**Classic Poetry Series**

# Ingeborg Bachmann

## - 28 poems -

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## Ingeborg Bachmann (1926 - 1973)

Bachmann was born in Klagenfurt, in the Austrian state of Carinthia, the daughter of a headmaster. She studied philosophy, psychology, German philology, and law at the universities of Innsbruck, Graz, and Vienna. In 1949, she received her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Vienna with her dissertation titled "The Critical Reception of the Existential Philosophy of Martin Heidegger," her thesis adviser was Victor Kraft.

After graduating, Bachmann worked as a scriptwriter and editor at the Allied radio station Rot-Weiss-Rot, a job that enabled her to obtain an overview of contemporary literature and also supplied her with a decent income, making possible proper literary work. Furthermore, her first radio dramas were published by the station. Her literary career was enhanced by contact with Hans Weigel (littérateur and sponsor of young post-war literature) and the legendary literary circle known as Gruppe 47, whose members also included Ilse Aichinger, Paul Celan, Heinrich Böll, Marcel Reich-Ranicki and Günter Grass.

In 1953, she moved to Rome, Italy, where she spent the large part of the following years working on poems, essays and short stories as well as opera libretti in collaboration with Hans Werner Henze, which soon brought with them international fame and numerous awards. Her relationship with the Swiss author Max Frisch (1911–1991) bestowed the role of the second protagonist in Frisch's 1964 novel Gantenbein upon her. His infidelity and the separation of the couple in 1962 had a deep impact on Bachmann.

Bachmann's work primarily focuses on themes like personal boundaries, establishment of the truth, and philosophy of language, the latter in the tradition of Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Her doctoral dissertation expresses her growing disillusionment with Heidegerrian Existentialism, which was in part resolved through her growing interest in Wittgenstein, whose Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus significantly influenced her relationship to language.

Ingeborg Bachmann died in the Roman Sant' Eugenio hospital three weeks after a fire in her bedroom, on 17 October 1973. Local police concluded that the blaze was caused by a lit cigarette. Withdrawal symptoms when her stay in hospital interrupted her long habit of compulsive pill-taking may have contribued to her death. She is buried at the Annabichl cemetery.

Works:

Publications
Ingeborg Bachmann-Paul Celan: Correspondence (letters between Ingeborg

and Paul Celan, published 2010)
"Darkness Spoken: The Collected Poems of Ingeborg Bachmann," translated and introduced by Peter Filkins, published by Zephyr Press, 2006. Bilingual on facing pages.
Last Living Words: The Ingeborg Bachmann Reader, translated by Lilian M. Friedberg, published by Green Integer, 2005
Letters to Felician (letters to an imaginary correspondent, written 1945, published posthumously). Edited & translated into English by Damion Searls. Green Integer Books, 2004.
Die gestundete Zeit (lyric poetry, 1953)
Die Zikaden (radio play, 1955)
Anrufung des Grossen Bären (lyric poetry, 1956)
Der gute Gott von Manhattan (radio play, 1958)
"Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar" (poetological speech at a German presentation of awards, 1959)
"Frankfurter Vorlesungen" (lecture on problems of contemporary literature, 1959)
Der Prinz von Homburg (libretto, 1960)
Das dreißigste Jahr (story volume, 1961)
Der junge Lord (libretto, 1965)
Malina (novel, 1971) Translated into English by Philip Boehm. Holmes & Meier, 1999.
Simultan (story volume, 1972)
Todesarten (novel-cycle project, unfinished)
The Barking (short story)

**A Kind Of Loss**

Used together: seasons, books, a piece of music.
The keys, teacups, bread basket, sheet and a bed.
A hope chest of words, of gestures, brought back, used, used up.
A household order maintained. Said. Done. And always a head was there.
I've fallen in love with winter, with a Viennese septet, wiht summer.
With Village maps, a mountain nest, a beach and a bed.
Kept a calender cult, declared promises irrevocable,
bowed before something, was pious to a nothing

(-to a folded newspaper, cold ashes, the scribbled piece of paper) ,
fearless in religion, for our bed was the church.

From my lake view arose my inexhaustible painting.
From my balcony I greeted entire peoples, my neighbors.
By the chimney fire, in safety, my hair took on its deepest hue.
The ringing at the door was the alarm for my joy.

It's not you I've lost,
but the world.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Advertisement**

But where are we going
carefree be carefree
when it grows dark and when it grows cold
be carefree
but
with music
what should we do
cheerful and with music
and think
cheerful
in facing the end
with music
and to where do we carry
best of all
our questions and dread of all the years
to the dream laundry carefree be carefree
but what happens
best of all
when dead silence

sets in

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Borrowed Time**

Harder days are coming.
The loan of borrowed time
will be due on the horizen.
Soon you must lace up your boots
and chase the hounds back to the marsh farms.
For the entrails of fish
have grown cold in the wind.
Dimly burns the light of lupines.
Your gaze makes out in fog:
the loan of borrowed time
will be due on the horizon.

There your loved one sinks in sand;
it rises up to her windblown hair,
it cuts her short,
it commands her to be silent,
it discovers she's mortal
and willing to leave you
after every embrace.

Don't look around.
Lace up your boots.
Chase back the hounds.
Throw the fish into the sea.
Put out the lupines!

Harder days are coming.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Bruderschaft**

Each and every thing cuts wounds,
and neither of us has forgiven the other.
Hurting like you and hurtful,
I lived towards you.

Every touch augments
the pure, the spiritual touch;
we experience it as we age,
turned into coldest silence.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Die Häfen Waren Geöffnet**

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Easter Zunday**

Last Easter Jim put on his blue
Frock cwoat, the vu'st time-vier new;
Wi' yollow buttons all o' brass,
That glitter'd in the zun lik' glass;
An' pok'd 'ithin the button-hole
A tutty he'd a-begg'd or stole.
A span-new wes-co't, too, he wore,
Wi' yellow stripes all down avore;
An' tied his breeches' lags below
The knee, wi' ribbon in a bow;
An' drow'd his kitty-boots azide,
An' put his laggens on, an' tied
His shoes wi' strings two vingers wide,
Because 'twer Easter Zunday.

An' after mornen church wer out
He come back hwome, an' stroll'd about
All down the vields, an' drough the leane,
Wi' sister Kit an' cousin Jeane,
A-turnen proudly to their view
His yollow breast an' back o' blue.
The lambs did play, the grounds wer green,
The trees did bud, the zun did sheen;
The lark did zing below the sky,
An' roads wer all a-blown so dry,
As if the zummer wer begun;
An' he had sich a bit o' fun!
He meade the maidens squeal an' run,
Because 'twer Easter Zunday.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Every Day**

War is no longer declared,
only continued. The monstrous
has become everyday. The hero
stays away from battle. The weak
have gone to the front.
The uniform of the day is patience,
its medal the pitiful star of hope above the heart.

The medal is awarded
when nothing more happens,
when the artillery falls silent,
when the enemy has grown invisible
and the shadow of eternal armament
covers the sky.

It is awarded
for desertion of the flag,
for bravery in the face of friends,
for the betrayal of unworthy secrets
and the disregard
of every command.

Ingeborg Bachmann

## I Know No Better World

Who knows of a better world should step forward.
Alone, no longer out of bravery, not wiping away this saliva,
this saliva worn upon the cheek
as if to a coronation, as if redeemed, whether at communion
or among comrades. The weak rabbit,
the rat, and those fallen there, all of them,
no longer alone, but as one, though still afraid,
the dream of returning home
in the dream of armament, in the dream
of returning home.

Ingeborg Bachmann

## I Step Outside Myself

I step outside
myself, out of my eyes,
hands, mouth, outside
of myself I
step, a bundle
of goodness and godliness
that must make good
this devilry
that has happened.

Ingeborg Bachmann

## In The Storm Of Roses

Wherever we turn in the storm of roses,
the night is lit up by thorns, and the thunder
of leaves, once so quiet within the bushes,
rumbling at our heels.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Menschenlos**

Verwunschnes Wolkenschloß, in dem wir treiben...
Wer weiß, ob wir nicht schon durch viele Himmel
so ziehen mit verglasten Augen?
Wir, in die Zeit verbannt
und aus dem Raum gestoßen,
wir, Flieger durch die Nacht und Bodenlose.

Wer weiß, ob wir nicht schon um Gott geflogen,
und, weil wir pfeilschnell schäumten ohne ihn zu sehen
und unsre Samen weiterschleuderten,
um in noch dunkleren Geschlechtern fortzuleben,
jetzt schuldhaft treiben?

Wer weiß, ob wir nicht lange, lang schon sterben?
Der Wolkenball mit uns strebt immer höher.
Die dünne Luft lähmt heute schon die Hände,
und wenn die Stimme bricht und unser Atem steht...?
Bleibt Verwunschenheit für letzte Augenblicke?

Submitted by carina

Ingeborg Bachmann

**My Orcha'd In Linden Lea**

'Ithin the woodlands, flow'ry gleaded,
By the woak tree's mossy moot,
The sheenen grass-bleades, timber-sheaded,
Now do quiver under voot;
An' birds do whissle over head,
An' water's bubblen in its bed,
An' there vor me the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.
When leaves that leately wer a-springen
Now do feade 'ithin the copse,
An' painted birds do hush their zingen
Up upon the timber's tops;
An' brown-leav'd fruit's a-turnen red,
In cloudless zunsheen, over head,
Wi' fruit vor me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Let other vo'k meake money vaster
In the air o' dark-room'd towns,
I don't dread a peevish measter;
Though noo man do heed my frowns,
I be free to goo abrode,
Or teake agean my hwomeward road
To where, vor me, the apple tree
Do lean down low in Linden Lea.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Nach Dieser Sintflut**

After this deluge
I wish to see the dove
saved,
nothing but the dove.

I would drown in this sea
if it did not fly away,
if it did not return with the leaf
in the final hour.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Nebelland**

Im Winter ist meine Geliebte
unter den Tieren des Waldes.
Daß ich vor Morgen zurückmuß,
weiß die Füchsin und lacht.
Wie die Wolken erzittern! Und mir
auf den Schneekragen fällt
eine Lage von brüchigem Eis.

Im Winter ist meine Geliebte
ein Baum unter Bäumen und lädt
die glückverlassenen Krähen
ein in ihr schönes Geäst. Sie weiß,
daß der Wind, wenn es dämmert,
ihr starres, mit Reif besetztes
Abendkleid hebt und mich heimjagt.

Im Winter ist meine Geliebte
unter den Fischen und stumm.
Hörig den Wassern, die der Strich
ihrer Flossen von innen bewegt,
steh ich am Ufer und seh,
bis mich Schollen vertreiben,
wie sie taucht und sich wendet.

Und wieder vom Jagdruf des Vogels
getroffen, der seine Schwingen
über mir steift, stürz ich
auf offenem Feld: sie entfiedert
die Hühner und wirft mir ein weißes
Schlüsselbein zu. Ich nehm’s um den Hals
und geh fort durch den bitteren Flaum.

Treulos ist meine Geliebte,
ich weiß, sie schwebt manchmal
auf hohen Schuh’n nach der Stadt,
sie küßt in den Bars mit der Strohhalm
die Gläser tief auf den Mund,
und es kommen ihr Worte für alle.
Doch diese Sprache verstehe ich nicht.

Nebelland hab ich gesehen,
Nebelherz hab ich gegessen.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Psalm**

1

Be silent with me, as all bels are silent!

In the afterbirth of terror
the rabble grovles for new nourishment.
On Good Friday a hand hangs on display
in the firmament, tow fingers missing,
and it cannot swear that all of it,
all of it didn't happen, and nothing
ever will. It dives into red clouds,
whisks off the new murderers
and goes free.

Each night on this earth
open the windows, fold back the sheets
so that the invalid's secret lies naked,
a sore full of sustenace, endless pain
for every taste.

Gloved butchers cease
the breath of the naked;
the moon in the doorway falls to earth;
let the shards lie, the handle ....

All was prepared for the last rites.
(The sacrament cannot be completed.)

2

How vain it all is.
Roll into a city,
rise from the city's dust,
take over a post
and diguise yourself
to avoid exposure

Fulfill the promises
before a tarnished mirror in the air,
before a shut door in the wind.

Untraveled are the paths on the steep slope of heaven.

3

O eyes, scorched by th Earth's reservoir of sun,
weighted with the rain of all eyes,
and now absorbed, interwoven
by the tragic spiders
of the present ...

4

In the hollow of my muteness
lay a word
and grow tall forests on both sides,
such that my mouth
lies wholly in shade.

tranlated by Peter Filkins

Songs from an Island
Ingeborg Bachmann

Shadow fruit is falling from the walls,
moonlight bathes the house in white, and the ash
of extinct craters is borne in by the sea winnd.

In the embrace of handsome youths
the coasts are sleeping.
Your flesh remembers mine,
it was already inclined to me,
when the ships
loosened themselves from shore and the cross
of our mortal burden
kept watch in the rigging.

Now the execution sites are empty,
they search but cannot find us.

.

When you rise from the dead,
when I rise fromt the dead,
no stone will lie before the gate,
no boat will rest on the sea.

Tomorrow the casks will roll
toward Sunday waves,
we come on anointed

soles to the shore, wash
the grapes and stamp
the harvest into wine,
tomorrow, on the shore.

When you rise from the dead,
when I rise from the dead,
the hangman will hang at the gate,
the hammer will sink into the sea.

.

One day the feast must come!
Saint Anthony, you who have suffered,
Saint Leonard, you who have suffered,
Saint Vitus, you who have suffered.

Make way for our prayers, way fro the worshippers,
room for music and joy!
We have learned simplicity,
we sing in the choir of cicadas,
we eat and drink,
the lean cats
rub against our table,
until evening mass begins
I hold your hand
with my eyes,
and a quiet, brave heart
sacrifices its wishes to you

Honey and nuts for the childern,
teeming nets for the fishermen,
fertility for the gradens,
moon for the volcano, moon for the volcano!

Our sparks leapt over the borders,
above the night fireworks fanned their
tails, the procession
floats away on dark rafts and gives
time to the primeval world,
to the plodding lizards,
to the carnivorous plant,
to the feverish fish,
to the orgies of wind and the lust
of mountains where a pious
star loses its way, collides with their face
and dissolves into dust.

Stand firm, you follish saints.
Tell the mainland the craters aren't resting!
Saint Roch, you who have suffered,
oh you who have suffered, Saint Francis.

.

When someone departs he must throw his hat,
filled with the mussels he spent the summer
gathering, in the sea
and sail off with his hair in the wind,
he must hurl the table,
set for his love, in the sea,
he must pour the wine,

left in his glass, into the sea,
he must give his bread to the fish
and mix a dropp of his blood with the sea,
he must drive his knife deep into the waves
and sink his shoes,
heart, anchor and cross,
and sail off with his hair in the wind.
Then he will return.
When?
Do not ask.

.

There is fire under the earth,
and the fire is pure.

There is fire under the eart
and molten rock.

There is a torrent under the earth,
it will stream into us.

There is a torrent under the earth.
it will scorch our bones.

A great fire is coming,
a torrent is coming over the earth.

We shall be witnesses.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Stay**

Now the journey is ending,
the wind is losing heart.
Into your hands it's falling,
a rickety house of cards.

The cards are backed with pictures
displaying all the world.
You've stacked up all the images
and shuffled them with words.

And how profound the playing
that once again begins!
Stay, the card you're drawing
is the only world you'll win.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**The Broken Heart**

News o' grief had overteaken
Dark-eyed Fanny, now vorseaken;
There she zot, wi' breast a-heaven,
While vrom zide to zide, wi' grieven,
Vell her head, wi' tears a-creepen
Down her cheaks, in bitter weepen.
There wer still the ribbon-bow
She tied avore her hour ov woe,
An' there wer still the hans that tied it
Hangen white,
Or wringen tight,
In ceare that drowned all ceare bezide it.

When a man, wi' heartless slighten,
Mid become a maiden's blighten,
He mid cearelessly vorseake her,
But must answer to her Meaker;
He mid slight, wi' selfish blindness,
All her deeds o' loven-kindness,
God wull waigh 'em wi' the slighten
That mid be her love's requiten;
He do look on each deceiver,
He do know
What weight o' woe
Do break the heart ov ev'ry griever.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**The Geate A-Vallen To**

In the zunsheen of our zummers
Wi' the hay time now a-come,
How busy wer we out a-vield
Wi' vew a-left at hwome,
When waggons rumbled out ov yard
Red wheeled, wi' body blue,
And back behind ‘em loudly slamm'd
The geate a'vallen to.

Drough daysheen ov how many years
The geate ha' now a-swung
Behind the veet o' vull-grown men
And vootsteps of the young.
Drough years o' days it swung to us
Behind each little shoe,
As we tripped lightly on avore
The geate a-vallen to.

In evenen time o' starry night
How mother zot at hwome,
And kept her bleazen vier bright
Till father should ha' come,
An' how she quicken'd up and smiled
An' stirred her vier anew,
To hear the trampen ho'ses' steps
An' geate a-vallen to.

There's moon-sheen now in nights o' fall
When leaves be brown vrom green,
When, to the slammen o' the geate,
Our Jenny's ears be keen,
When the wold dog do wag his tail,
An' Jean could tell to who,
As he do come in drough the geate,
The geate a-vallen to.

An' oft do come a saddened hour
When there must goo away
One well-beloved to our heart's core,
Vor long, perhaps vor aye:
An' oh! it is a touchen thing
The loven heart must rue,
To hear behind his last farewell
The geate a-vallen to.

Ingeborg Bachmann

## The Girt Woak Tree

The girt woak tree that's in the dell !
There's noo tree I do love so well;
Vor times an' times when I wer young
I there've a-climb'd, an' there've a-zwung,
An' pick'd the eacorns green, a-shed
In wrestlen storms from his broad head,
An' down below's the cloty brook
Where I did vish with line an' hook,
An' beat, in playsome dips and zwims,
The foamy stream, wi' white-skinn'd lim's.
An' there my mother nimbly shot
Her knitten-needles, as she zot
At evenen down below the wide
Woak's head, wi' father at her zide.
An' I've a-played wi' many a bwoy,
That's now a man an' gone awoy;
Zoo I do like noo tree so well
'S the girt woak tree that's in the dell.

An' there, in leater years, I roved
Wi' thik poor maid I fondly lov'd,-
The maid too feair to die so soon,-
When evenen twilight, or the moon,
Cast light enough 'ithin the pleace
To show the smiles upon her feace,
Wi' eyes so clear's the glassy pool,
An' lips an' cheaks so soft as wool.
There han' in han', wi' bosoms warm
Wi' love that burned but thought noo harm,
Below the wide-bough's tree we past
The happy hours that went too vast;
An' though she'll never be my wife,
She's still my leaden star o' life.
She's gone: an' she've a-left to me
Her token in the girt woak tree;
Zoo I do love noo tree so well
'S the girt woak tree that's in the dell.

An' oh ! mid never ax nor hook
Be brought to spweil his steately look;
Nor ever roun' his ribby zides
Mid cattle rub ther heairy hides;
Nor pigs rout up his turf, but keep
His lwonesome sheade vor harmless sheep;
An' let en grow, an' let en spread,
An' let en live when I be dead.
But oh! if men should come an' vell
The girt woak tree that's in the dell,
An' build his planks 'ithin the zide
O' zome girt ship to plough the tide,
Then, life or death ! I'd goo to sea,
A-sailen wi' the girt woak tree

An' I upon his planks would stand,
An' die a-fighten vor the land,-
The land so dear,-the land so free,-
The land that bore the girt woak tree;
Vor I do love noo tree so well
'S the girt woak tree that's in the dell.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**The Surprise**

As there I left the road in May,
And took my way along a ground,
I found a glade with girls at play,
By leafy boughs close-hemmed around,
And there, with stores of harmless joys,
They plied their tongues, in merry noise:
Though little did they seem to fear
So queer a stranger might be near;
Teeh-hee! Look here! Hah! ha! Look there!
And oh! so playsome, oh! so fair.

And one would dance as one would spring,
Or bob or bow with leering smiles,
And one would swing, or sit and sing,
Or sew a stitch or two at whiles,
And one skipped on with downcast face,
All heedless, to my very place,
And there, in fright, with one foot out,
Made one dead step and turned about.
Heeh, hee, oh! oh! ooh! oo!—Look there!
And oh! so playsome, oh! so fair.

Away they scampered all, full speed,
By boughs that swung along their track,
As rabbits out of wood at feed,
At sight of men all scamper back.
And one pulled on behind her heel,
A thread of cotton, off her reel,
And oh! to follow that white clue,
I felt I fain could scamper too.
Teeh, hee, run here. Eeh! ee! Look there!
And oh! so playsome, oh! so fair.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**The Wife A-Lost**

Since I noo mwore do zee your feace,
Up steairs or down below,
I'll zit me in the lwonesome pleace,
Where flat-bough'd beech do grow;
Below the beeches' bough, my love,
Where you did never come,
An' I don't look to meet ye now,
As I do look at hwome.

Since you noo mwore be at my zide,
In walks in zummer het,
I'll goo alwone where mist do ride,
Drough trees a-drippen wet;
Below the rain-wet bough, my love,
Where you did never come,
An' I don't grieve to miss ye now,
As I do grieve at hwome.

Since now bezide my dinner-bwoard
Your vaice do never sound,
I'll eat the bit I can avword,
A-vield upon the ground;
Below the darksome bough, my love,
Where you did never dine,
An' I don't grieve to miss ye now,
As I at hwome do pine.

Since I do miss your vaice an' feace
In prayer at eventide,
I'll pray wi' woone sad vaice vor greace
To goo where you do bide;
Above the tree an' bough, my love,
Where you be gone avore,
An' be a-waiten vor me now,
To come vor evermwore.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**The Young That Died In Beauty**

If souls should only sheen so bright
In heaven as in e'thly light,
An' nothen better wer the cease,
How comely still, in sheape an' feace,
Would many reach thik happy pleace, -
The hopevul souls that in their prime
Ha' seem'd a-took avore their time, -
The young that died in beauty.

But when woone's lim's ha' lost their strangth
A-tweilen drough a lifetime's langth,
An' over cheaks a-growen wold
The slowly-weasten years ha' roll'd
The deep'nen wrinkle's hollow vwold;
When life is ripe, then death do call
Vor less ov thought, than when do vall
On young vo'ks in their beauty.

But pinen souls, wi' heads a-hung
In heavy sorrow vor the young,
The sister ov the brother dead,
The father wi' a child a-vled,
The husband when his bride ha' laid
Her head at rest, noo mwore to turn,
Have all a-vound the time to murn
Vor youth that died in beauty.

An' yeet the church, where prayer do rise
Vrom thoughtvul souls, wi' downcast eyes,
An' village greens, a-beat half beare
By dancers that do meet, an' wear
Such merry looks at feast an' feair,
Do gather under leatest skies,
Their bloomen cheaks an' sparklen eyes,
Though young ha' died in beauty.

But still the dead shall mwore than keep
The beauty ov their early sleep;
Where comely looks shall never wear
Uncomely, under tweil an' ceare.
The feair at death be always feair,
Still feair to livers' thought an' love,
An' feairer still to God above,
Than when they died in beauty.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Theme and Variation**

That summer there was no honey.
The queens led their swarms away,
the strawberry bed dried up in a day,
the berrypickers went home early.

All that sweetness, swept on one ray of light
off to sleep. Who slept this sleep before his time?
Honey and berries? He is a stranger to suffering,
the one with the world at his hands. In want of nothing.

In want of nothing but perhaps a bit,
enought to rest or to stand straight.
He was bent by caves-and shadows,
because no country took him in.
He wasn't even safe in the wood-
a partisan whom the world reliquished
toher dead satellite, the moon.

He is a stranger to sufferin, the one with the world
[at his hands,
and was anything not handed him? He had the bettle's
cohort wrapped round his finger, blazes
branded his face with scars and the wellspring
appeared as a chimera before his eyes,
where it was not.

Honey and berries?
Had he ever known the scent, he'd have followed it
long ago!

Walking a sleepwalker's sleep,
who slept this sleep before his time?
One who was born ancient
and called to the darkness early.
All that sweetness swept on one ray of light
before him.

He spat into the undergrowth a curse
to bring drought, he screamed
and his prayers were heard:
the berrypickers went home early!
When the root rose up
and slithered after them, hissing
a snakeskin remained, the tree's last defense.
The strawberry bed dried up in a day.

In the village below, the buckets stood empty
like drums waiting in the square.
Then the sun struck
and paradiddled death.

The windows fell shut,

the queens led their swarms away,
and no one prevented them from fleeing.
Wilderness took them in,
the hollow tree among ferns,
the first free state.
The last human being was stung
and felt no pain.

That summer there was no honey.

—Translated from the German by Lilian M. Friedberg

Ingeborg Bachmann

**To The Sun**

More beatiful than the remarkable moon and her noble light,
More beautiful than the stars, the famous medals of the night,
More beautiful than the fiery entrance a comet makes,
And called to a part far more splendid than any other planet's
Because daily your life and my life depend on it, is the sun.

Beautifu sun that rises, his work not forgotten,
And completes it, most beautifully in summer, when a day
Evaporates on the coast, and effortlessly mirrored the sails
Pass through your sight, till you tire and cut short the last.

Without the sun even art takes the veil again,
You cease to appear to me, and the sea and the sand,
Lashed by shadows, take refuge under my eyelids.

Beautiful light, that keeps us warm, preserves us, marvellously makes sure
That I see again and that I see you again!

Nothing more beautiful under the sun than to be under the sun . . .

Nothing more beautiful than to see the stick in water and the bird above,
Pondering his flight, and, below, the fishes in shoals,

Coloured, moulded, brought into the world with a mission of light,
And to see the radius, the square of a field, my landscape's thousand angles

and the dress you have put on. And yourdress, bell-shaped and blue!
Beautiful blue, in which peacocks walk and bow,

Blue of far places, the zones of joy with weathers that suit my mood,
Blue chance on the horizon! and my enchanted eyes
Dilate again and blink and burn themselves sore.

Beautiful sun, to whom dust owes great admiration yet,
Not for the moon, therefore, and not for the stars, and not
Because night shows off with comets, trying to fool me,
But for your sake, and endlessly soon, and for you above all

I shall lament the inevitable loss of my sight.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Tokens**

Green mwold on zummer bars do show
That they've a-dripped in winter wet;
The hoof-worn ring o' groun' below
The tree do tell o' storms or het;
The trees in rank along a ledge
Do show where woonce did bloom a hedge;
An' where the vurrow-marks do stripe
The down the wheat woonce rustled ripe.
Each mark ov things a-gone vrom view—
To eyezight's woone, to soulzight two.

The grass agean the mwoldren door
'S a token sad o' vo'k a-gone,
An' where the house, bwoth wall an' vloor,
'S a-lost, the well mid linger on.
What tokens, then, could Meary gi'e
That she a-lived, an' lived vor me,
But things a-done vor thought an' view?
Good things that nwone agean can do,
An' every work her love ha' wrought,
To eyezight's woone, but two to thought.

Ingeborg Bachmann

## Verordnet Diesem Geschlecht Keinen Glauben

Do not decree faith on this race,
stars, ships and smoke are enough;
it is concerned with things, determines
stars and mathematical infinity,
and a trait, call it trait of love,
emerges more purely from it all.

The heavens hang limp, and stars come loose
from the juncture with moon and night.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Woak Hill**

When sycamore leaves wer a-spreaden
Green-ruddy in hedges,
Bezide the red doust o' the ridges,
A-dried at Woak Hill;

I packed up my goods, all a-sheenen
Wi' long years o' handlen,
On dousty red wheels ov a waggon,
To ride at Woak Hill.

The brown thatchen ruf o' the dwellen
I then wer a-leaven,
Had sheltered the sleek head o' Meary,
My bride at Woak Hill.

But now vor zome years, her light voot-vall
'S a-lost vrom the vlooren.
To soon vor my jay an' my childern
She died at Woak Hill.

But still I do think that, in soul,
She do hover about us;
To ho vor her motherless childern,
Her pride at Woak Hill.

Zoo—lest she should tell me hereafter
I stole off 'ithout her,
An' left her, uncalled at house-ridden,
To bide at Woak Hill—

I called her so fondly, wi' lippens
All soundless to others,
An' took her wi' air-reachen hand
To my zide at Woak Hill.

On the road I did look round, a-talken
To light at my shoulder,
An' then led her in at the doorway,
Miles wide vrom Woak Hill.

An' that's why vo'k thought, vor a season,
My mind wer a-wandren
Wi' sorrow, when I wer so sorely
A-tried at Woak Hill.

But no; that my Meary mid never
Behold herzelf slighted,
I wanted to think that I guided
My guide vrom Woak Hill.

Ingeborg Bachmann

**Zummer An Winter**

When I led by zummer streams
The pride o' Lea, as naighbours thought her,
While the zun, wi' evenen beams,
Did cast our sheades athirt the water;
Winds a-blowen,
Streams a-flowen,
Skies a-glowen,
Tokens ov my jay zoo fleeten,
Heightened it, that happy meeten.

Then, when maid an' man took pleaces,
Gay in winter's Chris'mas dances,
Showen in their merry feaces
Kindly smiles an' glisnen glances;
Stars a-winken,
Day a-shrinken,
Sheades a-zinken,
Brought anew the happy meeten,
That did meake the night too fleeten.

Ingeborg Bachmann