

## Poetry Series

# Emmanuel George Cefai

- poems -

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## **A reddening sun**

A reddening sun  
Into the azure sky fading  
I seem to see:  
My love, my love  
My reddening love,  
It seems to be:  
Like ripe fruit in the sun  
Like green boughs in the air  
Like lazing children sleeping  
In the hot summer afternoons  
After the mid-day eating.  
Like a soft-sleeping siesta  
A-dreaming and all-beaming  
A dulcet pair of azure eyes I see  
Is this my child to be?

Along the fields of sun  
And grasses green and trees  
Head-bent with overloading fruits:  
I seem to run without an aim  
And looking in the sky  
I want to speak and shout  
And do not find my voice:  
Such the mark of happiness  
When to the brim  
The red glass of happiness  
It overflows and brims.  
And in this feast of drunken wine  
A dulcet pair of tiny ears I see  
Is this my child to be?

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Aid me my Muse, my mind instill**

Aid me, my Muse, my mind instill  
And in my soul your warm breathe give  
To sing of Morpheus and his pleasant dreams  
I cannot sleep these days.  
Aye! Aye! Aye! I cannot sleep  
And thus came pilgrim to the Muse's shrine  
And there to ask my prayer to grant  
That I may rest my head in welcome sleep:  
What gifts, my Muse, favor will procure  
And cast me up in(to) your fortune's eyes  
Sprinkle with myrrh my passage to your shrine  
And fill with queer shapes its unwinding path?  
What gifts, my Muse, will please you most  
Amidst the gleaming jewels of the East  
Which the hoarding miser strokes with trembling hands  
In darkened solitude blest by a small light?  
What gifts, my Muse, will enchanting procure  
Your gracious favors to my anxious self  
Make your scepter yield with wanton hand  
And of your ordinance soften the content?

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **And the nightingales were singing**

And the nightingales were singing  
Do you remember that?  
The wine was not liquid but like gum  
And it fell slow and seeping  
Down the trees it fell.

It was mimicking the Milky Way.  
Where the milk of the stars  
Was trickling down  
Drop after dropp of milk  
Gum like in those giant gums  
Of immense distances.

For the heavens have such tears.  
And the immense heavens have  
Immense tears.  
For immense things propense are  
To immense things.

And then  
Throughout the night when Zephyr  
Watching with glistening eyes  
The summit stars decided  
To unwind his bag of winds  
A little - just a little;  
Then  
There cascaded in the immensity  
Of the night blue heavens  
There cascaded  
The solemn winds and on the sea  
The sails swelled.  
It was centuries ago.

But from the Milky Way a Star  
Was observing film-like  
Centuries ago before its eyes.  
Ah! The transposition of time  
And motion in a ray - it is  
Just like a film, just like a film  
It wanders in the silence of the nights.

It was an intelligent night.  
And the moon smiled and shone  
Even on the seas it shone  
Silver and white alternating  
In the ups and downs of the waves  
Small and introvert:  
And calm.

Ah! Verse and song  
ah! Verse and song  
For You

I will not exchange this or that:  
'It is your duty, sir, ' he said  
'Yes, ' I said, 'I will but await;  
First I must sing my song and verse  
And string till moment come  
That I string not  
The lyre the Muse gave and that  
As regards use is loaned to me:  
I cannot sir, duty must be, but  
Tarry yet.'

And the Human smiled for he understood  
And in him too the Muse entered too  
As magic spirits in the trees of a wood.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **As I my steps**

As I my steps  
Along the grated streets  
Of sweet Valletta I retraced  
I passed from street to street  
And I me thought that I could find  
The dwelling where you lived.

For me those streets familiar quite  
Became as dearer and dearer  
As I from city street to street  
My steps retraced their bearer

Aye! Aye! The streets became as dearer  
And beautiful more than I had seen  
For years and years before:  
The pregnant windows frowning black  
Unmoving ghosts in city pent  
I wandered quite what did they hide  
Behind their closed doors:  
The small quaint front doors in the street  
A few light inches the cobble stones above  
With memories faint and dim  
And with fast-fretting hither and thither  
The hazy residents of those small abodes  
Hid from my anxious questioning sight.

And as I passed along the street  
A chimney high I saw smiling with glee  
As it played child-like with white passing clouds  
Above the warm sun shone on the old stones  
That dreamt and dreamt and dreamt of years untold.

Aye! Aye! The city old  
Above the harbor glideth  
In my warm dreams:  
The sailing clouds  
Above the trees  
In the small garden passing:  
The green leaves  
In their high towers  
With each to each  
In their wild love-making  
To each and each are rustling:  
The citizens in city streets  
With hurried steps are passing.  
And whither do they pass  
And thither do they go?

The silent steps  
In the small sullen street  
I start descending  
As if some thief to catch

That in some city nook  
From me is hiding:  
A lazy cat  
Watches with half-open'd eye:  
Little beyond  
The stench of its urine  
Drown'd by the sweet sense  
Of roses pent in mortar cask  
And hanging from the city wall.

Yes! Time is passing  
In this sweet silent city of my dreams:  
Let me allow it pass  
Into the ocean sea-blue  
That in midst of it  
Like as in lover's arms  
My senses and myself will sink.

And I will not speak  
And I will not sing  
If not my lyre speaks  
If not my lyre sings.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **As the dry meseta stretched**

As the dry meseta stretched  
So stretched Bacchus  
Heavily asleep and overtook  
By chiding Dawn:  
She passed him and smiled  
Continued on her way on the fast Earth  
And Bacchus  
Bacchus woke in the sun  
That blazing in his eyes:  
Blinded his eyes to waking  
'At last! ' said the sun  
'At last! ' Bacchus said.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Bones**

Bones that in the night  
Shine  
But not only on nights  
Of moon light, even when  
The moon behind the clouds  
Frowning and huddled in the frozen skies  
Hides.  
And the swans in the lakes where  
Are they?  
No longer their chants or songs of  
Nightingales.  
But only  
Impulsive gusts of wind blowing  
Blowing random and discretionary  
This night  
When the bones shine irrespective of the moon.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Come, come, dry your eyes and tears**

Come, come, dry your eyes and tears  
Cunning woman, whose every day  
The clock of reproduction closes  
Tears a leaf from the calendar.

Lake that was fire in the twilight  
That  
Now under the moon light  
Shines  
Reflecting the night's desire.

Mount fairly tall but where  
The snow whitens the dark  
Of night to blue-azure:  
In the long distance better glimmering  
Over the burning lake shimmering.

To-day  
The moment comes for me  
To trace my steps to this site:  
As night closes round me  
My heart in fear leaps  
My heart in fear leaps  
My heart in fear leaps.

Below the pomengranate tree where  
Warm reigned in summer, where  
The night could be heard breathing sweat  
You lay  
Into the ecstasies of love and kissing  
Panting.

Then your cunning  
I kept at bay in your ecstasy  
You had to choose between it  
And cunning:  
Just like percentages or  
Two glasses: you add one  
And by the amount and proportion  
That you add one the other  
You decrease:  
That's proportion inverse.

No longer you yearn for the tower  
But you do yearn for the summer garden  
Trellised with remnants of the Spring  
Trophies of the yearly renaissance:  
You yearn for that and I with you.  
But now  
Now the cold, the cold blasts roll  
Over the garden, the trellised walls

Lanky and thin and dilapidate  
By the night-rains wetted lie  
Dreary and cold and thin:  
Haggard they look and speak not  
Nor our kisses warm nor our ecstasies  
Light the smoldering chimney fire  
But looks, furtive looks, just that.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## Ditty

Ah! Youth sweet youth!  
When we much younger were  
How clearer the vision stood  
When we at the fields looked  
Or trod the summer sea  
With oars and paddled boats  
Or else swam in low depths  
And basked on the warm sand  
In some half-hidden cove  
Along the rock hewn coast  
Of Circe's silent isle  
A-dreaming in the dusk  
Its long, long years of past.  
With closed eyes were we  
A-dreaming and a-musing  
Without a thought a whim  
Of fathering our children:  
And now and now  
A pair of ruddy legs I see  
Is this my child to be?

Ah! What strange convolutions  
Gray thought when drunk  
With red and warm-lit wine  
Goes through!  
What secret passages  
Throughout the brain  
Zig-zag in its hewn rock  
A down the humid earth  
It looked child's play  
Or some snakes and ladders  
Through long lost years  
Of silent history  
In fetters bound  
And striving for its liberty:  
With its lithe hands and feet  
A child's lithe struggling hands  
A pair of struggling feet  
I seem dimly to see  
Is this my child to be?

Turquoise and shining pearls  
And Eastern amulets  
From the deep ocean seas  
Of Indian oceans stolen  
And glittering necklaces  
Of some Valois princess:  
And mirrors brought from Crete  
To shine and all display  
In damasked Venetian halls:  
And all that beauty thinks

And all that beauty finds  
Does come into my eyes  
And your sweet face methinks I see  
Is this my child to be?

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Dreams of old**

Ah! Dreams of old  
Dreams of censer moving  
Here and there in the old monastery:  
And here moved torn apart  
That night  
Like the old censer the young legs  
Moved in a passion  
And a child was born.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Fog**

For through the fog the introspection  
The eerie eyes, thin and taut  
Like looking through a needle under fire  
Yes  
Yes I saw through the fog the introspection  
The coming of the Figure  
Now it turned White, then  
Black  
Then White again, then  
Twilight like the fainting waves  
When the red dusk starts lighting on the towns  
Panting the sunset out of country sides:  
Yes  
I loved the experience in that fog  
Heard the forge and bellows of the Earth  
Its heavy breathing  
In its suffering:  
Before during the Night it nursed itself:  
Still wounded  
Savage beast and raw, blood in its mouth,  
And dripping from its teeth  
The savage beast, this Earth:  
I saw  
Through the fog, the introspection  
The eerie eyes, thin and taut and needle-thin.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Ghosts of the Spirit**

Ghosts of the spirit  
They  
Mischievous things flew  
Flew  
Flew through the woods of Eden  
For so the desolate place was called  
Where a Styx-like river  
Flew:  
And Boreas like winds from the north  
With hail therein  
Blew, blew and blew:  
And flakes of hail flew  
Flew  
Like particles of red fire from the forge  
The bellows of the Earth  
Laboring in tempest:  
It was to be expected after all  
In that harsh winter, yes, it was  
To be expected.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Gown**

In the yellowish gown  
Tarnished  
Tarnished with so much wearing  
The beast came tearing  
Across the earth leopard-like  
It roamed savage and proud:  
And arrogant:  
And the moon panted out  
Its breath  
In fear at the arrogance:  
For arrogance on one side  
Breeds  
Fear on the other: a saw?  
Rifle-thin and cutting bayonet-like  
The blinding light, the clap,  
The rolling, sound that drawled,  
The magnificent, unique thunder.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Hear, last night, the roaring cavalcade**

Hear, last night the roaring cavalcade  
Of revelers that people street and club  
Party and elsewhere now sleep and doze  
And their thoughts upon the other are  
Deepening into profound austerity:  
Cold is the night, but martyrdom waits.  
Frosty is the night, but Fear lurks.  
Behind the corner trembles the sweet Dawn

Emmanuel George Cefai

## I

I  
I that could see the suffering  
I  
That had a heart pitying  
The healing of the Earth:  
I  
Who roamed a tiger through  
The hoarse and barren tufts  
That sprouted rare  
And wild here and there  
On that vast plain that stretched  
And stretched and stretched  
Horizon thin: where night  
Kissed it:  
Lip to lip:  
It stretched, and as I walked  
Through those long stretches  
Found I that it stretched  
And stretched till Night had ended  
And Dawn came smiling at the edge  
Where cliff and white fell giddy to deep seas.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **I have begun**

I have begun  
A new age, a new methodology  
Of writing verse, song and poesy.

You have noticed to-day.

Well, well, take note: it is vital.

The subjects are not so different:  
For who can escape  
The beauties of the night, the dusk,  
The winds, the verse and song,  
The Bacchanalian wreaths and wine?

Bring me the garland first  
I want the flowers  
Now that the dusk is gone.  
Next  
Bring the wreath, the laurel wreath  
And then the lyre simultaneously.

Let the Muse put the laurel wreath on my head.

Well, if I am ruined for being a Poet  
There is at least a laurel wreath  
That the silent nymphs and the Muse  
Have donned.

Humans take note: for you ignore.

Till now  
The iron of the burning molten fires  
Of the sinews of the forges  
Of the nether earth  
Are not obstructing the cool ground of green.

Nor frighten the nymphs and fairies numerous.

For the Dawn is away, and in their numbers  
From small numbers at the setting of the dusk  
One by one, couple by couple,  
They increased.  
And now they people the green lawns  
Head under the trees from which hang  
Like sentenced prisoners from gibbets  
The downcast fruits in their nocturnal mode.  
The rest is joy and silence.  
The leaves rustle, restless  
The boughs move and turn.  
Restless.  
Restless.  
For the Dawn is away, and in their numbers

The nymphs and fairies numerous increased  
And in the mirror of the heavens eyes'  
Already shine the prospect of the Dawn.  
See! See! The fairies said:  
The heavens have turned spies  
On us.  
Conspiring with Dawn we fear so;  
Though  
We admire her and love her beauty so  
Yet her light blinds us to our flight:  
Rings as the sentence of the condemnation  
To the nether world one by one, couple by couple.

Well, let me, let me, revel in these thoughts  
And joys:  
Let me be ruined if I am spoiled by these  
Let me be spoiled and ruined simultaneous.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **I have no words, but words that are grey**

I have no words, but words that are grey.

Yes grey, the color is not here  
Because I am not inspired now.  
The Muse has to come and save me.

And here, here, I write, I write still  
Not just for writing but perhaps  
Like a wheel turning mechanically from  
The previous rounds, on its axle;  
The last rounds and turns of the wheel  
May be  
Before it stops for now.

Yes, I spoke and versified long ago  
And not so long ago about  
Parched throat, dry hill side,  
Water coming not, dry, dry,  
Dust of the dry summer, touched  
By the Moses iron rod a new Spring.  
From now  
That is still beginning of the Winter  
That is a rather long way to go.

So I have to hope in the Muse.

And I will do crazy things; yes,  
What before I asserted crazy,  
Now I do, and feel comfortable  
Or at least not the sign of guilt  
And anguish and desperation:  
No, no, no.

There was a time when  
I looked at a certain sundial to  
Mark time: a sort of game,  
That's all.  
But now my nervousness  
Gets the better of me and  
I  
No longer think slow of Time  
But with impatience look not  
On the sundial.  
I know Time is Motion and I  
Know that Time goes round  
All the same,  
Cutting leaf after leaf from my diary,  
My calendar,  
And yet, I, parched though  
The more yearning for my lyre,  
Still

Waiting to sing, and write and  
Versify.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **I know that I must not lose that thrall**

I know that I must not lose that thrall  
Though  
But few days ago I entered upon another year  
The New 2011:  
I must continue.

Since years before has my Muse grown?  
Has she fonder become?  
More mad for me?  
For any honey from lips?  
For any depth in my utterances?  
For any profundity of thought?  
For the long line of might and nobleness?  
For all the rest I do not remember to confess?

Ah! Homer with your lines of nobleness  
You showed me a key, just nobleness:  
The words once the breast carries nobleness,  
The words, I say, will flow  
With the very auto-sound of the Voice  
That mighty rolls against the Ocean shores  
Of the hammer-beating brain of a Poet-Seer.

Here, these tombs, this grave-yard,  
Remnant and symbol of civilization  
Up to now:  
O! I yearn for yet another  
Civilization where we will not need  
Tombs graveyards and cemeteries  
For the things that move and live.

Here, here, here, bless me,  
Minerva my mind enlighten,  
My heart already in Immortality be,  
And hangs upon the very clouds  
Of great Olympus.

There reached I.

But reaching those summit heights  
I know that immense must be  
The aid to shore up in that high state:  
Nay, higher must I go,  
Or others after me  
Were I to fall to reach Immortality.  
Yet  
The flame is lighted, and I lighted it.  
The deed is done, I did it, History speaks.  
Keep me this way, give me more nobleness  
Keep me this way, and on this road I travel.

Help me discover more, and in ever-increase the more unravel.  
The summit heights I reached,  
And far from falling I must higher go.  
That is my calling.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **I saw**

I saw  
That floating in the so-called garbage  
Adown the dirty river waters went  
Heads of skeletons, large,  
Small,  
Unequal in size and shape:  
I saw

I said: This must be the skull of Human;  
This must be the skull of Cat;  
This must be the skull of Squirrel  
This must be the skull of Rat.

Down the slimy bank an aged hedgehog  
On its unclean and sympathetic feet  
Went slow plodding sinking  
Now and then  
On the dirty mud-banks floating  
By half in the brimming waters  
When the river rose its banks a little.

Then  
Seeing me the Hedgehog stopped:  
Its tiny eyes  
Looked red at me and stared balefully  
At first  
Then  
In chronological order Fear  
Seized upon them and transfixed  
For a moment Hedgehog and its eyes:  
As if glued in that dreary atmosphere.

Yet  
Fear has its reprieve, and we must seize it:  
As soon as the reprieve of Fear came  
Fast turned the Hedgehog its back to me  
And in the glooming bushes disappeared  
Amidst the rustling of animals quarreling  
The flying of a feather and a tuft of hair  
And then silence back again

Meanwhile  
The river flowed as dreary as before  
Styx-like though not in any nether world  
But in the world of all of us it flowed.

I saw  
That floating in the so-called garbage  
Adown the dirty river waters went

Heads of skeletons, large,  
Small,  
Unequal in size and shape:  
I saw

And the stars fell slow and by little  
And their falling only I saw, only I.

And that is near to the Dawn, said I  
Though  
Dreary and dirty the river flowed as before  
Dreary and dirty.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **I stayed between the earth and song**

I stayed between the earth and song  
For song  
Made rise up from the earth  
What we term as levitation:  
And in it found I  
Of all my senses the ecstasy and restoration.

O rivers that transform to leaves  
Crystals of night dews that  
In the first spring heat turn  
After Dawn has passed to ice-like eyes  
Peering and sticking on the green.

O! poetry is heat. Verse and song  
Are the warmth of Spring in  
The midst of the heaviest winter Storm  
The tempest  
Railing on the trembling woods  
But verse and song will not tremble  
Will not tremble with chill and frost.

In the hours before Dawn  
The Earth nursed herself, licked  
Her wounds that it received in day:  
So  
Verse and song heal:  
It is like going down the Ganges to  
The pilgrim – then  
And so the Poet-Seer is pilgrim too.

On the empty shores as the night nears  
Or before Dawn spreads her wings  
Fairy-like to clean the frigidity  
Of Night:  
Before Dawn spreads her wings  
On the empty shores there are  
Not laden golden cargoes, fruits  
Glimmering and shining, cut  
From the trees of Eden-on-Earth.

Then  
Will the song of the Poet-Seer  
Turn its head here and there  
Like the snake hearing music:  
Dancing to the fakir  
Like the head of the sperm  
Burning bullet-like to its destination.

And Venus, Venus, well is  
Waiting to be re-born everyday

Now  
It has become with her a fashion  
She will not dropp it  
She will continue in it:  
And  
She will rise as from a shell in the Dawn  
And from the voluptuous Oceans  
It has become her fashion.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **I that dwell, into the shafts and arrows**

I that dwell, into the shafts and arrows  
Of enemies from all sides  
Enjoy each red dusk as if were the last:  
Pine at the trembling night-stars  
Tremble like them, tears in my eyes  
Await nor presume yet another morrow  
Prepare  
For a night of bad dreaming and full sorrow  
I left Hope waiting for me:  
I had calculated  
That Hope would not be at the appointed place  
But lo! With the first lights I rose,  
And Hope I saw and met and hand in hand  
We went:  
it was  
The day, and was the risen Dawn.

Into the Hypnosis where my eyes close  
Though breathe I, I be indifferent  
But care for what I dream and what I feel:  
For the experience and for emotive steel  
Into the Hypnosis sink I:  
Willingly.

Time is a pirate: so I slandered it:  
But it smiled; and recoiled not  
At my words:  
Though I recoil and planning to retract  
The words that I had uttered in Hypnosis  
Yet Time, ah! Time's so cunning  
Knew well that under the Hypnosis  
I uttered well, and wished that  
All civilization would be in Hypnosis  
That is from king and president to power less  
Tycoon to relative poor: see!  
All is relative on these tongues of earth  
That from the Sun-circulating Oceans project:  
Time is a pirate  
Time is a pirate, emboldened I,  
Uttered again, Time is a Pirate.

Once struck so many times in a decade  
And just a little more of Time:  
I took my hammer so to strike again  
As I had struck before the decade

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **If in the long, long lost annals of Time**

If in the long, long lost annals of Time  
I will lie forgotten and unknown  
Let these verses be my testimony  
Let these verses be my legacy  
Let these verses my last will lie  
Into of Life and Time the Comedy:  
Then, said the Muse: reproduce  
Not just in verse and song, but  
In flesh and blood, to re-incarnate  
Successors in your noble trade  
And in that traffic I will aid  
As I have aided you, your children too.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **In the shade of a long winter yet to come**

In the shade of a long winter yet to come  
I am standing now:  
But  
Let me not forget that I was born  
In Winter too: but on the fringe  
Of it with the Spring:  
A case of enjoying both worlds?  
Or that the Spring  
And Winter together conspired that and such  
In my first few days I would be of Winter  
But then Spring made its best to gladden me  
Began another season in the world  
Parallel to my new life, and to it proportionate.

Tele keli bere mesret  
Ha! Yes these words, this language:  
I project  
And what I project in chronology  
That is in order chronological  
I then assert:  
Thoughts, notes, verses, songs are given

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Let us go on**

Let us go on.  
The road is long and we,  
Have been long trudging, trudging.  
In the trenches we knew war and warfare  
We saw blood mix with dust and clay.

But let us go on.  
The trenches have been dug, and long  
We can trudge more – hoping,  
Hoping.

If we trudge longer we will better do.  
The world needs our industry, not our laziness.  
So let us trudge though  
Falter we here and there in to  
The bogs and quagmires.

We will not fear more now that we lose what?  
Though existence be everywhere all time:

For at this juncture what is there to lose?  
Our cowardice perhaps?  
We have sung and chanted, verse has been.  
We have seen blood shed and we have seen guns  
We have heard the rattling of machine guns  
The bombs whistling through the air  
And missiles whizzing in the leaden skies.  
So what lose we?

Emmanuel George Cefai

## Merry is the womb

Merry is the womb  
It feels the Spring air though  
In winter on the fringe  
Was I born of sweet Spring:  
Merry is the womb  
For prophet be unto itself  
And it joys modest in  
The Future's self: see  
Motion view Motion that will come  
The Brain and Thought run more  
Than the Physical: though both  
Are same trains yet not parallel:  
The one before the other runs  
Both at the same place arrive:  
So one that arrives first  
Makes prophecy to the other of  
What is saw which will then  
Be what the last arriving train will see:  
See, see, the Ghost in the Machine,  
Descartes' criticisms, all dispelled  
And the solution in a few verses compressed.

O Orient you must to-night work  
Work what you should before arises  
The coming of the Dawn day's genesis:  
Come close your eyes  
Taste of the wine  
Drink deep: for deep  
The pitcher has cooled in the earth:  
Come, close your eyes and  
Sleep.  
Ninny nanny, sing a ditty!  
Come Orient close your eyes and  
Taste of wine!  
Put round your head the Bacchanalian ivy,  
The green that sparkles so in the moon's light!  
O Orient!

\*

Small bells, my Monsignor, that in the Time  
Of the Waning Day,  
That in the Time of the Pining Day,  
From the small chapel top, there,  
Lost in the country-side and plain  
Amidst the zigzag of country roads  
Wandering hither and thither  
By chance into each other reciprocal

The better to blind the traveler:  
Confusion will you say?  
Utter, small bells, those notes wild  
That I heard yesterday at vesper as  
The red dusk fell into the sea  
Accompanying the previous Sun  
That dipped:  
Small bells, arise on magic nights  
On spells of witches on brooms flying  
Violet lights, transforming continually  
Quantum physics, patches of the tiny  
Amidst those immense plains of desert hope:  
And in that night of cold and winter storm  
Far, far away hidden in a cave shivering  
Lay half-hidden the fair Dawn awaiting.

Tere weri serim kele  
Ghali vreris heri sepre  
They rhyme – those words  
Those words of a tongue of tongues  
So many tongues – all with a right

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **O said I to myself to-day**

O said I to myself to-day  
As I was walking below the arches  
Of Saint John's Square in old Valletta  
The air was lean; the clouds were mean  
And frowning as I passed  
By the shops, the restaurant, the shoe shops,  
The clothes shops and the rest:  
Then up to Zachary Street and more shops,  
O I said to myself under the arches  
If why so-called living things are as of sexes  
Why females are as females, males as males  
A book of Principles will open before me:  
Let me explore and think and find Principles.  
No sooner said than done.  
On the damp earth made slippery by the rain  
That slant-wise under the arches too had wetted  
I was about to slip; O! my back  
Have I broken my spine? Fear, fear, fear.  
And in the trembling of that Fear saw I  
The fading – for the moment – of my thinking.

\*

O Saint John the Cathedral!  
The night in the square I!  
How wish to terrify!  
Below the trees that cut  
Now grow again  
To be the home of the past homeless birds:  
Temporary their exile from their berths.  
So with us, . Humans.  
Pain, suffering, imprisonment, auctions, Courts,  
Marshals, police, hand-cuffs, cells, grating of iron,  
The judges' sentence, and the rest of paraphernalia  
Are just the same as temporary in proportion direct  
As cigars, automobiles of luxury, sedans, halls,  
Palaces, lands, flats, projects, et ceatera, et caetera,  
And as the high-dressed tail-coated presidents  
Of States of courts, prime minister, ministers,  
Cabinets and councils, tycoons and politicians,  
Well need I continue with the list?  
It is not worth such trouble being  
Only so temporary.  
Easy, my friend  
Obvious, my friend, Doctor Watson  
Said Sherlock Holmes  
Easy.  
Easy  
Obvious.

\*

I.  
I that saw land upon the littered sky  
The heavens, the embittered, disappointment  
After disappointment – a photocopy  
Of all my life –  
I  
Saw, I knew and I experienced.

\*

Four thousand days or rather  
Three thousand days – ten years:  
My mother is already eighty-seven  
And she is well nigh blind:  
And she decays now day by day:  
What will be in four thousand days  
And three thousand days or more  
Or less?

\*

Then in the north sang the wind  
Then from the north came the chill  
And then the rain that formed a little rill  
And splashed with rain-drops the dreamy window-sill  
Yes dreamy! The housed dreamt and slept  
When before their pining eyes wept  
At the red dusk's fall and passing  
At the night unwelcome coming  
At the grow popularity of night  
As star by star he cunning light:  
Then in the north sang the wind  
Then from the north came the chill  
And the rain formed (see above) a little rill.  
Uli sere ferì ghere  
Pesi fere teli mere

\*

Come through the fog that hangs!  
Chilly ghost of the reel of the future;  
Cut my hair now before it grows not  
Cut it you will hold it  
In a reliquary of forgotten humans:  
Who strived not to be forgotten:  
Who wrote, who thought, who asserted.  
Come through the fog that hangs!  
The clock of age is to be reverted as by magic.  
Magic will be the mechanics by which the clock of age be reverted

\*

The pulpit violet opens its mouth  
That its petals (in as direct proportion) :  
To-night I will recall some of Tolkien's  
Characters – o! call Kafka to the meeting:  
Add, me to them and from our meeting  
Let new forms and new characters arise  
The profane crowd needs them; yes  
Now more than ever; the rate of  
Balance will be as directly proportional  
Between the materialistic down  
Down-to-earth characters and the magic characters:  
All be that is asserted; so all characters  
Magic and materialistic be  
But the magic ones prefer we  
We, Humans who dare to dream, and save ourselves  
At the last moment.

\*

You must be stronger that is more Machiavellian  
To win this political chess in a democracy  
Where the incumbent has the upper hand:  
And is unashamed to use the upper hand:  
You must never hesitate in the circumstances  
To use the dirtiest of tricks, one after one, ever-increase.

\*

Gilded dwell  
Amidst the blue lights  
Of the winter night:  
Of the moon light  
Of the star light  
To us  
These be given to joy  
The Earth's toy  
To us her children:  
A heart that joys  
More than it grieves:  
A heart that pines  
At the red dusk  
That ecstasies at the new Dawn.

\*

Whither do you go lone star that strays  
From your path towards the arch  
Of dark that surrounds you?

Why stray you from the company of peers

And kin of stars this night that so  
Serene looks over the earthly scene?

You will not speak; you will not tell;  
But give me the key to your heart  
That I may know. I will not tell.

\*

Over the silver waters, relax you  
Just as Moses flowed  
Over the Nile unawares a young child.

And Destiny took care and still  
It makes the Moses case not just  
The single exception.

But more, more Destiny knocks at the door  
With joyous tidings for those who  
Expect it not, the more for them to joy.

\*

Waters that rise  
Though there be no fountain  
But as magic surprise  
And dances the snowy mountain.

\*

Blue light that from the wild dark  
Escapes into the moon light  
Strays into the path of flying insects  
Round the neon lights:  
And shuns the path  
Out of respect  
Where ghosts and shrouds lament

\*

New style  
Midnight dancing  
New child  
Midnight dews  
Hourly showers  
Falling as silver dowers  
The whole night till the Dawn  
And then  
On the green till the edge  
Of cliff and sea-beach sparkles  
A million and more eyes,  
Tiny eyes, welcoming the Dawn.

\*

Pere fisad merev kilieg  
Bere tulag dihah milieg.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **O! when in the levitation of ecstasy**

O! when in levitation of the ecstasy  
Of song and verse and sheer poesy  
I rise, I will rise to  
The heights of the heavens  
Immense  
Immense  
High and dwelling before  
The altars of the Olympian gods where  
Incense-laden bearers torches bear.

O! intensity! Intensity in All, Intensity is All  
And is the One in Evolution, Evolution  
Whittling its pride to the One,  
Evolution to Evolution, One to One,  
Those  
Those, the transformations  
The transpositions.

Cupid will be lactated by his jealous mother:  
Though  
He has grown enough: already  
She taught the Art of the Quiver  
The Art of the Arrow, the cunning  
The ecstasy of love, its net.

Imprinted in the sands are the traces  
Of the giant feet where on the  
Long, long, long sand of beach,  
Deserted, far from the Human towns  
And villages:  
Jove lighting down on Earth,  
Came down, like an Eagle,  
But not an eagle of war, but of Peace.

Inspecting as in a film  
The events of History he rose  
Disgusted from the airy hall  
That was no hall and had no roof at all:  
Jupiter arose and back to Olympus sped.

You see, my Monsignor, you see  
How I sing, versify and chant:  
You that have heard me now  
For many a long hour can  
Your judgment pass on my methodology  
Nay  
You can start yourself, set up  
Yourself as a Poet-Seer.

Then  
There will two Voices rise silver  
Through the mists and clouds

Where Venus dwells half in  
Between the Earth and great Olympus:  
There  
Let us both, my Monsignor,  
Lull the fair beauty goddess by her trick,  
Her own property, Beauty, lying  
Her to rest  
In her golden hummock between Earth  
And great Olympus.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **On this black Earth that hits**

On this black Earth that hits  
Our naked feet with thorns  
That hits our naked feet with jutting rocks  
This Earth is raw, yes, raw  
And savage  
But She be sincere:  
And in that sincerity she hurts us  
Thereby she teaches us and points  
How suffering must be to save us  
Somewhat.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Shakespeare too unfolded his emotions**

Shakespeare too unfolded his emotions  
Like the waves that roll and roll majestic  
When roaring stands the mighty Ocean:  
Wave upon wave, wave after wave  
Time and Space, Space and Time united  
All in One and One in All :  
So I; so write; so feel; so versify  
And times to come will perhaps  
Brush off the dust over the lank words  
The ironed passages and the highlighted words:  
O! Shakespeare too unfolded his emotions.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **The night soon fell**

The night soon fell  
The stars soon shone  
Black draped the chilly air:  
And many a day  
And many a night I waited  
Till time did come  
That I no longer waited  
And now the cool blue sea  
Holds my white bones  
By centuries large eroded:  
And ah! Ah! How chill I lie  
Here now down under  
But most of all that worries me  
The chill my soul is feeling:  
And days are past  
And months are past  
And centuries are stealing:  
And here I will surely lie  
In agonizing waiting”.

Thus ceased the Voice.  
I stood and feared  
Yet did not move:  
There was some thing  
Which rooted me unmoving:  
Was it the voice?  
Was it its sound?  
Or was it story telling?

I do not know.  
I do not know.  
Yet I do know  
That long remained  
I on the plain all gazing  
The sun had set  
And birds had slept  
The night was fast falling:  
The sea was still  
Without a wave  
And night was fast falling.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **The Old Bells**

Ah! The old bells it was  
Their fault  
That I walked through the frost  
Of winter that  
Hung down the trees with  
Their disheveled hair unkempt  
And let down:  
Like girls without having done  
Their make-up:  
I passed through the frost breathing  
Out mist like a forge  
Under the trees with hair  
Let down  
I passed, I walked, I suffered:  
Ah! The old bells it was  
Of the cathedral, their fault.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **The Storm**

Ah! The storm it ends not to-night  
To-night a winter night  
The storm is lustful:  
Wants more,  
The more the chill and frost  
The more savage it prowls:  
The towns and cities sleep  
White-faced and scared  
Through trembling neon lights  
And wind-clanking lamp  
Lamp-posts that vibrate as the Earth  
Trembling and fearing

Emmanuel George Cefai

## Then

Then  
Will you pine at the red dusk as you  
Did yesterday with those jet-black eyes?  
- Asked I

I will see, said she, what I feel then.

Ah! Woman how you distribute  
Your emotions as by interlude  
A play, scenes, acts, go by.

In the declining sun of yesterday  
I saw three children play  
About the same age were they  
And laughed and laughed and laughed  
As from school away  
They rolled over the darkling green  
And wondered with wide eyes at  
The moon's growing sheen  
At the popping night-stars they  
In the declining day of yesterday.

2011  
The year has come: a month ago  
My heart trembled at each hour  
That the new year came nearer:  
Now what was exceptional is  
Become routine:  
So life, so history move,  
Ruthless, mechanical, and clinical.

In the dark night of years and centuries  
Down in to the sump of ages  
And of gravities  
Saw I the planets circulating  
And yet  
The sun danced strangely side to side  
Coming back where it started from  
What distance covered on one side  
To the other went; neutral and as  
Unmoving went, though ever-moving was.

And so the Voice of the Poet-Seer went:  
The rays of the then scorching sun bent  
Themselves to the sea and to grounds  
Below where vast the long horizon abounds:  
In the declining day of yesterday.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **There is a Shadow that awaits restless**

There is a Shadow that awaits restless  
Under the penumbra of the sunset  
Then under the growing beauties  
Of the red dusk: the glaciers  
Broke into fragments and the night  
Covered them with his cloths.

You see, you see, said I  
The night is moving slow to-night  
That is you must profit:  
Yes, you must profit:  
You must profit where there is every thing  
At least, try,  
That's Economics:  
And the more so in beauty

See,  
See the pre-historic temple, the  
Stones, giant and standing,  
And above the clouds that fly:  
Those were reared by Humans  
By Human hands were reared they:  
And I said: Let us have life.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## Through out the birth of the new day

Through out the birth of the new day  
There was the birth of a New Year  
Silver confetti fell  
From the heavens  
The dews, the night dews that  
Fall on the grass, fell,  
Fragments  
Fragments  
And the church bells started ringing  
Early:  
And the streets were deserted early  
In the day  
As till almost noon  
The people celebrating New Year's Eve  
Slept in the Sub-Conscious while  
The Conscious Dawn presided over where  
The New Year entered port in the old town.

In the menu that Dawn brought with her  
For to-day New Year's Day there was  
the special and the not so special:  
Special rang the tunes of the church bells  
different from other holidays:  
overdue after all!  
New Year's Day!  
But the old city dressed as it had dressed  
the day before  
and the day before that  
and before that for centuries  
old in the memories of ancient times:  
and the people  
who survived into the New Year survived  
either as flesh or blood or else as ghosts  
the former in the morning streets  
the latter in the Night swarmed  
to the old town in hordes and shrouds  
and there rose high a long sad lament  
an All in One, and One in All  
to the sad heavens and stars.

I wish for Fog yesterday: long through  
the year this wish in my Sub-Conscious hid  
but  
now with the guillotine falling  
on the Old Year's head it rose  
restless and restless  
in the Deep Soul it rose like to  
an Egyptian snake of magic dazzling spells  
could I resist?

Wanted I to resist?  
And in the mist I had the Fog I yearned for  
though little the mist over the cold port  
in the cold early hours of New Day  
Soon at the first touches of the Sun dispelled.

Slow, slow, the verses flow -  
the water murky turned in to the river  
and dense and loaded it moved so and so -  
it was a sort of Styx - yet burned not -  
but  
rather chill under the drear winter heavens  
flowed discontented and unwilling:  
so  
my verses flow, do flow, but slow,  
crawl in the violet light of a waning day  
But they had their time too - let me say  
and so  
slow, slow the verses flow, this dusk.

The rain was falling.  
Though no snow fell  
the wind of frost neighed through  
the boughs and trees  
that huddled in the wood like naked  
men and women in that tempest hoar:  
The rain was falling.  
Deep,  
deep the water pencils fell adown  
the window-panes condensed with  
breath of the humans inside and  
with the warmth of stoves and  
lights and some ancient chimney-hearths.  
Ah! the old city, the old town  
how many chimneys here and there  
old and grimy on their faces hurled  
the winter tempest in its orgy wild.

Then in that Time there danced  
Masks in a place by the woods  
where  
the trees shivered and trembled  
in the frost and chill.  
Yet the Masks danced, danced  
silent:  
some on human feet; some manifested  
on all fours; some a tail beneath  
the frac of white or black  
but behind a Mask

all faces are the same and equal stand.

And then of sudden there came a sound  
strange as if from the nether earth  
from soils damp and wet arising;  
and  
it sang in a strange microphone tongue  
'Be merry sirs, no human sees  
Hum, hum around like nightly bees  
Or like the crickets on the summer nights.  
But merry be.  
The waters trickle.  
The gutters full.  
Slope the water-rains.  
The heavens open remain.  
Rain falls.  
Thunder opens white in rage  
its mouth.  
Then vibrating Earth  
it sounds.  
One after another Light  
after Light  
the Thunder goes.  
One after another Sound  
after Sound  
the Thunder goes.  
And the day is in throes.  
The red dusk fled.  
Throne has been left  
Into the hands of night.  
Be merry, Sirs, the storm  
Has ushered humans in:  
To their warm hearth and home  
And most now sleep profound  
Go round, round and round  
For no human espies  
Long, long and far  
the Dawn be; your faces  
have many hours to whiten  
with pale fear of new Dawn and Day.  
Be merry, dance, round  
and round,  
without a sound, silent,  
ghosts and shrouds, animal,  
bust and All, dance, merry be:  
The storm will last as long  
As the night be with me.'  
So said the Voice then stopped.

And the Masks turned and turned.

Slow they danced with measured steps.  
Studied each step and pace and slow.  
And the Masks turned and turned.  
And though the winds  
that Zephyr sent to blow such  
frost and dreary chill  
yet they touched not the Masks  
that underneath their identity hid:  
and reveled in the mystery of it.

There was a Boar's Head:  
Tall and high,  
he towered above all, and his feet  
brown and far from human stood,  
yet  
with calculated paces round and round  
he went.

There was a Sphinx Head  
and mystery added all around  
silent it moved yet  
with the rest it moved and danced

There was a Head that like a Sibyl  
grinned; behind was it a Sibyl  
or else?  
Still like the others danced  
As all danced mechanical  
Unearthly and ghastly their look  
And more since mid-night struck  
the more.

There was a Skeleton Head:  
though somewhat exposed  
it was made so that all the zones  
were covered that were not white bones:  
mysterious, mysterious danced it  
in that cavalcade of dark and silent din.

There was an Artist's Head:  
This the most mysterious Mask  
For under it, it hid some Artist who  
Long, long ago in his wild reveries  
Painted the walls of his house with  
strange shapes and things:  
this made him more than welcome guest  
and all more wanted to this ghastly feast.

Then, then again the eerie Voice  
That dread  
Spread through its nasal microphone  
Chanted again as if by sheer programming:  
'Be merry sirs, no human sees  
Hum, hum around like nightly bees  
Or like the crickets on the summer nights.  
But merry be.  
The waters trickle.  
The gutters full.  
Slope the water-rains.  
The heavens open remain.  
Rain falls.  
Thunder opens white in rage  
its mouth.  
Then vibrating Earth  
it sounds.  
One after another Light  
after Light  
the Thunder goes.  
One after another Sound  
after Sound  
the Thunder goes.  
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have many hours to whiten  
with pale fear of new Dawn and Day.  
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and round,  
without a sound, silent,  
ghosts and shrouds, animal,  
bust and All, dance, merry be:  
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So said the Voice then stopped.

And the Masks turned and turned.  
Slow they danced with measured steps.  
Studied each step and pace and slow.

And the Masks turned and turned.  
And though the winds  
that Zephyr sent to blow such  
frost and dreary chill  
yet they touched not the Masks  
that underneath their identity hid:  
and reveled in the mystery of it.

But ah! The hours fly though  
Danced they slow:  
The measured paces served not  
To delay the motion of Time:  
And soon  
One called – it was the Voice –  
That spoke in to a nasal microphone –  
'Look the Dawn within the hour  
Will on the shore pebbles be  
Treading: prepare you  
To Vanish in the airs and Vapors Blue  
Whence in the night's beginning came you.'

Then all the Masks of sudden stopped.  
Then all the Masks bent gracefully.  
Then all the Masks farewell partook  
Each to each, with respectful reciprocity.  
And soon in the air as the night-stars  
One by one light at the flight of  
Red dusk – so these Masks in the Air  
And Vapors Blue within less than minutes  
Five  
Disappeared and on the place  
There stood the trees a-shivering  
And the wind still blowing wild  
And the rain falling, and the chill  
And frost and the rain pattering.

Call after call I will not cease  
To tell you to reproduce: while  
You still breathe though slow,  
Though obesity  
Makes you in danger and increases it:  
Yet  
The more so you should thrive  
And your blood to delirium warm  
Even if it be the coldest winter day  
To make new children in your wake.

Shakespeare had sung this too: wisdom  
On this unite us.

If his country and mine had but two rivers  
Principal we would have joined them:  
But  
Shakespeare has his Thames and I have no  
River.  
Therefore we can join the Thames to the  
Mediterranean sea.

Breathe, breathe, Greek breath, the pines  
Are hanging down for they pined  
At the parting of the red dusk:  
And since they bent their head  
They will not rise, no, not even  
Night-stars lighting after the other  
Will do the trick: they still bend  
And further bend as the night deepens in  
Even though the winter chill bites not.

If you do not versify in the level  
If you do feel your hand  
Reach to the high peaks  
Where at least the clouds soar  
Or better  
Higher than the clouds:  
Then retire speak not, write not  
And think and wait.

Then  
The bells rang  
Then  
The chapel lighted  
Then  
The country lanes in the dust  
Then  
The horse was heard coming  
Then  
The hooves were heard beating  
Then  
The dust was seen flying:  
Then  
The seas dark were moon shining  
Then  
The horseman crossed the edge  
Then  
He dropped slow into the sea and safe  
Then  
The horseman and horse walked on the sea  
Then  
Night when they passed yielded to Dawn

Then  
The legend had been consummated.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Under the hammer sledge but not of snow**

Under the hammer sledge not of snow  
But of thoughts dreary and dark and multiple  
I forged throughout the evening.  
All aglow the heater burnt orange  
Then igniting to a redder hue  
It turned.

Then  
I saw that there was no Christmas tree  
I could sing under if song came  
No magic cavern of the Circe type  
I could sing in if the song came  
No magic bay of fairies and of nymphs  
To sing from high up on the pinnacles  
Or rock.

No, no, no.

You asked me why I assert so much  
About the times that I am dry and parched  
When my bottle and my glass are dry  
Or well to nigh:  
You asked me.

You asked me why so pessimistic  
The looks I cast upon the mighty heavens  
And why so sad the look I cast on  
The wide-bosomed Oceans.

I replied not, hoping for my silence to speak.

You asked not more.

But that, yes that,  
Made me ask myself why.

Blank, bleak, blank  
At first.

But then I found that in the dreariness  
There be that humility which required  
Is in the Doctrine of Sacrifice whereby  
Great works of intellect are produced.  
So be it.  
Expect a little so to reap the more.

Unlock, my Muse, unlock the fairy door  
In the castle of Verse and Song,  
Unlock, that I may enter  
And though cobwebs and must smells  
Meet and greet me  
Yet I will the treasure chests of song

And more  
The treasure chests of discovery and lore:  
What sovereign, power, tycoon can do more?  
I will not exchange intellectual power with human power.  
For you, my Monsignor, to judge now,  
For you, my Monsignor.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Whither? Whither?**

Whither? Whither?  
Whither are they going  
Into the dark night?  
With hooded cloaks  
In black bedecked  
And shining flames of red?

Why, why they pass  
Through the thin alley  
That winding leads  
To the seashore?

Why not a word they speak?  
Why do with furtive glance  
They look each other?  
Why in procession  
With solemn steps they fend?

Why do I seem to hear  
Gregorian chants this night  
Quick wafted on the wind  
From where they come  
With hooded clothes  
In black bedecked  
And shining flames of red?

Ah! In the past  
These figures seem to go:  
And yet in present move  
And methinks that I see  
Another night, another troop  
Like this dark night  
With hooded clothes  
And black bedecked  
And shining flames of red  
A hundred years from hence.

Emmanuel George Cefai

## **Why do I see a light**

Why do I see a light  
Burn silent and austere  
In that small dark room  
Where magic rites and dark  
They say occur at night  
Where happenings strange and dark  
They say occur at night?

Why does the light burn bright  
Into the solitary hours of the night  
And fade away  
With birth of dawn and day:  
In that small dark room  
Where happenings strange and dark  
They say occur at night?

Aye! Happenings strange and dark  
In that dark room occur they say:  
Away from light of day:  
Fleeing into the dark night  
And I would like to know and see  
What happens as they say:  
But then should I leave you  
To flee and go away?

Emmanuel George Cefai