
 In this breaking heart.
 With no betrayal?
 This grief is senseless.

This is the worst sorrow
 Not to know why,
 Without love or hate,
 My heart has all this sorrow.

MURIEL KITTEL

OH SAD, SAD WAS MY SOUL . . .

O triste, triste était mon âme . . .

Oh sad, sad was my soul
 Because, because of a woman.

I would not be comforted
 Although my heart had fled,

Although my heart, although my soul
Had gone far from this woman.

I would not be comforted
Although my heart had fled.

And my heart, my too sensitive heart
Said to my soul: Is it possible,

Is it possible—could it be true—
This proud exile, this sad exile?

My soul said to my heart: Do I
Myself know the meaning of this snare

Of being here, although in exile,
In spite of fleeing far apart?

MURIEL KITTEL

IN THE UNENDING TEDIUM . . .

Dans l'interminable ennui . . .

In the unending
Tedium of the plain
The uncertain snow
Gleams like sand.

The copper sky
Has no light at all,
You think you can see
The moon live and die.

Like clouds the oaks
Of nearby forests
Are gray, and float
Among the mists.

The copper sky
 Has no light at all,
 You think you can see
 The moon live and die.

Broken-winded crow
 And you, gaunt wolves,
 What happens to you
 In these harsh winds?

In the unending
 Tedium of the plain
 The indistinct snow
 Gleams like sand.

MURIEL KITTEL

GIVE EAR TO THE VERY FAINT SONG . . .

Écoutez la chanson bien douce . . .

Give ear to the very faint song
 That weeps but for your delight.
 It is discreet, it is light,
 Moss a stream runs along!

The voice was familiar (and dear?)
 To you, but now it is veiled,
 Like a widow loss has paled,
 And yet still proud, like her;

And in the long folds of her veil
 That lifts in the Autumn wind
 It hides and starlike shows to the stunned
 Conscience truth like a grail.

It says, that voice in her womb,
 That goodness is our life,
 And that of envy, hate, and strife
 Nothing remains, when death has come.

Then of the glory it sings
 Of expecting nothing here,
 And of gold nuptials, and the dear
 Joy of a peace no victory brings.

The persistent voice bring to bed
 In its simple marriage-call.
 Come, nothing more profits the soul
 Than to make a soul less sad!

It is "in travail" and "with young,"
 The soul that suffers without rage,
 And how clear is its moral and wage!
 Give ear to the very wise song.

VERNON WATKINS

AND I HAVE SEEN AGAIN THE MARVELOUS
 CHILD . . .

Et j'ai revu l'enfant unique . . .

And I have seen again the marvelous child: it seemed
 Then opened in my heart the last wound of my grief,
 That whose more tender pain assures me in belief
 Of a dear death on some fair day that faith has dreamed.

The patient, pointed spire, and its firm, fresh relief!
 In these rare, chosen moments they in me reclaimed
 The heavy-lidded dreams of scruple dull and tamed,
 And all my Christian blood sang the pure song made chief.

I hear again. I see again. Law of conformity
 So sweet! At last I know what means to hear and see,
 I hear, I see, always! Voice of dear thoughts at rest,

Innocence, future goodness! Silent, meek, and wise,
 How I shall love you now, O you a moment pressed,
 Beautiful little hands, hands that will close our eyes!

VERNON WATKINS

GOD SAID . . .

Mon Dieu m'a dit . . .

God said: "My son you must love me. You see
 My pierced side, my heart radiant with blood,
 And my injured feet bathed by Magdalene's tears,
 My arms that ache under the weight of your

Sins, my hands too! You see the cross,
 You see nails, gall, sponge, and all teach you
 To love in this bitter world of flesh
 Only my Flesh and Blood, my word and voice.

Oh, have I not loved you even unto death,
 Brother in my Father, son in the Holy Ghost,
 Have I not suffered for you as it was written?

Have I not sobbed for you in your great agony,
 Have I not sweated the sweat of your dark nights,
 Oh pitiful friend, who seeks me when I am here?"

MURIEL KITTEL

A GREAT DARK SLEEP . . .

Un grand sommeil noir . . .

A great dark sleep
 Has fallen on my life:
 Sleep, all hope,
 Sleep, all want!

I see nothing any more.
 I have lost memory
 Of good and of bad . . .
 O the sad story!

I am a cradle
 Rocked by a hand
 In the hollow of a crypt:
 Silence, silence!

KATE FLORES

THE SKY ABOVE THE ROOF . . .

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit . . .

The sky above the roof
 Is so blue, so calm!
 A tree above the roof
 Sways its fronds.

The bell in the sky we see
 Softly chimes.
 A bird in the tree we see
 Sings its lament.

Dear God, dear God, life is there,
 Simple and still.
 That peaceful murmur there
 Comes from the town.

What have you done, you who are here
 Weeping endlessly?
 Oh, what have you done, you who are here,
 With the days of your youth?

MURIEL KITTEL

I KNOW NOT WHY . . .

Je ne sais pourquoi . . .

I know not why
 My bitter spirit
 With wild and restless wing flies over the sea.
 All I hold dear,
 With wing of fear
 My love broods over on the waters. Why, oh why?

Seagull of melancholy flight,
 My thought follows the waves,
 Swayed by all the winds of heaven
 And shifting with the turn of the tide,
 Seagull of melancholy flight.

Drunk with sunshine
 And with freedom,
 Some instinct guides it across this immensity.
 The summer breeze
 On the vermilion wave
 Carries it gently in a warm half-sleep.

At times it utters so sad a cry
 That the far-off pilot is perturbed,
 Then abandoning itself to the wind's will
 It glides, and dives, and with battered wing
 Soars again, and again so sadly cries.

I know not why
 My bitter spirit
 With wild and restless wing flies over the sea.
 All I hold dear,
 With wing of fear
 My love broods over on the waters. Why, oh why?

MURIEL KITTEL

THE ART OF POETRY

Art poétique

To Charles Morice

Music must be paramount:
 Choose for this an Uneven Rhythm,
 More indefinite, more soluble in air,
 With nothing to press or bind.

You must not hesitate to choose
 Your words without ambiguity:
 The best song is a hazy song
 Where Vagueness and Precision join.

There, are eyes beautiful and veiled,
 And the quivering light of high noon,
 There, in a cooled autumnal sky,
 Is a blue confusion of bright stars.

For we must have Nuance still,
 Not Color—nothing but nuance!
 Ah! only nuance can betroth
 Dream to dream and flute to horn!

Flee far as possible from deadly Jest,
 From cruel Wit and impure Laughter,
 That make the eyes of Heaven weep—
 Avoid this garlic of low-class kitchens!

Take eloquence and wring its neck!
 And while you are in the mood, try
 To moderate Rhyme a little more.
 If you don't, what limit will it reach?

Who can tell the wrongs that Rhyme has done?
 What deaf child or crazy Negro
 Fashioned us this bauble from a coin
 That rings false and hollow under the file?

Music, always more music!
 Let your verse be the winged thing
 We feel soaring from a soul on its way
 To other loves in other heavens.

Let your verse be a good-luck charm
 Scattered on the brisk morning wind
 That passes smelling of mint and thyme. . . .
 And everything else is mere literature.

MURIEL KITTEL

APATHY

Langueur

I am the Empire at the end of its decadence
 Watching the tall, fair Barbarians pass,
 Meanwhile, I compose idle acrostics
 In a golden style where the sun's languors dance.

Intense boredom sickens a soul alone.
 Over there, I hear, a long bloody battle rages.
 Feeble with too slow desire, there is no power,
 There is no will to make this existence flower.

There is no will, no power even to die a little.
 Ah, all is drunk, Bathyllus—do you laugh still?
 All, all is drunk, all eaten! No more to tell.

Nothing but a stupid poem to throw on the fire,
Nothing but a faithless slave to neglect you,
Nothing but a nameless boredom to afflict you.

MURIEL KITTEL

Arthur Rimbaud

1854–1891

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

1854-1891

An extraordinarily precocious genius, Rimbaud completed his career as a poet of striking originality, virtuosity, and influence by the time he was nineteen.

After an apprenticeship involving poetry of revolt, together with some realistically descriptive verse, Rimbaud began upon the task outlined in his famous *Lettres du voyant*: he would be a seer, finding a language capable of translating the absolute. Taking to be sacred the disorder of his own soul, he would comprehend directly his own interior experience, bypassing all the usual categories, exploring with utmost immediacy and without reflection the violent forces he sensed within himself. Thus far poetry had been mere rhymed prose: Rimbaud would write from the soul to the soul, on a plane superior to that of the senses. *The Bateau ivre*, *The Illuminations*, are among the fruits of this terrifying investigation, and indeed in the striking brilliance and nakedness of his language and his images, Rimbaud comes close to accomplishing his stated intentions. Finally there is *A Season in Hell*, expressing his disillusion as a poet and acknowledging the ultimate impossibility of his quest, and his return from it.

Rimbaud broke with Verlaine shortly before finishing *A Season in Hell* and was henceforth to be a wanderer, on a wild odyssey which was to bring him back to France from time to time, but at ever longer intervals. Teaching at moments, working for a circus, traveling often on foot, he crossed and recrossed Europe, went briefly to the Far East, returned, and finally went to Africa as agent for a coffee merchant, dealer in arms, and explorer of some renown. After a decade there he returned to France to die.

OPHELIA

Ophélie

I

On the calm black wave where the stars sleep
Floats white Ophelia like a great lily,
Floats very slowly, lying in her long veils . . .
—From the distant woods, the flourish of the kill.

For more than a thousand years sad Ophelia
White phantom, passes, on the long black river.
For more than a thousand years her sweet obsession
Whispers her love to the evening breeze.

The wind embraces her breasts and unfolds her great veils
In a corolla gently rocked by the waters;
Trembling willows weep on her shoulder,
Reeds lean on her lofty pensive brow.

Bruised water lilies sigh about her;
Sometimes in a sleeping alder tree she awakens
A nest; a tiny wing-flutter escapes;
Mysterious sounds fall from the golden stars.

II

O pale Ophelia! fair as snow!
You died, child, yes, carried off by a river!
Because the winds falling from the great cliffs of Norway
Spoke low to you of fierce freedom;

Because a wind, tearing your long hair,
Bore strange shouts to your dreaming spirit;
Because your heart listened to the strains of Nature
In the wails of the tree and the sighs of the nights.

Because the voice of mad seas, immense rattle,
Bruised your child's heart, too sweet and too human;
Because on an April morning, a handsome pale courtier,
A sorry fool, sat mutely at your feet!

Heaven! Love! Freedom! What a dream, O Foolish girl!
 You melted toward him as snow near flame:
 Your words were strangled by your great visions
 —And the terrible Infinite frightened your blue eyes!

III

And the Poet says you come at night
 To gather flowers in the rays of the stars;
 And he has seen on the water, lying in her long veils,
 White Ophelia floating, like a great lily.

DAISY ALDAN

MY BOHEMIA

Ma Bohème

Fists in torn pockets I departed.
 My overcoat grew ideal too.
 I walked, your knight, O Muse,
 And dreamed, O my! what glorious loves.

My only trousers had a hole.
 Little Tom Thumb, I dropped my dreaming rhymes.
 My lodging was the Great Bear Inn,
 And in the sky my stars were rustling.

I listened, seated by the road—
 In soft September—where the dew
 Was wine of vigor on my face;

And in weird shadows rhyming, plucked like lyres,
 The laces of my martyred shoes,
 One foot against my heart.

LOUISE VARÈSE

POETS SEVEN YEARS OLD

Les Poètes de sept ans

And the Mother, closing the exercise book,
Went off satisfied and very proud, not seeing
In the blue eyes and beneath the bumpy forehead
That her child's soul was filled with revulsions.

All day he sweated obedience; very
Intelligent; but certain nasty habits, several traits,
Seemed to show bitter hypocrisies in him.
Passing through dark halls with musty drapes
He would stick out his tongue, his two fists
In his groin, and in his closed eyes see dots.
A door would be open to evening; by lamplight
He could be seen upstairs sulking on the banister
Beneath a gulf of day which hung from the roof. In summer
Above all, vanquished, stupid, he would stubbornly
Lock himself up in the coolness of latrines.
He would think there, tranquil, dilating his nostrils.

When in winter the little garden behind the house,
Washed of the smells of the day, became immooned,
He, stretched out at the foot of a wall, buried in the mud
And pressing his eye flat so as to have visions,
Would listen to the swarming of the scaly trellises.
As for pity! his only intimates were those children—
Feeble, with blank foreheads, eyes fading on their cheeks,
Hiding thin fingers yellow and black with mud
Under clothes stinking of diarrhea and all shabby—
Who conversed with the gentleness of idiots;
And if having discovered him at such filthy pities
His mother became frightened, the deep tenderness
Of the child would overwhelm her surprise.
It was good. She would have the blue look—that lies!

At seven he was writing novels about life
In the great desert where ecstatic Liberty shines,
Forests, suns, banks, savannas! He was aided
By illustrated papers in which, blushing, he looked
At Spanish and Italian women laughing.
When, brown-eyed, mad, in printed cotton dresses
—Aged eight—the daughter of the workers next door,
Had come, the little brute, and when she had jumped
On his back in a corner, shaking her braids,
And he was underneath her, he would bite her buttocks
(For she never wore panties)
And then bruised by her fists and by her heels
He would take the savors of her skin back to his room.

He dreaded the pale Sundays of December
When, all spruced up, at a little round mahogany table
He would read a Bible edged in cabbage-green.
Dreams oppressed him each night in the alcove.
He loved, not God, but the men whom in the russet
evening,
Dark, in blouses, he would see returning to the suburbs
Where the criers with three rollings of the drum
Make the crowds laugh and groan at proclamations.
He could yearn for the amorous meadow, where luminous
Billows, healthy perfumes, golden pubescences
Make their calm movement and take their flight;

And as he delighted most in somber things,
When, in the bare room with closed shutters,
High and blue, filled with an acrid dampness,
He would read his novel, which he always thought about,
Full of heavy clayey skies and drowned forests,
Of flesh-flowers opened in the depths of celestial woods—
Dizziness, failings, routs, and pity!—
While the din of the neighborhood sounded
Below, alone, lying on pieces of unbleached
Canvas, with a violent premonition of sails! . . .

THE LICE SEEKERS

Les Chercheuses de poux

When the child's forehead full of red torments
Begs for the white swarm of indistinct dreams
There come close to his bed two big charming sisters
With frail fingers and silver nails.

They seat the child next to a window
Wide open, where blue air bathes a confusion of flowers
And in his heavy hair where the dew falls
Promenade their delicate fingers, terrible and enchanting.

He hears the singing of their timorous breath
Which bears the scent of long vegetable and rosy honeys
And which a whistling interrupts now and then, salivas
Taken back from the lip or desires for kisses.

He hears their black eyelashes beating beneath perfumed
Silences; and their fingers electric and sweet
Make crackle among his hazy indolences
Beneath their royal fingernails the death of little lice.

Now there is mounting in him the wine of Laziness,
Harmonica's sigh which could be delirious;
The child feels, according to the slowness of the caresses,
Spring up and die unceasingly a wish to cry.

KENNETH KOCH AND GEORGES GUY

THE DRUNKEN BOAT

Le Bateau ivre

As I descended black, impassive Rivers,
I sensed that haulers were no longer guiding me:
Screaming Redskins took them for their targets,
Nailed nude to colored stakes: barbaric trees.

I was indifferent to all my crews;
I carried English cottons, Flemish wheat.
When the disturbing din of haulers ceased,
The Rivers let me ramble where I willed.

Through the furious ripping of the sea's mad tides,
Last winter, deafer than an infant's mind,
I ran! And drifting, green Peninsulas
Did not know roar more gleefully unkind.

A tempest blessed my vigils on the sea.
Lighter than a cork I danced on the waves,
Those endless rollers, as they say, of graves:
Ten nights beyond a lantern's silly eye!

Sweeter than sourest apple-flesh to children,
Green water seeped into my pine-wood hull
And washed away blue wine stains, vomitings,
Scattering rudder, anchor, man's lost rule.

And then I, trembling, plunged into the Poem
Of the Sea, infused with stars, milk-white,
Devouring azure greens; where remnants, pale
And gnawed, of pensive corpses fell from light;

Where, staining suddenly the blueness, delirium,
The slow rhythms of the pulsing glow of day,
Stronger than alcohol and vaster than our lyres,
The bitter reds of love ferment the way!

I know skies splitting into light, whirled spouts
Of water, surfs, and currents: I know the night,
The dawn exalted like a flock of doves, pure wing,
And I have seen what men imagine they have seen.

I saw the low sun stained with mystic horrors,
Lighting long, curdled clouds of violet,
Like actors in a very ancient play,
Waves rolling distant thrills like lattice light!

I dreamed of green night, stirred by dazzling snows,
Of kisses rising to the sea's eyes, slowly,
The sap-like coursing of surprising currents,
And singing phosphors, flaring blue and gold!

I followed, for whole months, a surge like herds
Of insane cattle in assault on the reefs,
Unhopeful that three Marys, come on luminous feet,
Could force a muzzle on the panting seas!

Yes, I struck incredible Floridas
That mingled flowers and the eyes of panthers
In skins of men! And rainbows bridled green
Herds beneath the horizon of the seas.

I saw the ferment of enormous marshes, weirs
Where a whole Leviathan lies rotting in the weeds!
Collapse of waters within calms at sea,
And distances in cataract toward chasms!

Glaciers, silver suns, pearl waves, and skies like coals,
Hideous wrecks at the bottom of brown gulfs
Where giant serpents eaten by red bugs
Drop from twisted trees and shed a black perfume!

I should have liked to show the young those dolphins
In blue waves, those golden fish, those fish that sing.
—Foam like flowers rocked my sleepy drifting,
And, now and then, fine winds supplied me wings.

When, feeling like a martyr, I tired of poles and zones,
The sea, whose sobbing made my tossing sweet,
Raised me its dark flowers, deep and yellow whirled,
And, like a woman, I fell on my knees . . .

Peninsula, I tossed upon my shores
The quarrels and droppings of clamorous, blond-eyed birds.
I sailed until, across my rotting cords,
Drowned men, spinning backwards, fell asleep! . . .

Now I, a lost boat in the hair of coves,
Hurl'd by tempest into a birdless air,
I, whose drunken carcass neither Monitors
Nor Hansa ships would fish back for men's care;

Free, smoking, rigged with violet fogs,
I, who pierced the red sky like a wall
That carries exquisite mixtures for good poets,
Lichens of sun and azure mucus veils;

Who, spotted with electric crescents, ran
Like a mad plank, escorted by seahorses,
When cudgel blows of hot Julys struck down
The sea-blue skies upon wild water spouts;

I, who trembled, feeling the moan at fifty leagues
Of rutting Behemoths and thick Maelstroms, I,
Eternal weaver of blue immobilities,
I long for Europe with its ancient quays!

I saw sidereal archipelagoes! and isles
Whose delirious skies are open to the voyager:
—Is it in depthless nights you sleep your exile,
A million golden birds, O future Vigor?—

But, truly, I have wept too much! The dawns disturb.
All moons are painful, and all suns break bitterly:
Love has swollen me with drunken torpors.
Oh, that my keel might break and spend me in the seal

Of European waters I desire
Only the black, cold puddle in a scented twilight
Where a child of sorrows squats and sets the sails
Of a boat as frail as a butterfly in May.

I can no longer, bathed in languors, O waves,
Cross the wake of cotton-bearers on long trips,
Nor ramble in a pride of flags and flares,
Nor swim beneath the horrible eyes of prison ships.

VOWELS

Voyelles

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue;
 Someday I'll tell your latent birth O vowels:
 A, a black corset hairy with gaudy flies
 That bumble round all stinking putrefactions,

Gulfs of darkness; E, candors of steam and tents,
 Icicles' proud spears, white kings, and flutter of parasols;
 I, purple blood coughed up, laughter of lovely lips
 In anger or ecstatic penitence;

U, cycles, divine vibrations of virescent seas,
 Peace of the pastures sown with animals, peace
 Of the wrinkles that alchemy stamps on studious brows;

O, Clarion supreme, full of strange stridences,
 Silences crossed by Angels and Worlds:
 —Omega, the violet ray of His Eyes!

LOUISE VARÈSE

MEMORY

Mémoire

I

Clear water; like the salt of childhood's tears,
 whiteness of women's bodies assaulted in the sun;
 silk, in mass and lily pure, of oriflammes
 under the walls some Maid had defended

frolic of angels. —No . . . the marching current of gold
 moves black arms, heavy and supremely cool with grass.
 She, dark, with blue Heaven for bed canopy, summons
 the shadow of the hill and of the arch for curtains.

II

Eh! the wet pane holding out its limpid bubbles!
With bottomless pale gold the water clothes the waiting
beds.

And out of the willows—faded green pinafores.
of little girls—hop the unbridled birds.

Yellower than a louis, eyelid warm and pure,
the watchful marigold—your conjugal pledge, O Spouse!
at prompt midday from its tarnished mirror envies,
in the gray-hot sky, the pink and precious Sphere.

III

Madam standing in the meadow too erect,
where snow the sons of toil; poking with sun umbrella
the umbels of the flowers too proud for her;
her children with their book of red morocco

reading in the flowering grass! But He, alas,
like a thousand angels separating on the road,
goes off across the mountain! While She,
all black and cold, hurries after the man's departure!

IV

Regret for arms with pure grass strong and young!
April moons in the heart of the holy bed! Joy
of abandoned lumber yards along the river, prey
to August dusks that made putrescence germinate!

Let her weep now below the ramparts; above,
the poplars' breath is only for the breeze.
Then the gray sheet without reflections or spring
where, in his motionless barge, an old man dredges.

V

Sport of this sad water eye, I cannot reach,
 O boat immovable! O arms too short! either this
 or the other flower; neither the yellow importuning me,
 nor the blue one, friend of the ashy water.

Ah, the powder of the willows that a wing shakes!
 The roses of the reeds devoured long ago!
 My boat stuck fast; and its chain that drags
 On the bottom of this rimless eye . . . in what mud!

LOUISE VARÈSE

WHAT TO US, MY HEART . . .

Qu'est-ce pour nous, mon cœur . . .

What to us, my heart, are the pools of blood,
 Embers, and the thousand murders, and the endless cries
 Of rage, sobs of all hell overthrowing
 All order; and Aquilon still on the ruins;

And all vengeance? Nothing! . . . —Yes, everything,
 It's what we're after! Industrialists, princes, senates:
 Perish! Down with history, justice, power!
 It is our right. Blood! Blood! the golden flame!

All for war, vengeance, and terror.
 My spirit! Turn in the wound: Ah! away,
 Republics of this world! Emperors,
 Regiments, colonizers, peoples: enough!

Who should stir up the blasts of furious fire
 But we and those who we imagine are our brothers?
 Come, fantastic friends: we're going to like it.
 Never will we work, O floods of fire!

Vanish, Europe, Asia, and America.
 Our youthful march has overridden everything,
 Cities and country! —We shall be crushed!
 Volcanoes will explode! And ocean struck . . .

O my friends! O heart, it's sure, they are my brothers!
 Black strangers, if we should go? Let's go! Let's go!
 Horror! I feel myself trembling, old earth
 On me, yours more than ever! The earth melts.

It is nothing: I am here; I am still here.

LOUISE VARÈSE

MICHAEL AND CHRISTINE

Michel et Christine

Blast! if the sun desert these shores!
 Bright deluge, flee! Look, how the roads darken.
 And in the willows and ancient entrance court,
 The first big drops fall of the storm.

Blond soldiers of the idyll, O hundred lambs,
 From aqueducts and scanty heather,
 Away! Horizons, prairies, plains, and heaths
 Assist at the red toilet of the storm!

Black shepherd dog and shepherd brown, with billowing
 cloak
 Flee from the lightning of the heights,
 And when you see the darkness and the sulphur melt,
 Seek refuges more sure, white flock, below.

But I, O Lord, see how my spirit soars
 Toward the red-iced skies, beneath
 Celestial clouds that race and fly
 Over a hundred Solognes, long as a railway.

Lo, a thousand wolves and a thousand seeds
 Borne by this holy afternoon of storm
 (Not without love of the convolvulus)
 Over old Europe where a hundred hordes will swarm!

Afterwards, the moonlight! And throughout the land
 Warriors on pale chargers slowly ride,
 With ruddy faces turned toward the dark skies!
 While under the proud band the stones resound!

And shall I see the yellow wood and the bright vale,
 Bride with blue eyes and red-faced man, O Gaul!
 And white at their feet the Paschal Lamb,
 Michael and Christine—and Christ—the idyll's end.

LOUISE VARÈSE

TEARDROP*

Larme

Far away from the birds, the flocks, and the girls of the
 village,
 Knee-deep in some kind of country heather, I drank,
 Surrounded by saplings of a hazelnut wood,
 In the haze of an afternoon, warming and green.

What could I have drunk in this young river Oise?
 Elms without voice, lawns without flower, lowering sky.
 What could I sip from the calabash flask?
 Some drop of gold liquor, bland and making one sweat.

* *Larme*, meaning tear, also means colloquially a drop to drink.
 —Translator's Note.

Such as had made me a dreadful sign for a tavern.
Then the storm was changing the skies, till evening came
on.

It was out of the black country, country of lakes, and of
poles,
Of colonnades under the blue night, and of mooring-places.

The waters of the woodland sank in the virgin sands.
A gust, God-sent, flung icicles into the swamps . . .
Gold! as if a digger of gold or of mollusks,
To say that I had no need of a drink!

CLAIRE MCALLISTER

SONG OF THE HIGHEST TOWER

Chanson de la plus haute tour

Idle youth
By all availed,
Through delicacy
My life has failed.
Ah! for the time
When hearts entwine.

I told myself: leave,
Let them see you no more:
Nor with the promise
Of higher reward.
Let none impede
Your austere retreat.

I have had patience
Unto forgetting;
Dread and torment
To the heavens are fled,
And thirstings vile
My veins defile.

So does the prairie
Given no heed
Flourish, and blossom
With darnel and weed
To the insensate tone
Of filthy-mouthed drone.

Ah! thousand widowhoods
Of poor soul bereft
Of all but the image
Of Our Lady blessed!
Is it this way
To the Virgin one prays?

Idle youth
By all availed,
Through delicacy
My life has failed.
Ah! for the time
When hearts entwine!

KATE FLORES

ETERNITY

L'Éternité

I have recovered it.
What? Eternity.
It is the sea
Matched with the sun.

My sentinel soul,
Let us murmur the vow
Of the night so void
And of the fiery day.

Of human sanctions,
Of common transports,
You free yourself:
You soar according . . .

From your ardor alone,
Embers of satin,
Duty exhales,
Without any one saying: at last.

Never a hope;
No genesis.
Skill with patience . . .
Anguish is certain.

I have recovered it.
What? Eternity.
It is the sea
Matched with the sun.

FRANCIS GOLFFING

YOUNG COUPLE

Jeune Ménage

The room is open to the turquoise sky;
No place at all: coffers and hutches!
And the birthwort on the wall outside
Is all aquiver with hobgoblin gums.

Intrigues of jinn for sure,
This vain disorder and expense!
It's the African fairy who supplies
Mulberry, and cobwebs in the corners.

They enter, godmothers in a huff
 In shafts of light on the buffets,
 Then stay! And the couple rushes out
 Quite scatterbrained, and nothing done.

The bridegroom, like the wind, which
 In his absence robs him.
 Even the evil water sprites come in,
 Roaming around the alcove's province.

At night their friend, Oh the honeymoon!
 Will cull their smile and fill
 With a thousand copper bands the sky.
 There's the sly rat to cope with too.

If only no *ignis fatuus* darts in,
 Like the shot of a gun after vespers!
 —O holy white Ghosts of Bethlehem
 Charm the blue of their window instead!

LOUISE VARÈSE

BRUSSELS

Bruxelles

July

Boulevard du Regent

Amaranthine flower beds stretching to
 Jupiter's agreeable palace.
 I know it's You, mingling here
 Your almost Sahara Blue!

And how enclosed the play
 Of the sun's vines and pines and roses,
 Cage of the little widow! . . .

Listen

What troupes of birds, pia, pio, piay! . . .

SHAME

Honte

As long as the blade has never
Yet pierced this brain,
This fat and green-white package
Of stagnant vapors,

(Ah! But he ought to cut his lips
His ears, his nose off,
His belly too! and sacrifice—
O marvelous!—both legs!)

But no, I really think
Till over his head the blade,
Over his flank the stones,
Over his gut the flame,

Have not triumphed,
The troublesome child, the feeble fool,
Will not for an instant
Cease his tricks,

And like the Rocky Mountain lion
Will leave his stench behind.
But grant, O God, that when he dies
One prayer should rise!

LOUISE VARÈSE

A SEASON IN HELL

Une Saison en Enfer

ONCE LONG AGO . . .

Jadis . . .

Once, long ago—if I remember rightly—my life was a sumptuous feast, where all hearts opened and all wines flowed.

One night, I set Beauty on my lap. —And found her bitter. —And reviled her.

I rebelled against justice.

I fled. Oh witches, oh misery and hatred, *you* have been the guardians of my treasure.

At last I banished all human hope from my mind. Upon each joy, to strangle it, I made the soundless spring of a wild beast. I summoned the executioners so that, dying, I might bite the butts of their guns. I summoned the scourges to choke me with blood and sand. Misfortune was my god. I sprawled in the mire. I dried myself off in the crime-filled air. And I played some fine tricks on madness.

Then spring brought me the idiot's frightful laugh.

Of late, however, since I nearly squawked my last, I have again toyed with the idea of seeking the key to the bygone feast, where perhaps I might revive my appetite.

Charity is the key! —An inspiration which proves I have been dreaming!

“You shall remain a hyena, etc.,” shrieks the demon who crowned me with such amiable poppies. “Earn death with all your appetites, and your selfishness and all the capital sins.”

Ah! I've had too much already: —But dear Satan, I implore you, don't scowl at me so! And while awaiting my few little misdeeds in arrears, you who love in writers the absence of descriptive or edifying talents, I shall detach for you these sparse hideous pages from my notebook of the damned.

ILL WILL

Mauvais sang

.....
 I await God greedily. . . . Now I am accursed, I detest my country. The best thing is to sleep, dead drunk, on the beach.

As a child, I admired the intractable convict who is always being sent behind bars; I would visit the inns and lodgings he might have hallowed with his presence; I saw *with his eyes* the blue sky and the flourishing toil of the countryside; I hounded his destiny into the cities. He had more strength than a saint, more good sense than a traveler—and himself, himself alone! as witness to his glory and his right.

As I trudged along the highways on winter nights, without shelter, clothes, or food, a voice tugged at my frozen heart: "Weakness or strength: there you have it, strength. You know not where you are going nor why, you enter everywhere, and answer everything. No one will kill you any more than if you were a corpse." In the morning I looked so lost and woebegone that those I met *perhaps did not see me*.

In the cities the mud looked suddenly red and black, like a mirror when the lamp shifts in the next room, like a treasure in the forest! Here's to luck, I cried, and saw a sea of flame and smoke up in the sky; and right and left, all kinds of riches flashing like a billion thunderbolts.

But to me the orgies and comradeship of women were forbidden. Not even a companion. I saw myself before an exasperated mob, facing the firing squad, weeping over a misfortune they could never understand, and forgiving! —Like Joan of Arc! —"Priests, instructors, schoolmasters, you are wrong to hand me over to justice. I have never belonged to these people; I have never been a Christian; I belong to the race that sang under torture; I do not understand laws; I have no moral sense; I am a brute: you are mistaken . . ."

Yes, my eyes were shut in your light. I am a beast, a Negro. But I can be saved. You, maniacs, butchers, misers,

you are false Negroes. Merchant, you're a Negro; judge, you're a Negro; general, you're a Negro; emperor, you scabby old itch, you're a Negro: you have drunk contraband liquor from Satan's workshop. —This people is inspired by fever and cancer. Cripples and old men are so respectable that they ask to be boiled.—The smartest thing to do is to leave this continent, where madness prowls in search of hostages for these wretches. I enter the true kingdom of the sons of Ham.

Do I still know nature? Do I know myself? —*Speak no more.* I bury the dead in my guts. Shouts, drum, dance, dance, dance, dance! I do not even see the time when, as the white men disembark, I shall fall into nothingness.

Hunger, thirst, shouts, dance, dance, dance, dance!

WILLIAM M. DAVIS

THE ALCHEMY OF WORDS

Alchimie du verbe

Listen. The tale of one of my follies.

For a long time I had boasted my mastery of all possible landscapes, and I found ridiculous the celebrities of modern painting and poetry.

I loved absurd paintings, overdoors, décors, side-show backdrops, signboards, popular prints; outmoded literature, church Latin, misspelled erotic books, romances of the days of our grandmothers, fairy tales, little books for children, old operas, childish ditties, naïve rhythms.

I dreamed of crusades, voyages of discovery of which there are no accounts, republics without histories, hushed-up religious wars, revolutions in customs, displacements of races and of continents: I believed in all enchantments.

I invented the colors of the vowels! A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green. I settled the form and the movement of each consonant and, with instinctive rhythms, I flattered myself that I was inventing a poetic language ac-

cessible, one day or another, to all of the senses. I kept back the translation.

In the beginning it was an experiment. I wrote silences, nights, I noted down the inexpressible. I crystallized vertigo.

. . . The bric-a-brac of poetry played a considerable part in my alchemy of words.

I got used to plain hallucination: I saw quite clearly a mosque in place of a factory, a school of drums made by angels, tilburies on the highways of the sky; a parlor at the bottom of a lake; monsters; mysteries; the title of a music-hall comedy raised up horrors before me.

Then I explained the magic of my sophistries by means of the hallucination of words!

I ended by deeming sacred the disorder of my spirit. I was idle, prey to high fever! I envied the beasts their happiness—caterpillars, which symbolize the innocence of limbo; moles, the sleep of virginity!

I became embittered. I bade farewell to society in something like ballads.

.....
I became a fabulous opera: I saw that all creatures are destined to a certain contentment: action is not life, but a means of wasting strength, an enervation. Morality is the softening of the brain. It seemed to me that to each creature several *other* lives belonged. This gentleman does not know what he is doing—he is an angel. That family is a litter of pups. With several men I have conversed with a moment from one of their other lives.

“And so . . . I have loved a pig.”

None of the sophistries of madness—the madness locked within—have I forgot; I could recite them all, I know the system.

My health was endangered. Terror came. I fell asleep for several days at a stretch and, risen, continued the most depressing dreams. I was ripe for death, and along a highway of danger my weakness led me to the ends of the earth and of Chimmeria, the land of shadow and whirlwinds.

I had to travel, and seek distraction from the spells gathered in my brain. At sea, which I loved as though it should

cleanse me of a stain, I watched the rise of the consoling cross. I had been damned by the rainbows. Happiness was my doom, my remorse, my worm: my life would always be too vast to be given up to strength and beauty.

Happiness! Her tooth, sweet unto death, would warn me at cockcrow—*ad matutinum*, at the *Christus venit*—in the most dismal cities:

Oh seasons, oh castles!
What soul is flawless?

I have made the magic study
Of happiness, that none evades.

Hail to it, each time
The gallic rooster crows.

Ah! I'll have no cares:
It manages my life.

This spell, now flesh and soul
Has put an end to toil.

Oh seasons, oh castles!

Its hour of flight, alas!
Will be the hour of death.

That is over. Now I know how to greet beauty.

BERT M-P. LEEFMANS—WILLIAM M. DAVIS

MORNING

Matin

.....
 Yet now I think I have finished the tale of my inferno.
 And inferno it was: the old one, whose gates the Son of
 Man flung open.

From the same desert, on the same night, my eyes still
 awake to the silvery star, still, as the Kings of life, the
 Three Magi, heart, soul, and mind sleep untroubled. When
 shall we go beyond shores and mountains, to greet the
 birth of new labors, the new wisdom, the putting to flight
 of tyrants and demons, the end of superstition, and worship
 —the very first! —Noel on earth.

The song of the skies, the march of peoples! Slaves, let
 us not curse life.

WILLIAM M. DAVIS

ILLUMINATIONS

Les Illuminations

BALLY

Parade

Very solid rascals. Several have exploited your worlds.
 Without needs, and in no great hurry to bring to bear their
 brilliant abilities and their experience of your consciences.
 What mature men! Eyes dazed after the manner of the sum-
 mer night, red and black, tricolored, of steel pricked with
 golden stars; deformed physiognomies, leaden, blanched,
 burnt-out; frolicsome hoarsenesses. The cruel gait of tinsel
 fineries! —There are some young ones—how would they look
 upon Cherubino?—provided with frightful voices and cer-
 tain dangerous resources. They are sent into town to gain
 experience, rigged up with a disgusting *luxury*.

Oh most violent Paradise of the frenzied grimace! Your Fakirs and other scenic buffooneries are not to be compared. In improvised costumes, in the style of a bad dream, they play laments, tragedies of brigands and of demigods witty as history or religions have never been. Chinamen, Hottentots, gypsies, simpletons, hyenas, Molochs, old lunacies, sinister demons, they mingle popular, maternal stunts with bestial poses and caresses. They would interpret new plays and simple-minded ballads. Master jugglers, they transform place and persons and make use of magnetic comedy. The eyes blaze, the blood sings, the bones expand, there is trickling of tears and red filaments. Their banter, their terror lasts a minute, or months on end.

I alone hold the key to this savage ballyhoo.*

FREDERICK MORGAN

ANTIQUÉ

Antique

Graceful son of Pan! About your forehead, crowned with flowerets and berries, your eyes, precious balls, are in motion. Stained with brown sediment, your cheeks deepen in hollows. Your fangs flash. Your chest is like a zither, your blond arms are astir with tinklings. Your heart is beating in that belly where the double sex sleeps. Walk out at night, softly moving that thigh, that second thigh, and that left leg.

FREDERICK MORGAN

* The French word, *parade*, as used in this poem, refers to the little free show given *outside* a tent or booth at a fair or carnival, to induce the public to pay their money and go in. "Bally"—short for "ballyhoo"—is the term used in American circus and carnival talk (this word was originally derived from, or associated with, *Ballyhooly*, a village in County Cork, Ireland).—*Translator's Note.*

BEING BEAUTEOUS

Being Beauteous

Standing against the snow, a tall Being of beauty. Rattlings of death and rings of muted music make her adorable body rise, expand, and tremble like a ghost. Scarlet and black wounds burst on the proud flesh. Life's own colors darken, dance, and separate to cluster about the Vision in the market place. Shudders rise and scorn the violent taste of these effects, mingling with the death rattles and raucous music which the world, far behind us, hurls at our mother of beauty— She draws back, she stands erect. Oh, our bones have put on a new amorous body!

Oh, the ash-colored face, the horsehair escutcheon, the crystal arms! And the cannon I must fall on, in the battle of trees and light air!

ANGEL FLORES

LIVES

Vies

I

Oh the enormous avenues of the holy land, the terraces of the temple! What has become of the Brahmin who once taught me Proverbs? Now, further down, I can still see even old women! I recall the silver hours, and sun by the rivers, and my girl's hand on my shoulders, and our caresses as we stood in the peppered heath. A flight of scarlet pigeons thundered in my brain. —Exiled here, I had a stage on which I performed the masterpieces of literatures the world over. I might point out to you incredible riches. I have been following up the history of treasures you might find—and I know what is next! My wisdom is rejected as chaos. What is my void when compared to the surprise awaiting you?

II

I am an inventor far more deserving of attention than all those who have preceded me; a musician who has moreover discovered something like the key of love. Now a country squire from a lean land with a tranquil sky, I endeavor to throw off lethargy by remembering my mendicant childhood, my years of apprenticeship or my arrival in wooden shoes, my polemics, my five or six widowings, and a few carousals when my level head kept me from emulating my comrades' folly. I do not miss my former share of divine gaiety. The quietude of this harsh countryside feeds my dreadful skepticism rather bountifully. But since this skepticism can no longer be put to use, and since, furthermore, I have devoted myself to a new anxiety, I believe I shall end up as a very dangerous madman.

III

In an attic where I was locked up when I was twelve I got to know the world—I illustrated the human comedy. In a gin mill I learned history. At some night revel, in a northern city, I met all the women of the Old Masters. In an old Paris arcade I was taught the classical sciences. In a magnificent mansion, reeking with oriental luxury, I completed my exhaustive tasks and spent my luxurious retreat. I have burned up my blood. My duty has been remitted to me. But that need no longer even concern us. I am really from beyond the grave, and accept no new commitments.

ANGEL FLORES

DEPARTURE

Départ

Enough seen. The vision has been met in all guises.

Enough heard. Clamor of the towns at night, in the sunlight, at all times.

Enough known. Life's awards. —O Sounds and Visions!
Departure in new sympathy amid new sounds.

FRANCIS GOLFFING

ROYALTY

Royauté

One fine morning, in a land full of mild-mannered folk, a man and woman, majestic in their bearing, stood on the public square. The man said, "Friends, I want her to be queen!" And the woman said, "I want to be queen!" She laughed and trembled. And the man told his friends of a revelation, of a test completed. Then they swooned into each other's arms, enraptured.

And for one whole morning, as the draperies hung ruby-colored from the houses, and for one whole afternoon, as they walked toward the garden of palms, they were truly kings.

ANGEL FLORES

WORKERS

Ouvriers

Ah, that warm February morning! The untimely South wind came rekindling memories of our absurd poverty, our young indigence.

Henrika had a skirt of brown- and white-checked cotton, probably fashionable a century ago, a bonnet trimmed with ribbons, and a silk kerchief. It was much sadder than a bereavement. We took a stroll in the suburbs. The weather

looked ominous and the South wind stirred up all the evil smells of parched fields and ravaged gardens.

And from this, my wife seemed less tired than I. In a puddle left by floods the month before, on a rather high path, she pointed out a school of tiny fish.

The city, with its smoke and noise of men at work, followed us far out along the roads. Ah, the other world, heaven's blessed dwelling-place, and umbrage! The South wind reminded me of the tawdry events of my childhood, my disappointed summers, and how awfully much fate cheated me out of cleverness and strength. No! We will not spend the summer in this stingy country where we shall never be anything but betrothed orphans. No longer do I want this strong arm to drag a cherished image behind.

ANGEL FLORES

CITIES

Villes

What cities these! What a people, for whom have been built up these Alleghanies and Lebanons of dream! Chalets of crystal and wood move on invisible rails and pulleys. The old craters rimmed by colossi and copper palms roar melodiously in the fires. On the canals hung behind the chalets, festivals of love ring out. The hunting song of the chimes is hallooming in the gorges. Guilds of giant singers flock together in vestments and oriflammes that glitter like the light on mountain peaks. On platforms, in the midst of chasms, Rolands are blaring their bravura. On the catwalks of the abyss and the roofs of inns the staffs are decked with flags by the hot blaze of the sky. The crumbling of celestial transformations rejoins the fields on high where the seraphic she-centaurs circulate amid the avalanches. Above the level of the highest crests, a sea troubled by the eternal birth of Venus, laden with fleets bearing male-voice choirs and with the confused mutter of precious pearls and conches—the sea darkens at times with deadly glintings. On the declivities bellow harvests of flowers big as our arms and gob-

lets. Processions of Mabs in russet gowns, opaline, ascend from the ravines. High up there, Diana gives suck to stags, their feet in waterfall and brambles. The Bacchantes of the suburbs sob, and the moon burns and howls. Venus enters the caverns of blacksmiths and of hermits. Belfries sing out in clusters the ideas of the peoples. From castles built of bone emerges the unknown music. All the legends circulate, and the elks hurl themselves into the market towns. The paradise of storms caves in. The savages are dancing ceaselessly the Festival of the Night. And, one hour, I descended into the tumult of a boulevard of Bagdad where they sang, in companies, the joy of new work, under a thick breeze, moving about without being able to elude the fabulous phantoms of the mountains where they were to have met again.

What good arms, what beautiful hour will restore to me that region from which come my slumbers and my least movements?

FREDERICK MORGAN

EVENINGS

Veillées

It is rest full of light, neither fever nor languor, on the bed
or on the road.

It is the friend, neither ardent nor timid. The friend.

It is the loved one, the fond, neither tormenting nor tormented. The loved one.

The air and the world all unexplored. Life.

—Was it then this?

—And the dream breaks afresh.

VERNON WATKINS

DAWN

Aube

I have kissed the summer dawn.

Before the first faint stirrings on the thresholds of the palaces. The water lay dead. Shadows lingered on by the woodland road. I kept walking, and awoke the brisk warm throbbing air, and stones looked up and wings rose silently.

My first adventure occurred on the path, when a flower, glowing with fresh pale light, told me its name.

I laughed at the waterfall running breathless through the pine trees: At the silvery summit I came upon the goddess.

Then one by one I lifted her veils. In a glade, waving my arms. Across the plain, where I denounced her to the cock. In the city she fled amid belfries and domes; and, fleet as a beggar along the marble quays, I ran, and sought her out.

Further along the road, by a laurel grove, I gathered her veils about her and felt her huge body next to mine. Dawn and the child sank to the depths of the forest.

And when I woke, it was noon.

ANGEL FLORES

FLOWERS

Fleurs

From a golden stadium—amid silken cords, gray chiffons, green velvets, and discs of crystal blackening like bronze in the sun—I see the foxglove open on a rug of silver filigree, of eyes, and flowing hair.

Yellow gold-pieces lie strewn over agate, mahogany pil-

lars support a dome of emeralds, bouquets of white satin,
and delicate stalks of rubies gird the water lily.

Like a snow-limbed god with enormous blue eyes, sea
and sky lure the throng of sturdy young roses to the marble
terraces.

ANGEL FLORES

MARINE

Marine

The chariots of silver and copper,
The prows of steel and silver
Beat foam
And lift up the stumps of the bramble.

The currents of the heath
And the immense ruts delved by their reflux
Veer in a circle to the east,
Toward the pillars of the forest,
Toward the piles of the jetty,
Whose angle is struck by the whirlwinds of light.

FRANCIS GOLFFING

Stéphane Mallarmé

1842–1898

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

1842-1898

Much influenced initially by Baudelaire, Mallarmé quite soon developed a poetry which was distinctively his own. His dedication as a poet and the exquisite finesse of his verse were enormously important in the genesis of twentieth-century letters.

Obsessed by the ideal of a pure poetry, and well aware of the impossibility of its achievement by a real poet in the real world, Mallarmé in a career of more than a third of a century published hardly more than a thousand lines, many of them directly concerned with the correlatives which control his verse: purity as the duty, and sterility as the fate, of the poet. They include, among the small number of his longer works, one of the most obscure of poems, *Un Coup de dés*, and what is certainly one of the most beautiful in the language, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. But most are short and all are musical, evocative, and crystalline with a clarity which, once perceived, does not fade. If many of them seem excessively preoccupied with negation, with non-being, it should be pointed out that Mallarmé represents—and this is a triumph for purity in art—the ultimate stage in a development from Flaubert, with his transformation of the commonplace into art, and Baudelaire, with his alchemical transmutation of the ugly into beauty. Mallarmé converts absence into diamonds.

Difficult to begin with because of extremes of condensation and displacement—few of the usual syntactical connectives are used and structure itself is of crucial importance—Mallarmé's poems with their grace and precision are comparable only to those of his greatest disciple, Paul Valéry.

APPARITION

Apparition

The moon was languishing. Dreamy seraphim
Weeping, bow in hand, in the calm of vaporous
Flowers, drew from waning violins white sobs
Gliding down the blue of the corollas.
—'Twas the blessed day of your first kiss.
My reverie, in my martyrdom delighting,
Quaffed deep heady draughts of the perfumes of sadness
Which the gathering of a Dream, even without regret
Or disenchantment, leaves with the questing heart.
I wandered then, my eyes to the worn old pavement joined,
When with the sun in your hair, in the street
And by night, laughing you came before me;
And I seemed to see the fairy of radiant headdress
Who once across my lovely dreams of pampered childhood
Passed, letting always from her loose-clasped hands
White bouquets of perfumed stars snow down.

KATE FLORES

WINDOWS

Les Fenêtres

Disgusted with the dreary hospital, and the rank fumes
Rising with the banal whiteness of the curtains
Toward the great crucifix tired of the bare wall,
The man destined for death slyly straightens his old spine,

Shuffles, less to warm his rotting body
Than to watch the sun on the stones, to press
His ashen gaunt and skeletal face
To the panes which a clear beautiful ray attempts to tinge,

And his mouth, feverish and greedy for the azure,
As when young, he breathed his prize,
A virginal cheek! soils
With a long bitter kiss the warm golden panes.

Drunk, forgetting the horror of the holy oil,
The herb teas, the clock and the inflicted bed,
The cough, he lives again; and when twilight bleeds on the
tiles,
His eye on the horizon gorged with light,

Sees golden ships, fine as swans,
On a scented river of purple, sleepily
Rocking the rich faun flash of their lines
In a great calm charged with memory!

In this way, disgusted with the blunt-souled man
Who wallows in contentment, where only his appetites
Devour him, and who insists on fetching this filth
To present to his wife nursing her children,

I flee and I cling to all those windows
From where one turns one's back on life, and hallowed,
In their glass, washed by eternal dews,
Gilded by the chaste morning of the Infinite

I see myself and I brag I am an angel! and I die, and I long
—Let the glass be art, let it be mysticism—
To be reborn, wearing my dream as a crown,
In a past heaven where Beauty flourished!

But, alas! Here—below is master; its curse
Sickens me at times even in this safe shelter,
And the foul vomit of Stupidity
Makes me stop up my nose in face of the azure.

Is there a way for Me who knows bitterness,
To shatter the crystal insulted by the monster
And to escape with my two featherless wings
—Even at the risk of falling in eternity?

DAISY ALDAN

ANGUISH

Angoisse

I come not to conquer your body tonight, O creature
In whom the sins of a nation stream, nor under
The cureless tedium which my kisses pour
To burrow a sad tempest in your impure hair:

I ask of your bed the deep sleep with no dreams
Flitting under unknown drapes of remorse
Which you, after your dark deceits, can enjoy,
You who know more about oblivion than a corpse:

For gnawing at my ingrained morality, Vice
Has marked its sterility in me as in you;
But while there exists in your breast of stone

A heart which the tooth of no crime can wound,
Haunted by my shroud I flee, wan, undone,
In terror of dying while sleeping alone.

KATE FLORES

SIGH

Soupir

Towards your brow where an autumn dreams
 freckled with russet scatterings,
 calm sister, and towards the sky,
 wandering, of your angelic eye
 my soul ascends: thus, white and true,
 within some melancholy garden
 a fountain sighs towards the Blue!
 —Towards October's softened Blue
 that pure and pale in the great pools
 mirrors its endless lassitude
 and, on dead water where the leaves
 wind-strayed in tawny anguish cleave
 cold furrows, lets the yellow sun
 in one long lingering ray crawl on.

FREDERICK MORGAN

WEARY OF BITTER EASE . . .

Las de l'amer repos . . .

Weary of bitter ease in which my indolence
 Offends a glory for which I fled the charm long since
 Of childhood rose-embowered under natural arch
 Of blue, and wearier sevenfold of this my harsh
 Compact to dig each night a furrow once again
 Into the cold and stingy soil of my brain,
 Gravedigger with no pity for sterility,
 —What can I tell this Dawn, by roses companied,
 O Dreams, when out of terror for its ashen rose
 The vast graveyard will merge these empty holes?

I would forsake the ravenous Art of cruel lands
 And with a smile for all the age-old reprimands

Delivered by my friends and genius and the past
And by my lamp which knows my agony at last,
Would imitate the Chinese of limpid, delicate bent,
Whose purest ecstasy is but to paint the end
Upon his cups of snow new ravished from the moon
Of some exotic flower that constantly perfumed
His life, transparent flower he smelled in infancy,
Grafting itself upon the soul's blue filigree.
And like to death within the sage's only dream,
Serene, I'll choose a landscape young and evergreen
Which I also will paint on cups, preoccupied.
A line of azure, thin and pale, will signify
A lake, amid a sky of naked porcelain;
A shining crescent lost behind a white cloudscape
Will dip its tranquil horn in the water's glassy sheet
Not far from three long emerald eyelashes—reeds.

HUBERT CREEKMORE

THE AZURE

L'Azur

In serene irony the infinite azure,
Languidly lovely as the flowers, smites
The impotent poet cursing his genius
Across a barren wilderness of Sorrows.

Fleeing with eyes closed, I feel it probe
Deep as a racking remorse
My empty soul. Where escape? And what eerie night
To hurl, O remains, against this heart-mangling scorn?

O fogs, come forth! Pour your monotonous ashes
In long shreds of haze across the skies,
Drowning the livid quagmire of the autumns
And rearing a vast ceiling of silence!

And you, from the lethal morasses emerge and gather
 As you come the slime and the vapid reeds,
 Dear Ennui, to stuff with untiring hands
 The great blue holes the birds maliciously make.

More! Let the sad chimneys unceasingly
 Smoke, and a wandering prison of soot
 Blot out in the horror of their murky trails
 The sun dying yellowish on the horizon!

—The Sky is dead. —Toward you I run! O matter, give
 Oblivion of the cruel Ideal and of Sin
 To this martyr who comes to share the straw
 Where men's contented cattle lie,

For here I wish, since at the last my brain, empty
 As the pot of paint lying at the foot of a wall,
 The art to adorn the woeful Idea possesses no more,
 To yawn disconsolately to a desolate death . . .

In vain! The Azure triumphs, and in the bells
 I hear it sing. My soul, it becomes a voice
 Instilling us with fear anew of its awful victory,
 And from the living metal comes in bluenesses the Angelus!

It whirls through the mist as of old and cleaves
 Like a resolute sword your intrinsic agony;
 In the helpless and hopeless revolt what escape?
I am obsessed. The Azure! The Azure! The Azure! The
 Azure!

GIFT OF THE POEM

Don du poème

I bring you the offspring of an Idumæan night!
Dark, with pale and bleeding wing, plumeless.
Through the casement burnished with incense and gold,
Past the frozen panes still bleak, alas!
Dawn burst upon the angel lamp.
Palms! and when it discovered this relic
To this father attempting an inimical smile,
Blue and barren the solitude shuddered.
O cradle-singer, with your child and the innocence
Of your cold feet, welcome a horrible birth:
And your voice reminiscent of viol and clavecin,
Will you press with faded finger the breast
Whence woman in sibylline whiteness flows
For lips in the air of the virgin azure famished?

KATE FLORES

SEA BREEZE

Brise Marine

The flesh is sad, alas! and I have read all the books.
To flee to flee far away! where the birds must be drunk
To be amidst the unknown spray and the skies!
Nothing, not old gardens reflected in eyes
Will keep back this heart drenched in the sea,
O nights! nor the desolate light of my lamp
On the empty paper sheathed in its whiteness,
And neither the young wife nursing her child.
I shall leave! Steamer rocking your masts,
Heave anchor for exotic lands!

An ennui, bereft of cruel hopes,
 Yet believes in the ultimate farewell of handkerchiefs!
 And, perhaps, the masts, inviting storms,
 May be those a wind bends over shipwrecks
 Lost, without masts, nor masts nor fertile shores . . .
 Still, O my heart, hear the seafarers' song!

KATE FLORES

HÉRODIADE

Hérodiade

FRAGMENT

NURSE: . . . For whom, consumed
 With anguish, do you keep the unseen
 splendor
 And vain mystery of your being?

HÉRODIADE: For myself.

NURSE: Poor flower growing alone without a flutter
 Save for its shadow seen listless in the water.

HÉRODIADE: Go, your pity with your irony keep.

NURSE: Yet explain: O no, innocent child!
 This triumphant disdain must one day lessen.

HÉRODIADE: But who would touch me, by the lions re-
 spected?
 I want, regardless, nothing human, and if
 with my eyes
 Lost in paradise you see me rapt,
 It is with remembering your milk once drunk.

NURSE: Lamentable victim to her destiny offered!

HÉRODIADE: Yes, it is for myself, for myself I flower se-
 cluded!
 You know this, gardens of amethyst, endlessly
 Buried in knowing abysses bedazzling,
 You, unfathomed gold guarding your ancient
 luster
 Under the dark sleep of a primeval soil,

You, precious stones wherefrom my eyes like
flawless gems

Borrow their melodious shimmer, and you

Metallics which lend my youthful tresses

Their massive allure and a fatal splendor!

As for you, woman born in centuries iniqui-
tous

With the sins of sibylline caves

Who of a mortal speak! Who would from the
calyxes

Of my robes, fragrant of fierce delights,

Have the pale tremor of my nudity emerge,

Foretell that if the tepid azure of summer,

Toward which innately woman unveils,

In my pudency of tremulous star should see
me,

I die!

I love the terror of being virgin and I fain
Would live amid the dread my hair instills in
me

That I may, at evening, retired to my bed,

Inviolate reptile, feel in my useless flesh

The chill scintillation of your pallid light,

You who burn with chastity, who die to
yourself,

White night of icicles and cruel snow!

And your solitary sister, O my sister eternal
Toward you my dream shall rise: indeed so
rarely

Limpid this heart brooding on it

I feel I am alone in my monotonous homeland

And all around me dwell in idolatry

Of a mirror which reflects in its changeless
calm

Hérodiade of the pristine diamond gaze . . .

O final bliss, yes, I feel it, I am alone!

Madame, are you going to die then?

NURSE:

HÉRODIADE:

No, poor grandam,

Be calm and, taking your leave, forgive this
 hard heart,
 But first, if you will, draw to the blinds,
 The seraphic azure smiles in the deep win-
 dowpanes,
 And I, I detest the beauteous azure!

Yonder

Billows rock, and do you not know of a
 country there
 Where the sinister sky has the hated mien
 Of Venus burning in the leafage at night:
 There would I go.

Light again those tapers,
 Childishness, you say, whose wax of feeble
 flame
 Weeps amid futile gold some foreign tear
 And . . .

NURSE:

Now?

HÉRODIADÉ:

Good night.

O nude flower

Of my lips, you lie.

I do wait some thing unknown
 Or, perhaps, heedless of the mystery and your
 cries,
 You loose the ultimate and wounded sobs
 Of a childhood amidst its reveries sensing
 Its frigid jewels becoming separate at last.

KATE FLORES

SAINT

Sainte

At the window ledge concealing
The ancient sandalwood gold-flaking
Of her viol dimly twinkling
Long ago with flute or mandore,

Stands the pallid Saint displaying
The ancient missal page unfolding
At the Magnificat outpouring
Long ago for vesper and compline:

At that monstrance glazing lightly
Brushed now by a harp the Angel
Fashioned in his evening flight
Just for the delicate finger

Tip which, lacking the ancient missal
Or ancient sandalwood, she poises
On the instrumental plumage,
Musician of silences.

HUBERT CREEKMORE

THE AFTERNOON OF A FAUN

L'Après-midi d'un faune

ECLOGUE

The Faun

These nymphs, I would make them endure.

Their delicate flesh-tint so clear,
it hovers yet upon the air
heavy with foliage of sleep.

Was it a dream I loved? My doubt,
hoarded of old night, culminates
in many a subtle branch, that stayed
the very forest's self and proves
alas! that I alone proposed
the ideal failing of the rose
as triumph of my own. Think now . . .
and if the women whom you gloze
picture a wish of your fabled senses!
Faun, the illusion takes escape
from blue cold eyes, like a spring in tears,
of the purer one: and would you say
of her, the other, made of sighs,
that she contrasts, like the day breeze
warmly astir now in your fleece!
Nol through the moveless, half-alive
languor that suffocates in heat
freshness of morning, if it strive,
no water sounds save what is poured
upon the grove sparged with accords
by this my flute; and the sole wind
prompt from twin pipes to be exhaled
before dispersal of the sound
in arid shower without rain
is—on the unwrinkled, unstirred
horizon—calm and clear to the eye,
the artificial breath of in-
spiration, which regains the sky.

Sicilian shores of a calm marsh,
 despoiled by my vanity
 that vies with suns, tacit beneath
 the flower-sparkle, **NOW RELATE**
how here I cut the hollow reeds
that talent tames; when, on pale gold
of distant greens that dedicate
their vine to fountains, undulates
an animal whiteness in repose:
and how at sound of slow prelude
with which the pipes first come to life
this flight of swans, no! naiads flees
or plunges . . .

Limp in the tawny hour
 all is burning and shows no trace
 by what art those too many brides
 longed-for by him who seeks the A
 all at once decamped; then shall I wake
 to the primal fire, alone and straight,
 beneath an ancient surge of light,
 and one of all of you, lilies!
 by strength of my simplicity.

Other than the soft nothingness
 their lips made rumor of, the kiss,
 which gives assurance in low tones
 of the two perfidious ones,
 my breast, immaculate of proof,
 attests an enigmatic bite,
 imputed to some august tooth;
 leave it! such mystery made choice
 of confidant: the vast twinned reed—
 beneath blue sky we give it voice:
 diverting to itself the cheek's
 turmoil, it dreams, in a long solo,
 that we amused the beauty here-
 about by false bewilderments
 between it and our naïve song;
 dreams too that from the usual dream

of back or flawless flank traced by
 my shuttered glances, it makes fade,
 tempered to love's own pitch, a vain,
 monotonous, sonorous line.

Oh instrument of flights, try then,
 cunning Syrinx, to bloom again
 by lakes where you await me I,
 proud of my murmur, shall discourse
 at length of goddesses; and by
 idolatries warmly portrayed
 remove more cinctures from their shades:
 thus, when from grapes their clarity
 I suck, to banish a regret
 deflected by my strategy,
 laughing, I raise the cluster high
 and empty to the summer sky,
 and breathing into its bright skins,
 craving the grace of drunkenness,
 I gaze them through till night begins.

Oh nymphs, let us once more expand
 various MEMORIES. *My eye,*
piercing the reeds, darted at each
immortal neck-and-shoulders, which
submerged its burning in the wave
with a cry of rage to the forest sky;
and the splendid shower of their hair
in shimmering limpidities,
oh jewels, vanishes! I run;
when, at my feet, all interlaced
(bruised by the languor which they taste
of this sickness of being two),
I come upon them where they sleep
amid their own chance arms alone;
and seizing them, together still
entwined, I fly to this massed bloom—
detested by the frivolous shade—
of roses draining all perfume
in the sun's heat; where our frisk play
may mirror the consumed day.

I worship you, oh wrath of virgins,
 savage joy of the sacred burden
 sliding its nakedness to flee
 my lips that drink, all fiery—
 like tremor of a lightning-flash!—
 the secret terror of the flesh:
 from feet of the inhuman one
 to her shy sister's heart, who is
 forsaken at the instant by
 an innocence, moist with wild tears
 or humors of a brighter cheer.
*My crime is, that in gaiety
 of vanquishing these traitor fears
 I parted the disheveled tuft
 of kisses which the gods had kept
 so closely mingled; for I scarce
 moved to conceal a burning laugh
 beneath glad sinuosities
 of one alone (holding the child,
 naïve and never blushing, by
 a single finger, that her white-
 swan candor might take tinge of shame
 from kindling of her sister's flame):
 when from my arms, that are undone
 by obscure passings, this my prey
 forever thankless slips away
 unpitying the sob which still
 intoxicated me.*

Ah well!

Others will draw me towards joy,
 their tresses knotted to my brow's
 twin horns: you know, my passion, how
 each pomegranate, purple now
 and fully ripened, bursts—and hums
 with bees; and our blood, taking fire
 from her who will possess it, flows
 for the timeless swarm of all desire.
 At the hour when this wood is tinged
 with ash and gold, a festival

From hostile soil and cloud, O grief!
 If our idea cannot carve out a bas-relief
 To adorn the dazzling monument of Poe,

Silent stone fallen here below from some dim disaster,
 May at least this granite forever be a bourne
 To the black flights that Blasphemy may spread hereafter.

DAISY ALDAN

Such as into himself at last Eternity changes him,
 The Poet arouses with a naked hymn (1)
 His century overawed not to have known
 That death extolled itself in this (2) strange voice:

But, in a vile writhing of an hydra, (they) once hearing the
 Angel (3)
 To give (4) too pure a meaning to the words of the tribe,
 They (between themselves) thought (by him) the spell drunk
 In the honourless flood of some dark mixture (5)

Of the soil and the ether (which are) enemies, o struggle!
 If with it my idea does not carve a bas-relief
 Of which Poe's dazzling (6) tomb be adorned,

(A) Stern block here fallen from a mysterious disaster,
 Let this granite at least show forever their bound
 To the old flights of Blasphemy (still) spread in the future (7)

- (1) *naked hymn* meant when the words take in death their absolute value.
 (2) *this* means his own.
 (3) *the Angel* means the above said Poet.
 (4) *to give* means giving.
 (5) in plain prose: charged him with always being drunk.
 (6) *dazzling* means with the idea of such a bas-relief.
 (7) *Blasphemy* means against Poets, such as the charge of Poe being drunk.

WHEN WINTER ON FORGOTTEN WOODS . . .

Sur les bois oubliés . . .

“When Winter on forgotten woods moves somber
 you, lonely captive of the threshold, sigh
 that this twin grave which is to be our pride
 alas! but by lack of thick bouquets is cumbered.

Heedless when Midnight cast its vacant number
 a vigil vaunts you not to close your eye
 until within the ancient armchair, my
 Shade is illumined by the final ember.

Who would receive the Visit must not load
 too thick with flowers the stone my finger lifts
 with ennui of a power that has decayed.

Soul, at the bright hearth trembling to be seated,
 I live again, assuming from your lips
 my name in murmurs evening-long repeated.”

FREDERICK MORGAN

ANOTHER FAN (OF MADEMOISELLE MALLARMÉ)

Autre Éventail (de Mademoiselle Mallarmé)

That in pristine, unpathed delight,
 O dreamer, I may cast,
 Know, by an imperceptible guile,
 To keep my wing in hand.

To you a sundown coolness
 Is wafted with each flutter
 Daintily, with tethered draught,
 Bowing to the horizon.

Twirling! how the spaces quiver,
 As though a mighty kiss,
 Wild at being born for no one,
 Could be nor breathed nor still.

If you but knew the raging paradise
 That like a submerged laugh
 Slips from the corner of your lips
 To the depths of the unanimous fold!

Sceptre of what roseate shores
 Unstirred on nights of gold,
 This barred white waving counterposed
 Against a bracelet's flame.

KATE FLORES

THE PRISTINE, THE PERENNIAL AND THE
 BEAUTEOUS TODAY . . .

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui . . .

The pristine, the perennial, the beauteous today,
 May it crack for us with lunge of drunken wing
 This hard, forsaken lake haunted beneath its crust
 By the crystalline ice of flights not ever flown!

—A quondam swan recalls that it is he,
 Magnificent but in despair of extricating himself,
 Having left unsung the region where to be
 When winter glistened sterile with ennui.

All his neck will be disburdened of this white agony
 Imposed by space upon the bird denying it,
 But not of his loathing of the ground where trapped his
 plumage lies.

Phantasm to this place consigned by his utter grandeur,
He immures himself in the frigid dream of scorn
Which in his fruitless exile swathes the Swan.

KATE FLORES

THE WHITE WATER LILY

Le Nénuphar blanc

I had been rowing for a long time with a sweeping, rhythmical, drowsy stroke, my eyes within me fastened upon my utter forgetfulness of motion, while the laughter of the hour flowed round about. Immobility dozed everywhere so quietly that, when I was suddenly brushed by a dull sound which my boat half ran into, I could tell that I had stopped only by the quiet glittering of initials on the lifted oars. Then I was recalled to my place in the world of reality.

What was happening? Where was I?

To see to the bottom of my adventure I had to go back in memory to my early departure, in that flaming July, through the rapid opening and sleeping vegetation of an ever narrow and absent-minded stream, my search for water flowers, and my intention of reconnoitering an estate belonging to the friend of a friend of mine, to whom I would pay my respects as best I could. No ribbon of grass had held me near any special landscape; all were left behind, along with their reflections in the water, by the same impartial stroke of my oars; and I had just now run aground on a tuft of reeds, the mysterious end of my travels, in the middle of the river. There, the river broadens out into a watery thicket and quietly displays the elegance of a pool, rippling like the hesitation of a spring before it gushes forth.

Upon closer examination, I discovered that this tuft of green tapering off above the stream concealed the single arch of a bridge which was extended on land by a hedge on either side surrounding a series of lawns. Then it dawned on me: this was simply the estate belonging to the unknown lady to whom I had come to pay my respects.

It was an attractive place for this time of year, I thought, and I could only sympathize with anyone who had chosen

a retreat so watery and impenetrable. Doubtless she had made of this crystal surface an inner mirror to protect herself from the brilliant indiscretion of the afternoons. Now, I imagined, she must be approaching it; the silvery mist chilling the willow trees has just become her limpid glance, which is familiar with every leaf.

I conjured her up in her perfection and her purity.

Bending forward with an alertness prompted by my curiosity, and immersed in the spacious silence of the worlds still uncreated by my unknown lady, I smiled at the thought of the bondage she might lead me into. This was well symbolized by the strap which fastens the rower's shoe to the bottom of the boat; for we are always at one with the instrument of our magic spells.

"Probably just somebody . . ." I was about to say.

Then, suddenly, the tiniest sound made me wonder whether the dweller on this bank was hovering about me—perhaps by the river!—while I lingered there.

The walking stopped. Why?

Oh, subtle secret of feet as they come and go and lead my imagination on, and bend it to the desire of that dear shadow! She is hidden in cambric and in the lace of a skirt flowing on the ground, floating about heel and toe as if to surround her step before she takes it, as (with folds thrown back in a train) she walks forth with her cunning twin arrows.

Has she—herself the walker—a reason for standing there? And yet have I the right, on my side, to penetrate this mystery further by lifting my head above these reeds and waking from that deep imaginative drowse in which my clear vision has been veiled?

"Whatever your features may be, madame (I whisper to myself), I sense that the instinctive, subtle charm created here by the sound of my arrival would be broken if I saw them—a charm not to be denied the explorer by the most exquisitely knotted of sashes, with its diamond buckle. An image as vague as this is self-sufficient; and it will not destroy the delight which has the stamp of generality, which permits and commands me to forget all real faces; for if I saw one (oh, don't bend yours here, don't let me see it on

this ephemeral threshold where I reign supremel), it would break the spell which is of another world."

I can introduce myself in my pirate dress and say that I happened here by chance.

Separate as we are, we are together. Now I plunge within this mingled intimacy, in this moment of waiting on the water, my revery keeps her here in hesitation, better than visit upon visit could do. How many fruitless talks there would have to be—when I compare them to the one I have had, unheard—before we could find so intimate an understanding as we do now, while I listen along the level of the boat and the expanse of sand now silent!

The waiting moment lasts while I decide.

Oh, my dream, give counsell What shall I do?

With a glance I shall gather up the virginal absence scattered through this solitude and steal away with it; just as, in memory of a special site, we pick one of those magical, still unopened water lilies which suddenly spring up there and enclose, in their deep white, a nameless nothingness made of unbroken reveries, of happiness never to be—made of my breathing, now, as it stops for fear that she may show herself. Steal silently away, rowing bit by bit, so that the illusion may not be shattered by the stroke of oars, nor the plashing of the visible foam, unwinding behind me as I flee, reach the feet of any chance walker on the bank, nor bring with it the transparent resemblance of the theft I made of the flower of my mind.

But if, sensing something unusual, she was induced to appear (my Meditative lady, my Haughty, my Cruel, my Gay unknown), so much the worse for that ineffable face which I shall never know! For I executed my plan according to my rules: I pushed off, turned, and then skirted a river wave; and so, like a noble swan's egg fated never to burst forth in flight, I carried off my imaginary trophy, which bursts only with that exquisite absence of self which many a lady loves to pursue in summer along the paths of her park, as she stops sometimes and lingers by a spring which must be crossed or by a lake.

INSERT MYSELF WITHIN YOUR STORY . . .

M'introduire dans ton histoire . . .

Insert myself within your story
it's as a hero all abashed
if with bare toe he has but touched
some grassplot of that territory

Infringer of your glaciers, I
know of no unsophisticated
sin you will not have frustrated
of laughing loud its victory

Say then, if I am not gay
thunder and rubies at the naves
to see in air pierced by these rays

with scattered kingdoms all about
as though in purple death the wheel
of my sole twilight chariot.

FREDERICK MORGAN

MY OLD BOOKS CLOSED . . .

Mes bouquins refermés . . .

My old books closed once more on Paphos' name,
it pleases me to choose by spirit alone
a ruin, blessed by thousand sprays of foam
beneath far hyacinths of its days of fame.

Then let the cold in scything silence leap,
I shall not wail in empty threnodies
if this white frolic skimming the ground denies
each site the honor of the false landscape.

My hunger, feasting on no present fruits,
finds in their learned lack an equal zest:
though one of fragrant human flesh would bloom!

Feet on some wyvern (our love warming the room)
longer I muse, distractedly perhaps,
on the other—the ancient amazon's charred breast.

FREDERICK MORGAN

THE CHASTISED CLOWN

Le Pitre châtié

Eyes, lakes withal my simple drunkenness to be reborn
Other than actor evoking with gesture
As though of a quill the shameful soot of the lamps,
I bored a window through the curtain wall.

Swimming to my hand and foot sheer traitor,
In numberless bounds, reneging the bad
Hamlet! it's as though in the waves I improvised
A thousand tombs in which to vanish virginal.

Jubilant gold of cymbal irked to fists,
The sun at a fell blow smites the nudity
Breathed forth pure from my nacreous freshness,

Foul night of the skin though you passed upon me,
As if not knowing, ingrate! that it was my sole anointment,
This grease paint drowned in the glacial water of perfidy.

KATE FLORES

OLD-CLOTHES WOMAN

La Marchande d'habits

Your lively look that pierces them
Down to what they hold
Separates my clothes from me
And nude as a god I go.

KATE FLORES

SALUTE

Salut

Nothing, this froth: virgin verse
Delineating naught but the cup;
Such the slip of many a troupe
Of mermaids drowning wrong side up.

We are sailing, oh my divers
Friends: I already on the poop,
You the forward prow that cleaves
The waves of thunderstorms and winters;

Made dauntless even of its lurching
By a sweet inebriation,
Standing up I bear this greeting:

Solitude, reef, star
To whatever it was deserving
Of the white care of our sail.

KATE FLORES

LITTLE AIR

Petit Air

I

Somehow a solitude
With neither swan nor quay
Surveys its desuetude
With the glance I turned away

Here from the vainglory
Too remote for touch
Bejeweling many a heaven
With the opulence of dusk

But traces languorously
As snowy linen doffed
Such fugitive bird alongside
You exultant one in the surf

To plunge were to become
Your naked jubilation.

KATE FLORES

LITTLE AIR

Petit Air

II

Inexorably bound
As my hope launching high
To shatter there lost
In fury and silence,

Voice strange to the grove
 Or by no echo trailed,
 The bird in life never
 Another time heard.

The weird musician,
 The one who leaves in doubt
 If from my breast or his
 The wilder sob broke out,

May he tear himself away
 On some path to stay!

KATE FLORES

THE TOMB OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Le tombeau de Charles Baudelaire

The shrouded temple divulges through its sepulchral
 Mouth a running drain of filth and ruby
 Abominable as some Anubian idol
 The whole snout aflame as a fierce barking.

Or as the recent gas-light twists the dubious wick
 Wiped, one knows, of the suffered opprobrium
 It lights up, haggard, an immortal pubis
 Whose flight, after its reflection, stays out all night

What dry leaves in the cities without evening
 Votive, will be able to bless as she who settles herself
 again
 Vainly against the marble of Baudelaire

In the veil which circles her, absent, with shivering
 She is his own Shade—a tutelary poison
 Always to breathe though we perish by it.

THEODORE HOLMES

STILL BY THE CLOUD STRICKEN . . .

A la nue accablante tu . . .

Still by the cloud stricken
 Low with lava and ash
 Unto its slavish echo
 For a worthless blast

What sepulchral shipwreck (spume,
 You know, but drool there)
 Supreme amid the ruin
 Razed its nuded mast

Or can in a rage for want
 Of some perdition mighty
 All the vain abyss bestrewn

With hair so white bedraggling
 Have frugally drowned
 A siren limb ungrown.

KATE FLORES

TOMB [OF PAUL VERLAINE]

*Tombeau**Anniversary—January, 1897*

The dark rock angered to be blown by the blast
 Will not be stilled either under pious hands
 Groping its resemblance to human woes
 As though in blessing of some dire mold.

Here nearly always if the mourning dove coos
 This immaterial grief with many films of cloud
 Overcasts the morrows' mellowed star
 Destined in brilliance to besilver the crowd.

Who, by pursuing his solitary bourne
Presently external, seeks our vagabond—
Verlaine? He is hid amid the grass, Verlaine

Only to discover naïvely in accord,
Not crossing his lip or quenching his breath,
A stream not very deep and calumniated death.

KATE FLORES

O SO DEAR FROM FAR AWAY, SO NEAR AND
WHITE . . .

O si chère de loin et proche et blanche . . .

O so dear from far away, so near and white, so
Deliciously you, Mary, lead me in dream where thrives
A balm so elusive distilled where it revives
On any flower-vase of crystal in shadow.

You know it, yes, for me, here still, as years ago,
Always your blinding smile extenuating contrives
The same rose with its fair Summer that dives
Into lost times and then into the future also.

My heart that in the nights seeks to know itself sometimes
And to call you with what last word most tenderly chimes
Rears nothing in your homage save what a sister sighed

Were it not, great treasure and diminutive head,
That you teach me quite otherwise a sudden delight
Softly by the sole kiss in your hair said.

VERNON WATKINS

A THROW OF THE DICE
NEVER WILL ABOLISH
CHANCE*

Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard

TRANSLATED BY DAISY ALDAN

* This translation follows faithfully the typographical arrangement designed by Mallarmé. The poem is to be read lengthwise, from the left side of the page across the fold of the book to the edge of the opposite page.

Each page of the poem forms an ideogram—an image of whiteness of sky and ocean, storm waves, crests, and troughs,

male and female, wing and bird, sail and boat, the Dipper or Septentrion, etc. The four themes introduced by the title are equivalent to the four-phase movement of a symphony. That number, representing many phases of life and time—four divisions of a day, four seasons, four stages of total time, etc., is an important part of the pattern which unifies the poem.

A THROW OF THE DICE/ NEVER/ WILL ABOLISH/ CHANCE in large, bold, Roman caps is the first and major theme, each word group forming the central idea of the four divisions of the work. The secondary theme, in small caps, may be traced through the poem: EVEN WHEN CAST IN ETERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES/ AT THE HEART OF A SHIPWRECK/ LET IT BE/ THE MASTER/ EVEN IF IT EXISTED/ EVEN IF IT BEGAN AND EVEN IF IT CEASED/ EVEN IF SUMMED UP/ EVEN IF IT ENLIGHTENED/ NOTHING/ WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE/ EXCEPT/ PERHAPS/ A CONSTELLATION. The words in lower case carry out other ideas, and an adjacent theme is carried by those in upper and lower case: Abyss/ Number/ Spirit/ Betrothal. The eight-point type, the italics, all form individual counterpoints.

The central idea is that "Thought" or the creative act, "A Throw of the Dice," will never abolish Death, the Absolute, Chance. The Boatswain, the Master, the Artist, the Poet, Creative Man, stands at the helm of his foundering ship (Life, energy, all the creative forces over which he once held control which now he has lost in a tornado which is pulling him into the whirlpool (the Abyss, the *gouffre*). Driven wild by the indifferent neutrality of the Abyss, he hesitates to make the last throw of the dice which he holds in his clenched fist, which might save the ship (himself); finally realizing that nothing, not even the "unique Number" (the great work of art, the supreme act), can save him from the anonymity of Death (the Absolute, perdition, the final "Chance," the void) in which all reality is dissolved. Yet, a point of light saves the poem from complete darkness. "PERHAPS," in the altitude, beyond human comprehension and perception, there is a last single, dying constellation which retains a point of consciousness which reflects onto the void where he tried to conquer oblivion.—*Translator's Note.*

A THROW OF THE DICE

NEVER

EVEN WHEN CAST IN ETERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES

AT THE HEART OF A SHIPWRECK

LET IT BE

that the

Abyss

whitened

slack

raging

under an incline

desperately soars

by its own

wing

beforehand relapsed from wrongly steering the flight
and repressing the outbursts
cleaving the bounds at the root

deep inside weighs

the shadow hidden in the depth by this alternate sail

to adjust
to the spread

its yawning depth as great as the hull

of a ship

careening from side to side

THE MASTER

arisen

inferring

from this conflagration

which

as one threatens

the one Number which can be

hesitates

cadaver by his arm

rather

than

as the old madman

play the game

in behalf of the waves

one

direct shipwreck

beyond outworn calculations
where the manoeuvre with age forgotten

once he gripped the helm

at his feet

of the unanimous horizon

prepares itself

is tossed and merges

with the fist which would grip it
destiny and the winds

no other

Spirit

to hurl it

into the tempest

to seal the gap and to go proudly

cut off from the secret he withholds

surges over the chief

flows over the submissive graybeard

of the man

without a ship

no matter

where vainly

ancestrally not to unclench his hand

contracted

above the worthless head

legacy on his disappearance

to some

unknown

the ulterior immemorial demon

having

from dead lands

led

the aged man toward this supreme conjunction with
probability

he

the puerile shadow

caressed and polished and drained and washed

tamed by the wave and freed

from the unyielding bones lost among the planks

born

of a frolic

the sea by the sire enticed or the sire compelling the sea

idle fortune

Betrothal

whose

veil of illusion rekindled their obsession

as the ghost of a gesture

will falter

will plummet

madness

NEVER WILL ABOLISH

AS IF

A simple

in the silence

into an approaching

hovers

innuendo

encoiled with irony

or

the mystery

hurled

howled

whirlwind of hilarity and horror

over the abyss

neither scattering it

nor fleeing

and rocks therein the virgin symbol

AS IF

solitary plume lost

save

*that a toque of midnight meets or grazes it
and freezes
to the velvet crumpled by a dull guffaw*

this stiffened whiteness

derisive

too much

*in opposition to heaven
not to weakly*

brand

whosoever

bitter prince of the reef

dons the headdress heroic

*invincible but curbed
by his limited human mind*

in turmoil

anxious

atoning and pubescent

mute

*The lucid and seigneurial aigrette
on the invisible brow
scintillates*

*then conceals
a frail gloomy stature
in her siren's torsion*

with impatient end scales

laugh

which

IF

of vertigo

upright

time
for beating
forked

a rock

false castle
suddenly
melted into fog

which imposed
a limit on infinity

IT WAS
stellar birth

THIS WOULD BE

no

worse

nor better

but as indifferent as

THE NUMBER

EVEN IF IT EXISTED

other than as a straggling hallucination of agony

EVEN IF IT BEGAN AND EVEN IF IT CEASED

hollow as negation and still born

finally

by some profusion spread with rarity

EVEN IF SUMMED UP

evidence of the sum as small as it is

EVEN IF IT ENLIGHTENED

CHANCE

Falls

the plume

rhythmic suspense of the disaster

to bury itself

in the primitive foam

from where lately his delirium surged to a peak

collapsed

by the indifferent neutrality of the abyss

NOTHING

**of the memorable crisis
or the event
might have been**

completed with no possible result in view
human

WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE
an ordinary swell discloses the absence

BUT THE PLACE
any mediocre plashing as if to disperse the empty act
abruptly which otherwise
by its lie
would have justified
the perdition

in these parts
of the void
in which all reality is dissolved

EXCEPT

in the heights

PERHAPS

at so distant a place

that it fuses with infinity
 above human interest
 as pointed out to him
 in general
by such slant by such slope
 of lights

toward
 what should be
 the Septentrion or North

A CONSTELLATION

cold from neglect and disuse
 yet not so much
 that it does not count
 on some empty and superior plane
 the next collision
 sidereally
of a final reckoning in the making

watching
 doubting
 revolving
 blazing and meditating

 before it halts
at some final point which consecrates it

All Thought emits a Throw of the Dice

Jules Laforgue

1860–1887

JULES LAFORGUE

1860-1887

Like Rimbaud, Laforgue had a short career, but he did not have Rimbaud's precocity. If, however, his poetry perhaps suffers from his immaturity, it none the less is remarkable for the eloquence and simplicity with which it deals with the major themes. Laforgue's particular tone of sentimental irony, tender, sincere, colloquial, occasionally sardonic, oppressed at once by the search for perfection and by a sense of the impossibility of finding it in the world in which he lived, is a most engaging and moving one.

Born in Uruguay of French parents, Laforgue went to France for his studies at an early age, lived a lonely life devoted much of the time to literature in one form or another. After a thorough study of philosophy and modern poetry, especially Baudelaire, he went to Germany as reader to the Empress. After five years of exile there, during which he did much of his writing, he married an English girl and settled in Paris once again, only to find there illness, poverty, and death.

In his anti-Romanticism, his departure from grandeur and an elevated tone, and in his irony a descendant of Corbière, and in some respects superior to him, Laforgue eventually quit the classic structures of French poetry for free verse, which he is credited with inventing. If he is a minor poet by comparison with Verlaine, whom he in some ways resembles, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, still his innovations and his tone were of enormous importance to subsequent poets—notably Apollinaire, Pound, Eliot—and to modern poetry in general.

LAMENT OF THE ORGANIST OF NOTRE-DAME DE
NICE

Complainte de l'Organiste de Notre-Dame de Nice

Hark, already the winter crows
Have said their psalm among our bells;
The autumn showers are near, like knells;
Farewell the woods of the casinos.

Last night her cheek had a paler dye
And her body shivered, numbed quite through;
This church of ours is icy, too.
Ah, none loves her down here but I.

If I shall cut my heart out, tooled
For the sake of a smile so sad from her,
And remain true to her image there
Forever, in this victorious world.

The day that she leaves this world
A *Miserere* I mean to play
So cosmic in its despairing way
That God will have to return me word.

No, I shall stay down here, all dark,
Loyal to my dear phthisic dead,
Rocking my heart too deeply fed
With the eternal fugues of Bach.

And every year, at the new year's birth,
On our anniversary, constant then,
I shall unroll this *Requiem*
I have made for the death of the Earth.

VERNON WATKINS

SONG OF THE LITTLE HYPERTROPHIC CHILD

La Chanson du petit hypertrophique

It is from a heart sickness
She is dead, the doctor says,
 Tra-la-leer!
 Poor mother dear,
And that I'll go below
To play bye-bye with her,
I hear my heartbeat go:
My mother calls me near.

I am laughed at in the streets
For my incongruous hands
 La-lu-lid!
 Of a drunken kid.
Ah God, every step I go
I choke, I rock with fear.
I hear my heartbeat go:
My mother calls me near.

So then through the fields I go
To sob to the sunsets low,
 La-ri-rame!
 It's a silly game.
But the sun seems, I don't know,
Like a heart that is rippling clear.
I hear my heartbeat go:
My mother calls me near.

Ah, if little Gen'vieve took
For my bursting heart one look,
 Pi-lou-less!
 Ah, yes!
I am yellow and sad, I know.
She is rosy, gay, and dear.
I hear my heartbeat go:
My mother calls me near.

No, all the world's all bad,
All but the heart the sunsets had,
Tra-la-leer!
And mother dear,
And I must go down there soon
To play bye-bye with her.
My heart beats on, beats on . . .
Is it, Mother, you I hear?

VERNON WATKINS

APOTHEOSIS

Apothéose

In all senses, forever, the silence palpitates
With clusters of gold stars interweaving their rounds.
One might take them for gardens sanded with diamonds,
But each in desolation, very solitary, scintillates.

Now far down, in this corner unknown which vibrates
With a furrow of rubies in its melancholy bounds,
One spark with a twinkle of tenderness astounds:
A patriarch guiding his family with lights.

His family: a swarm of heavy globes; each a star is.
And on one, it is Earth, a yellow point, Paris,
Where a lamp is suspended and, on watch, a poor devil:
In the universal order frail, unique human marvel.
He himself is its mirror of a day and he knows it.
Long he dreams there, then turns to a sonnet to compose it.

VERNON WATKINS

FOR THE BOOK OF LOVE

Pour le Livre d'amour

I can die tomorrow and I have not loved.
My lips never touched a woman's while I lived.
None has given me her soul in a look; none in heat
Has held me, exhausted with love, to her heart.

I have but suffered for all nature, each moment,
For the beings, the wind, the flowers, the firmament,
Suffered through all my nerves minutely, like a knife,
Suffered to have a soul still not yet pure enough.

I spat upon love, and I have killed the flesh.
Mad with pride on this Earth enslaved by Instinct's leash,
I alone stood and stiffened myself against life.
I challenged the Instinct with a bitter laugh.

Everywhere, in the salons, at the theater, in church,
Before these cold great men, these men of finest touch,
And these women with gentle, or jealous, or proud eyes
Whose tender, ravished soul one might virginally rebase,

I thought: all these are come to it. I heard in their rites
The roarings of the unclean coupling of brutes.
So much mire with an access of three minutes in mind!
Men, be correct! O women, keep your smiles refined!

VERNON WATKINS

WINTER SUNSET

Couchant d'hiver

What a sorrowful sunset we had tonight!
In the trees a wind of despair wept,
Blowing dead wood amid the withered leaves.
Across the lace of barren branches
Etched upon the cold and pale-blue sky,
The sovereign of the heavens dropped stark and desolating.
O Sun! In summertime, magnificent in your glory
You set, radiant as a vast ciborium
Inflaming the azure! Now we behold
A sickly saffron disc, bereft of rays,
Die on the vermilion-washed horizon
Bleak in a sinister tubercular décor
Feebly tingeing the rheumy clouds
Dull livid white, splenetic green,
Old gold, wan lilac, leaden gray, tarnished rose.
O, it's finished, finished! The wind is long in its throes!
The days are over with; all is gasping and sere;
Earth's course is run, its loins are able no more.
And its miserable children, thin, bald, and pallid
With pondering the everlasting problems too much,
Shaking and stooped in their burden of shawls,
In the waning yellow gaslight of the misty boulevards
Contemplate their absinthes with mute and empty eyes,
Laughing in bitterness when pregnant women go by
Parading their bellies and their breasts
In the beastly pride of a god's slaves . . .

Unknown tempests of the last debacles,
Come! Unleash your whirlwind floods!
Seize this sordid, gasping globe! Sweep
Its weary heirs and cities' leprosy away!
And fling the unspeakable havoc to the immensity of night!
And in the great innocence of the eternal suns
And the stars of love, may there be nothing known
Of this rotten Brain which was the Earth, one day.

SKEPTIC CHRISTMAS

Noël sceptique

Noell Noell? I hear the bells in the night . . .
 And I to these faithless sheets have put my pen:
 O memories, sing! All my pride flees me,
 And by my vast bitterness I am overcome.

Ah! these voices in the night singing Noell Noell
 Bringing me from the nave which, out there, is lighted
 A motherly reproach so tender, so sweet
 That my heart, too full, breaks in my breast . . .

And I listen long to the bells in the night . . .
 I am the pariah of the human family,
 To whom in his squalid hole the wind
 Brings poignant rumor of a far festivity.

KATE FLORES

THE IMPOSSIBLE

L'Impossible

Tonight I may die. Rain, wind, sun
 Will scatter everywhere my heart, my nerves, my marrow.
 All will be over for me. Neither sleep nor awakening.
 I shall not have been out there among the stars.

In every direction, I know, on those distant worlds,
 Are similar pilgrims of pale solitudes,
 Extending us their hands across the gentle dark,
 Sister Humanities dreaming in multitudes.

Yes, brothers everywhere. That I know, I know.
 And all alone like us. Trembling with sadness,
 They beckon to us at night. Ah, shall we never go?
 We would console one another in our great distress.

The stars, it is certain, will one day meet,
 Heralding perhaps that universal dawn
 Now sung by those beggars with caste marks of thought.
 A fraternal outcry will be raised against God.

Alas, before that time, rain, wind, sun
 Will have lost in the distance my heart, my nerves, my
 marrow.
 All will be done without me. Neither dream nor awakening.
 I shall not have been among the gentle stars.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

LIGHTNING OF THE ABYSS
Éclair de gouffre

I was on a tower in the midst of the stars.

Suddenly, stroke of vertigo, a lightning-flash where, cast
 Of all its veils, I sounded, thrilling with awe, with fear,
 The riddle of the cosmos, in all its depth made clear.
 All, all is one? Where am I? Where goes this mass that rolls
 Bearing me on? —And I can die, die, take my leave,
 Knowing nothing. Speak! O rage! And time flows on and
 tolls

Without return. Stop, stop! And to true joys how cleave?
 For I know nothing, I. My hour is there, at least?
 I do not know. I was in the night, then I am born.
 Why? Whence the universe? Where goes it? For the priest
 Is mere man. One knows nothing. Appear to me, take form,
 God, witness eternal! Speak: why is there life?
 All is silent. Oh, space is without a heart. One moment,
 Stars! I do not want to die! I have genius!
 Ah, to become nothing again, irrevocably spent!

VERNON WATKINS

THE FIRST NIGHT

La Première nuit

Night falls, soothing to lascivious old men
 My cat, Murr, hunched like some heraldic sphinx,
 Uneasily surveys, from his fantastic eyeball,
 The gradual ascent of the chlorotic moon.

The hour of children's prayers, when whoring Paris
 Hurls on to the pavement of every boulevard
 Her cold-breasted girls, who wander with searching
 Animal eyes under the pale street lights.

With my cat, Murr, I meditate at my window,
 I think of the newborn everywhere;
 I think of the dead who were buried today.

I imagine myself within the cemetery,
 Entering the tombs, going in place
 Of those who will spend their first night there.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

COMPLAINT OF THAT GOOD MOON

Complainte de cette bonne lune

The Stars are heard:

On the lap
 Of our Master
 We are dancing, fast and faster
 On the lap
 Of our Master
 Dancing faster in a ring.

"What about you, little Miss
Moon? Don't take it so amiss!
Come with us and you'll collect
Golden suns around your neck!"

"It's very nice of you to treat
A poor Cinderella so,
But my wardrobe is complete
With my sister planet's glow."

"That reservoir of Thinking mars
The sky! Give up! Come to the ball
And you will turn the heads of all
Our very most distinguished stars!"

"Thanks! I'll stick to the attractions
Of my friend—just now she sighed!"
"You're wrong; that was the cosmic tide
Of weary chemical reactions!"

"Be still! I earn my bread and butter
Keeping watch! Go drag your tails,
You scandalmongers, in the gutter!"

"A first-class Innocence in veils!
Ha! Our Lady of the Soused!
Werewolves, sneak thieves—all for you,
And your prowling cats carousel
Cookool!"

Exeunt the stars. Silence and Moon. One hears:

Under the empty
Canopy
We are dancing, we are dancing
Under the empty
Canopy
Swiftly dancing in a ring.

COMPLAINT OF THE PIANOS OVERHEARD
IN PROSPEROUS NEIGHBORHOODS

Complainte des pianos qu'on entend dans les quartiers aisés

Lead on the soul, well fed by Literature,
Pianos, pianos, in prosperous neighborhoods.
First evenings, without a coat—our walks are pure—
To the tune of nerves, crushed or misunderstood.

Those girls—what dreaming entertains
Their long monotonous refrains?

“Courtyards at night,
The dormitory’s Christ!”

“You go away and leave us here,
You leave us here and you are free,
We take down and curl our hair,
And practice our embroidery.”

Vague or pretty? sad or wise? and chaste?
O days, is all the same to me? or, world, for *me* now?
And virgins, at least as to that worthy wound;
They know what greasy settings attend the most candid
vow?

Oh, what’s behind their dreaming faces?
Rolands, or, perhaps, fine laces?

“Hearts in prisons,
Slow, the seasons!”

“You go away and leave us here,
You leave us and pursue your quests!
Gray convents, choirs of Shulamites,
We cross our arms on our flat breasts.”

Then, one day, being's key fatalities;
 Psst! heredity's punctual fermentations
 Amid the ceaseless dance of our strange streets;
 Ah, theaters, dormitories, prose sensations!

Your sterilized refrains annull
 Life is real and criminal.

"Drawn curtains,
 May we come in?"

"You go away and leave us,
 You leave us and you disappear.
 The rose tree soon dries out its spring,
 Really! Why isn't he here? . . ."

He'll come! And yours will be the erring heart,
 Engaged to remorse, as to a meaningless start,
 The adequate heart, insulated and decked
 With chiffon and lonely trappings of respect.

Die? Perhaps their needlework engenders
 Some wealthy uncle's suspenders?

"Oh, that's not true!
 If only you knew!"

"You go away and leave us here,
 You leave us here and you won't stay,
 But you promised you'd come back and cure
 My nice little pain right away?"

And it's true! The Ideal throws them all out of line;
 Bohemia flourishes even in well-to-do quarters.
 Life is there; the pure flask of living wine
 Will be, *as is proper*, baptized with clean waters.

And so, very soon, they'll complain
About some more precise refrain.

"My one pillow!
The wall I know!"

"You leave us here and go, alas.
You go untouched by our appeals.
Why couldn't I have died at Mass!
O months, O lingerie, O meals."

PATRICIA TERRY

ANOTHER LAMENT OF LORD PIERROT

Autre Complainte de Lord Pierrot

She, the one who should put me on to Woman!
We will say to her, to begin with, in my least chilly manner:
"The sum of the angles of a triangle, dear heart,
Is equal to two right angles."

And if this cry escapes her: "God, O God! How I love you!"
—"God will recognize his own." Or, stung to the quick:
—"My keyboards have a soul, you will be my sole theme."
I: "All is relative."

With both her eyes, then! feeling herself too banal:
"Ah! You do not love me; so many others are jealous!"
And I, with an eye which is carried away toward the
Unconscious:

"Thanks, not badly; and you?"

—"Let us play at finding out who is the most faithful!"
—"What's the use, O Nature!"
"So that the one who loses wins!" Then, another verse:
—"Ah! you will be bored first, I am sure of it . . ."
—"After you, please."

Finally, if, of an evening, she dies among my books,
Meek; pretending still not to believe my eyes,
I will have a word: "Ah yes, but, we had Enough to live on!
It was in earnest then?"

JOSEPH BENNETT

COMPLAINT OF THE KING OF THULE

Complainte du Roi de Thulé

Once there was a King of Thule,
An immaculate King was he,
Who far from petticoats and the like
Mourned the metempsychosis
By which lilies became roses,
What a palace was his!

On milky nights, past his sleeping flowers,
He would go, dragging his keys,
To embroider on a high tower
A certain bright-colored sail,
The stars his only witnesses.

When he had finished hemming the sail,
He departed on the gray seas,
Far from Thule,
Rowing hard toward the dying sun,
That failing temple of delight,
And so would wail:

"Dying sun, for one day more
Your beacon light has beckoned forth
All the viviparous holocausts
Of the cult which men call love.

“And now as you feel your strength fail
 Before the wild night falls,
 You come to bathe the alcove
 With one last wave of martyred blood.

“Sun! Sun! See me descending
 Now toward your heart-rending
 Polar palaces to rock to sleep
 Your bleeding heart
 In this Winding Sheet.”

He spoke, and with the sail full-spread,
 Agitated and dismayed,
 As handsome as one of the Wise Men,
 The King mocked by petticoats,
 Descended then
 To wrecked ships and coral reefs.

Gentle lovers, on milky nights,
 Do not fail to turn the key!
 A phantom chilled with pure love
 Might come to sing you this old saw:
 “Once there was a King of Thule,
 An immaculate King was he . . .”

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

COMPLAINT ON THE OBLIVION OF THE DEAD

Complainte de l'oubli des morts

Ladies and gentlemen
 Whose mother is no more,
 The old gravedigger
 Scratches at your door.

Six feet down
Is a dead man's place;
He hardly ever
Shows his face.

You blow smoke into your beer,
You wind up your love affair,
Yonder crows chanticleer,
Poor dead beyond the pale!

His finger at his temple,
Look at Grandpa half asleep,
Sister busy with her knitting,
Mother turning up the lamp.

One who is dead
Is quite discreet,
He goes to bed
Right in the street.

The meal was good, was it?
Now how is everything?
The little stillborn
Get almost no fondling.

On one side of your ledger
Enter the cost of the dance;
On the other, the undertaker's fee
To make your books balance.

Life's a ditty
With a hye-nommy-no.
Eh what, my pretty,
Do you find it so?

Ladies and gentlemen,
Whose sister is no more,
Open up for the gravedigger
Who raps at your door.

Show him no pity,
 He will come all the same
 To drag you out by the heels
 When the moon is full.

Importunate wind,
 Howl on.
 Where are the dead?
 They're gone.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

PIERROTS (SOME OF US HAVE PRINCIPLES)

Pierrots (On a des principes)

She was saying, with the wisdom of the ages,
 "I love you just for yourself!" Bravo! A charming device—
 Yes, like art! Keep calm, illusory wages
 From capitalist Paradise!

She said, "I'm waiting, here I am, don't know . . ."
 Her eyes copied from large and candid moons.
 Bravo! Perhaps it wasn't just for prunes
 That we went to school here below?

But she was found one evening, impeccably out of luck,
 Deceased! Bravo! A change of key!
 We know that you'll revive in three
 Days, if not in person at least

In the perfume, the leaves, the brooks of the spring!
 And fools will be entangled, as you flirt,
 In the Veil of the Gioconda, in the Skirt!
 I might even be there on your string.

PATRICIA TERRY

I HEAR MY SACRED HEART BEAT . . .

J'entends battre mon Sacre-Cœur . . .

I hear my Sacred Heart beat
 Lonely and companionless,
 In the twilight of the hour
 With little hope, and no retreat.

I hear my youthful blood course
 Ambiguous through my arteries
 Between the Edens of my verse
 And the province of my fathers.

I hear also the flute of Pan.
 "Go far, go far afield!" it sings.
 "Die, when life demands too much;
 But, mark you, he who loses wins."

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

ROMANCE

Romance

HAMLET: *To a nunnery, go.*

A thousand sea birds all pale gray
 Nest on the walls of my lovely soul;
 And fill the sad halls day by day
 With the beat of oars, and the ocean's roll.

Deposit filth on everything,
 Flesh, and coral, and sea shells;
 And strike the upright paneling
 While circling wildly round the walls.

Oh, pallid birds of the roaring waves,
 Fashion a necklace of sea shell
 To please my lady who arrives,
 And spare her not your carrion smell.

So she will say: "My little nose
 Can't bear this soul; it's far too strong;
 But this lovely necklace, may I take it along?"
 What good will it do her, do you suppose?

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

THE APPROACH OF WINTER

L'Hiver qui vient

Blockade of the senses! Mail steamers from the
 Levant! . . .
 O downpour of rain! O downpour of night,
 O! the wind! . . .
 All Hallow's Eve, Christmas, and the New Year,
 Oh, in the drizzling, all my chimneys! . . .
 Of factories . . .

It is impossible to sit down any more, all the benches are
 wet;
 Believe me, everything is over until next year,
 All the benches are wet, the woods are so rusted,
 And the horns have so many times sounded your note, your
 sound of *ton* and *taine!* . . .

Ah! storm clouds flocking here from the shores of the
 Channel,
 You have spoiled us our last Sunday.

It drizzles;
 In the wet forest, spider webs
 Bend under the drops of water, and it is their ruin.

Plenipotentiary suns from the washing of golden river-sands,
From country fairs,
Where are you buried?
This evening a squandered sun lies helpless at the top of
the slope,
Lies on the hillside, in the broom, on his cloak.
A sun white as spittle on a barroom floor
Lies in a litter of yellow broom,
The yellow broom-flowers of Autumn.
And the horns call him!
May he come back . . .
May he come to himself again!
Tallyho! Tallyho! and the hunting horn at the kill!
O sad anthem, have you ended! . . . And they play the
fool! . . .
And he lies there, the sun, like a gland torn out of a neck,
And he shivers, without a friend! . . .

Forward, forward, and the horn at the kill!
It is well-known Winter blowing in;
Oh! the turnings, the bends of the highroads,
And without Little Red Ridinghood making her way! . . .
Oh! their ruts from the wagons of another month,
Ascending like quixotic rails
Towards the patrols of fleeing storm clouds
Which the wind knocks towards the transatlantic sheep-
folds! . . .
Let us hasten, hasten, it is the well-known season, this time,
And the wind, this night, he has made beautiful clouds!
O havoc, O nests, O modest little gardens!
My heart and my drowsiness: O echoes of hatchets! . . .

All these branches still have their green leaves,
The underbrush is now nothing but a dung heap of dead
leaves;
Leaves, leaflets, may a fair wind carry you away
In swarms toward the ponds,
Or for the gamekeeper's fire,
Or for the mattresses of ambulances
For soldiers far from France.

It is the season, it is the season, rust overruns the masses,
 Rust gnaws in their kilometric spleens
 The telegraphic wires on the highroads where no one
 passes.

The horns, the horns, the horns--melancholic! . . .
 Melancholic! . . .

They depart, changing their tone,
 Changing their tone and their music,
 Your note, your sound of *ton* and *taine* and *ton!* . . .
 The horns, the horns, the horns! . . .
 Have departed with the north wind.

I cannot leave, this tone: such echoes! . . .
 It is the season, it is the season, the grape harvest is
 over! . . .
 Here come the rains with their angel's patience,
 The business is over and done with, adieu grape harvests
 and all the baskets,
 All the Watteau baskets of the peasant dances under the
 chestnut trees,
 It is the coughing in high-school dormitories which returns,
 It is herb tea without a hearth, far from home,
 Pulmonary consumption saddening the neighborhood,
 And all the misery concentrated in great cities.

But, woolens, rubber overshoes, pharmacy, dream,
 Parted curtains on balconies high up above the riverbanks
 Facing the sea of roofs of the quarters of the city,
 Lamps, engravings, tea, *petits fours*,
 Will you not be my only amours! . . .
 (Oh! and then, are you versed in, besides the pianos,
 The sober and vespertine weekly mystery
 Of the sanitation statistics
 In the newspapers?)

No, no! it is the season and the planet is curiously quaint!
 May the south wind, may the south wind
 Ravel out the old shoes which time runs off with!
 It is the season, oh rending! it is the season!
 Every year, every year,
 In chorus I will try to give it its note.

JOSEPH BENNETT

MOON SOLO

Solo de lune

On the roof of a coach at night I lie,
 My cigarette pointing to the sky;
 While my poor bones jostle and roll, up dances my soul
 Like some Ariel;
 Without malice or solace, my lovely soul,
 O roads, O hills, O mists, O vales,
 My lovely soul—let's see what it entails.

Yes. We were madly in love, we two,
 And with never a word drifted apart;
 A sense of disgust held back my heart,
 A disgust that was universal, too.

Her eyes said: "Now you see what I mean?
 You mean to say that you haven't seen?"
 Yet neither would be the first to act;
 We longed to kneel *together*, in fact.
 (Now you see what I mean?)

So where can she be?
 Weeping her heart out bitterly?
 So where can she be?
 My darling, I beg of you, do take care!

O the woods by the road are cool and clear!
 O shawl of sorrow, all things seem to hear,
 And all willingly
 Would trade places with me!

By hoarding the coin of what must be,
 Let us improve upon destiny!
 More stars in the sky than pebbles by the sea
 Where others than I have watched her bathe;
 All goes under Death's dark wave.
 No port but the grave.

Years will go by,
 And each on his own will grow hardened somehow;
 And often—I can already hear myself now—
 Say to the other, "Had I but known . . ."
 Ah, cursed from the start,
 Dead end for the heart—
 What an ass was I!

But wild for happiness then in truth,
 What shall we do? I with my soul,
 She with her fallible youth?
 O my aging sinner,
 How many evenings after dinner
 Shall I turn to infamy to do you honor!

Her eyes would blink: "Now you see what I mean?
 You mean to say that you haven't seen?"
 But neither would be the first to act—
 To kneel together. Ah, in fact! . . .

O see the moon climb,
 Dream road beyond time!
 We have passed the cotton mills, we have passed the
 sawmills,
 And nothing remains but a few road signs.
 And little pink cotton-candy clouds
 With a thin crescent moon that continues to climb;
 Dream road beyond sound, dream road beyond time . . .

What spacious, clean rooms
In these pinewoods where
Since the dawn of time
It is dark as the tomb!
Ah, for an evening of lovely abduction!
I people these rooms, in my mind I am there,
In my mind I behold a loving pair
Whose every gesture breaks the law.

And I pass them by, and I leave them there,
And lie back down
While the road winds on, Ariel, I;
No one waits for me, I am going nowhere:
I have only the friendship of hotel rooms.

O see the moon climb,
Dream road beyond time,
Dream road without end;
Now here at the bend
Is the posthouse where
The lanterns are lit,
And we drink fresh milk,
And change postilion,
While crickets trill
Under the July stars.

O broad moonlight
Like a wedding of torches drowning my sorrow tonight,
The shadows of the poplars along the road . . .
The torrent that listens
As it flows . . .
A river of Lethe that overflows . . .

O Moon Solo, when
Will you answer my pen?
O this night on the road;
Stars—all there, all,
With all you forebode.
O fleeting hour,

Had I but the power
To retain your image until autumn returns! . . .

How cool it is now, how cool,
And what if now at this very hour
She also strolls at the edge of the same wood
Drowning her sorrow
In a wedding of light! . . .
(And how she loves to stroll at night!)
Having forgotten the scarf for her throat tonight,
She is sure to take cold in such cold, clear light!
Oh, my darling, I beg of you, do take care;
That cough is more than one can bear.

Ah, would I had sunk to my knees when I could!
Ah, would you had swooned in my arms as you should!
What a model husband in me you'd have found,
As the swish of your skirt is a model of sound.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

SUMMER LANDSCAPE

Paysage d'été

The hot Sun at its zenith weeps ingots like the clappers of bells; and thirsty for the breezes of the meadow, and the smell of water cress, it invisibly absorbs water from the springs, the springs of the countryside, which have been writhing with discomfort as they work out their destinies through this horrid day; from afar, the sun watches flocks of motes rise through the air, and, cooled and comforted at the sight, ceases drinking and the water hovers then in black sheets steaming from this spasmodic christening. In black sheets thick with storm clouds and fertilized by latent thunders, sheets that twist like invalids on their mattresses, that drift, stretch themselves, sniff one another amorously, lustingly, and thrust one another back for fear of final catastrophe . . . Like eyes in death agony the

leaves revolve on their stalks, branches pulsate like arteries choked by terrible temperatures, the meadow darkens like an angry peacock's tail, like the comb of a blinded cock, or the face of some lost balloonist who has sailed beyond the earth's orbit; inventing inexhaustibly lamentable pretexts, the winds seek one another out: man feels afflicted. Gone is the sacramental sun, gone with a wholly somnambulistic air. Love's simoon makes its round. The pupils of one's eyes are dilated, moist temples beat like drums, supplications are choked in burning throats, hands heavy with faith wander idly about, lips mad with thirst come down upon lips that are even madder with thirst, more withered and dry . . . Is there no way to set you free, O cool corrosive dew? Is there no cork your liquid waves can strike against and thrust out? Poor desperate miners buried underground as they dug their tunnel, their lamps have gone out, and one can hear the picks of the pioneers from the other side, with only one wall remaining between . . . Two lightning flashes have whistled through the air, interlacing like flashing snakes, thunder tears the temple veil, and the fan of love's cloudburst descends upon the breathless meadows like the speckled hawk upon an ocean wedged with ingots of faith, descends with a silver sound of rain on a boat lost in a lake. Water runs down leaves and eyes, dissolving the salt of sweat, drowning the eyes.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

SPRING EVENING ON THE BOULEVARDS

Soir de printemps sur les boulevards

Sitting on a bench one evening in spring on the great boulevards, near the Variétés. A café streaming with gas. A prostitute dressed all in red going from beer to beer. On the second floor, a room quite somber and quiet with a few lamps and tables over which heads were bent, a little study. On the third floor, adazzle with gas, all the windows open, flowers, perfumes, a dance in progress. One can't hear the

music for the din of the street swarming with cabs and people, with the corridors devouring and vomiting people incessantly, and the hawking of programs in front of the Variétés . . . But one can see, gliding past in front of these ten windows, men in black tails with white shirt fronts, revolving to the music, holding ladies, blue, pink, lilac, white, holding them ever so lightly, so correctly, one can see them pass, re-pass, with serious, unsmiling faces (but one can't hear the music they follow). Several pimps wander by; one says to the other: "She made ten francs, old boy . . ." From the Variétés a crowd swarms out during intermission; and the hell of the boulevard continues, the cabs, the cafés, the gas, the shopwindows, more and more pedestrians—more prostitutes filing by under the harsh lights of the cafés . . . Near me a newspaper stall and two women chatting; one says: "She certainly won't last the night, that one, and my kid caught it from hers." Busses filled with members of both sexes, each with his or her own feelings, troubles, vices.

And above it all, the gentle, eternal stars.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

MID-JULY TWILIGHT, EIGHT O'CLOCK

Crépuscule de mi-juillet, huit heures

After a light shower, the pools, muddy green in color, lose their wrinkles and their look of watered silk.

Three distinct monotonous sounds in space: a train whistle, the lively fluting of a blackbird in the low foliage of the terrace, and the tinkle of cowbells.

All the rest is an immobile mass of hills, space, and pale gray sky.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

THE END OF A DAY IN THE PROVINCES

Fin de journée en province

Passed the end of a day in the provinces.

A gray sort of town, carefully paved, peaceful.

The hotel window looks onto the main square. I watched a stupid moon rise over there, lighting up this town especially as though to assure me that this town really existed, in its insignificance.

A lamplighter carrying a baby in his arms and followed by a dog who seemed to be used to everything, and who sniffed at the pavements as though they were very old friends.

The lamp did not want to light.

Immediately, two, five, six people came along and discussed it; the lamp lights, the people see that it is lit and go away slowly. Only one remains. He looks at the lamp for a moment and then he goes away.

Oh! to live in one of these mollusc beds!

To die! . . . to die.

And the moon is the same here as in Paris, as over the Mississippi, as in Bombay.

MARGARET CROSLAND

A HOT STAGNANT EVENING

Après-dîner torride et stagnante

One's feet are baking, one can feel the arteries throbbing in one's ankles, under one's chin, in the heart, the wrists; one raises up hands that are already swollen and wet, the least little meal weighs one down, one must undo one's necktie, one breathes so deeply that the cigarette stuck to the corner of one's mouth is consumed in twelve puffs, one's skin is wringing wet . . . How unhappy I would be if I had breasts and were a nurse! Or if I were one of those

military musicians laced tight in a uniform, and had to blow into a trombone in some bandstand. Ah, to be a fly on the wet tile floor of some provincial kitchen! Or rather a passive sponge, a branch of coral encrusted at the bottom of the sea, watching the parade of submarine nature, or a blue cornflower on a piece of delft china perched above a pile of stoles, in the cool, dark back room of an antique shop on the banks of the Sequana! Or a flower in the chintz of the bare prim parlor of an old maid in Quimper . . . or a heron . . .

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

THUNDERBOLT

Coup de foudre

I am in love, I am in love: I have drunk a good dizzying gulp. I with an analytical mind and a shortsighted soul now feel completely solemn . . . And I walk along the streets. The Luxembourg Gardens are flooded with a great gaiety of bells. If she doesn't love me, if she can't be wholly mine, what difference will it make? I am in love, that's enough; I feel generous, holy, human, trembling, so filled with things that I dare not look myself in the eye . . . No joking, I really mean all that I say.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

TWILIGHT

Crépuscule

Twilight . . . From the houses I pass come the smell of cooking and the rattle of plates. People are preparing to dine and then go to bed or to the theater . . . Ah, too long

have I hardened myself against tears; I can be a terrific coward now in the face of the stars!

And all this is without end, without end.

Beaten-down horses drag their heavy carts along the streets—women wander by—gentlemen greet one another with polite smiles . . . And the earth whirls on.

Noon.

One half of the earth lit by the sun, the other half black and spotted with fire, gas, resin, or candle flame . . . In one place people are fighting, there are massacres; in another, there is an execution, in another, a robbery . . . Below, men are sleeping, dying . . . the black ribbons of funeral processions winding toward the yew trees . . . endless. And with all this on its back, how can the enormous earth go on hurtling through eternal space with the terrible rapidity of a lightning flash?

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

Guillaume Apollinaire

1880–1918

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

1880-1918

Immediate predecessor of Dada and the Surrealists in the anti-rational line of descent from Baudelaire—Corbière, Rimbaud, Laforgue—Apollinaire was a very conscious modernist. He strove in his poetry to make use of the new, less in the sense of the search for the unhackneyed or the unknown, as had been the case with Baudelaire and Rimbaud, than of the various phenomena which, before and during the First World War, were revolutionizing the more minor aspects of experience: the automobile, the airplane, moving pictures, and also of course the war itself. At times also even his experiments in form, his surprising images, his omissions of punctuation seem those of the conscious innovator.

As gregarious as Laforgue was shy, Apollinaire knew everyone, was interested in painting and the theater, and the novel, as well as poetry; and, a little like Cocteau shortly afterwards, he served as a kind of clearing house and impresario for new ideas: Futurism, Cubism, every approach which seemed to him to represent the *esprit nouveau*.

His poetry, intimate, casual, unpretentious, was remarkably free and varied, reflecting in its variety the quickly shifting rhythms of the new age which was replacing the relatively stable close of the nineteenth century. Theorist of Cubism in *Les Peintres cubistes*, credited with inventing the term "surrealism," Apollinaire was perhaps as important as the center of an attitude reflecting the modern age as he was because of his two volumes of poetry.

ZONE

Zone

After all you are weary of this oldtime world

Shepherdess O Eiffel Tower your flock of bridges is bleating
this morning

You have had enough of this living in a Greek and Roman
antiquity

Here even the automobiles contrive an ancient aspect
Only religion is still new only religion
Has stayed simple like the Airport hangars

In all Europe you alone are not antique O Christianity
The most up-to-date European is you Pope Pius X
And you whom the windows stare at shame keeps you back
From going into some church and confessing your sins this
morning

You read the prospectuses the catalogues the public no-
tices that sing out

Here's the morning's poetry and for prose we have news-
papers

We've two-bit volumes full of crime adventure
Portraits of the great and a thousand miscellaneous items

This morning I saw a neat street I've forgotten its name
All new and clean a bugle in the sun

Bosses workmen and pretty stenographers

From Monday morning to Saturday night pass along it four
times a day

Three times each morning the siren moans there

A furious whistle bays along about noon

The slogans the signboards the walls

The plaques the parrotty notices nagging

I like the charm of this industrial street

Located in Paris between the Rue Aumont-Thiéville and
the Avenue des Ternes

Here's your young street and you're only a little child still

Your mother dresses you only in white and blue
You're a religious boy and along with your oldest pal René
Dalize
You like nothing better than Church ceremonies
It's nine o'clock the gas is all bluey turned down you sneak
out of the dorm
You pray all night long in the school chapel
While the eternal adorable depth of amethyst
Revolves forever the flamboyant glory of Christ
This is the fair lily that all of us tend
The torch with red hair unquenched by the wind
The pale flushed son of the mother grieving
The tree leafy-thick all over with prayers
The double potency of honor and forever
The six-branched star
God who dies Friday and rises on Sunday
Christ who climbs the sky better than any aviator
He holds the world record for altitude
Pupil Christ of the eye
Twentieth pupil of the centuries he knows his job
And changes into a bird this century goes up into the air
like Jesus
The devils in their abysses lift up their heads to watch
They call it an imitation of Simon Magus in Judaea
They exclaim if this is flying let's call him fly-by-night
The angels flash around the pretty tightroper
Icarus Enoch Elijah Apollonius of Tyana
Bob about this first airplane
From time to time they step aside for persons transported
by the Sacrament
Those priests ascending eternally at the Elevation of the
Host
The plane lands at last with wings outspread
Then the skies are jammed with swallows by the millions
On swooping wings the ravens come the falcons the owls
Ibises from Africa and flamingos and marabouts
The Roc bird celebrated by storytellers and poets
Glides with the skull of Adam the first head in its claws
The eagle plummets from the horizon with a great cry
And from America comes the small colibri

From China the supple long pihis
Who have only one wing and who fly in pairs
And here is the dove immaculate spirit
Escorted by the lyre-bird and the eye peacock
The phoenix that self-engendering stake
Hides everything for a moment with his burning ashes
The sirens abandon their perilous straits
Arrive all three of them singing at the top of their voices
Eagle phoenix Chinese pihis all combine
To fraternize with the flying machine

You are walking in Paris now all alone in a crowd
Herds of mooing busses pass by as you go
Love's anguish grabs you by the gullet
As if you'd never be loved again
If you lived in the old days you'd enter a monastery
You're ashamed of yourself when you catch yourself pray-
ing
You sneer at yourself friend your laugh snaps like hell-fire
The sparks of that laugh gild your life's cash reserves
It's a picture hung up in a dusky museum
And every once in a while you get up close to examine it

Today you're taking a walk in Paris the women are bloodied
This was and I did not want to remember it this was in the
ebb of beauty

Immured in her ancient flames Notre-Dame has seen me at
Chartres
The blood of your Sacré-Cœur has engulfed me at Mont-
martre
I am sick of listening to blessed discourse
The love that I suffer is a shameful disease
And the image that owns you keeps you alive in sleepless-
ness and in agony
It is always near you that transient image

Now you are by the Mediterranean
Under the lemon trees flowering all year long
You go for a sail with some friends of yours

One's from Nice one's from Menton there are two from
Turbes

We are alarmed by the sight of the cuttlefish far down
And through the seaweed fish swim in the Savior's image

You are in a tavern garden somewhere outside Prague
You are so happy there's a rose on the table
And instead of composing your prose fable
You note the worm asleep in the heart of the rose

In terror you see yourself limned in the agates of Saint Vit
You were deathly sorry the day you saw yourself there
You look like Lazarus struck silly by the daylight
The hands on the ghetto clock move backwards
You too reverse slowly into your life
And going up to Hradchin hearing at nightfall
The tavern songs of the singing Czechs
You're back at Marseille along the watermelons
Back in Coblenz at the Hôtel du Géant
You're in Rome sitting under a Japanese medlar

You're in Amsterdam with a girl you think's pretty but she's
a fright
She's going to marry a Leyden undergraduate
They rent rooms in Latin there Cubicula locanda
I remember it well I spent three days there and also at
Gouda

You're in Paris before the examining magistrate
Like a common criminal you are placed in custody
You have made your happy and dolorous journeys
Before taking account of falsehood and age
At twenty and thirty you have suffered from love
I have lived like a madman and I've lost my time
You no longer dare look at your hands and all the time I
could burst out sobbing
Because of you because of her I love because of everything
that has frightened you

Eyes full of tears you watch these poor emigrants

They trust in God they pray the women suckle their babies
Their odor fills the concourse of the Saint-Lazare Station
They believe in their star like the Three Wise Men
They look forward to getting rich in the Argentine
And coming back home after their fortune's made
One family transports its red eiderdown just as you trans-
port your heart

That quilt and our dreams are equally unreal
Certain of these emigrants stay here and take lodgings
In the Rue des Rosiers or the Rue des Écouffes in flopperies
I've often seen them taking the air evenings in the street
They are like chessmen they seldom leave their squares
There are Jews above all their women wear wigs
Drained of blood they sit far back in their shops

You stand before the counter in a rotgut bar
With a five-cent coffee among the down-and-out

You are night in a fine restaurant

These women are not evil they have their troubles never-
theless
All of them have made some lover unhappy even the
ugliest
She's the daughter of a Jersey policeman

Her hands I had not seen them are hard and chapped
I've an enormous pity for the stitched scars on her belly

To a poor girl with a horrible laugh I humble my mouth
now

You are alone morning is coming
The milkmen are clanking their tin cans in the streets

Night takes flight like a fair Médive
It's a faithless Ferdine or a faithful Leah

You drink an alcohol that burns like your life
Your life that you drink down like brandy

You walk toward Auteuil and you would go home on foot
 To sleep among your fetishes from Oceania and Guinea
 They are Christs in another form Christs of another faith
 They are the lesser Christs of obscure yearnings

Good-bye Good-bye

Sun cut throat

DUDLEY FITTS

THE MIRABEAU BRIDGE

Le Pont Mirabeau

Under the Mirabeau Bridge the Seine
 Flows and our love
 Must I be reminded again
 How joy came always after pain

Night comes the hour is rung
 The days go I remain

Hands within hands we stand face to face
 While underneath
 The bridge of our arms passes
 The loose wave of our gazing which is endless

Night comes the hour is rung
 The days go I remain

Love slips away like this water flowing
 Love slips away
 How slow life is in its going
 And hope is so violent a thing

Night comes the hour is rung
 The days go I remain

The days pass the weeks pass and are gone
 Neither time that is gone
 Nor love ever returns again
 Under the Mirabeau Bridge flows the Seine

Night comes the hour is rung
 The days go I remain

W. S. MERWIN

THE SONG OF THE ILL-BELOVED

La Chanson du mal-aimé

To Paul Léautaud

*And this is the ballad that I sang
 In 1903 not knowing then
 How like a Phoenix is my love
 For if it dies one night the next
 Morning sees it born again*

One London night in a half fog
 A draggled boy accosted me
 So like my love that when I felt
 The glance that touched me from his eyes
 I dropped my own in modesty

I followed this perverse kid as
 He strolled along hands pocketed
 And whistling The Red Sea ditch
 With houses lining either side
 I was Pharaoh he the Jews

Let these brick waves wash down on us
 If once I did not love you well
 I am great Egypt's sovereign lord
 His sister-wife and all his host
 If you are not my only love

At the turn of a burning street each house-
front supplicated fiery wounds
Of mist and blood all the façades
In lamentation cried aloud
A woman who resembled him

I knew at once the inhuman eyes
The naked neck with the ragged scar
That came out staggering from some bar
The moment that I recognized
How great a cheat is love itself

When after many a weary year
Ulysses that good man reached home
His ancient dog remembered him
His wife was waiting for him near
A rug she'd woven thick and fine

The royal mate of Sacontale
Bored with his triumphs was well pleased
To find her with love-faded eyes
And face delay had made more pale
Petting her little male gazelle

I thought of those happy royalties
That night when love betraying and
She whom I loved and do love still
Beset me with their sleight of ghosts
Contriving my unhappiness

Hell's built on such regrets as these
A Heav'n of forgetfulness revealed
For a kiss from her all the world's kings
Would have gladly died poor famous things
And bartered their own shades willingly

I have been wintering in my past
O Easter sunlight come again
To warm a heart more frozen than
Sebastus' was by forty such
My life has suffered briefer pain

Fair ship O Memory have we two
 Sailed long enough upon a sea
 Too sour for drinking and gone astray
 From sweet dawn to nagging night
 Mindless heedless of our way

O false farewells O love involved
 In her who takes her leave of me
 The loved woman whom I lost
 That last year in Germany
 And whom I shall not again see

O Galaxy O luminous
 Sister of the white Canaan rills
 And the white flesh of girls in love
 Shall we not swim in death along
 That course toward systems further still

I call to mind another year
 The dawning of an April day
 I sang my darling pleasure I
 Sang as a man sings of his love
 In the love-rising of the year

AUBADE SUNG AT LAETARE A YEAR SINCE

*Spring's come again Arise Pâquette
 And walk with me in the pretty woods
 The hens go cluckcluck in the yard
 Dawn hangs the sky up in pink folds
 Love's on the march to take you dear*

*Mars and Venus have come back
 To drink each other's lips in love
 There in the open where roses lean
 Leafing shelteringly above
 The naked dance of the rose gods*

*Oh come this is my love's domain
 The heavy flowers yield to love
 Nature is all immediacy
 Pan plays his woodland pipes again
 The damp frogs have begun their song*

Those gods are mostly dead For them
 It is the weeping willows weep
 The great god Pan Love Jesus Christ
 Utterly dead and tomcats wail
 In Paris courtyards I too weep

I who have lays fit for a queen
 And love-compleynts for all my years
 The choruses of fisher slaves
 The ballad of the ill-beloved
 And such songs as the Sirens sing

For love's dead and I shake therefore
 Idols of him I now adore
 Mementoes in his likeness made
 Thus like Mausolus' wife I droop
 Faithful in grief forevermore

For I am true as a bull-pup
 To his master or as ivy to the trunk
 Or the Zaporozhian Cossacks drunk
 Brigandish and full of prayers
 To their native steppes and the Decalogue

Under the Crescent bow your necks
 That Crescent that the Mages quiz
 I am the Sultan King of Kings
 Zaporozhian Cossacks *Ecce Rex*
 Your Sovereign your Dazzling Lord

Subjects swear fealty to me
 Thus he had written to them once
 But when they'd got his words aright
 They laughed and sat down cheerfully
 To answer him by candlelight

REPLY OF THE ZAPOROZHIAN COSSACKS
 TO THE SULTAN OF CONSTANTINOPLE

*You are worse news than Barabbas was
 Horn'd like the Angels of the Pit
 Are you there you old Beelzebub
 Suckled on drainage and filthy mud
 We must decline Walpurgisnacht*

*Spoilt fishfood from Saloniki
 Interminable necklace of bad nights
 Of eyes gouged out and speared on spikes
 Your mother let a squishy fart
 And of her gut-cramp you were born*

*Podolian hangman Fancier
 Of gashes ulcers and scab-crust
 Arse of horse and snout of hog
 Keep whatever gold you've got
 To pay the druggist for your drugs*

O Galaxy O luminous
 Sister of the white Canaan rills
 And the white flesh of girls in love
 Shall we not swim in death along
 Your course toward systems further still

The hurt that troubles a whore's eyes
 Lovely as a panther is
 Your kisses Love were Florentine
 And tasted of such bitterness
 As canceled both our destinies

An evening rout of trembling stars
 Trailed from those eyes and Sirens swam
 Therein and our quick kisses bit
 Deep into blood our fury moved
 Our fairy godmothers to tears

Surely I wait for her return
 I wait with all my heart and soul
 And on Come-back-to-me-dear Bridge
 If we must never meet again
 I'll tell her That's all right by me

My heart is drained and so's my head
 All heaven it seems runs out of them
 To fill my Danaïd casks Shall I
 Ever find happiness instead
 The innocence of a small child

I would not drive her from my mind
 O dove O roadstead calm and white
 Daisy exfoliate Isle remote
 My land of dreaming My Cockayne
 My gillyflower and my rose

Satyrs and pyralidès
 Aegipans and will-o'-the-wisps
 Fates frustrate or fates fortunate
 A Calais choke-string round my neck
 What holocaust of miseries

O sorrow multiplying fate
 The unicorn the capricorn
 My soul and wavering body fly
 From you Torment divine adorned
 With all the morning's flower stars

Unhappiness pale god with eyes
 Of ivory your mad priests bring
 Your victims wrapped in robes of black
 And have they shed their tears in vain
 God in whom no man need have faith

And you that follow after me
Cringing god of my gods that died
In autumn You mark off the hours
Of earth that still are left to me
My Shade and my inveterate Snake

We walked together in the sun
Because remember you love it so
Shadowy wife I love you too
You are mine for ever nothing you
My ghost wears mourning for myself

Winter with all its snow is dead
The gleaming hives are all burnt down
Birds on branches overhead
Sing springtime light sing April bright
For orchard plot and garden bed

Argýraspids undying strike
The silver-targèd snow gives way
Before the pale Dendróphori
Of spring that simple people like
And wet eyes learn to smile again

And me my heart's as thumping fat
As the arse of a wife from the Middle East
I loved you too much O my love
I have found too much hurt in love
Now seven swords leap from the sheath

Seven subtle blades of grief
Transfix my heart O lucent pain
My foolish mind would justify
My plight but the excuse is vain
Forget you say But how can I

THE SEVEN SWORDS

*The first sword is pure silver and
Pâline they call its vibrant name
Its blade a wintry snowing sky
Ghibelline blood its destiny
When he had forged it Vulcan died*

*The second blade is named Noubosse
Oh rainbow of delight The gods
Handle it at their wedding feasts
It's killed thirty Bé-Rieux at least
Its power came from Carabosse*

*The third is all a woman's blue
But Cypriape for all of that
They call it Lul de Faltenin
And Hermès Ernest a midget now
Brings it in on a tablecloth*

*The fourth is known as Malourène
A river running green and gold
And river girls at evening bathe
The worship of their bodies in
That stream and singing boatmen pass*

*The fifth sword's name is Sainte-Fabeau
Prettiest of the distaff kind
A cypress shadowing a tomb
Where the four winds fall to their knees
And every night's a torch ablaze*

*A glory of metal is the sixth
Our friend with such small hands from whom
Each morning forces us to part
Good-bye that's the road you must take
Crowing has drained the cock's shrill heart*

*The seventh lies exhausted here
A woman a dead rose also
Thank you the last man to appear
Shut the door upon my love
I have not known you all these years*

O Galaxy O luminous
Sister of the white Canaan rills
And the white flesh of girls in love
Shall we not swim in death along
That course toward systems further still

The quiring firmament declares
That dicing devils guide our steps
The scrape of those lost fiddles cheers
Our human dance as we descend
Backwards into the abyss

What fate inscrutable is this
The shaking madness of great kings
A sky of stiff stars shivering
Faithless women for your beds
In deserts crushed by history

The old Prince Regent Leopold
Male nurse of two mad Heads of State
Does he sob himself to sleep for them
While fireflies flash their sparkling light
Gilded for Midsummer's Night

A château without a chatelaine
And a barque with barcarolles near by
On a lake of white touched by the breath
Of delicate breezes It was like
A Siren sailing a dying swan

One day the King drowned in that flood
Of silver but floated up again
Mouth wide open and lay down
Upon the bank to sleep awhile
Face up beneath the fickle sky

Your sun O June your ardent lyre
Scorches the fingers of my hand
Pain-singing ecstasy of fire
I stroll through my fine Paris and
Have no heart for dying there

Each Sunday is eternity
Barrel organs creak their grief
In dingy courtyards flowers lean
From these Parisian balconies
Like towers in a Pisan scene

Nights in Paris drunk on gin
Affare with electricity
Trams trail green fire along their spines
Take the long rails melodiously
Musicking the insane machine

Paunchy with smoke the cafés grunt
Love love love from the gypsy dance
Love from siphons sniffly-nosed
Love from the apron'd waiter-boys
Love from you love whom I loved

I who have lays fit for a queen
And love-compleynts for all my years
The choruses of fisher slaves
The ballad of the ill-beloved
And such songs as the Sirens sing

DUSK

*Crépuscule**To Mademoiselle Marie Laurencin*

Brushed by the shadows of the dead
On grass where failing daylight falls
The lady harlequin's stripped bare
Admiring herself in a still pool

A twilight juggler a charlatan
Boasts tricks that he knows how to play
Pale as milk the studding stars
Stand in the tall uncolored air

Harlequin pallid on his small stage
Greets the audience first of all
Bohemian sorcerers a train
Of fairies and prestidigitals

Reaching up to unhook a star
He whirls it round with outstretched arm
While cymbals mark a measured beat
Hanging from a hanged man's feet

The sightless one croons to a child
The hind and her troop of fawns pass by
The dwarf sulks at the growing thrust
Of Harlequin the Trismegist

DUDLEY FITTS

ANNIE

Annie

On the Texas coast
Between Mobile and Galveston there's
A large garden full of roses
And the villa there
Is one great rose

Time and again a woman walks
In that garden all alone
And when I pass by on the lime-shaded road
Our eyes lock

As this woman is a Mennonite
Her rosebushes and her frocks are buttonless
There are two missing from my coat
The lady and I profess almost the same rite

DUDLEY FITTS

MARIZIBILL

Marizibill

Along the high-street in Cologne
back and forth she walked at night
a slick little piece for all to own
then tired of sidewalks she'd stay on
in shady barrooms drinking late

She went down and out, she gave her all
for a redheaded pimp with a bloodshot eye
a Jew he was with a garlic smell
who'd come from Formosa once and hauled
her out of some whorehouse in Shanghai

People I know of every sort
to match their fates they lack the force
like dead leaves they're irresolute
their eyes are fires just half put out
their hearts sway open like their doors

FREDERICK MORGAN

WHITE SNOW

La Blanche neige

Angels angels in the sky
One's dressed as an officer
One as a cook
And the others are singing

Smart officer color of the sky
Long after Christmas soft spring will bring
A shining sun to medal you
A shining sun

And now the cook is plucking geese
Ah! fall of snow
Falling and no
Darling girl in my arms' embrace

DUDLEY FITTS

SALOME

Salomé

To bring a smile once more to John Baptist's lips
Sire I would outdance the Seraphim
In your countess' finery why are you so sad
As you sit by the Prince Mother and look at him

My heart leaped up leaped up to hear him speak
That day I was dancing on the fennel ground
Lilies I worked in silken embroidery
For a streamer to bind the tip of his staff around

Now King Herod for whom will you have me sew
His staff bloomed with new flowers at Jordan River
And when your soldiers carried him away
The lilies in my garden died forever

Come down come down with me to the quincunx glade
Silly pretty King your tears are told
Instead of that gewgaw of yours take this head and dance
But do not touch the brow my mother is cold

Go before us Sire and you pikemen march behind
We'll dig in the earth and bury him and he
Shall have our flowers our dancing in a round
Until my garter drops from my dancing knee
From the king his snuffery
From the princess her rosary
From the parson his breviary

DUDLEY FITTS

AUTUMN

Automne

A bowlegged peasant and his ox receding
 Through the mist slowly through the mist of autumn
 Which hides the shabby and sordid villages

And out there as he goes the peasant is singing
 A song of love and infidelity
 About a ring and a heart which someone is breaking

Oh the autumn the autumn has been the death of summer
 In the mist there are two gray shapes receding

W. S. MERWIN

RHENISH AUTUMN

Rhénane d'Automne

To Toussaint Luca

The children of the dead are going to play
 In the graveyard
 Martin Gertrude Hans and Henri
 No cock has crowed today
 Kikiriki

The old women
 All in tears are proceeding
 And the good burros
 Bray heehaw and start to munch the flowers
 Of the funeral wreaths

This is the day of the dead and of all their souls

The children and the old women
Light candles and tapers
On each catholic grave
The veils of the old women
The clouds in the sky
Are like the beards of she-goats

The air trembles with flames and prayer

The graveyard is a beautiful garden
Full of hoary willows and rosemary
Often they are friends who are buried here
Ah! how blessed you are in the beautiful graveyard
You beggars who died drunkards
You who are eyeless as Fate
And you children who died as you prayed

Ah! how blessed you are in the beautiful graveyard
You burgomasters you seamen
And you counselors of state
And you gypsies without passport
Life is rotting your belly
We stumble on the cross at our feet

The owls hoot and the moaning wind from the Rhine
Blows out the tapers which the children light again and
again
And the dead leaves
Come to cover the dead

Dead children now and then speak with their mother
And dead women now and then long to come back

Oh! I do not want you to return
The autumn is full of disembodied hands
No no these are dead leaves
They are the hands of the dear dead
They are your disembodied hands

We have wept so much today
With these dead their children and the old women
Under a sunless sky
In the graveyard full of flames

Then we had to turn back into the wind
At our feet the chestnuts rolled
And their burrs were
Like the wounded heart of the Madonna
We wondered if her skin
Was the color of the autumn chestnuts

DAISY ALDAN

I HAD THE COURAGE . . .

J'ai eu le courage . . .

I had the courage to look backward
The ghosts of my days
Mark my way and I mourn them
Some lie moldering in Italian churches
Or in little woods of citron trees
Which flower and bear fruit
At the same time and in every season
Other days wept before dying in taverns
Where ardent odes became jaded
Before the eyes of a mulatto girl who inspired poetry
And the roses of electricity open once more
In the garden of my memory

DAISY ALDAN

HUNTING HORNS

Cors de chasse

Our history is exalted tragic
 Like the masque of some despot
 No drama of high exploit or magic
 No detail that matters or does not
 Can make this love of ours pathetic

Thomas De Quincey drinking down
 His opium sweet poison demure
 Went in a dream to his poor Anne
 Pass by pass by since nothing's sure
 Often I'll come back again

Memory is a hunting horn
 Its tone dies out along the wind

DUDLEY FITTS

VENDEMAIRE

Vendémiaire

Remember me you men in years to come
 My lifetime saw the passing away of kings
 Silent and glum they perished one by one
 Who were thrice brave reduced to conjuring

In Paris how charmingly September closed
 Each night grew like a vine whose branches spread
 Light upon that city while overhead
 Ripe stars pecked at by my glory's tipsy birds
 Hung waiting to be gathered in the dawn

Passing the shadowy empty quays one night
As I came back to Auteuil I heard a voice
Singing a grave song phrased with silences
Through which there rose from all along the Seine
Farther voices in distant pure lament

Long I stood listening to these cries and songs
Stirred by the voice of Paris in the night

Cities of France of Europe of all the world
I am thirsty drain into my deep throat

Then I saw that Paris already drunk in the vine
Was gathering the sweetest grape that the world knows
The marvelous fruit singing from the trellises

And Rennes answered for Quimper and for Vannes
We are here O Paris Our houses our citizens

These grapes of our senses engendered by the sun
Perish to quench your thirst too urgent a prodigy
To all of you we bring minds graveyards and walls
And cradles filled with cries that you will not hear
Upstream or down O rivers our thoughts are yours
The ears of the schools and our joined hands
Fingers pricked up like parish steeples
We bring you the lithe power of reason too
Mystery that shuts as a door shuts the house
The gallant mystery of ancient courtesy
Mystery fatal fatal in another life

Double reason existing beyond beauty
Unknown to Greece unknown to the Orient
The double reason of Brittany where wave by wave
The ocean slowly gelds the continent

Gaily the cities of the North replied

O Paris we are yours your lively drinks

The virile cities where metallic saints
Talk and sing in our consecrated mills
Sky-open our chimneys fill the clouds
As once Ixion good mechanic did
And our numberless hands
Shops mills factories hands
Where workers naked as our fingers fashion
Reality for whatever wage an hour
All that we give you

And Lyon answered as the angels of Fourvières
Wove a new heaven with the silk of prayer

Refresh your thirst Paris with the divine words
Murmured by my two lips the Rhône and the Saône
The same cult rising always from its death
Puts saints asunder here and rains down blood
Fortunate rain O tepid drops O pain
A child watches windows opening wide
And grapes yielding themselves to drunken birds

And then the cities of the South replied

Great Paris last refuge of living reason
Ordering our moods as your destiny compels
And you O Mediterranean drawing back
Divide our bodies as it were the broken Host
These lofty loves and this orphan dance of theirs
Shall be the pure wine O Paris that you love

An endless death-rattle rose from Sicily
Composing words in a long whirl of wings

All the grapes have been gathered from our vines
And this fruit of the dead whose flattened seeds
Taste of the blood of earth and of its salt
All is yours for your thirst Paris beneath
A sky curtained by hungry clouds
Petted by Ixion that indirect creator
And all the crows of Africa hatch in this sea

O grapes And these leaden and domestic eyes
Future and life mope in the trellises

But where are the sirens with gleaming stare
That trapped the mariners whom these birds loved
There is no gleam now from the Skyllan rock
Where once serene and soft three voices sang

Suddenly the aspect of the strait had changed
Faces of wave-flesh or of
Whatever else the mind can summon up
You are only masks imposed upon faces masked

He smiled that young swimmer in midstream
Among the drowned floating on that new flood
And the plaintive singers fled in pursuit of him

They said farewell to whirlpool and to rock
To their pale husbands stretched on the terraces
Then set their flight toward the burning sun
Along the wave where the great stars plunge down

When night returned covered with open eyes
To wander where the hydra hissed this winter
And suddenly I heard your imperious voice
O Rome
Damn with one breath all my accustomed thoughts
And the sky where love shepherds our destinies

The sprung iron bands on the tree of the Cross
And even the fleur-de-lis dying in the Vatican
Compounded in this wine I offer you having
A taste of the pure blood of one familiar
With a vegetal liberty you do not know
For the essential power that it is

The triple crown is fallen on the flagstones
And hierarchs kick it with their sandaled feet
O democratic splendor fading now
Let the royal night descend and the beasts be killed

Wolf-bitch and lamb eagle and mild dove
A crowd of kings hostile and merciless
Thirsting like you in the eternal vine
Shall spring from the ground and come down from the air
For a drink of my twice millenary wine

In silence now the Moselle meets the Rhine
At Coblenz it is Europe praying night and day
And I who lingered on the Auteuil quay
As the spaced hours drifted down like leaves
I heard the timely prayer of the vine stock
Joining the liquid purity of the rivers

O Paris your own wine is better than this
Grown on our banks but on branches from the north

All the grapes are ripe for this terrible thirst
My masculine strong grapes bleeding in the press
You will drink down in long draughts all of Europe's blood
Because you are beautiful because only you are noble
And because it is in you that God becomes
And these vintners of mine in their elegant houses
That flash fire each evening across our waters
In these fine houses stark white and black
Not knowing the real you they chant your glory
But we join our liquid hands in prayer
Leading the restless floods down to the brine
And the city lying between our two blades
Sheds no light on its two waters as it sleeps
While from time to time a far-off whistle
Troubles the sleeping daughters of Coblenz

And now the cities were answering by the hundreds
I could no longer distinguish their distant speech
And Trier that venerable city
Joined its voice with theirs

All the universe centered in this wine
Containing seas animals plants
Cities and their fate and the singing stars

Men kneeling on Heaven's bank
And docile iron our good companion
And fire lovable as one's own self
All the haughty dead united behind my brow
The lightning flash quick as a newborn thought
All names six by six all numbers one by one
Tons of paper twisting like flame
And those coming someday to whiten our bones
The good immortal worms so demurely bored
Armies ranged as for battle
Crucifix forests and the lacustrine dwellings
Along the shores of her eyes whom I love so
And flowers crying out of mouths
And everything that I can not say
Everything that I shall never know
All of it all of it changed into this pure wine

For which Paris thirsted
Then was revealed to me

Accomplishments pleasant days horror nights
Vegetation Couplings eternal music
Motions Adorations divine regret
Worlds self-mirroring mirroring us
I have drunk you without being slaked

But I have known since how the universe tastes

I am drunk from drinking the whole universe
On the dock by the river flood and the sleeping barges

Oh hear me I am the gullet of Paris
If I like I will drink the universe again

Listen to my song of cosmic drunkenness

The September night was ending slowly
The red bridge-fires were dying in the Seine
With the fading stars Dawn was about to break

There is such sweetness everywhere
Paris like a waking girl
Rises languid from her sleep
Shakes out the long coils of her hair
Singing and what she sings is fair

My youth has fallen where is it now
See all my future is in flames
Let the whole world hear me today
When I pronounce that now at last
Prophecy is an art newborn

You will find men who stand like hills
Towering from the run of men
Seeing the distant future's shape
Better than what surrounds them now
Clearer than what is past and gone

Adornment of roadways and of times
Passing and lasting without stay
Let us give the serpents leave to hiss
Vainly against the southern wind
The Psylli and the wave are gone

Schedule of days if our machines
Should set themselves to think at last
Waves of gold would comb and break
On stretches of a jeweled shore
The foam would be a womb once more

An eagle's pitch is less than man's
Man's is the joy that the sea knows
He frees himself in that upper air
From shadows and the muzzying blues
And so the spirit regains the dream

This is the time of sorcery
It's ours again prepare to see
A thousand million prodigies
Beyond the scope of myth itself
Since none has yet imagined them

The inner depths of consciousness
Tomorrow they will be explored
Who knows what living entities
Will be drawn up from that abyss
What new and whole cosmologies

Prophets rising up to speak
On the blue line of the distant hills
Will know the certitude of things
That learned men pretend to know
And they will carry us where they will

Desire is the greatest force
Come let me kiss you on the brow
Ah you are light as a tongue of flame
All of whose suffering you know
All of whose fervor burning bright

The time will come when we shall know
All that's to know of suffering
An age neither of taking heart
Nor of letting what we cherish go
Nor of doing all that we can do

In man himself we shall seek out
More than was ever sought before
And we shall weigh with no machines
Or instruments the will of man
And the drive engendered by that will

And even those who most would help
Are wrong in their ministering to us
Since the times that made us one
Nothing is ended nothing's begun
Look on your finger there's a ring

Time of deserts and crossroads
Time of hills and of city squares
I am here for a stroll or two
Where a talisman enacts his role
Dead and more subtle than life itself

At last I've set myself apart
From every natural concern
Die I may but I cannot sin
And whatever any man has touched
My hands have touched my hands have felt

I have investigated un-
imagined things and many times
I have taken the very weight
Of life unweighable and now
I can perish with a smile

How often I have soared so high
So high that everything disappeared
Good-bye bizarreries ghosts good-bye
Then how shall I be imposed upon
By a small boy's pantomime of fear

Farewell my youth jasmine of time
I have breathed that fresh perfume
At Rome upon the floral floats
Gay with masks and tinkling bells
And the bright wreaths of carnival

Pure Christmas farewell now my youth
When all life was a single star
And I could see it mirrored in
The Mediterranean water far
Pearlier than a meteor

Downy as an archangelical
Nest with a garland made of clouds
Brighter than halos are and all
Splendors and emanating fires
Single sweetness Harmonies

But now I make a halt to watch
Upon the incandescent grass
A straying snake and it is I
I am the flute I play upon
I am the whip I am the lash

There is a time for suffering
There is a time for goodness too
My youth farewell the time has come
To know what it is the future holds
To know and not to die of it

This is the time of burning grace
When only a man's will can act
Seven years of tests beyond belief
Will bring him back to his true self
More pure more wise and more alive

He will discover worlds beyond
Now his mind shrivels like those flowers
That bring to birth delicious fruits
And we shall see them ripening
Upon the hill in the thick sun

I sing of very life and I
Alone am fit to sing this song
My music falls like scattered seed
You other singers be still You shall
Not mingle your tares with my wheat

A vessel came into the port
A great ship fine with all her flags
On her we found no one at all
But a woman she was rosy fair
And she lay murdered at our feet

I was begging another time
And all they gave me was a flame
That burnt me to the lips I could
Not say a single word of thanks
Torch that nothing can put out

And where are you dear friend of mine
Withdrawn so deep into yourself
That only a pit was left behind
For me to hurl myself into
Down to the neutral shades below

I hear my footsteps coming back
Along those pathways that no foot
Has ever taken I hear my steps
Always passing there below
Slow or swift as they come and go

Winter you with your whiskered chin
It's snowing I am out of sorts
I have traversed a glory of skies
Where human life is music and
The sun is too white for my eyes

Become familiar as I have
With the wonders that I proclaim
The goodness that is to prevail
The suffering that I endure
Then you will know what is to come

From suffering with goodness joined
A purer beauty shall be born
Than any beauty found before
In balanced counterweight of forms
Snow falls I shudder and I burn

Here at my table I write down
Whatever it may be I have felt
Whatever I have sung up there
A thrusting tree that sways against
The wind and its light streaming hair

A silk hat on the tablecloth
In a jumble of fruit the gloves lie dead
Beside an apple a lady cranes
Her neck to see the gentleman
Stands next her and engulfs himself

The dance whirls on at the back of time
I have killed the handsome band leader
And for the pleasure of my friends
I peel an orange now whose taste
Is a marvel of fireworks in the sky

They are all dead the headwaiter comes
And pours them an unreal champagne
That bubbles as though it were a snail
Or as though it were a poet's brain
A rose was singing all the while

The slave raises a naked sword
Like rivers and their springing wells
And every time he lowers it
The guts of a universe are drawn
And new worlds issue forth from it

The chauffeur hangs on to the wheel
And every time along the road
He honks at a corner there beyond
Just at the edge of his eye's reach
A virgin universe recedes

Third on the program's the lady who
Takes the elevator up
Up she goes forever up
And light streams round about her and
She stands transfigured in that light

But these are minor secrets There
Are others you'll find more profound
To be disclosed in a little while
And they will cut you through and through
With a thought forever unparalleled

Weep then and weep and weep again
What though the moon is full tonight
Or only crescent in the sky
Ah weep and weep and weep again
We have laughed so long in the sunlight

Arms of gold support this life
 The golden secret must be pierced
 There's nothing but a rapid flame
 Touched by a rose adorably
 And all the fragrance of the rose

DUDLEY FITTS

ALWAYS

Toujours

To Madame Faure-Favier

Always

We'll go further without ever advancing
 And from planet to planet

From nebula to nebula
 The Don Juan of a thousand-and-three comets
 Without even stirring from the earth
 Looks for new forces
 And takes phantoms seriously

And so much universe forgets itself
 What are the great forgetters
 Who then will know how to make us forget such and such
 a part of the world
 Where is the Christopher Columbus to whom one will owe
 the forgetting of a continent

To lose

But to lose truly
 To give way to discovery
 To lose
 Life to find Triumph

COMPANY COMMANDER

Chef de section

My mouth will flame the sulphurs of the Pit
 You will find my mouth a hell of sweetness and seduction
 My mouth's angels will hold sway in your heart
 My mouth's soldiers will take you by storm
 The priests of my mouth will cense your beauty
 Your soul will shake like a terrain in an earthquake
 Your eyes will be charged with all the love that humanity
 has stored up in its eyes since the beginning
 My mouth will be an army against you a stumbling
 awkward army
 Tricky as a magician with his sleight of changing shapes
 The choirs and orchestra of my mouth will tell you my love
 It murmurs to you now from far away
 While I stand here eyes fastened to my watch waiting for
 the exact moment to go over the top

DUDLEY FITTS

THE PRETTY REDHEAD

La Jolie Rousse

Here I am before all a man of sense
 Knowing life and of death as much as a human being can
 know
 Having experienced the pangs and the joys of love
 Having known at times how to impose his ideas
 Acquainted with several languages
 Having traveled not a little
 Having seen war in the Artillery and the Infantry
 Wounded in the head trepanned under chloroform
 Having lost his best friends in the frightful struggle
 I know of the old and the new as much as one man can
 know of the two
 And without being disturbed today by this war

Between us and for us my friends
I judge this long quarrel about tradition and invention
About Order and Adventure

You whose mouth is made in the image of God's
Mouth which is order itself
Be indulgent when you compare us
With those who were the perfection of order
We who seek adventure everywhere

We are not your enemies
We strive to give you vast and strange domains
Where mystery flowers for all who would gather it
There are new fires of colors there never seen before
A thousand imponderable phantasms
To which reality must be given
We strive to explore kindness enormous country where all
is still
There is also time which can be banished or recaptured
Pity us who struggle ever on the frontiers
Of the limitless and the future
Pity us our errors pity us our sins

Here now comes summer the violent season
And my youth as well as the spring is dead
O Sun this is the time of ardent Reason
And I expect
To follow ever the sweet and noble form
Which she takes that I may love only her
She comes and draws me as a magnet iron
She has the charming aspect
Of an adorable redhead

Her hair is of gold one might say
A lovely flash of lightning that endures
Or those flames which flaunt
In tea roses that wither

But laugh laugh at me
Men everywhere especially people here
For there are so many things that I do not dare tell you
So many things that you would not permit me to say
Have pity on me

KATE FLORES

Paul Valéry

1871–1945

PAUL VALÉRY

1871-1945

Valéry is without question the pre-eminent French poet of the twentieth century. Like Mallarmé, whose leading disciple he was, he produced relatively little poetry and was silent altogether from the mid-nineties until 1917, when what he had planned as the short valedictory to a reprinting of his scattered poems turned into *La Jeune Parque*, his major work in verse and, it has been said, the most difficult poem in the language. Neither its difficulty, however, nor the time of its publication prevented the immediate recognition of it as a masterpiece. Within a few years Valéry's stature as a literary figure was to be compared only with that of Proust and Gide.

Echoing Mallarmé's preoccupation with the relation of potentiality to action, Valéry moved this concern from the world of art, of the poem, to the world of experience, of such experience, at any rate, as involved the intellect. His world is divided into a pure, potential, contemplated aspect, where all is absolute, and one which is impure, actual, acted, where all is relative. Creativity, the creation of the poem—or the process of any action involving intellect—is an oscillation between these aspects. What may serve to control activity, to keep it as near perfection as can be, what may demonstrate the poet's mastery of the actual, is the skill with which he works, the rigidity of the control he exerts as he works. At the opposite pole from the Romantic notion of inspiration, as it is from the Surrealist's automatic writing, Valéry's emphasis upon technique and the function of the mind produces in his poetry a remarkable contrast with its delicate but none the less striking sensuality.

HELEN

Hélène

Azure! behold me . . . I come from the caverns of death
To hear once more the measured sounding of waves,
And once more I see long galleys in the dawn
Revive from darkness in a file of golden oars.

My solitary hands call forth those monarchs
Whose beards of salt entwined my simple fingers.
I wept. They sang of their obscure triumphs
And of buried seas in the wake of their barques.

I hear deep hollow shells and the compelling
Clarions of war, pacing the flight of the oars—
The clear song of the oarsmen chains this tumult.

And gods raised high on the heroic prow,
Their ancient smile insulted by the spray,
Hold forth toward me forgiving sculptured arms.

ANDREW CHIAPPE

THE FRIENDLY WOOD

Le Bois amical

Meditations pure were ours
Side by side, along the ways;
We held each other's hand without
Speaking, among the hidden flowers.

Alone we walked as if betrothed,
Lost in the green night of the fields;
We shared this fruit of fairy reels,
The moon, to madmen well disposed.

And then, we were dead upon the moss,
Far, quite alone, among the soft
Shades of this intimate, murmuring wood;

And there, in the vast light aloft,
We found ourselves with many a tear,
O my companion of silence dear!

VERNON WATKINS

THE CEMETERY BY THE SEA

Le Cimetière marin

This tranquil roof, with walking pigeons, looms
Trembling between the pines, among the tombs;
Precise midday the sea from fire composes—
The sea, the sea, forever rebegun!
What recompense after a thought is one
Look on the calm of gods the sea disposes!

Pure energies of lightning-flash consume
What diamond of evanescent spume!
And how is peace conceived in this pure air!
When the sun rests at noon above the abyss,
Pure work of an eternal cause is this,
And dream is knowledge, here in trembling air.

Temple unto Athena, quiet curve,
Ponderous calm and visible reserve,
Enchanting water, sleeping eye, aloof
Beneath a flaming veil, enduring bowl,
O silence! Like a tower within the soul,
But summit of a thousand gold tiles, Roof!

Temple of Time that one sigh may resume,
I climb this point and habitude assume,
Surrounded by the sea's enclosing sight.
As though an altar flamed and smoke arose,
My offering, the scintillation sows
A sovereign disdain along the height.

And as the hungry mouth obscures the fresh
Contour of fruit, translating thus its flesh
Into enjoyment, which the form abhors,
My future I inhale, in smoke unbound;
And to the soul consumed the heavens sound
The hollow alteration of seashores.

Fair sky, true sky, consider how I changel
After so much of pride, so much of strange
Indolence, yet full of power, unspent,
I abandon myself to this bright space,
Over the tombs my shadow runs its race,
Taming myself to its fragile movement.

My soul exposed to torches of the sun,
I can sustain you, just and forthright one,
Unerring light, pitilessly arrayed!
Pure to your primal place I have restored
You: contemplate yourself! But light outpoured
Presumes one somber moiety of shade.

O for myself, within myself alone,
Near to the poem's source, against the bone,
Between the void and pure contingency,
I wait the echoing greatness from within,
Like some sonorous, bitter cistern's din,
Sounding some chasm in the soul to be.

Do you know, subtle prisoner of leaves,
Devourer of the grills the foliage weaves,
The shining mystery on my closed eyes,
What flesh impels me to its slothful end,
What forehead to this bony earth I bend?
A spark dreams of my absent loyalties.

Closed, sacred, filled with fire of nothing spun,
 Terrestrial fragment offered to the sun,
 This place by torches governed pleases me,
 Composed of gold, of stone and somber glades,
 Where so much marble trembles over shades;
 Over the tombs there sleeps the faithful seal

Resplendent bitch! Keep off the idolator,
 While I with shepherd's smile lay out the store
 Of earth for these, my white, mysterious sheep,
 My tranquil tombs, the strange, white, herded things.
 Vain dreams, and angels with inquiring wings,
 And prudent pigeons at a distance keep!

Once here the future becomes idleness;
 The clean insect scratches the aridness;
 Everything burns and is undone, the sere
 Grasses like fire invade the splitting wood . . .
 Now drunk with absence, life's infinitude,
 And bitterness is sweet and mind is clear.

The hidden dead are well within this clay
 That warms them, burns their mystery away.
 Midday above, high noontide without motion,
 Thinks in itself and is its proper stem . . .
 O complete head and perfect diadem,
 I am in you the secret alteration.

You have but me to hold your fearful taint!
 My penitence and doubt and my constraint
 In your great diamond comprise the flaw! . . .
 But in their night of marble-weighted cold,
 A shadowy people of the rooted mold,
 Slow, hesitating, to your party draw.

Into heavy absence they are blended,
 White species unto the red clay descended;
 The gift of life is passing to the flowers.
 Where are the well-known phrases of the dead,
 The personal art, the souls distinguishèd?
 The source of tears the tracking worm devours.

Of flattered girls the eager, sharpened cries,
The moistened eyelids and the teeth and eyes,
The charming breasts that parley with the flame,
The shining blood at lips that pleasure rifts,
The fingers that defend the final gifts,
All go beneath the earth, rejoin the game.

Do you, great soul, still hope to find a dream
Without these colors of a lying scheme
That wave and gold display here to the eye?
When you are changed to breath, then will you sing?
My presence is porous! All is flying!
But holy eagerness must also die!

You, black and gold, gaunt immortality,
Death's head wreathed with the broken laurel tree,
Who say that where we end we but begin—
O lovely lie! O cunning, pious ruse!
Who does not know them—who does not refuse
The empty skull and the eternal grin!

Deep fathers, uninhabited heads, now dull,
Who, weighted by so many shovelful,
Become the earth, and who confound our steps,
The gnawing and unanswerable worm's
Not yours, beneath the table. He confirms
My flesh, he lives on life, he keeps my steps.

What name I call him does not signify,
As love, or self-contempt; his tooth must pry,
Ever, so near my life no name him wrongs!
What matter! He can see, will, dream, and touch!
He likes my flesh, and even on my couch
My passing life to him, who lives, belongs.

Ah Zenon! Cruel Zeno of Elea!
Who pierce my body with your winged idea,
Arrow that flying denies motion's press!
The sound brings me to birth, the arrow slays!
Ah Sun! What shadow of a tortoise stays
The soul, Achilles running motionless!

No, no! . . . Arise and enter the next state!
 This thoughtful pose, my body, dissipate!
 Drink, my breast, of the wind, a rising bourn!
 A freshness breathed from off the quickening sea
 Gives back my soul . . . O salty potency!
 I'll run to the wave and from it be reborn!

Yes! great sea with delirium endowed,
 O torn chlamys and hide of panther proud,
 With thousand thousand idols of the sun,
 Absolute hydra, drunk with your blue flesh,
 Who tail in mouth eternally enmesh
 In turbulence that is with silence one,

The wind awakes! . . . I must presume to live!
 The immense air in my book is tentative;
 The wave dares spout in powder from the rocks!
 Flee, dazzled pages! Chase time and the hour!
 Break, waves, and shatter with exultant power
 This tranquil roof where jib-sails peck in flocks!

BARBARA GIBBS

SONG OF THE COLUMNS

Cantique des colonnes

Sweet columns, with
 Chaplets adorned with day,
 Crowned with true birds, no myth,
 That walk the stone-fledged way,

Sweet columns, O
 The bobbins' orchestral
 Each one confides its own
 Hush to the unison.

--What do you bear so high
Equal in radiance?
--For desire's faultless eye
Our studious elegance.

We sing by mutual choice
That we bear up the skies.
O sage and single voice
Singing for the eyes!

See what clear hymns!
What sonority
Our light-enamoured limbs
Draw from limpidity!

So chill, chased with dawn,
We from our beds early
By the chisel were drawn
To become these lilies!

From our beds of cold crystal
We were awakened,
Talons of metal
Gripped us and slackened.

To face the moon,
The moon and sun glow,
We were polished each one
Like a nail of the toe!

Servant-maids inflexuous,
Smiles with no viewer,
The girl before us
Feels her legs pure.

Piously matched peers,
The nose beneath the stringcourse
And our rich ears
Deaf to the white load's force,

A temple on our eyes,
Dark for eternity,
Without the gods we rise
To that divinity!

Our antique youths,
Dull flesh, fair shades of mirth,
Are bright with subtle truths
Which numbers bring to birth.

Girls of the golden numbers,
Strong with heaven's laws and rod,
On us there falls and slumbers
A honey-colored god.

He sleeps at ease, the Day,
Whom every day with vows
We on love's table lay,
Slack-tided on our brows.

Incorruptible sisters,
Half fire, half cool as eves,
We took for dancers
Breezes and dry leaves,

And the centuries, by ten,
And the past peoples' tide,
It is a deep-found Then,
Then never satisfied!

Beneath our loves that raise
A weight than Earth more grave
Silent we cross the days
Like a stone the wave!

We walk in time, and these
Our dazzling bodies
Have steps ineffable
That mark in fable . . .

INSINUATION

L'Insinuant

Oh Curves, meanderings,
Tricks of the liar,
What skill more gentle
Than this delay?

May I be your guide?
I know what I do,
And my fell design
Will not injure you . . .

(Although she smiles
So confidently,
Such liberty
Bewilders her!)

Oh Curves, meanderings,
Tricks of the liar,
I will make you wait
For the gentlest word.

BARBARA HOWES

THE BURIED LADY

La Fausse morte

Tenderly, humbly, upon the charming tomb,
The unconscious monument
Formed by your overweary grace from shade,
Surrenderings, wasteful love,
I die, I throw myself upon you, drop, despond,

But hardly have I fallen to the sepulcher
Whose sealed expanse invites me on to dust,
Than her seeming corpse, in which the life revives,
Stirs, fires me with her glance, and sinks her teeth
In my flesh—and ever tears from me a new
Death far dearer than life.

BARBARA HOWES

POMEGRANATES

Les Grenades

Hard pomegranates sundered
By excess of your seeds,
You make me think of mighty brows
Aburst with their discoveries!

If the suns you underwent,
O pomegranates severed,
Wrought your essence with the pride
To rend your ruby segments,

And if the dry gold of your shell
At instance of a power
Cracks in crimson gems of juice,

This luminous eruption
Sets a soul to dream upon
Its secret architecture.

KATE FLORES

THE LOST WINE

Le Vin perdu

One day into the sea I cast
(But where I cannot now divine)
As offering to oblivion,
My small store of precious wine . . .

What, oh rare liquor, willed your loss?
Some oracle half understood?
Some hidden impulse of the heart
That made the poured wine seem like blood?

From this infusion of smoky rose
The sea regained its purity,
Its usual transparency . . .

Lost was the wine, and drunk the waves!
I saw high in the briny air
Forms unfathomed leaping there.

BARBARA HOWES

INTERIOR

Intérieur

With narrow eyes below soft chains, a slave
Empties my vases, in the mirror dives,
Extends to the secret bed her pure, white hands:
Within these walls a modest woman moves
Who in my reverie cuts through my vision,
Never once endangering abstraction,
As by a simple glass the sun is caught
Without the apparatus of pure thought.

BARBARA HOWES

PALM

*Palme**To Jeannie*

An angel sets at my place
—Barely screening the accolade
Of his formidable grace—
Fresh milk, new-baked bread;
With his lids he makes a sign
That is like a petition
That says to my vision:
Calm, calm, be calm,
Know the heaviness of a palm
Bearing its profusion!

Even as it bends
Under abundant good things
The shape perfectly rounds,
The heavy fruits are strings.
Wonder how it sheds
Vibrancy, how a slow thread
That parcels out the moment
Adjudicates without mystery
The heaviness of the sky
And the earth's enticement!

This fair mobile arbitress
Between shadow and sunlight
Wears the sibyl's dress,
Wisdom of day, sleep of night.
All round the one spot
The wide palm wearies not
Of welcomes and farewells . . .
How noble and soft it is
And worthy to dispose
The comforts of immortals!

The faint gold it sighs
Rings like a mere finger of air
Burdening the desert skies
With a silken signature.
An imperishable sound
Which it gives to the sandy wind
That waters it with its grains
Serves it as oracle
And foretells the miracle
Of the chanting pain.

Between sand and sky,
Ignorant of its own nature,
Each brightening day
Adds honey to its store.
This gentleness is ordered by
The divine continuity
Which does not mark passing time
But rather hides it
In a juice wherein secretes
All of love's perfume.

If you sometimes despond—
If the ardored rigor
In spite of tears responds
Under a shadow of languor—
Never blame of avarice
A Wisdom that is nurse
To so much gold and authority:
An everlasting hope
Rises through the dark sap
To maturity!

These days that seem effete,
Lost to the universal will,
Have thirsty roots that penetrate
The desert soil.
Fibrous substances,
The elect of shades,
They will never cease to try,
Short of the world's bowels,
To uncover the deep wells
For which the heights cry.

Patience, patience,
Patience in the blueness!
Every atom of silence
Is a seed of ripeness!
The glad surprise will come,
Quietest commotion,
A dove, a fresh breeze,
A woman leaning in languor
Will bring the downpour
That makes you fall on your knees!

Let multitudes pass away
Palm! . . . Let them abandon
Themselves, wallow in the clay
At the fruitfulness of creation!
These hours have not been lost,
So lightly you rest,
Like one contemplative
After lovely surrender,
Whose soul is spendthrift
To grow with what it gives!

BARBARA GIBBS

ASIDES

Chanson à part

What do you do? Why, everything.
What are you worth? Worth, well,
The worth of mastery and disgust,
Presentiment and trial . . .
What are you worth? Worth, well . . .
What do you want? Nothing, all.

What do you know? Boredom.
What can you do? Dream.
And with the power of the mind
Can turn the morning into night.
What can you do? Dream,
And so drive boredom from the mind.

What do you want? My own good.
What must you do? Learn.
Learn and master and foresee,
All, of course, to no good.
What do you fear? The will.
Who are you? Nothing, nothing at all.

Where are you going? To death.
What will you do there? Die;
Nor ever return to this rotten game,
Forever and ever and ever the same.
Where are you going? To die.
What will you do there? Be dead.

WILLIAM JAY SMITH

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