

## **Classic Poetry Series**

# **Edouard Roditi**

**- 3 poems -**

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## **Edouard Roditi (6 June 1910 - 10 May 1992)**

Edouard Roditi was an American poet, short-story writer and translator

### Biography

Édouard Roditi was born in Paris, June 6, 1910; he was educated in England at Elstree, Charterhouse, and Balliol, and received a BA from the University of Chicago; he became acquainted with T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, André Breton and other leading literary figures, while living in London, Paris, and Berlin (1929-37); he published the first Surrealist manifesto in English, "The new reality," in the Oxford outlook (1929); while continuing his literary interests, he worked for the U.S. government during World War II for the Office of War Information and also served as an interpreter for the State Department during the San Francisco conference which established the United Nations.

In 1961, Roditi translated Yasar Kemal's epic novel *Ince Memed* (1955) under the English title *Memed, My Hawk*. This book was instrumental in introducing the famed Turkish writer to the English-speaking world. *Memed, My Hawk* is still in print.

In addition to his poetry and translations, Roditi is perhaps best remembered for the numerous interviews he conducted with modernist artists, including Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, Oskar Kokoschka, Philippe Derome and Hannah Höch. Several of these have been assembled in the collection *Dialogues on Art*

Roditi also held teaching positions at various colleges and universities; in addition to his literary achievements, Roditi was known as a generous and encouraging mentor to young writers; he died in Spain on May 10, 1992.

### Works:

Poems for F (1934)  
Oscar Wilde: a critical study (1947)  
Dialogues on art (1960)  
De l'homosexualité (1962)  
In a lost world (1978)  
Thrice chosen (1981)

## **Aurora Borealis**

A crystallization of color spreads from the upper regions of the dark sky towards the trembling nipples of the waves. The feathering fringes of clouds fade behind pillars of green light. Transparent curtains tremble every-where. In the arctic temple, the hidden Samson of light shakes the moon-green pillars of the night.

Color these crystals with sudden blood; it is dawn, or else the last consumptive saliva of the dying day. Heartless hard light!

In the crisp light of the frozen tinkling stars, no waters flow. The ice-stars are icebergs in this black ocean. When the green glass cathedrals crash, the light and the pillars of light and the green pillars of moon-green crystallized light are reflected through space and finally settle like sharp blades above the trembling nipples of the waves.

Samson moves in the glass cathedrals. Samson and the bull and Samson and the sun and the sun is the bull and Samson is the sun and is the bull.

Let crackling twigs of green-white light weave fantastic tree-patterns on the mirror of the sea. Let the deceptive sky celebrate the fall of its ice-cathedrals and its icebergs and its ice-stars when darkness hardens the black waters into the sullen black ice-pack of night.

Red Samson the arctic red sun is moving in the groves of green pillars. There is the red tinge of consumptive blood flickering behind the moon-green glass pillars of light. Blood of red Samson, red blood of Samson, the red thief is sprinkling blood on the slanting pillars of the falling sanctuary of light that is doomed to succumb soon to the black ice-pack of night. Then there will be night and, suddenly thrust into dark night, the red sex of the Samson-sun must later rise out of eastern whiteness and destroy the night.

Then the pillars of the black shattered temple of night glow with a white light and a red light of consumptive blood, but again later comes night then again the same Samson as the temples crash each time when the red thief scatters blood on the pillars of the light or the pillars of the night. And the thief is Samson and the red sun is Samson and Samson is the thief and Samson is the sun.

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## Hand

Clouds darken the plain.

From all sides, the mountains of the horizon move forward; the plain shrinks, crumpled into valleys that grow deeper. The three rivers become torrents that flow swiftly in their cavernous beds towards those dark spots where they meet: the cities.

Then the sun again.

The mountains move back to the distant circular horizon; the valleys disappear, and the three rivers flow placidly in their scarcely perceptible beds of luminous sands. The cities glisten with their crystal walls and the hard light is reflected from house to house along the glass streets. Men no longer drag their dark-blue shadows like long chains that rattled on the opaque cobble stones. Silence of light: frozen wines of sound. No wind stirs, sleepily coiled around the towers that are transparent stems bearing the white flowers of clouds which float, vehicles for our pure thoughts, like water-lilies on the surface of a stream until they fade into the blue depth of space.

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## **Seance**

The stranger walks into the dark room where the two men sit at the table and talk of travel. The stranger joins in the conversation, saying: 'I have also traveled' and the two men look up and seem surprised at his sudden appearance. In the corners of the ceiling there is a sound as of very swift wings, a muttering of motors, and a chattering of thin voices. The stranger disappears. His voice is heard first in this corner, then in that, until it fades away somewhere near the open window. Where the stranger stood the two men find a railway ticket to an unknown destination.

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