Classic Poetry Series

Georg Trakl

- poems -

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Georg Trakl (3 February 1887 - 3 November 1914)

an Austrian poet. He is considered one of the most important Austrian Expressionists.

Life and Work

Trakl was born and lived the first 18 years of his life in Salzburg, Austria. His father, Tobias Trakl (11 June 1837, Ödenburg/Sopron – 1910), was a dealer of hardware from Hungary, while his mother, Maria Catharina Halik (17 May 1852, Wiener Neustadt – 1925), was a housewife of Czech descent with strong interests in art and music.

Trakl attended a Catholic elementary school, although his parents were Protestants. He matriculated in 1897 at the Salzburg Staatsgymnasium, where he studied Latin, Greek, and mathematics. At age 13, Trakl began to write poetry. As a high school student, he began visiting brothels, where he enjoyed giving rambling monologues to the aging prostitutes. At age 15, he began drinking alcohol, and using opium, chloroform, and other drugs. By the time he was forced to quit school in 1905, he was a drug addict. Many critics think that Trakl suffered from undiagnosed schizophrenia.

After quitting high school, Trakl worked for a pharmacist for three years and decided to adopt pharmacy as a career. It was during this time that he experimented with playwriting, but his two short plays, All Souls' Day and Fata Morgana, were not successful.

In 1908, Trakl moved to Vienna to study pharmacy, and became acquainted with some local artists who helped him publish some of his poems. Trakl's father died in 1910, soon before Trakl received his pharmacy certificate; thereafter, Trakl enlisted in the army for a year-long stint. His return to civilian life in Salzburg was unsuccessful and he re-enlisted, serving as a pharmacist at a hospital in Innsbruck. There he also met the local artistic community. Ludwig von Ficker, the editor of the journal Der Brenner (and son of the historian Julius von Ficker), became his patron: he regularly printed Trakl's work and endeavored to find him a publisher to produce a collection of poems. The result of these efforts was Gedichte (Poems), published by Kurt Wolff in Leipzig during the summer of 1913. Ficker also brought Trakl to the attention of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who anonymously provided him with a sizable stipend so that he could concentrate on his writing.

In 1912, he was stationed in Innsbruck, Austria, where he became acquainted with a group of avant-garde artists involved with the well-regarded literary journal Der Brenner, a journal that began the

Kierkegaard revival in the German-speaking countries.

At the beginning of World War I, Trakl was sent as a medical official to attend soldiers in Galicia (comprising portions of modern-day Ukraine and Poland). Trakl suffered frequent bouts of depression. During one such incident in Gródek, Trakl had to steward the recovery of some ninety soldiers wounded in the fierce campaign against the Russians. He tried to shoot himself from the strain, but his comrades prevented him. Hospitalized at a military hospital in Kraków and observed closely, Trakl lapsed into worse depression and wrote to Ficker for advice. Ficker convinced him to communicate with Wittgenstein. Upon receiving Trakl's note, Wittgenstein went to the hospital, but found that Trakl had died of a cocaine overdose. Trakl was buried at Kraków's Rakowicki Cemetery on 6 November 1914, but on 7 October 1925, as a result of the efforts by Ficker, his remains were transferred to Mühlau near Innsbruck (where they now repose next to Ficker's).

Eserleri:

Selected Titles

Gedichte (Poems), 1913
Sebastian im Traum (Sebastian in the Dream), poetry 1915
Der Herbst des Einsamen (The Autumn of The Lonely), 1920
Gesang des Abgeschiedenen (Song of The Departed), 1933

In English

DECLINE: 12 POEMS trans. Michael Hamburger, Guido Morris / Latin Press, 1952
Twenty Poems of George Trakl, trans. James Wright & Robert Bly, The Sixties Press, 1961
Selected Poems, ed. Christopher Middleton, trans. Robert Grenier et al., Jonathan Cape, 1968 [5]
Georg Trakl: A Profile, ed. Frank Graziano, Logbridge-Rhodes, 1983
The Golden Goblet: Selected Poems of Georg Trakl, 1887-1914, trans. Jamshid Shirani & A. Maziar, Ibex Publishers, 1994
Song of the West: Selected Poems, trans. Robert Firmage, North Point Press, 1988
Autumn Sonata: Selected Poems of Georg Trakl, trans. Daniel Simko, Asphodel Press, 1998
Poems and Prose, Bilingual edition, trans. Alexander Stillmark, Libris, 2001
In an Abandoned Room: Selected Poems by Georg Trakl, trans. Daniele Pantano, Erbacce Press, Liverpool, 2008

At Night

The blueness dies out in my eyes tonight,
the red gold of my heart. O how still the light burns!
Your cloak of sadness encircles the long descent.
Your red lips seal your friend’s unhinging.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Nachts

Die Bläue meiner Augen ist erloschen in dieser Nacht,
Das rote Gold meines Herzens. O! wie stille brannte das Licht.
Dein blauer Mantel umfing den Sinkenden;
Dein roter Mund besiegelte des Freundes Umnachtung.

Georg Trakl

At the Moor

At the Moor

Wanderer in the blackened wind. Dry reeds whisper
in the stillness of the moor. A column of savage birds
ensues in the dawning sky.
Over murky waters they cross.

Uproar. From the crumbling shack
the black wings of rot flutter up.
Crippled birches sigh in the wind.

Evening in the forsaken tavern. The way home is shrouded
by the tender sadness of the grazing herd.
Night becomes manifest: toads emerge from the silver water.

Translated by Eric Plattner & Joseph Suglia

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Am Moor

Wanderer im schwarzen Wind; leise flüstert das dürre Rohr
In der Stille des Moors. Am grauen Himmel
Ein Zug von wilden Vögeln folgt;
Quere über finsteren Wassern.

Aufruhr. In verfallener Hütte
Aufflattert mit schwarzen Flügeln die Fäulnis;
Verkrüppelte Birken seufzen im Wind.

Abend in verlassener Schenke. Den Heimweg umwittert
Die sanfte Schwermut grasender Herden,
Erscheinung der Nacht: Kröten tauchen aus silbernen Wassern.

Georg Trakl

Birth

These mountains: blackness, silence, and snow.
The red hunter climbs down from the forest;
Oh the mossy gaze of the wild thing.
The peace of the mother: under black ﬁrs
The sleeping hands open by themselves
When the cold moon seems ready to fall.
The birth of man. Each night
Blue water washes over the rockbase of the cliff;
The fallen angel stares at his reﬂection with sighs,
Something pale wakes up in a suffocating room.
The eyes
Of the stony old woman shine, two moons.
The cry of the woman in labor. The night troubles
The boy’s sleep with black wings,
With snow, which falls with ease out of the purple
clouds

Georg Trakl

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

Descent and Defeat

To Karl Borromaus Heinrich

Over the white ﬁshpond
The wild birds have blown away.
An icy wind drifts from our stars at evening.
Over our graves
The broken forehead of the night is bending.
Under the oaks we veer in a silver skiff.
The white walls of the city are always giving off
sound.
Under arching thorns
O my brother blind minute-hands we are climbing
toward midnight

Georg Trakl

Downfall

Downfall

(To Karl Borromaeus Heinrich)

Over the white pond
the savage birds draw away.
At twilight an icier wind blows about our star.

The split forehead of night bends
across our graves.
Under oaks we shudder on a silver barge.

Forever ring the whitewashed walls of the city.
Under a dome of thorns
O my brother we climb—blind hour hands to midnight.

Translated by Eric Plattner & Joseph Suglia

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Untergang

(An Karl Borromaeus Heinrich)

Über den weißen Weiher
Sind die wilden Vögel fortgezogen.
Am Abend weht von unseren Sternen ein eisiger Wind.

Über unsere Gräber
Beugt sich die zerbrochene Stirne der Nacht.
Unter Eichen schaukeln wir auf einem silbernen Kahn.

Immer klingen die weißen Mauern der Stadt.
Unter Dornenbogen
O mein Bruder klimmen wir blinde Zeiger gen Mitternacht.

Georg Trakl

Elis

Elis

1.
The absolute stillness of this golden day.
Under ancient oak trees
you appear, Elis, a dormant seed with round eyes.

Their blueness reflects the slumber of lovers,
whose rosy sighs
die on your lips.

At evening the fishermen drew in their heavy nets.
A good shepherd
leads his herd to the edge of the woods.
O, Elis, how just are your days!

Wordlessly, by barren walls,
the blue secrecy of olive trees descends.
An old man’s dark song dies away.

One golden boat
rocks back and forth, Elis—your heart to the deserted sky.

2.
A sweet chiming ripples in Elis’s breast
at evening
when his head sinks into the black pillow.

The shadow of the hunted
bleeds in peace in the barbed thicket.

A brown tree stands cloistered there,
its blue fruit falling away.

Signs and stars
go under, breathless, in the night-pond.

Behind the hill winter has come.

By night
blue doves drink the glacial sweat
from Elis’s crystal brow.

Forever whines by the blackened walls
God’s forsaken wind.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Elis

1.

Vollkommen ist die Stille dieses goldenen Tags.
Unter alten Eichen
Erscheinst du, Elis, ein Ruhender mit runden Augen.

Ihre Bläue spiegelt den Schlummer der Liebenden.
An deinem Mund
Verstummten ihre rosigen Seufzer.

Am Abend zog der Fischer die schweren Netze ein.
Ein guter Hirt
Führt seine Herde am Waldsaum hin.
O! wie gerecht sind, Elis, alle deine Tage.

Leise sinkt
An kahlen Mauern des Ölbaums blaue Stille,
Erstirbt eines Greisen dunkler Gesang.

Ein goldener Kahn
Schaukelt, Elis, dein Herz am einsamen Himmel.

2.
Ein sanftes Glockenspiel tönt in Elis' Brust
Am Abend,
Da sein Haupt ins schwarze Kissen sinkt.

Ein blaues Wild
Blutet leise im Dornengestrüpp.

Ein brauner Baum steht abgeschieden da;
Seine blauen Früchte fielen von ihm.

Zeichen und Sterne
Versinken leise im Abendweiher.

Hinter dem Hügel ist es Winter geworden.

Blaue Tauben
Trinken nachts den eisigen Schweiß,
Der von Elis' kristallener Stirne rinnt.

Immer tönt
An schwarzen Mauern Gottes einsamer Wind.

Georg Trakl

Evening Song

Evening Song

At evening, when we walk on dark trails,
our bleached selves appear before us.

Thirsty
we drink from the pond's white water,
the sweetness of our mournful childhood.

Weary, we rest beneath the elderberry
to behold the dawning gulls.

Spring clouds rise above the town's dark thoughts—
mute, the monks' nobler days.

As I took your tiny hands
your round eyes gently broke upon me.
This was long ago.

And yet, when darker songs descend upon the soul,
you appear—a whiteness—in your friend's autumn landscape.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Abendlied

Am Abend, wenn wir auf dunklen Pfaden gehn,
Erscheinen unsere bleichen Gestalten vor uns.

Wenn uns dürstet,
Trinken wir die weißen Wasser des Teichs,
Die Süße unserer traurigen Kindheit.

Erstorbene ruhen wir unterm Hollundergebüsch,
Schaun den grauen Möven zu.

Frühlingsgewölke steigen über die finstere Stadt,
Die der Mönche edlere Zeiten schweigt.

Da ich deine schmalen Hände nahm
Schlugst du leise die runden Augen auf,
Dieses ist lange her.

Doch wenn dunkler Wohllaut die Seele heimsucht,
Erscheinst du Weiße in des Freundes herbstlicher Landschaft.

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

Hohenburg

Hohenburg

The house is empty. Fall in the room.
The moon’s lone glow
and a birth at the edge of the dawning woods.

Forever your thoughts turn to the ashen face of your people,
removed from the bedlam of time.
Over the dreamer green branches bend eagerly,

cross and evening.
With bruised arms his star envelops the Song of Songs.
Towards the unpeopled window it ascends.

Thus the stranger shudders in blackness,
as his eyelids gently recede over
the far-off one. The silver voice of the wind in the hallway.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Hohenburg

Es ist niemand im Haus. Herbst in Zimmern;
Mondeshelle Sonate
Und das Erwachen am Saum des dämmernden Walds.

Immer denkst du das weiße Antlitz des Menschen
Ferne dem Getümmel der Zeit;
Über ein Träumendes neigt sich gerne grünes Gezweig,

Kreuz und Abend;
Umfängt den Tönenden mit purpurnen Armen sein Stern,
Der zu unbewohnten Fenstern hinaufsteigt.

Also zittert im Dunkel der Fremdling,
Da er leise die Lider über ein Menschliches aufhebt,
Das ferne ist; die Silberstimme des Windes im Hausflur.

Georg Trakl

In Darkness

In Darkness

In blue spring the soul falls silent.
Under dripping branches the evening
lovers bowed their foreheads and shivered.

O the corroding cross. In sunless communion
man and woman awoke to each other.
By the barren wall
the deserted one wanders with his shifting stars.

Over the moonstricken paths in the woods
the wilderness of forgotten hunts
sinks ever deeper. Your grief rises up
over the crumbling rock face in mutiny.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Im Dunkel

Es schweigt die Seele den blauen Frühling.
Unter feuchtem Abendgezweig
Sank in Schauern die Stirne den Liebenden.

O das grünende Kreuz. In dunklem Gespräch
Erkannten sich Mann und Weib.
An kahler Mauer
Wandelt in seinen Gestirnen der Einsame.

Über die mondbeglänzten Wege des Walds
Sank die Wildnis
Vergessener Jagden; Blick der Bläue
Aus verfallenen Felsen bricht.

Georg Trakl

In Red Foliage Full of Guitars

In Red Foliage Full of Guitars

In red foliage full of guitars
the girls’ yellow hair waves
at the fence, where sunflowers persist.
A golden chariot steers through the clouds.

In brown shadows the ancients
grow dumb, and dumbly entwine.
The orphaned ones sing vespers—sweetly.
Flies hum in the yellow haze.

In the stream the women wash.
The hung linen undulates.
The little girl, long dead to me,
returns throughout the dawning night.

From the tender sky sparrows fling themselves
into green holes pregnant with rot.
The hungry are filled
with the ghost of bread and spices.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Im roten Laubwerk voll Guitarren

Im roten Laubwerk voll Guitarren
Der Mädchen gelbe Haare wehen
Am Zaun, wo Sonnenblumen stehen.
Durch Wolken fährt ein goldner Karren.

In brauner Schatten Ruh verstummen
Die Alten, die sich blöd umschlingen.
Die Waisen süß zur Vesper singen.
In gelben Dünsten Fliegen summen.

Am Bache waschen noch die Frauen.
Die aufgehängten Linnen wallen.
Die Kleine, die mir lang gefallen,
Kommt wieder durch das Abendgrauen.

Vom lauen Himmel Spatzen stürzen
In grüne Löcher voll Verwesung.
Dem Hungrigen täuscht vor Genesung
Ein Duft von Brot und herben Würzen.

Georg Trakl

In The East

Like the wild organs of the winter storm
Is the people gloomy rage,
The purple billow of battle
Of stars leaf-stripped.
With broken brows, silvery arms
The night beckons to dying soldiers.
In the autumnal ash-tree’s shade
The ghosts of the killed are sighing.

Thorny wilderness surrounds the town.
From steps that bleeds the moon
Drives off dumbfounded women.
Wild wolves have burst through the gate.

Georg Trakl

In the Spring

In the Spring

Your black footsteps whisper into the snow.
In the shadows of trees
your rosy eyelids flutter out of love.

Forever follow the dark calls of the mariner,
the night and the stars.
And the oars pulse faintly.

Before long the violets bloom
by the crumbling wall.
The temple of the deserted corrodes in their silence.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Im Frühling

Leise sank von dunklen Schritten der Schnee,
Im Schatten des Baums
Heben die rosigen Lider Liebende.

Immer folgt den dunklen Rufen der Schiffer
Stern und Nacht;
Und die Ruder schlagen leise im Takt.

Balde an verfallener Mauer blühen
Die Veilchen,
Ergrünt so stille die Schläfe des Einsamen.

Georg Trakl

In Venice

In Venice

Stillness in the passing night of the room.
Seven silver branches flicker
before the whispered song
of the deserted,
the mystic flock of roses.

A swarm of flies, black as smoke,
swallows up the stony space,
and from the anguish
of golden days the head
of the homeless child gazes back.

The frozen sea fills with night.
The one star and the dark journey
have vanished in the ditch.
Child, your ailing smile
haunts me, wordless, in sleep.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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In Venedig

Stille in nächtigem Zimmer
Silbern flackert der Leuchter
Vor dem singenden Odem
Des Einsamen;
Zaubrisches Rosengewölk.

Schwärzlicher Fliegenschwarm
Verdunkelt den steinernen Raum
Und es starrt von der Qual
Des goldenen Tags das Haupt
Des Heimatlosen.

Reglos nachtet das Meer.
Stern und schwärzliche Fahrt
Entschwand am Kanal.
Kind, dein kränkliches Lächeln
Folgte mir leise im Schlaf.

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.

Translated by Jurek Kirakowski

Anonymous submission.

Georg Trakl

Lament

Sleep and death, the dusky eagles
Around this head swoop all night long;
Eternity’s icy wave
Would swallow the golden image
Of man; against horrible reefs
His purple body is shattered.
And the dark voice laments
Over the sea.
Sister of stormy sadness,
Look a timid dinghy goes down
Under stars,
The silent face of the night.

Georg Trakl

Landscape

Landscape

September evening. The somber calls of the herdsmen float
across the dimming village. Molten metal sparks in the blacksmith's.
A massive horse rears darkly back. To the fervor of its blazing nostrils
the hyacinth curls of the servant girl cling.
At the edge of the woods a faint cry stiffens the deer's back,
and the yellow flowers of autumn
bend wordlessly over the pond's blue countenance.
The tree was consumed in red flame. Up flutter the dark faces of bats.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Landschaft

Septemberabend; traurig tönen die dunklen Rufe der Hirten
Durch das dämmernde Dorf; Feuer sprüht in der Schmiede.
Gewaltig bäumt sich ein schwarzes Pferd; die hyazinthenen Locken der Magd
Haschen nach der Inbrunst seiner purpurnen Nüstern.
Leise erstarrt am Saum des Waldes der Schrei der Hirschkuh
Und die gelben Blumen des Herbstes
Neigen sich sprachlos über das blaue Antlitz des Teichs.
In roter Flamme verbrannte ein Baum; aufflattern mit dunklen Gesichtern die
Fledermäuse.

Georg Trakl

Mankind

Mankind

Face to face with the fire-abyss,
thundering hooves, the doomed brows of warriors,
across the blood-fog bootsteps echo, the iron death knells,
surrender, black in blue brains:
here Eve’s cloud, in pursuit, the passing over and bleeding coins.
Light breaks through the malignancy, his last meal.
A swelling silence dwells in bread and wine,
and the twelve are cleaved.
All night they wail in their dreams beneath the olive branches.
Saint Thomas plunges his hand into the heart of the wound.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Menschheit

Menschheit vor Feuerschlünden aufgestellt,
Ein Trommelwirbel, dunkler Krieger Stirnen,
Schritte durch Blutnebel; schwarzes Eisen schellt,
Verzweiflung, Nacht in traurigen Gehirnen:
Hier Evas Schatten, Jagd und rotes Geld.
Gewölk, das Licht durchbricht, das Abendmahl.
Es wohnt in Brot und Wein ein sanftes Schweigen
Und jene sind versammelt zwölf an Zahl.
Nachts schrein im Schlaf sie unter Ölbaumzweigen;
Sankt Thomas taucht die Hand ins Wundenmal.

Georg Trakl

On The Eastern Front

The ominous anger of masses of men
Is like the wild organ of the winter storm,
The purple surge of battle,
Leaﬂess stars.
With broken eyebrows and silver arms
The night waves to dying soldiers.
In the shade of the ash tree of autumn
The souls of the slain are sighing.
A thorny desert surrounds the city.
The moon chases the shocked women
From the bleeding stairways.
Wild wolves have broken through the door

Georg Trakl

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

Rondel

Rondel

The day’s gold is consumed,
The evening’s brown and blue:
The herders’ flutes swell then die
The evening’s blue and brown
The day’s gold is consumed.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Rondel

Verflossen ist das Gold der Tage,
Des Abends braun und blaue Farben:
Des Hirten sanfte Flöten starben
Des Abends blau und braune Farben
Verflossen ist das Gold der Tage.

Georg Trakl

Seven-Song of Death

Seven-Song of Death

So dawns the blue face of spring. Beneath the suckling trees
a darkness strays into evening and demise.
The blackbird’s feeble complaint is caught.
The stifled night appears, a wild bleeding,
dirge burrowing deeper into the hillside.

Flowering apple-branches sway in the damp air.
Tangles unhinge their silver,
death rattles over the night’s fluttering eyes, clatter of stars,
the whispered song from the cradle.

Down to the blackened woods the sleeper, arisen, descended,
and the blue spring, it wheezed its way through the valley,
that those bleached eyelids receded
wordlessly over his snow-covered face.

And the moon hunted the red beast
from its cave.
And sighing, it died—the bitter lament of women.

The white stranger, luminous, raised his hands
to the one star.
In silence the dead abandon their ruined tenement.

O the blasted stature of man—forged out of loveless metals,
night and horror in the sunken woods
and the crematory wilderness of beasts,
the windless eye of the soul.

On the blackish barge he embarked down the shimmering currents,
plenary of purple stars, and the branches, budding green,
sank upon him,
poppy born from a silver cloud.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Siebengesang des Todes

Bläulich dämmert der Frühling; unter saugenden Bäumen
Wandert ein Dunkles in Abend und Untergang,
Lauschend der sanften Klage der Amsel.
Schweigend erscheint die Nacht, ein blutendes Wild,
Das langsam hinsinkt am Hügel.

In feuchter Luft schwankt blühendes Apfelgezweig,
Löst silbern sich Verschlungenes,
Hinsterbend aus nächtigen Augen; fallende Sterne;
Sanfter Gesang der Kindheit.

Erscheinender stieg der Schläfer den schwarzen Wald hinab,
Und es rauschte ein blauer Quell im Grund,
Daß jener leise die bleichen Lider aufhob
Über sein schneeiges Antlitz;

Und es jagte der Mond ein rotes Tier
Aus seiner Höhle;
Und es starb in Seufzern die dunkle Klage der Frauen.

Strahlender hob die Hände zu seinem Stern
Der weiße Fremdling;
Schweigend verläßt ein Totes das verfallene Haus.

O des Menschen verweste Gestalt: gefügt aus kalten Metallen,
Nacht und Schrecken versunkener Wälder
Und der sengenden Wildnis des Tiers;
Windesstille der Seele.

Auf schwärzlichem Kahn fuhr jener schimmernde Ströme hinab,
Purpurner Sterne voll, und es sank
Friedlich das ergrünte Gezweig auf ihn,
Mohn aus silberner Wolke.

Georg Trakl

Song of The Western Countries

Oh the nighttime beating of the soul’s wings:
Herders of sheep once, we walked along the forests
that were growing dark,
And the red deer, the green ﬂower and the speaking
river followed us
In humility. Oh the old old note of the cricket,
Blood blooming on the altarstone,
And the cry of the lonely bird over the green silence
of the pool.
And you Crusades, and glowing punishment
Of the ﬂesh, purple fruits that fell to earth
In the garden at dusk, where young and holy men
walked,
Enlisted men of war now, waking up out of wounds
and dreams about stars.
Oh the soft cornﬂowers of the night.
And you long ages of tranquillity and golden
harvests,
When as peaceful monks we pressed out the purple
grapes;
And around us the hill and forest shone strangely.
The hunts for wild beasts, the castles, and at night,
the rest,
When man in his room sat thinking justice,
And in noiseless prayer fought for the living head
of God.
And this bitter hour of defeat,
When we behold a stony face in the black waters.
But radiating light, the lovers lift their silver eyelids:
They are one body. Incense streams from rosecolored pillows
And the sweet song of those risen from the dead

Georg Trakl

Summer

Summer

At evening in the woods
the cuckoos withhold their misery.
The cornstalks slant deeper into themselves,
the red poppies.

The blackening sky cracks open
over the hills.
The ancient song of the cricket
dies in the harbor.

It never stirs,
the crown of the chestnut.
Up the winding stairs
your dress rustles.

The candle’s glowing silence
darkens the room.
Your silver hand
quenches it.

Tonight, no wind, no stars.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Sommer

Am Abend schweigt die Klage
Des Kuckucks im Wald.
Tiefer neigt sich das Korn,
Der rote Mohn.

Schwarzes Gewitter droht
Über dem Hügel.
Das alte Lied der Grille
Erstirbt im Feld.

Nimmer regt sich das Laub
Der Kastanie.
Auf der Wendeltreppe
Rauscht dein Kleid.

Stille leuchtet die Kerze
Im dunklen Zimmer;
Eine silberne Hand
Löschte sie aus;

Windstille, sternlose Nacht.

Georg Trakl

The Fall of the Deserted

The Fall of the Deserted

The dark fall swells with fruit and abundance,
the yellowed glare of garish summer days.
A pure blueness steps from the ruined husk.
Shadows flap from the ancient myth.
The wine is pressed, benign silence
fraught with the whispered reply to murkier questions.

And here and there a cross on a barren hill.
In the red woods a flock loses itself.
The cloud wanders into the pond’s mirror.
A peasant’s stormless gesture is put to rest.
Below one’s breath the evening wings of grief stir
the dry reeds of our rooftop, the black earth.

Before long the stars will nestle in his weary brow.
In the chilled room a mute humility turns back
and angels tread softly from the blue
eyes of lovers, that more gentle ache.
Reeds hiss. A bone-ridden horror dawns.
Black dew drips from the shaven fields.

Translated by Eric Plattner
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Der Herbst des Einsamen

Der dunkle Herbst kehrt ein voll Frucht und Fülle,
Vergilbter Glanz von schönen Sommertagen.
Ein reines Blau tritt aus verfallener Hülle;
Der Flug der Vögel tönt von alten Sagen.
Gekeltert ist der Wein, die milde Stille
Erfüllt von leiser Antwort dunkler Fragen.

Und hier und dort ein Kreuz auf ödem Hügel;
Im roten Wald verliert sich eine Herde.
Die Wolke wandert übern Weiherspiegel;
Es ruht des Landmanns ruhige Geberde.
Sehr leise rührt des Abends blauer Flügel
Ein Dach von dürrem Stroh, die schwarze Erde.

Bald nisten Sterne in des Müden Brauen;
In kühle Stuben kehrt ein still Bescheiden
Und Engel treten leise aus den blauen
Augen der Liebenden, die sanfter leiden.
Es rauscht das Rohr; anfällt ein knöchern Grauen,
Wenn schwarz der Tau tropft von den kahlen Weiden.

Georg Trakl

The Heart

The wild heart grew white in the forest;
Dark anxiety
Of death, as when the gold
Died in the grey cloud.
An evening in November.
A crowd of needy women stood at the bare gate
Of the slaughterhouse;
Rotten meat and guts fell
Into every basket;
Horrible food.
The blue dove of the evening
Brought no forgiveness.
The dark cry of trumpets
Tr a v e l l e d i n t h e golden branches
Of the soaked elms,
A frayed ﬂag
Smoking with blood,
To w h i c h a m a n l i s t e n s
In wild despair.
All your days of nobility, buried
In that red evening!
Out of the dark entrance hall
The golden shape
Of the young girl steps
Surrounded by the pale moon,
The prince’s court of autumn,
Black ﬁr trees broken
In the night’s storm,
The steep fortress.
O heart
Glittering above in the snowy cold

Georg Trakl

The Mood of Depression

You dark mouth inside me,
You are strong , shape
Composed of autumn cloud,
And golden evening stillness;
In the shadows thrown
By the broken pine trees
A mountain stream turns dark in the green light;
A little town
That piously dies away into brown pictures.
Now the black horses rear
In the foggy pasture.
I think of soldiers!
Down the hill, where the dying sun lumbers,
The laughing blood plunges,
Speechless
Under the oak trees! Oh the hopeless depression
Of an army; a blazing steel helmet
Fell with a clatter from purpled foreheads.
The autumn night comes down so coolly.
With her white habit glittering like the stars
Over the broken human bodies
The convent nurse is silent

Georg Trakl

The Rats

The Rats

The hunter’s moon cuts straight through the farmyard.
From the roof’s edge a shadow descends.
The window empties itself without a word.
Up the stairs, below one’s breath, the rats cavort.

And the scuttling whistles here and there
and the grizzly whiff of your human stink
gives you away,
the ghost in the moonlight trembles through and through

and their bottomless greed tugs at you
and the houses and barns comply,
pregnant with corn and fruit.
In the dark out there the icy wind thrashes and weeps.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Die Ratten

In Hof scheint weiß der herbstliche Mond.
Vom Dachrand fallen phantastische Schatten.
Ein Schweigen in leeren Fenstern wohnt;
Da tauchen leise herauf die Ratten

Und huschen pfeifend hier und dort
Und ein gräulicher Dunsthauch wittert
Ihnen nach aus dem Abort,
Den geisterhaft der Mondschein durchzittert

Und sie keifen vor Gier wie toll
Und erfüllen Haus und Scheunen,
Die von Korn und Früchten voll.
Eisige Winde im Dunkel greinen.

Georg Trakl

The Ravens

The Ravens

Over the black crevice
at noon the ravens rush with rusty cries.
Their shadows touch the deer’s back
and at times they loom in gnarled rest.

O how they derange the brown stillness,
in the one acre itself entranced,
like a woman married to grave premonitions,
and at times you can hear them bicker

about a corpse they sniffed-out somewhere,
and sharply they bend their flight towards north
and dwindle away like a funeral
march in the air, shivering with bliss.

Translated by Eric Plattner & Joseph Suglia

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Die Raben

Über den schwarzen Winkel hasten
Am Mittag die Raben mit hartem Schrei.
Ihr Schatten streift an der Hirschkuh vorbei
Und manchmal sieht man sie mürrisch rasten.

O wie sie die braune Stille stören,
In der ein Acker sich verzückt,
Wie ein Weib, das schwere Ahnung berückt,
Und manchmal kann man sie keifen hören

Um ein Aas, das sie irgendwo wittern,
Und plötzlich richten nach Nord sie den Flug
Und schwinden wie ein Leichenzug
In Lüften, die von Wollust zittern.

Georg Trakl

The Sun

The Sun

Each day the yellow sun rises over the hill.
The woods glow, the dark beast,
Man: hunter or shepherd.

Blood-fish surface in the teeming pond.
Under the dome of heaven
the fisherman drifts in his blue boat.

The grapes ripen slowly, the corn.
When day slumps to a close,
Good and Evil are poised.

Night falls.
The wanderer lifts his heavy eyelids.
The sun breaks from the dark ditch.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Die Sonne

Täglich kommt die gelbe Sonne über den Hügel.
Schön ist der Wald, das dunkle Tier,
Der Mensch; Jäger oder Hirt.

Rötlich steigt im grünen Weiher der Fisch.
Unter dem runden Himmel
Fährt der Fischer leise im blauen Kahn.

Langsam reift die Traube, das Korn.
Wenn sich stille der Tag neigt,
Ist ein Gutes und Böses bereitet.

Wenn es Nacht wird,
Hebt der Wanderer leise die schweren Lider;
Sonne aus finsterer Schlucht bricht.

Georg Trakl

To The Silenced

Oh, the great city's madness when at nightfall
The crippled trees gape by the blackened wall,
The spirit of evil peers from a silver mask;
Lights with magnetic scourge drive off the stony night.
Oh, the sunken pealing of evening bells.

Whore who in her icy shivers sheds a still-born child.
With raving whips God's fury punishes brows possessed.
Purple pestilence, hunger that breaks green eyes.
Oh, the horrible laughter of gold.

But silent in dark caves a stiller humanity bleeds,
Out of hard metals moulds the redeeming head.

Georg Trakl

Towards Evening, My Heart

Towards Evening, My Heart

The screeching of bats at evening.
Two horses lope in the meadow.
The red maple shivers.
To the wanderer, a small tavern appears in the distance.
It is good to taste young wine and nuts.
It is good: to lurch, drunken, into the dawning woods.
Tolling, through the black tangle, the dolorous bells.
Dew drops on the face.

Translated by Eric Plattner

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Zu Abend mein Herz

Am Abend hört man den Schrei der Fledermäuse.
Zwei Rappen springen auf der Wiese.
Der rote Ahorn rauscht.
Dem Wanderer erscheint die kleine Schenke am Weg.
Herrlich schmecken junger Wein und Nüsse.
Herrlich: betrunken zu taumeln in dämmernden Wald.
Durch schwarzes Geäst tönen schmerzliche Glocken.
Auf das Gesicht tropft Tau.

Georg Trakl

Trumpets

Under the trimmed willows, where brown children
are playing
And leaves tumbling, the trumpets blow. A quaking
of cemeteries.
Banners of scarlet rattle through a sadness of maple
trees,
Riders along rye-ﬁelds, empty mills.
Or shepherds sing during the night, and stags step
delicately
Into the circle of their ﬁre, the grove’s sorrow
immensely old,
Dancing, they loom up from one black wall;
Banners of scarlet, laughter, insanity, trumpets

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.

Georg Trakl