

Classic Poetry Series

Georg Trakl

- poems -

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De Profundis

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

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

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

A shade I am remote from sombre hamlets.
The silence of God
I drank from the woodland well.

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

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

Translated by Jurek Kirakowski

Anonymous submission.

Georg Trakl

Delirium

The black snow runs down from the rooftops;
A red finger dips into your brow;
Blue snow flakes sink into the empty room,
They are a lovers' dying mirrors.
Heavy and torn to pieces the mind muses,
Follows the shadow in the mirror of blue snow flakes,
The cold smile of a deceased harlot.
The evening's wind weeps in the scent of carnations.

Georg Trakl

Grodek

At evening the autumn woodlands ring
With deadly weapons. Over the golden plains
And lakes of blue, the sun
More darkly rolls. The night surrounds
Warriors dying and the wild lament
Of their fragmented mouths.
Yet silently there gather in the willow combe
Red clouds inhabited by an angry god,
Shed blood, and the chill of the moon.
All roads lead to black decay.
Under golden branching of the night and stars
A sister's shadow sways through the still grove
To greet the heroes' spirits, the bloodied heads.
And softly in the reeds Autumn's dark flutes resound.
O prouder mourning! - You brazen altars,
The spirit's hot flame is fed now by a tremendous pain:
The grandsons, unborn.

Georg Trakl

Helian

In the spirit's solitary hours
It is lovely to walk in the sun
Along the yellow walls of summer.
Quietly whisper the steps in the grass; yet always sleeps
The son of Pan in the grey marble.

At eventide on the terrace we got drunk on brown wine
The red peach glows under the foliage.
Tender sonata, joyous laughter.

Lovely is this silence of the night.
On the dark plains
We gather with shepherds and the white stars.

When autumn rises
The grove is a sight of sober clarity.
Along the red walls we loiter at ease
And the round eyes follow the flight of birds.
In the evening pale water gathers in the dregs of burial urns.

Heaven celebrates, sitting in bare branches.
In hallowed hands the yeoman carries bread and wine
And fruit ripens in the peace of a sunny chamber.

Oh how stern is the face of the beloved who have taken their passage.
Yet the soul is comforted in righteous meditation.

Overwhelming is the desolated garden's secrecy,
As the young novice has wreathed his brow with brown leaves,
His breath inhales icy gold.

The hands touch the antiquity of blueish water
Or in a cold night the sisters' white cheeks.

In quiet and harmony we walk along a suite of hospitable rooms
Into solitude and the rustling of maple trees,
Where, perhaps, the thrush still sings.

Beautiful is man and emerging from the dark
He marvels as he moves his arms and legs,
And his eyes quietly roll in purple cavities.

At supertime a stranger loses himself in November's black destitution;
Under brittle branches he follows a wall covered under leprosy.
Once the holy brother went here,
Engrossed in the tender music of his madness.

Oh how lonely settles the evening-wind.
Dying away a man's head droops in the dark of the olive tree.

How shattering is the decline of a family.
This is the hour when the seer's eyes are filled

With gold as he beholds the stars.

The evening's descend has muffled the belfry's knell in silence;
Among black walls in the public place,
A dead soldier calls for a prayer.

Like a pale angel
The son enters his ancestor's empty house.

The sisters have traveled far to the pale ancients.
At night, returned from their mournful pilgrimage,
He found them asleep under the columns of the hallway.

Oh hair stained with dung and worms
As his silver feet stepped on it
And on those who died in echoing rooms.

Oh you palms under midnight's burning rain,
When the servants flogged those tender eyes with nettles,
The hollyhock's early fruit
Beheld your empty grave in wonder.

Fading moons sail quietly
Over the sheets of the feverish lad,
Into the silence of winter.

At the bank of Kidron a great mind is lost in musing,
Under a tree, the tender cedar,
Stretched out under the father's blue eyebrows,
Where a shepherd drives his flock to pastures at night.

Or there are screams which escape the sleep;
When an iron angel approaches man in the grove,
The holy man's flesh melts over burning coals.

Purple wine climbs about the mud-cottage,
Sheaves of faded corn sing;
The buzz of bees; the crane's flight.
In the evening the souls of the resurrected gather on rocky paths.

Lepers behold their image in dark water;
Or they lift the hemp of their dung soiled attire,
And weep to the soothing wind, as it drifts down from the rosy hill.

Slender maidens grope their way through the narrow lanes of night;
They hope for the gracious shepherd.
Tenderly, songs ring out from the huts on weekend.

Let the song pay homage to the boy,
To his madness to his white eyebrows and to his passage,
To the decaying corpse, who opened his blue eyes.
Oh how sad is this reunion.

The stairs of madness in black apartments –
The matriarch's shadow emerged under the open door
When Helian's soul beheld his image in a rosy mirror;
And from his brow bled snow and leprosy.

The walls extinguished the stars
And the white effigies of light.

From the carpet rise skeletons, escaping their graves,
Fallen crosses sit silent on the hill,
The night's purple wind is sweet with frankincense.

Oh ye broken eyes over black gaping jaws,
When the grandson in the solitude
Of his tender madness muses over a darker ending,
The blue eyelids of the silent god sink upon him.

Georg Trakl

Kaspar Hauser's Song

He truly loved the purple sun, descending from the hills,
The ways through the woods, the singing blackbird
And the joys of green.

Sombre was his dwelling in the shadows of the tree
And his face undefiled.
God, a tender flame, spoke to his heart:
Oh son of man!

Silently his step turned to the city in the evening;
A mysterious complaint fell from his lips:
"I shall become a horseman."

But bush and beast did follow his ways
To the pale people's house and garden at dusk,
And his murderer sought after him.

Spring and summer and – oh so beautiful – the fall
Of the righteous. His silent steps
Passed by the dark rooms of the dreamers.

At night he and his star dwelled alone.
He saw the snow fall on bare branches
And in the murky doorway the assassin's shadow.
Silvern sank the unborne's head.

Georg Trakl

Klage

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

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

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Psalm

It is a light, that the wind has extinguished.
It is a pub on the heath, that a drunk departs in the afternoon.
It is a vineyard, charred and black with holes full of spiders.
It is a space, that they have white-limed with milk.
The madman has died. It is a South Sea island,
Receiving the Sun-God. One makes the drums roar.
The men perform warlike dances.
The women sway their hips in creeping vines and fire-flowers,
Whenever the ocean sings. O our lost Paradise.

The nymphs have departed the golden woods.
One buries the stranger. Then arises a flicker-rain.
The son of Pan appears in the form of an earth-laborer,
Who sleeps away the meridian at the edge of the glowing asphalt.
It is little girls in a courtyard, in little dresses full of heart-rending poverty!
It is rooms, filled with Accords and Sonatas.
It is shadows, which embrace each other before a blinded mirror.
At the windows of the hospital, the healing warm themselves.
A white steamer carries bloody contagia up the canal.

The strange sister appears again in someone's evil dreams.
Resting in the hazelbush, she plays with his stars.
The student, perhaps a doppelganger, stares long after her from the window.
Behind him stands his dead brother, or he comes down the old spiral stairs.
In the darkness of brown chestnuts, the figure of the young novice.
The garden is in evening. The bats flit around inside the walls of the monastery.
The children of the caretaker cease their playing and seek the gold of the heavens.
Closing accords of a quartett. The little blind girl runs trembling through the tree-lined street.
And later touches her shadow along cold walls, surrounded by fairy tales and holy legends.

It is an empty boat, that drives at evening down the black canal.
In the bleakness of the old asylum, human ruins come apart.
The dead orphans lie at the garden wall.
From gray rooms tread angels with shit-spattered wings.
Worms drip from their yellowed eyelids.
The square before the church is obscure and silent, as in the days of childhood.
Earlier lives glide past upon silvery soles
And the shadows of the damned climb down to the sighing waters.
In his grave, the white-magician plays with his snakes.

Silent above the place of the skull, open God's golden eyes.

Georg Trakl

Rondeau

Gone and passed is the gold of day,
And the evening's brown and blue:
Silenced the shepherd's tender flute
And the evening's brown and blue
Gone and passed as is the gold of day.

Georg Trakl

Whispered Into Afternoon

Sun of autumn, thin and shy
And fruit drops off the trees,
Blue silence fills the peace
Of a tardy afternoon's sky.

Death knells forged of metal,
And a white beast hits the mire.
Brown lasses uncouth choir
Dies in leaves' drifting prattle.

Brow of God dreams of hues,
Senses madness' gentle wings.
Round the hill wield in rings
Black decay and shaded views.

Rest and wine in sunset's gleam,
Sad guitars drizzle into night,
And to the mellow lamp inside
You turn in as in a dream.

Georg Trakl

Winter Evening

When snow falls against the window,
Long sounds the evening bell...
For so many has the table
Been prepared, the house set in order.

From their wandering, many
Come on dark paths to this gateway.
The tree of grace is flowering in gold
Out of the cool sap of the earth.

In stillness, wanderer, step in:
Grief has worn the threshold into stone.
But see: in pure light, glowing
There on the table: bread and wine.

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