

Classic Poetry Series

**Pablo Neruda**  
**- poems -**

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## Pablo Neruda(12 July 1904 – 23 September 1973)

Pablo Neruda was the pen name and, later, legal name of the Chilean poet and politician Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. He chose his pen name after Czech poet Jan Neruda.

Neruda wrote in a variety of styles such as erotically charged love poems as in his collection *Twenty Poems of Love and a Song of Despair*, surrealist poems, historical epics, and overtly political manifestos. In 1971 Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez once called him "the greatest poet of the 20th century in any language." Neruda always wrote in green ink as it was his personal color of hope.

On July 15, 1945, at Pacaembu Stadium in São Paulo, Brazil, he read to 100,000 people in honor of Communist revolutionary leader Luís Carlos Prestes. During his lifetime, Neruda occupied many diplomatic positions and served a stint as a senator for the Chilean Communist Party. When Conservative Chilean President González Videla outlawed communism in Chile in 1948, a warrant was issued for Neruda's arrest. Friends hid him for months in a house basement in the Chilean port of Valparaíso. Later, Neruda escaped into exile through a mountain pass near Maihue Lake into Argentina. Years later, Neruda was a close collaborator to socialist President Salvador Allende. When Neruda returned to Chile after his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Allende invited him to read at the Estadio Nacional before 70,000 people.

Neruda was hospitalized with cancer at the time of the Chilean coup d'état led by Augusto Pinochet. Three days after being hospitalized, Neruda died of heart failure. Already a legend in life, Neruda's death reverberated around the world. Pinochet had denied permission to transform Neruda's funeral into a public event. However, thousands of grieving Chileans disobeyed the curfew and crowded the streets.

## 'carnal Apple, Woman Filled, Burning Moon,'

Carnal apple, Woman filled, burning moon,  
dark smell of seaweed, crush of mud and light,  
what secret knowledge is clasped between your pillars?  
What primal night does Man touch with his senses?  
Ay, Love is a journey through waters and stars,  
through suffocating air, sharp tempests of grain:  
Love is a war of lightning,  
and two bodies ruined by a single sweetness.  
Kiss by kiss I cover your tiny infinity,  
your margins, your rivers, your diminutive villages,  
and a genital fire, transformed by delight,  
slips through the narrow channels of blood  
to precipitate a nocturnal carnation,  
to be, and be nothing but light in the dark.

Pablo Neruda

## 'In The Wave-Strike Over Unquiet Stones'

In the wave-strike over unquiet stones  
the brightness bursts and bears the rose  
and the ring of water contracts to a cluster  
to one drop of azure brine that falls.  
O magnolia radiance breaking in spume,  
magnetic voyager whose death flowers  
and returns, eternal, to being and nothingness:  
shattered brine, dazzling leap of the ocean.  
Merged, you and I, my love, seal the silence  
while the sea destroys its continual forms,  
collapses its turrets of wildness and whiteness,  
because in the weft of those unseen garments  
of headlong water, and perpetual sand,  
we bear the sole, relentless tenderness.

Pablo Neruda

## 'march Days Return With Their Covert Light'

March days return with their covert light,  
and huge fish swim through the sky,  
vague earthly vapours progress in secret,  
things slip to silence one by one.  
Through fortuity, at this crisis of errant skies,  
you reunite the lives of the sea to that of fire,  
grey lurchings of the ship of winter  
to the form that love carved in the guitar.  
O love, O rose soaked by mermaids and spume,  
dancing flame that climbs the invisible stairway,  
to waken the blood in insomnia's labyrinth,  
so that the waves can complete themselves in the sky,  
the sea forget its cargoes and rages,  
and the world fall into darkness's nets.

Pablo Neruda

## 'perhaps Not To Be Is To Be Without Your Being.'

Perhaps not to be is to be without your being,  
without your going, that cuts noon light  
like a blue flower, without your passing  
later through fog and stones,  
without the torch you lift in your hand  
that others may not see as golden,  
that perhaps no one believed blossomed  
the glowing origin of the rose,  
without, in the end, your being, your coming  
suddenly, inspiringly, to know my life,  
blaze of the rose-tree, wheat of the breeze:  
and it follows that I am, because you are:  
it follows from 'you are', that I am, and we:  
and, because of love, you will, I will,  
We will, come to be.

Pablo Neruda

# A Dog Has Died

My dog has died.  
I buried him in the garden  
next to a rusted old machine.

Some day I'll join him right there,  
but now he's gone with his shaggy coat,  
his bad manners and his cold nose,  
and I, the materialist, who never believed  
in any promised heaven in the sky  
for any human being,  
I believe in a heaven I'll never enter.  
Yes, I believe in a heaven for all dogdom  
where my dog waits for my arrival  
waving his fan-like tail in friendship.

Ai, I'll not speak of sadness here on earth,  
of having lost a companion  
who was never servile.  
His friendship for me, like that of a porcupine  
withholding its authority,  
was the friendship of a star, aloof,  
with no more intimacy than was called for,  
with no exaggerations:  
he never climbed all over my clothes  
filling me full of his hair or his mange,  
he never rubbed up against my knee  
like other dogs obsessed with sex.

No, my dog used to gaze at me,  
paying me the attention I need,  
the attention required  
to make a vain person like me understand  
that, being a dog, he was wasting time,  
but, with those eyes so much purer than mine,  
he'd keep on gazing at me  
with a look that reserved for me alone  
all his sweet and shaggy life,  
always near me, never troubling me,  
and asking nothing.

Ai, how many times have I envied his tail  
as we walked together on the shores of the sea  
in the lonely winter of Isla Negra  
where the wintering birds filled the sky  
and my hairy dog was jumping about  
full of the voltage of the sea's movement:  
my wandering dog, sniffing away  
with his golden tail held high,  
face to face with the ocean's spray.

Joyful, joyful, joyful,  
as only dogs know how to be happy  
with only the autonomy  
of their shameless spirit.

There are no good-byes for my dog who has died,  
and we don't now and never did lie to each other.

So now he's gone and I buried him,  
and that's all there is to it.

Translated, from the Spanish, by Alfred Yankauer

Pablo Neruda



# A Lemon

Out of lemon flowers  
loosed  
on the moonlight, love's  
lashed and insatiable  
essences,  
sodden with fragrance,  
the lemon tree's yellow  
emerges,  
the lemons  
move down  
from the tree's planetarium

Delicate merchandise!  
The harbors are big with it-  
bazaars  
for the light and the  
barbarous gold.  
We open  
the halves  
of a miracle,  
and a clotting of acids  
brims  
into the starry  
divisions:  
creation's  
original juices,  
irreducible, changeless,  
alive:  
so the freshness lives on  
in a lemon,  
in the sweet-smelling house of the rind,  
the proportions, arcane and acerb.

Cutting the lemon  
the knife  
leaves a little cathedral:  
alcoves unguessed by the eye  
that open acidulous glass  
to the light; topazes

riding the droplets,  
altars,  
aromatic facades.

So, while the hand  
holds the cut of the lemon,  
half a world  
on a trencher,  
the gold of the universe  
wells  
to your touch:  
a cup yellow  
with miracles,  
a breast and a nipple  
perfuming the earth;  
a flashing made fruitage,  
the diminutive fire of a planet.

Pablo Neruda

# A Song Of Despair

The memory of you emerges from the night around me.  
The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.  
It is the hour of departure, oh deserted one!

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart.  
Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked.

In you the wars and the flights accumulated.  
From you the wings of the song birds rose.

You swallowed everything, like distance.  
Like the sea, like time. In you everything sank!

It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.  
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.

Pilot's dread, fury of blind driver,  
turbulent drunkenness of love, in you everything sank!

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded.  
Lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

You girdled sorrow, you clung to desire,  
sadness stunned you, in you everything sank!

I made the wall of shadow draw back,  
beyond desire and act, I walked on.

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost,  
I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

Like a jar you housed infinite tenderness.  
and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar.

There was the black solitude of the islands,  
and there, woman of love, your arms took me in.

There was thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit.  
There were grief and ruins, and you were the miracle.

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me  
in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms!

How terrible and brief my desire was to you!  
How difficult and drunken, how tensed and avid.

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,  
still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds.

Oh the bitten mouth, oh the kissed limbs,  
oh the hungering teeth, oh the entwined bodies.

Oh the mad coupling of hope and force  
in which we merged and despaired.

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour.  
And the word scarcely begun on the lips.

This was my destiny and in it was my voyage of my longing,  
and in it my longing fell, in you everything sank!

Oh pit of debris, everything fell into you,  
what sorrow did you not express, in what sorrow are you not drowned!

From billow to billow you still called and sang.  
Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel.

You still flowered in songs, you still broke the currents.  
Oh pit of debris, open and bitter well.

Pale blind diver, luckless slinger,  
lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

It is the hour of departure, the hard cold hour  
which the night fastens to all the timetables.

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore.  
Cold stars heave up, black birds migrate.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.  
Only tremulous shadow twists in my hands.

Oh farther than everything. Oh farther than everything.

It is the hour of departure. Oh abandoned one!

Pablo Neruda

# Absence

I have scarcely left you  
When you go in me, crystalline,  
Or trembling,  
Or uneasy, wounded by me  
Or overwhelmed with love, as  
when your eyes  
Close upon the gift of life  
That without cease I give you.

My love,  
We have found each other  
Thirsty and we have  
Drunk up all the water and the  
Blood,  
We found each other  
Hungry  
And we bit each other  
As fire bites,  
Leaving wounds in us.

But wait for me,  
Keep for me your sweetness.  
I will give you too  
A rose.

Pablo Neruda

## Algunas Bestias

Era el crepúsculo de la iguana.  
Desde la arcoirisada crestería  
su leengua como un dardo  
se hundía en la verdura,  
el hormiguero monacal pisaba  
con melodioso pie la selva,  
el guanaco fino como el oxígeno  
en las anchas alturas pardas  
iba calzando botas de oro,  
mientras la llama abría cándidos  
ojos en la delicadeza  
del mundo lleno de rocío.  
Los monos trenzaban un hilo  
interminablemente erótico  
en las riberas de la aurora,  
derribando muros de polen  
y espantando el vuelo violeta  
de las mariposas de Muzo  
Era la noche de los caimanes,  
la noche pura y pululante  
de hocicos saliendo del légamo,  
y de las ciénagas soñolientas  
un ruido opaco de armaduras  
volvía al origen terrestre.  
El jaguar tocaba las hojas  
con su ausencia fosforescente,  
el puma corre en el ramaje  
como el fuego devorador  
mientras arden en él los ojos  
alcohólicos de la selva.  
Los tejones rascan los pies  
del río, husmean el nido  
cuya delicia palpitante  
atacarán con dientes rojos.  
Y en el fondo del agua magna,  
como el círculo de la tierra,  
está la gigante anaconda  
cubierta de barro rituales,  
devoradora y religiosa.

Pablo Neruda



# Always

I am not jealous  
of what came before me.

Come with a man  
on your shoulders,  
come with a hundred men in your hair,  
come with a thousand men between your breasts and your feet,  
come like a river  
full of drowned men  
which flows down to the wild sea,  
to the eternal surf, to Time!

Bring them all  
to where I am waiting for you;  
we shall always be alone,  
we shall always be you and I  
alone on earth,  
to start our life!

Pablo Neruda

# And Because Love Battles

And because love battles  
not only in its burning agricultures  
but also in the mouth of men and women,  
I will finish off by taking the path away  
to those who between my chest and your fragrance  
want to interpose their obscure plant.

About me, nothing worse  
they will tell you, my love,  
than what I told you.

I lived in the prairies  
before I got to know you  
and I did not wait love but I was  
laying in wait for and I jumped on the rose.

What more can they tell you?  
I am neither good nor bad but a man,  
and they will then associate the danger  
of my life, which you know  
and which with your passion you shared.

And good, this danger  
is danger of love, of complete love  
for all life,  
for all lives,  
and if this love brings us  
the death and the prisons,  
I am sure that your big eyes,  
as when I kiss them,  
will then close with pride,  
into double pride, love,  
with your pride and my pride.

But to my ears they will come before  
to wear down the tour  
of the sweet and hard love which binds us,  
and they will say: "The one  
you love,

is not a woman for you,  
Why do you love her? I think  
you could find one more beautiful,  
more serious, more deep,  
more other, you understand me, look how she's light,  
and what a head she has,  
and look at how she dresses,  
and etcetera and etcetera".

And I in these lines say:  
Like this I want you, love,  
love, Like this I love you,  
as you dress  
and how your hair lifts up  
and how your mouth smiles,  
light as the water  
of the spring upon the pure stones,  
Like this I love you, beloved.

To bread I do not ask to teach me  
but only not to lack during every day of life.  
I don't know anything about light, from where  
it comes nor where it goes,  
I only want the light to light up,  
I do not ask to the night  
explanations,  
I wait for it and it envelops me,  
And so you, bread and light  
And shadow are.

You came to my life  
with what you were bringing,  
made  
of light and bread and shadow I expected you,  
and Like this I need you,  
Like this I love you,  
and to those who want to hear tomorrow  
that which I will not tell them, let them read it here,  
and let them back off today because it is early  
for these arguments.

Tomorrow we will only give them

a leaf of the tree of our love, a leaf  
which will fall on the earth  
like if it had been made by our lips  
like a kiss which falls  
from our invincible heights  
to show the fire and the tenderness  
of a true love.

Pablo Neruda

# Bird

It was passed from one bird to another,  
the whole gift of the day.

The day went from flute to flute,  
went dressed in vegetation,  
in flights which opened a tunnel  
through the wind would pass  
to where birds were breaking open  
the dense blue air -  
and there, night came in.

When I returned from so many journeys,  
I stayed suspended and green  
between sun and geography -  
I saw how wings worked,  
how perfumes are transmitted  
by feathery telegraph,  
and from above I saw the path,  
the springs and the roof tiles,  
the fishermen at their trades,  
the trousers of the foam;  
I saw it all from my green sky.  
I had no more alphabet  
than the swallows in their courses,  
the tiny, shining water  
of the small bird on fire  
which dances out of the pollen.

Pablo Neruda

# Brown And Agile Child

Brown and agile child, the sun which forms the fruit  
And ripens the grain and twists the seaweed  
Has made your happy body and your luminous eyes  
And given your mouth the smile of water.

A black and anguished sun is entangled in the twigs  
Of your black mane when you hold out your arms.  
You play in the sun as in a tidal river  
And it leaves two dark pools in your eyes.

Brown and agile child, nothing draws me to you,  
Everything pulls away from me here in the noon.  
You are the delirious youth of bee,  
The drunkenness of the wave, the power of the wheat.

My somber heart seeks you always  
I love your happy body, your rich, soft voice.  
Dusky butterfly, sweet and sure  
Like the wheatfield, the sun, the poppy, and the water.

Pablo Neruda

## Canto Xii From The Heights Of Macchu Picchu

Arise to birth with me, my brother.  
Give me your hand out of the depths  
sown by your sorrows.  
You will not return from these stone fastnesses.  
You will not emerge from subterranean time.  
Your rasping voice will not come back,  
nor your pierced eyes rise from their sockets.

Look at me from the depths of the earth,  
tiller of fields, weaver, reticent shepherd,  
groom of totemic guanacos,  
mason high on your treacherous scaffolding,  
iceman of Andean tears,  
jeweler with crushed fingers,  
farmer anxious among his seedlings,  
potter wasted among his clays--  
bring to the cup of this new life  
your ancient buried sorrows.  
Show me your blood and your furrow;  
say to me: here I was scourged  
because a gem was dull or because the earth  
failed to give up in time its tithe of corn or stone.  
Point out to me the rock on which you stumbled,  
the wood they used to crucify your body.  
Strike the old flints  
to kindle ancient lamps, light up the whips  
glued to your wounds throughout the centuries  
and light the axes gleaming with your blood.

I come to speak for your dead mouths.

Throughout the earth  
let dead lips congregate,  
out of the depths spin this long night to me  
as if I rode at anchor here with you.

And tell me everything, tell chain by chain,  
and link by link, and step by step;  
sharpen the knives you kept hidden away,

thrust them into my breast, into my hands,  
like a torrent of sunbursts,  
an Amazon of buried jaguars,  
and leave me cry: hours, days and years,  
blind ages, stellar centuries.

And give me silence, give me water, hope.

Give me the struggle, the iron, the volcanoes.

Let bodies cling like magnets to my body.

Come quickly to my veins and to my mouth.

Speak through my speech, and through my blood.

Pablo Neruda



# Castro Alves From Brazil

Castro Alves from Brazil, for whom did you sing?  
Did you sing for the flower? For the water  
whose beauty whispered words to the stones?  
Did you sing to the eyes, to the torn profile  
of the woman you once loved? For the spring?

Yes, but those petals were not dewed,  
those black waters had no words,  
those eyes were those who saw death,  
still burning the tortures behind love,  
Spring was splashed with blood.

I sang for the slaves, aboard the ships  
as a dark branch of wrath.  
They travelled, and bled from the ships  
leaving us the weight of a stolen blood.

I sang in those days against the inferno,  
against the sharp languages of greed,  
against the gold drenched in the torment,  
against the hand that rose the whip,  
against the maestros of darkness.

Each rose had one dead man in their roots.  
The light, the night, the sky were covered in tears,  
the eyes separated from wounded hands  
and it was my voice the only one to fill the silence.

I wanted that from the man we could be rescued,  
I believed that the route passed through the man,  
and from there destiny would be made.  
I sang for those who had no voice.  
My voice hit doors that until then were closed  
so that, fighting, Freedom could be let in.

Castro Alves from Brazil, now that your pure book  
is reborn to a free land,  
let me, poet of our America,  
to crown your head with the laurels of the people.

Your voice joined the eternal and loud voice of the men.  
You sang well. You sang how it must be sung.

Pablo Neruda

# Cat's Dream

How neatly a cat sleeps,  
sleeps with its paws and its posture,  
sleeps with its wicked claws,  
and with its unfeeling blood,  
sleeps with all the rings-  
a series of burnt circles-  
which have formed the odd geology  
of its sand-colored tail.

I should like to sleep like a cat,  
with all the fur of time,  
with a tongue rough as flint,  
with the dry sex of fire;  
and after speaking to no one,  
stretch myself over the world,  
over roofs and landscapes,  
with a passionate desire  
to hunt the rats in my dreams.

I have seen how the cat asleep  
would undulate, how the night  
flowed through it like dark water;  
and at times, it was going to fall  
or possibly plunge into  
the bare deserted snowdrifts.  
Sometimes it grew so much in sleep  
like a tiger's great-grandfather,  
and would leap in the darkness over  
rooftops, clouds and volcanoes.

Sleep, sleep cat of the night,  
with episcopal ceremony  
and your stone-carved moustache.  
Take care of all our dreams;  
control the obscurity  
of our slumbering prowess  
with your relentless heart  
and the great ruff of your tail.

Translated by Alastair Reid

Pablo Neruda

# Chant To Bolivar

Our Father thou art in Heaven,  
in water, in air  
in all our silent and broad latitude  
everything bears your name, Father in our dwelling:  
your name raises sweetness in sugar cane  
Bolivar tin has a Bolivar gleam  
the Bolívar bird flies over the Bolivar volcano  
the potato, the saltpeter, the special shadows,  
the brooks, the phosphorous stone veins  
everything comes from your extinguished life  
your legacy was rivers, plains, bell towers  
your legacy is our daily bread, oh Father.

Pablo Neruda

# Clenched Soul

We have lost even this twilight.  
No one saw us this evening hand in hand  
while the blue night dropped on the world.

I have seen from my window  
the fiesta of sunset in the distant mountain tops.

Sometimes a piece of sun  
burned like a coin in my hand.

I remembered you with my soul clenched  
in that sadness of mine that you know.

Where were you then?  
Who else was there?  
Saying what?  
Why will the whole of love come on me suddenly  
when I am sad and feel you are far away?

The book fell that always closed at twilight  
and my blue sweater rolled like a hurt dog at my feet.

Always, always you recede through the evenings  
toward the twilight erasing statues.

Pablo Neruda

## Come With Me, I Said, And No One Knew (VII)

Come with me, I said, and no one knew  
where, or how my pain throbbed,  
no carnations or barcaroles for me,  
only a wound that love had opened.

I said it again: Come with me, as if I were dying,  
and no one saw the moon that bled in my mouth  
or the blood that rose into the silence.  
O Love, now we can forget the star that has such thorns!

That is why when I heard your voice repeat  
Come with me, it was as if you had let loose  
the grief, the love, the fury of a cork-trapped wine

the geysers flooding from deep in its vault:  
in my mouth I felt the taste of fire again,  
of blood and carnations, of rock and scald.

Pablo Neruda

# Death Alone

There are lone cemeteries,  
tombs full of soundless bones,  
the heart threading a tunnel,  
a dark, dark tunnel :  
like a wreck we die to the very core,  
as if drowning at the heart  
or collapsing inwards from skin to soul.

There are corpses,  
clammy slabs for feet,  
there is death in the bones,  
like a pure sound,  
a bark without its dog,  
out of certain bells, certain tombs  
swelling in this humidity like lament or rain.

I see, when alone at times,  
coffins under sail  
setting out with the pale dead, women in their dead braids,  
bakers as white as angels,  
thoughtful girls married to notaries,  
coffins ascending the vertical river of the dead,  
the wine-dark river to its source,  
with their sails swollen with the sound of death,  
filled with the silent noise of death.

Death is drawn to sound  
like a slipper without a foot, a suit without its wearer,  
comes to knock with a ring, stoneless and fingerless,  
comes to shout without a mouth, a tongue, without a throat.  
Nevertheless its footsteps sound  
and its clothes echo, hushed like a tree.

I do not know, I am ignorant, I hardly see  
but it seems to me that its song has the colour of wet violets,  
violets well used to the earth,  
since the face of death is green,  
and the gaze of death green  
with the etched moisture of a violet's leaf



and its grave colour of exasperated winter.

But death goes about the earth also, riding a broom  
lapping the ground in search of the dead -  
death is in the broom,  
it is the tongue of death looking for the dead,  
the needle of death looking for the thread.

Death lies in our beds :  
in the lazy mattresses, the black blankets,  
lives a full stretch and then suddenly blows,  
blows sound unknown filling out the sheets  
and there are beds sailing into a harbour  
where death is waiting, dressed as an admiral.

Pablo Neruda

# Don'T Go Far Off

Don't go far off, not even for a day, because --  
because -- I don't know how to say it: a day is long  
and I will be waiting for you, as in an empty station  
when the trains are parked off somewhere else, asleep.

Don't leave me, even for an hour, because  
then the little drops of anguish will all run together,  
the smoke that roams looking for a home will drift  
into me, choking my lost heart.

Oh, may your silhouette never dissolve on the beach;  
may your eyelids never flutter into the empty distance.  
Don't leave me for a second, my dearest,

because in that moment you'll have gone so far  
I'll wander mazily over all the earth, asking,  
Will you come back? Will you leave me here, dying?

Pablo Neruda

# Drunk As Drunk

*Translated from the Spanish by Christopher Logue*

Drunk as drunk on turpentine  
From your open kisses,  
Your wet body wedged  
Between my wet body and the strake  
Of our boat that is made of flowers,  
Feasted, we guide it - our fingers  
Like tallows adorned with yellow metal -  
Over the sky's hot rim,  
The day's last breath in our sails.

Pinned by the sun between solstice  
And equinox, drowsy and tangled together  
We drifted for months and woke  
With the bitter taste of land on our lips,  
Eyelids all sticky, and we longed for lime  
And the sound of a rope  
Lowering a bucket down its well. Then,  
We came by night to the Fortunate Isles,  
And lay like fish  
Under the net of our kisses.

Pablo Neruda

# Enigma With Flower

Victory. It has come late, I had not learnt  
how to arrive, like the lily, at will,  
the white figure, that pierces  
the motionless eternity of earth,  
pushing at clear, faint, form,  
till the hour strikes: that clay,  
with a white ray, or a spur of milk.  
Shedding of clothing, the thick darkness of soil,  
on whose cliff the fair flower advances,  
till the flag of its whiteness  
defeats the contemptible deep of night,  
and, from the motion of light,  
spills itself in astonished seed.

Pablo Neruda

# Enigmas

You've asked me what the lobster is weaving there with  
his golden feet?

I reply, the ocean knows this.

You say, what is the ascidia waiting for in its transparent  
bell? What is it waiting for?

I tell you it is waiting for time, like you.

You ask me whom the *Macrocystis* alga hugs in its arms?

Study, study it, at a certain hour, in a certain sea I know.

You question me about the wicked tusk of the narwhal,  
and I reply by describing

how the sea unicorn with the harpoon in it dies.

You enquire about the kingfisher's feathers,

which tremble in the pure springs of the southern tides?

Or you've found in the cards a new question touching on  
the crystal architecture

of the sea anemone, and you'll deal that to me now?

You want to understand the electric nature of the ocean  
spines?

The armored stalactite that breaks as it walks?

The hook of the angler fish, the music stretched out  
in the deep places like a thread in the water?

I want to tell you the ocean knows this, that life in its  
jewel boxes

is endless as the sand, impossible to count, pure,  
and among the blood-colored grapes time has made the  
petal

hard and shiny, made the jellyfish full of light  
and untied its knot, letting its musical threads fall  
from a horn of plenty made of infinite mother-of-pearl.

I am nothing but the empty net which has gone on ahead  
of human eyes, dead in those darknesses,  
of fingers accustomed to the triangle, longitudes  
on the timid globe of an orange.

I walked around as you do, investigating  
the endless star,  
and in my net, during the night, I woke up naked,

the only thing caught, a fish trapped inside the wind.

Translated by Robert Bly

Pablo Neruda

# Entrance Of The Rivers

Beloved of the rivers, beset  
By azure water and transparent drops,  
Like a tree of veins your spectre  
Of dark goddess biting apples:  
And then awakening naked  
To be tattooed by the rivers,  
And in the wet heights your head  
Filled the world with new dew.

Water rose to your waist,  
You are made of wellsprings  
And lakes shone on your forehead.  
From your sources of density you drew  
Water like vital tears  
And hauled the riverbeds to the sand  
Across the planetary night,  
Crossing rough, dilated stone,  
Breaking down on the way  
All the salt of geology,  
Cutting through forests of compact walls  
Dislodging the muscles of quartz.

Pablo Neruda

# Epithalamium

Do you remember when  
in winter  
we reached the island?  
The sea raised toward us  
a crown of cold.  
On the walls the climbing vines  
murmured letting  
dark leaves fall  
as we passed.  
You too were a little leaf  
that trembled on my chest.  
Life's wind put you there.  
At first I did not see you: I did not know  
that you were walking with me,  
until your roots  
pierced my chest  
joined the threads of my blood  
spoke through my mouth  
flourished with me.  
Thus was your inadvertent presence  
invisible leaf or branch  
and suddenly my heart was filled with fruits and sounds  
You occupied the house  
that darkly awaited you  
and then you lit the lamps.

...

the island of stone and moss  
echoed in the secret of its grottoes  
like the song in your mouth  
and the flower that was born  
between the crevices of the stone  
with its secret syllable  
spoke, as it passed, your name  
of blazing plant  
and the steep rock raised  
like the wall of the world,  
knew my song, well beloved,



and all things spoke of  
your love, my love, beloved  
because earth, time, sea, island  
life, tide  
the seed that half opens  
its lips in the earth  
the devouring flower  
the movement of spring  
everything recognizes us.  
Our love was born  
outside the walls  
in the wind  
in the night  
in the earth  
and that's why the clay and the flower  
the mud and the roots  
know your name  
and know that my mouth  
joined yours  
because we were sown together in the earth  
and we alone did not know it  
and that we grow together  
and flower together  
and therefore  
when we pass  
your name is on the petals  
of the rose that grows on the stone,  
my name is in the grottoes  
They know it all  
we have no secrets  
we have grown together  
but we did not know it.  
The sea knows our love, the stones  
of the rocky height  
know that our kisses flowered  
with infinite purity  
as in their crevices a scarlet  
mouth dawns  
just as our love and the kiss  
that joins your mouth and mine  
in an eternal flower.  
My love,

sweet spring,  
flower and sea, surround us.  
We did not change it  
for our winter  
when the wind  
began to decipher your name  
and today at all hours it repeats  
when  
the leaves did not know  
that you were a leaf  
when  
the roots did not know that you were seeking me  
in my breast.  
Love, love,  
spring  
offers us the sky  
but the dark earth  
is our name  
our love belongs to all time and the earth.  
Loving each other, my arm  
beneath your neck of sand  
we shall wait  
as earth and time change  
on the island  
as the leaves fall  
from the silent climbing vines  
as autumn departs  
through the broken window.  
But we  
are going to wait for  
our friend  
our red-eyed friend  
the fire,  
when the wind again  
shakes the frontiers of the island  
and does not know the names of everyone  
winter  
will seek us, my love  
always  
it will seek us, because we know it  
because we do not fear it  
because have

with us  
fire  
forever,  
spring with us  
forever  
and when a leaf  
falls  
from the climbing vines  
you know, my love  
what name is written o  
on that leaf,  
a names that is yours and mine  
our love name, a single  
being, the arrow  
that pierced winter  
the invincible love  
the fire of the days  
a leaf  
that dropped upon my breast  
a leaf from the tree  
of life  
that made a nest and sang  
that put out roots  
that gave flowers and fruits.  
And so you see, my love,  
how I move around the island  
around the world  
safe in the midst of spring  
crazy with light in the cold  
walking tranquil in the fire  
lifting your petal  
weight in my arms  
as if I had never walked  
except with you, my heart  
as if I could not walk  
except with you  
as if I could not sing  
except when you sing.

Pablo Neruda

# Fable Of The Mermaid And The Drunks

All those men were there inside,  
when she came in totally naked.  
They had been drinking: they began to spit.  
Newly come from the river, she knew nothing.  
She was a mermaid who had lost her way.  
The insults flowed down her gleaming flesh.  
Obscenities drowned her golden breasts.  
Not knowing tears, she did not weep tears.  
Not knowing clothes, she did not have clothes.  
They blackened her with burnt corks and cigarette stubs,  
and rolled around laughing on the tavern floor.  
She did not speak because she had no speech.  
Her eyes were the colour of distant love,  
her twin arms were made of white topaz.  
Her lips moved, silent, in a coral light,  
and suddenly she went out by that door.  
Entering the river she was cleaned,  
shining like a white stone in the rain,  
and without looking back she swam again  
swam towards emptiness, swam towards death.

Pablo Neruda

# Finale

Matilde, years or days  
sleeping, feverish,  
here or there,  
gazing off,  
twisting my spine,  
bleeding true blood,  
perhaps I awaken  
or am lost, sleeping:  
hospital beds, foreign windows,  
white uniforms of the silent walkers,  
the clumsiness of feet.

And then, these journeys  
and my sea of renewal:  
your head on the pillow,  
your hands floating  
in the light, in my light,  
over my earth.

It was beautiful to live  
when you lived!

The world is bluer and of the earth  
at night, when I sleep  
enormous, within your small hands

Pablo Neruda

# Fleas Interest Me So Much

Fleas interest me so much  
that I let them bite me for hours.  
They are perfect, ancient, Sanskrit,  
machines that admit of no appeal.  
They do not bite to eat,  
they bite only to jump;  
they are the dancers of the celestial sphere,  
delicate acrobats  
in the softest and most profound circus;  
let them gallop on my skin,  
divulge their emotions,  
amuse themselves with my blood,  
but someone should introduce them to me.  
I want to know them closely,  
I want to know what to rely on.

Pablo Neruda

## From – Twenty Poems Of Love

I can write the saddest lines tonight.

Write for example: 'The night is fractured  
and they shiver, blue, those stars, in the distance'

The night wind turns in the sky and sings.  
I can write the saddest lines tonight.  
I loved her, sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like these I held her in my arms.  
I kissed her greatly under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.  
How could I not have loved her huge, still eyes.

I can write the saddest lines tonight.  
To think I don't have her, to feel I have lost her.

Hear the vast night, vaster without her.  
Lines fall on the soul like dew on the grass.

What does it matter that I couldn't keep her.  
The night is fractured and she is not with me.

That is all. Someone sings far off. Far off,  
my soul is not content to have lost her.

As though to reach her, my sight looks for her.  
My heart looks for her: she is not with me

The same night whitens, in the same branches.  
We, from that time, we are not the same.

I don't love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.  
My voice tried to find the breeze to reach her.

Another's kisses on her, like my kisses.  
Her voice, her bright body, infinite eyes.

I don't love her, that's certain, but perhaps I love her.  
Love is brief: forgetting lasts so long.

Since, on these nights, I held her in my arms,  
my soul is not content to have lost her.

Though this is the last pain she will make me suffer,  
and these are the last lines I will write for her.

Pablo Neruda



# From The Book Of Questions

III.

Tell me, is the rose naked  
or is that her only dress?

Why do trees conceal  
the splendor of their roots?

Who hears the regrets  
of the thieving automobile?

Is there anything in the world sadder  
than a train standing in the rain?

Pablo Neruda

# From The Heights Of Maccho Picchu

Rise up to be born with me, brother.  
Give me your hand from the deep  
Zone seeded by your sorrow.  
You won't return from under the rocks.  
You won't return from your subterranean time.  
Your hardened voice won't return.  
Your gouged-out eyes won't return.

Look at me from the depth of the earth,  
laborer, weaver, silent shepherd:  
tamer of wild llamas like spirit images:  
construction worker on a daring scaffold:  
waterer of the tears of the Andes:  
jeweler with broken fingers:  
farmer trembling as you sow:  
potter, poured out into your clay:  
bring to the cup of this new life  
your old buried sorrows.  
Show me your blood and your furrow,  
Tell me, "Here I was punished,  
Because the jewel didn't shine or the earth  
Didn't yield grain or stones on time."  
Show me the stone you fell over  
And the wood on which they crucified you,  
Make a spark from the old flints for me,  
For the old lamps to show the whips still stuck  
After centuries in the old wounds  
And the axes shining with blood.  
I come to speak for your dead mouth.  
Across the earth come together all  
The silent worn-out lips  
And from the depth speak to me all this long night  
Like I was pinned down there with you.  
Tell me all, chain by chain,  
Link by link and step by step,  
Sharpen the knives which you hid,  
Put them in my breast and in my hand,  
Like a river of yellow lightning  
Like a river of buried jaguars

And let me weep, hours, days, years,  
For blind ages, cycles of stars.

Give me silence, water, hope.

Give me struggle, iron, volcanoes.

Stick bodies to me like magnets.

Draw near to my veins and my mouth.

Speak through my words and my blood.

Pablo Neruda

# Gautama Christ

The names of God and especially those of His representative  
Who is called Jesus or Christ according to holy books and  
someone's mouth  
These names have been used, worn out and left  
On the shores of rivers of of human lives  
Like the empty shells of a mollusk.  
However when we touch these sacred but exhausted  
Names, these wounded scattered petals  
Which have come out of the oceans of love and fear  
Something still remains, a sip of water,  
A rainbow footprint that still shimmers in the light.  
While the names of God were used  
By the best and the worst, by the clean and the dirty  
By the white and the black, by bloody murderers  
And by victims flaming gold with napalm  
While Nixon with his hands  
Of Cain blessed those whom he condemned to death,  
While fewer and fewer divine footprints were found  
on the beach  
People began to study colors,  
The future of honey, the sign of uranium  
They looked with anxiety and hope for the possibilities  
Of killing themselves or not killing themselves, of organizing  
themselves into a fabric  
Of going further on, of breaking through limits without stopping

What we came across in these blood thirsty times  
With their smoke of burning trash, their dead ashes  
As we weren't able to stop looking  
We often stopped to look at the names of God  
We lifted them with tenderness because they reminded us  
Of our ancestors, of the first people, those who said the prayers  
Those who discovered the hymn that united them in misfortune  
And now seeing the empty fragments which sheltered those  
ancient people  
We feel those smooth substances,  
Worn out and used up by good and by evil.



# Gentleman Alone

The young maricones and the horny muchachas,  
The big fat widows delirious from insomnia,  
The young wives thirty hours' pregnant,  
And the hoarse tomcats that cross my garden at night,  
Like a collar of palpitating sexual oysters  
Surround my solitary home,  
Enemies of my soul,  
Conspirators in pajamas  
Who exchange deep kisses for passwords.  
Radiant summer brings out the lovers  
In melancholy regiments,  
Fat and thin and happy and sad couples;  
Under the elegant coconut palms, near the ocean and moon,  
There is a continual life of pants and panties,  
A hum from the fondling of silk stockings,  
And women's breasts that glisten like eyes.  
The salary man, after a while,  
After the week's tedium, and the novels read in bed at night,  
Has decisively fucked his neighbor,  
And now takes her to the miserable movies,  
Where the heroes are horses or passionate princes,  
And he caresses her legs covered with sweet down  
With his ardent and sweaty palms that smell like cigarettes.  
The night of the hunter and the night of the husband  
Come together like bed sheets and bury me,  
And the hours after lunch, when the students and priests are masturbating,  
And the animals mount each other openly,  
And the bees smell of blood, and the flies buzz cholericly,  
And cousins play strange games with cousins,  
And doctors glower at the husband of the young patient,  
And the early morning in which the professor, without a thought,  
Pays his conjugal debt and eats breakfast,  
And to top it all off, the adulterers, who love each other truly  
On beds big and tall as ships:  
So, eternally,  
This twisted and breathing forest crushes me  
With gigantic flowers like mouth and teeth  
And black roots like fingernails and shoes.

Translated by Mike Topp

Pablo Neruda

# Here I Love You

Here I love you.  
In the dark pines the wind disentangles itself.  
The moon glows like phosphorous on the vagrant waters.  
Days, all one kind, go chasing each other.

The snow unfurls in dancing figures.  
A silver gull slips down from the west.  
Sometimes a sail. High, high stars.  
Oh the black cross of a ship.  
Alone.

Sometimes I get up early and even my soul is wet.  
Far away the sea sounds and resounds.  
This is a port.

Here I love you.  
Here I love you and the horizon hides you in vain.  
I love you still among these cold things.  
Sometimes my kisses go on those heavy vessels  
that cross the sea towards no arrival.  
I see myself forgotten like those old anchors.

The piers sadden when the afternoon moors there.  
My life grows tired, hungry to no purpose.  
I love what I do not have. You are so far.  
My loathing wrestles with the slow twilights.  
But night comes and starts to sing to me.

The moon turns its clockwork dream.  
The biggest stars look at me with your eyes.  
And as I love you, the pines in the wind  
want to sing your name with their leaves of wire.

Pablo Neruda



# I Crave Your Mouth, Your Voice, Your Hair

I crave your mouth, your voice, your hair.  
Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets.  
Bread does not nourish me, dawn disrupts me, all day  
I hunt for the liquid measure of your steps.

I hunger for your sleek laugh,  
your hands the color of a savage harvest,  
hunger for the pale stones of your fingernails,  
I want to eat your skin like a whole almond.

I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your lovely body,  
the sovereign nose of your arrogant face,  
I want to eat the fleeting shade of your lashes,

and I pace around hungry, sniffing the twilight,  
hunting for you, for your hot heart,  
like a puma in the barrens of Quitratue.

Translated by Stephen Tapscott

Pablo Neruda

# I Do Not Love You Except Because I Love You

I do not love you except because I love you;  
I go from loving to not loving you,  
From waiting to not waiting for you  
My heart moves from cold to fire.

I love you only because it's you the one I love;  
I hate you deeply, and hating you  
Bend to you, and the measure of my changing love for you  
Is that I do not see you but love you blindly.

Maybe January light will consume  
My heart with its cruel  
Ray, stealing my key to true calm.

In this part of the story I am the one who  
Dies, the only one, and I will die of love because I love you,  
Because I love you, Love, in fire and blood.

Pablo Neruda

# I Like For You To Be Still

i like for you to be still  
it is as though you are absent  
And you hear me from far away  
And my voice does not touch you  
it seems as though your eyes had flown away  
And it seems that a kiss had sealed your mouth  
As all things are filled with my soul  
You emerge from the things  
Filled with my soul  
You are like my soul  
A butterfly of dream  
And you are like the word: Melancholy

i like for you to be still  
And you seem far away  
it sounds as though you are lamenting  
A butterfly cooing like a dove  
And you hear me from far away  
And my voice does not reach you  
Let me come to be still in your silence  
And let me talk to you with your silence  
That is bright as a lamp  
Simple, as a ring  
You are like the night  
With its stillness and constellations  
Your silence is that of a star  
As remote and candid

i like for you to be still  
it is as though you are absent  
Distant and full of sorrow  
So you would've died  
One word then, One smile is enough  
And i'm happy;  
Happy that it's not true

Pablo Neruda

# I Like You Calm, As If You Were Absent

I like you calm, as if you were absent,  
and you hear me far-off, and my voice does not touch you.  
It seems that your eyelids have taken to flying:  
it seems that a kiss has sealed up your mouth.  
Since all these things are filled with my spirit,  
you come from things, filled with my spirit.  
You appear as my soul, as the butterfly's dreaming,  
and you appear as Sadness's word.  
I like you calm, as if you were distant,  
you are a moaning, a butterfly's cooing.  
You hear me far-off, my voice does not reach you.  
Let me be calmed, then, calmed by your silence.  
Let me commune, then, commune with your silence,  
clear as a light, and pure as a ring.  
You are like night, calmed, constellated.  
Your silence is star-like, as distant, as true.  
I like you calm, as if you were absent:  
distant and saddened, as if you were dead.  
One word at that moment, a smile, is sufficient.  
And I thrill, then, I thrill: that it cannot be so.

XV From: 'Veinte poemas de amor'

I like you calm, as if you were absent,  
and you hear me far-off, and my voice does not touch you.  
It seems that your eyelids have taken to flying:  
it seems that a kiss has sealed up your mouth.  
Since all these things are filled with my spirit,  
you come from things, filled with my spirit.  
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I like you calm, as if you were absent:

distant and saddened, as if you were dead.  
One word at that moment, a smile, is sufficient.  
And I thrill, then, I thrill: that it cannot be so.

Pablo Neruda

# I Remember You As You Were

I remember you as you were in the last autumn.  
You were the grey beret and the still heart.  
In your eyes the flames of the twilight fought on.  
And the leaves fell in the water of your soul.

Clasping my arms like a climbing plant  
the leaves garnered your voice, that was slow and at peace.  
Bonfire of awe in which my thirst was burning.  
Sweet blue hyacinth twisted over my soul.

I feel your eyes traveling, and the autumn is far off:  
Grey beret, voice of a bird, heart like a house  
Towards which my deep longings migrated  
And my kisses fell, happy as embers.

Sky from a ship. Field from the hills:  
Your memory is made of light, of smoke, of a still pond!  
Beyond your eyes, farther on, the evenings were blazing.  
Dry autumn leaves revolved in your soul.

Pablo Neruda

# If You Forget Me

I want you to know  
one thing.

You know how this is:  
if I look  
at the crystal moon, at the red branch  
of the slow autumn at my window,  
if I touch  
near the fire  
the impalpable ash  
or the wrinkled body of the log,  
everything carries me to you,  
as if everything that exists,  
aromas, light, metals,  
were little boats  
that sail  
toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

Well, now,  
if little by little you stop loving me  
I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly  
you forget me  
do not look for me,  
for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,  
the wind of banners  
that passes through my life,  
and you decide  
to leave me at the shore  
of the heart where I have roots,  
remember  
that on that day,  
at that hour,  
I shall lift my arms  
and my roots will set off  
to seek another land.

But  
if each day,  
each hour,  
you feel that you are destined for me  
with implacable sweetness,  
if each day a flower  
climbs up to your lips to seek me,  
ah my love, ah my own,  
in me all that fire is repeated,  
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,  
my love feeds on your love, beloved,  
and as long as you live it will be in your arms  
without leaving mine.

Pablo Neruda



# I'M Explaining A Few Things

You are going to ask: and where are the lilacs?  
and the poppy-petalled metaphysics?  
and the rain repeatedly spattering  
its words and drilling them full  
of apertures and birds?  
I'll tell you all the news.

I lived in a suburb,  
a suburb of Madrid, with bells,  
and clocks, and trees.

From there you could look out  
over Castille's dry face:  
a leather ocean.

My house was called  
the house of flowers, because in every cranny  
geraniums burst: it was  
a good-looking house  
with its dogs and children.

Remember, Raul?

Eh, Rafael? Federico, do you remember  
from under the ground  
my balconies on which  
the light of June drowned flowers in your mouth?

Brother, my brother!

Everything

loud with big voices, the salt of merchandises,  
pile-ups of palpitating bread,  
the stalls of my suburb of Arguelles with its statue  
like a drained inkwell in a swirl of hake:

oil flowed into spoons,

a deep baying

of feet and hands swelled in the streets,

metres, litres, the sharp

measure of life,

stacked-up fish,

the texture of roofs with a cold sun in which

the weather vane falters,

the fine, frenzied ivory of potatoes,

wave on wave of tomatoes rolling down the sea.

And one morning all that was burning,  
one morning the bonfires  
leapt out of the earth  
devouring human beings --  
and from then on fire,  
gunpowder from then on,  
and from then on blood.  
Bandits with planes and Moors,  
bandits with finger-rings and duchesses,  
bandits with black friars spattering blessings  
came through the sky to kill children  
and the blood of children ran through the streets  
without fuss, like children's blood.

Jackals that the jackals would despise,  
stones that the dry thistle would bite on and spit out,  
vipers that the vipers would abominate!

Face to face with you I have seen the blood  
of Spain tower like a tide  
to drown you in one wave  
of pride and knives!

Treacherous  
generals:  
see my dead house,  
look at broken Spain :  
from every house burning metal flows  
instead of flowers,  
from every socket of Spain  
Spain emerges  
and from every dead child a rifle with eyes,  
and from every crime bullets are born  
which will one day find  
the bull's eye of your hearts.

And you'll ask: why doesn't his poetry  
speak of dreams and leaves  
and the great volcanoes of his native land?

Come and see the blood in the streets.  
Come and see  
The blood in the streets.  
Come and see the blood  
In the streets!

Pablo Neruda

# In My Sky At Twilight

In my sky at twilight you are like a cloud  
and your form and colour are the way I love them.  
You are mine, mine, woman with sweet lips  
and in your life my infinite dreams live.

The lamp of my soul dyes your feet,  
the sour wine is sweeter on your lips,  
oh reaper of my evening song,  
how solitary dreams believe you to be mine!

You are mine, mine, I go shouting it to the afternoon's  
wind, and the wind hauls on my widowed voice.  
Huntress of the depth of my eyes, your plunder  
stills your nocturnal regard as though it were water.

You are taken in the net of my music, my love,  
and my nets of music are wide as the sky.  
My soul is born on the shore of your eyes of mourning.  
In your eyes of mourning the land of dreams begin.

Pablo Neruda

# In You The Earth

Little  
rose,  
roselet,  
at times,  
tiny and naked,  
it seems  
as though you would fit  
in one of my hands,  
as though I'll clasp you like this  
and carry you to my mouth,  
but  
suddenly  
my feet touch your feet and my mouth your lips:  
you have grown,  
your shoulders rise like two hills,  
your breasts wander over my breast,  
my arm scarcely manages to encircle the thin  
new-moon line of your waist:  
in love you loosened yourself like sea water:  
I can scarcely measure the sky's most spacious eyes  
and I lean down to your mouth to kiss the earth.

Pablo Neruda

# It's Good To Feel You Are Close To Me

It's good to feel you are close to me in the night, love,  
invisible in your sleep, intently nocturnal,  
while I untangle my worries  
as if they were twisted nets.

Withdrawn, your heart sails through dream,  
but your body, relinquished so, breathes  
seeking me without seeing me perfecting my dream  
like a plant that seeds itself in the dark.

Rising, you will be that other, alive in the dawn,  
but from the frontiers lost in the night,  
from the presence and the absence where we meet ourselves,

something remains, drawing us into the light of life  
as if the sign of the shadows had sealed  
its secret creatures with flame.

Pablo Neruda

# La Muerta

Si de pronto no existes,  
si de pronto no vives,  
yo seguiré viviendo.

No me atrevo,  
no me atrevo a escribirlo,  
si te mueres.

Yo seguiré viviendo.

Porque donde no tiene voz un hombre  
allí, mi voz.

Donde los negros sean apaleados,  
yo no puedo estar muerto.  
Cuando entren en la cárcel mis hermanos  
entraré yo con ellos.

Cuando la victoria,  
no mi victoria,  
sino la gran Victoria llegue,  
aunque esté mudo debo hablar:  
yo la veré llegar aunque esté ciego.

No, perdóname.  
Si tú no vives,  
si tú, querida, amor mío, si tú  
te has muerto,  
todas las hojas caerán en mi pecho,  
lloverá sobre mi alma noche y día,  
la nieve quemará mi corazón,  
andaré con frío y fuego  
y muerte y nieve,  
mis pies querrán marchar hacia donde tú duermes, pero seguiré vivo,  
porque tú me quisiste sobre  
todas las cosas indomable,  
y, amor, porque tú sabes que soy no sólo un hombre  
sino todos los hombres





# La Reina (And Translation)

The Queen

I have named you queen.  
There are taller than you, taller.  
There are purer than you, purer.  
There are lovelier than you, lovelier.  
But you are the queen.

When you go through the streets  
No one recognizes you.  
No one sees your crystal crown, no one looks  
At the carpet of red gold  
That you tread as you pass,  
The nonexistent carpet.

And when you appear  
All the rivers sound  
In my body, bells  
Shake the sky,  
And a hymn fills the world.

Only you and I,  
Only you and I, my love,  
Listen to me.

-----  
Yo te he nombrado reina.  
Hay más altas que tú, más altas.  
Hay más puras que tú, más puras.  
Hay más bellas que tú, hay más bellas.  
Pero tú eres la reina.

Cuando vas por las calles  
nadie te reconoce.  
Nadie ve tu corona de cristal, nadie mira  
la alfombra de oro rojo  
que pisas donde pasas,  
la alfombra que no existe.

Y cuando asomas  
suenan todos los ríos  
en mi cuerpo, sacuden  
el cielo las campanas,  
y un himno llena el mundo.

Sólo tú y yo,  
sólo tú y yo, amor mío,  
lo escuchamos.

Pablo Neruda

# Leaning Into The Afternoons

Leaning into the afternoons I cast my sad nets  
towards your oceanic eyes.

There in the highest blaze my solitude lengthens and flames,  
its arms turning like a drowning man's.

I send out red signals across your absent eyes  
that smell like the sea or the beach by a lighthouse.

You keep only darkness, my distant female,  
from your regard sometimes the coast of dread emerges.

Leaning into the afternoons I fling my sad nets  
to that sea that is thrashed by your oceanic eyes.

The birds of night peck at the first stars  
that flash like my soul when I love you.

The night gallops on its shadowy mare  
shedding blue tassels over the land.

Pablo Neruda

# Leave Me A Place Underground

Leave me a place underground, a labyrinth,  
where I can go, when I wish to turn,  
without eyes, without touch,  
in the void, to dumb stone,  
or the finger of shadow.

I know that you cannot, no one, no thing  
can deliver up that place, or that path,  
but what can I do with my pitiful passions,  
if they are no use, on the surface  
of everyday life,  
if I cannot look to survive,  
except by dying, going beyond, entering  
into the state, metallic and slumbering,  
of primeval flame?

Pablo Neruda

# Lone Gentleman

The gay young men and the love-sick girls,  
and the abandoned widows suffering in sleepless delirium,  
and the young pregnant wives of thirty hours,  
and the raucous cats that cruise my garden in the shadows,  
like a necklace of pulsating oysters of sex  
surround my lonely residence,  
like enemies lined up against my soul,  
like conspirators in bedroom clothes  
who exchange long deep kisses to order.

The radiant summer leads to lovers  
in predictable melancholic regiments,  
made of fat and skinny, sad and happy pairings:  
under the elegant coconut palms, near the ocean and the moon,  
goes an endless movement of trousers and dresses,  
a whisper of silk stockings being caressed,  
and womens breasts that sparkle like eyes.

The little employee, after it all,  
after the weeks boredom, and novels read by night in bed,  
has definitively seduced the girl next door,  
and carried her away to a run-down movie house  
where the heroes are studs or princes mad with passion,  
and strokes her legs covered with soft down  
with his moist and ardent hands that smell of cigarettes.

The seducers afternoons and married peoples nights  
come together like the sheets and bury me,  
and the hours after lunch when the young male students  
and the young girl students, and the priests, masturbate,  
and the creatures fornicate outright,  
and the bees smell of blood, and the flies madly buzz,  
and boy and girl cousins play oddly together,  
and doctors stare in fury at the young patients husband,  
and the morning hours in which the professor, as if to pass the time,  
performs his marriage duties, and breakfasts,  
and moreover, the adulterers, who love each other truly  
on beds as high and deep as ocean liners:  
finally, eternally surrounding me

is a gigantic forest breathing and tangled  
with gigantic flowers like mouths with teeth  
and black roots in the shape of hooves and shoes.

Pablo Neruda

# Lost In The Forest

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig  
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:  
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,  
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off it seemed  
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,  
a shout muffled by huge autumns,  
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there, the hazel-sprig  
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance  
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind  
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood--  
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent.

Pablo Neruda

## Lost In The Forest...

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig  
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:  
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,  
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off it seemed  
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,  
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cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood---  
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent.

Pablo Neruda



# Love

What's wrong with you, with us,  
what's happening to us?  
Ah our love is a harsh cord  
that binds us wounding us  
and if we want  
to leave our wound,  
to separate,  
it makes a new knot for us and condemns us  
to drain our blood and burn together.

What's wrong with you? I look at you  
and I find nothing in you but two eyes  
like all eyes, a mouth  
lost among a thousand mouths that I have kissed, more beautiful,  
a body just like those that have slipped  
beneath my body without leaving any memory.

And how empty you went through the world  
like a wheat-colored jar  
without air, without sound, without substance!  
I vainly sought in you  
depth for my arms  
that dig, without cease, beneath the earth:  
beneath your skin, beneath your eyes,  
nothing,  
beneath your double breast scarcely  
raised  
a current of crystalline order  
that does not know why it flows singing.  
Why, why, why,  
my love, why?

Pablo Neruda

## Love Sonnet XVII

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,  
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms  
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;  
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,  
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.  
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;  
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,  
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,  
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Pablo Neruda

# Love, We'Re Going Home Now

Love, we're going home now,  
Where the vines clamber over the trellis:  
Even before you, the summer will arrive,  
On its honeysuckle feet, in your bedroom.

Our nomadic kisses wandered over all the world:  
Armenia, dollop of disinterred honey:  
Ceylon, green dove: and the YangTse with its old  
Old patience, dividing the day from the night.

And now, dearest, we return, across the crackling sea  
Like two blind birds to their wall,  
To their nest in a distant spring:

Because love cannot always fly without resting,  
Our lives return to the wall, to the rocks of the sea:  
Our kisses head back home where they belong.

Pablo Neruda

# Lovely One

Lovely one,  
Just as on the cool stone  
Of the spring, the water  
Opens a wide flash of foam,  
So is the smile of your face,  
Lovely one.

Lovely one,  
With delicate hands and slender feet  
Like a silver pony,  
Walking, flower of the world,  
Thus I see you,  
Lovely one.

Lovely one,  
With a nest of copper entangled  
On your head, a nest  
The color of dark honey  
Where my heart burns and rests,  
Lovely one.

Lovely one,  
Your eyes are too big for your face,  
Your eyes are too big for the earth.

There are countries, there are rivers,  
In your eyes,  
My country is your eyes,  
I walk through them,  
They light the world  
Through which I walk,  
Lovely one.

Lovely one,  
Your breasts are like two loaves made  
Of grainy earth and golden moon,  
Lovely one.

Lovely one,

Your waist,  
My arm shaped it like a river when  
It flowed a thousand years through your sweet body,  
Lovely one.

Lovely one,  
There is nothing like your hips,  
Perhaps earth has  
In some hidden place  
The curve and the fragrance of your body,  
Perhaps in some place,  
Lovely one.

Lovely one, my lovely one,  
Your voice, your skin, your nails,  
Lovely one, my lovely one,  
Your being, your light, your shadow,  
Lovely one,  
All that is mine, lovely one,  
All that is mine, my dear,  
When you walk or rest,  
When you sing or sleep,  
When you suffer or dream,  
Always,  
When you are near or far,  
Always,  
You are mine, my lovely one,  
Always.

Pablo Neruda

# Luminous Mind, Bright Devil

Luminous mind, bright devil  
of absolute clusterings, of upright noon---:  
here we are at last, alone, without loneliness,  
far from the savage city's delirium.

Just as a pure line describes the dove's curve,  
as the fire honors and nourishes peace,  
so you and I made this heavenly outcome.  
The mind and love live naked in this house.

Furious dreams, rivers of bitter certainty,  
decisions harder than the dreams of a hammer  
flowed into the lovers' double cup,

until those twins were lifted into balance  
on the scale: the mind and love, like two wings.  
---So this transparency was built.

Pablo Neruda

## Lxxxiv From: 'cien Sonetos De Amor'

One time more, my love, the net of light extinguishes  
work, wheels, flames, boredoms and farewells,  
and we surrender the swaying wheat to night,  
the wheat that noon stole from earth and light.  
The moon alone in the midst of its clear page  
sustains the pillars of Heaven's Bay,  
the room acquires the slowness of gold,  
and your hands go here and there preparing night.  
O love, O night. O cupola ringed by a river  
of impenetrable water in the shadows of Heaven,  
that raises and drowns its tempestuous orbs,  
until we are only the one dark space  
a glass into which fall celestial ashes,  
one drop in the flow of a vast slow river

Pablo Neruda

# Magellanic Penguin

Neither clown nor child nor black  
nor white but verticle  
and a questioning innocence  
dressed in night and snow:  
The mother smiles at the sailor,  
the fisherman at the astronaut,  
but the child child does not smile  
when he looks at the bird child,  
and from the disorderly ocean  
the immaculate passenger  
emerges in snowy mourning.

I was without doubt the child bird  
there in the cold archipelagoes  
when it looked at me with its eyes,  
with its ancient ocean eyes:  
it had neither arms nor wings  
but hard little oars  
on its sides:  
it was as old as the salt;  
the age of moving water,  
and it looked at me from its age:  
since then I know I do not exist;  
I am a worm in the sand.

the reasons for my respect  
remained in the sand:  
the religious bird  
did not need to fly,  
did not need to sing,  
and through its form was visible  
its wild soul bled salt:  
as if a vein from the bitter sea  
had been broken.

Penguin, static traveler,  
deliberate priest of the cold,  
I salute your vertical salt  
and envy your plumed pride.



Pablo Neruda

# Nothing But Death

There are cemeteries that are lonely,  
graves full of bones that do not make a sound,  
the heart moving through a tunnel,  
in it darkness, darkness, darkness,  
like a shipwreck we die going into ourselves,  
as though we were drowning inside our hearts,  
as though we lived falling out of the skin into the soul.

And there are corpses,  
feet made of cold and sticky clay,  
death is inside the bones,  
like a barking where there are no dogs,  
coming out from bells somewhere, from graves somewhere,  
growing in the damp air like tears of rain.

Sometimes I see alone  
coffins under sail,  
embarking with the pale dead, with women that have dead hair,  
with bakers who are as white as angels,  
and pensive young girls married to notary publics,  
caskets sailing up the vertical river of the dead,  
the river of dark purple,  
moving upstream with sails filled out by the sound of death,  
filled by the sound of death which is silence.

Death arrives among all that sound  
like a shoe with no foot in it, like a suit with no man in it,  
comes and knocks, using a ring with no stone in it, with no  
finger in it,  
comes and shouts with no mouth, with no tongue, with no  
throat.

Nevertheless its steps can be heard  
and its clothing makes a hushed sound, like a tree.

I'm not sure, I understand only a little, I can hardly see,  
but it seems to me that its singing has the color of damp violets,  
of violets that are at home in the earth,  
because the face of death is green,  
and the look death gives is green,

with the penetrating dampness of a violet leaf  
and the somber color of embittered winter.

But death also goes through the world dressed as a broom,  
lapping the floor, looking for dead bodies,  
death is inside the broom,  
the broom is the tongue of death looking for corpses,  
it is the needle of death looking for thread.

Death is inside the folding cots:  
it spends its life sleeping on the slow mattresses,  
in the black blankets, and suddenly breathes out:  
it blows out a mournful sound that swells the sheets,  
and the beds go sailing toward a port  
where death is waiting, dressed like an admiral.

Translated by Robert Bly

Pablo Neruda

# Oda Al Tomate

La calle  
se llenó de tomates,  
mediodía,  
verano,  
la luz  
se parte  
en dos  
mitades  
de tomate,  
corre  
por las calles  
el jugo.  
En diciembre  
se desata  
el tomate,  
invade  
las cocinas,  
entra por los almuerzos,  
se sienta  
reposado  
en los aparadores,  
entre los vasos,  
las matequilleras,  
los saleros azules.  
Tiene  
luz propia,  
majestad benigna.  
Debemos, por desgracia,  
asesinarlo:  
se hunde  
el cuchillo  
en su pulpa viviente,  
es una roja  
viscera,  
un sol  
fresco,  
profundo,  
inagotable,  
llena las ensaladas

de Chile,  
se casa alegremente  
con la clara cebolla,  
y para celebrarlo  
se deja  
caer  
aceite,  
hijo  
esencial del olivo,  
sobre sus hemisferios entreabiertos,  
agrega  
la pimienta  
su fragancia,  
la sal su magnetismo:  
son las bodas  
del día  
el perejil  
levanta  
banderines,  
las papas  
hierven vigorosamente,  
el asado  
golpea  
con su aroma  
en la puerta,  
es hora!  
vamos!  
y sobre  
la mesa, en la cintura  
del verano,  
el tomate,  
astro de tierra,  
estrella  
repetida  
y fecunda,  
nos muestra  
sus circunvoluciones,  
sus canales,  
la insigne plenitud  
y la abundancia  
sin hueso,  
sin coraza,

sin escamas ni espinas,  
nos entrega  
el regalo  
de su color fogoso  
y la totalidad de su frescura.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To A Large Tuna In The Market

Among the market greens,  
a bullet  
from the ocean  
depths,  
a swimming  
projectile,  
I saw you,  
dead.

All around you  
were lettuces,  
sea foam  
of the earth,  
carrots,  
grapes,  
but  
of the ocean  
truth,  
of the unknown,  
of the  
unfathomable  
shadow, the  
depths  
of the sea,  
the abyss,  
only you had survived,  
a pitch-black, varnished  
witness  
to deepest night.

Only you, well-aimed  
dark bullet  
from the abyss,  
mangled  
at one tip,  
but constantly  
reborn,  
at anchor in the current,  
winged fins

windmilling  
in the swift  
flight  
of  
the  
marine  
shadow,  
a mourning arrow,  
dart of the sea,  
olive, oily fish.  
I saw you dead,  
a deceased king  
of my own ocean,  
green  
assault, silver  
submarine fir,  
seed  
of seaquakes,  
now  
only dead remains,  
yet  
in all the market  
yours  
was the only  
purposeful form  
amid  
the bewildering rout  
of nature;  
amid the fragile greens  
you were  
a solitary ship,  
armed  
among the vegetables  
fin and prow black and oiled,  
as if you were still  
the vessel of the wind,  
the one and only  
pure  
ocean  
machine:  
unflawed, navigating  
the waters of death.



Pablo Neruda

# Ode To A Naked Beauty

With chaste heart, and pure  
eyes  
I celebrate you, my beauty,  
restraining my blood  
so that the line  
surges and follows  
your contour,  
and you bed yourself in my verse,  
as in woodland, or wave-spume:  
earth's perfume,  
sea's music.

Nakedly beautiful,  
whether it is your feet, arching  
at a primal touch  
of sound or breeze,  
or your ears,  
tiny spiral shells  
from the splendour of America's oceans.  
Your breasts also,  
of equal fullness, overflowing  
with the living light  
and, yes,  
winged  
your eyelids of silken corn  
that disclose  
or enclose  
the deep twin landscapes of your eyes.

The line of your back  
separating you  
falls away into paler regions  
then surges  
to the smooth hemispheres  
of an apple,  
and goes splitting  
your loveliness  
into two pillars  
of burnt gold, pure alabaster,

to be lost in the twin clusters of your feet,  
from which, once more, lifts and takes fire  
the double tree of your symmetry:  
flower of fire, open circle of candles,  
swollen fruit raised  
over the meeting of earth and ocean.

Your body - from what substances  
agate, quartz, ears of wheat,  
did it flow, was it gathered,  
rising like bread  
in the warmth,  
and signalling hills  
silvered,  
valleys of a single petal, sweetnesses  
of velvet depth,  
until the pure, fine, form of woman  
thickened  
and rested there?

It is not so much light that falls  
over the world  
extended by your body  
its suffocating snow,  
as brightness, pouring itself out of you,  
as if you were  
burning inside.

Under your skin the moon is alive

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Age

I don't believe in age.  
All old people  
carry  
in their eyes,  
a child,  
and children,  
at times  
observe us with the  
eyes of wise ancients.  
Shall we measure  
life  
in meters or kilometers  
or months?  
How far since you were born?  
How long  
must you wander  
until  
like all men  
instead of walking on its surface  
we rest below the earth?  
To the man, to the woman  
who utilized their  
energies, goodness, strength,  
anger, love, tenderness,  
to those who truly  
alive  
flowered,  
and in their sensuality matured,  
let us not apply  
the measure  
of a time  
that may be  
something else, a mineral  
mantle, a solar  
bird, a flower,  
something, maybe,  
but not a measure.  
Time, metal  
or bird, long

petiolate flower,  
stretch  
through  
man's life,  
shower him  
with blossoms  
and with  
bright  
water  
or with hidden sun.  
I proclaim you  
road,  
not shroud,  
a pristine  
ladder  
with treads  
of air,  
a suit lovingly  
renewed  
through springtimes  
around the world.  
Now,  
time, I roll you up,  
I deposit you in my  
bait box  
and I am off to fish  
with your long line  
the fishes of the dawn!

translated from the Spanish by Margaret Sayers Peden

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Bird Watching

Now

Let's look for birds!

The tall iron branches  
in the forest,

The dense  
fertility on the ground.

The world

is wet.

A dewdrop or raindrop  
shines,

a diminutive star  
among the leaves.

The morning time

mother earth

is cool.

The air

is like a river

which shakes

the silence.

It smells of rosemary,

of space

and roots.

Overhead,

a crazy song.

It's a bird.

How

out of its throat

smaller than a finger

can there fall the waters

of its song?

Luminous ease!

Invisible

power

torrent

of music

in the leaves.

Sacred conversations!

Clean and fresh washed

is this

day resounding  
like a green dulcimer.  
I bury  
my shoes  
in the mud,  
jump over rivulets.  
A thorn  
bites me and a gust  
of air like a crystal  
wave  
splits up inside my chest.  
Where  
are the birds?  
Maybe it was  
that  
rustling in the foliage  
or that fleeting pellet  
of brown velvet  
or that displaced  
perfume? That  
leaf that let loose cinnamon smell  
- was that a bird? That dust  
from an irritated magnolia  
or that fruit  
which fell with a thump -  
was that a flight?  
Oh, invisible little  
critters  
birds of the devil  
with their ringing  
with their useless feathers.  
I only want  
to caress them,  
to see them resplendent.  
I don't want  
to see under glass  
the embalmed lightning.  
I want to see them living.  
I want to touch their gloves  
of real hide,  
which they never forget in  
the branches

and to converse with  
them  
sitting on my shoulders  
although they may leave  
me like certain statues  
undeservedly whitewashed.  
Impossible.  
You can't touch them.  
You can hear them  
like a heavenly  
rustle or movement.  
They converse  
with precision.  
They repeat  
their observations.  
They brag  
of how much they do.  
They comment  
on everything that exists.  
They learn  
certain sciences  
like hydrography.  
and by a sure science  
they know  
where there are harvests  
of grain

Pablo Neruda



# Ode To Broken Things

Things get broken  
at home  
like they were pushed  
by an invisible, deliberate smasher.  
It's not my hands  
or yours  
It wasn't the girls  
with their hard fingernails  
or the motion of the planet.  
It wasn't anything or anybody  
It wasn't the wind  
It wasn't the orange-colored noontime  
Or night over the earth  
It wasn't even the nose or the elbow  
Or the hips getting bigger  
or the ankle  
or the air.  
The plate broke, the lamp fell  
All the flower pots tumbled over  
one by one. That pot  
which overflowed with scarlet  
in the middle of October,  
it got tired from all the violets  
and another empty one  
rolled round and round and round  
all through winter  
until it was only the powder  
of a flowerpot,  
a broken memory, shining dust.

And that clock  
whose sound  
was  
the voice of our lives,  
the secret  
thread of our weeks,  
which released  
one by one, so many hours  
for honey and silence

for so many births and jobs,  
that clock also  
fell  
and its delicate blue guts  
vibrated  
among the broken glass  
its wide heart  
unsprung.

Life goes on grinding up  
glass, wearing out clothes  
making fragments  
breaking down  
forms  
and what lasts through time  
is like an island on a ship in the sea,  
perishable  
surrounded by dangerous fragility  
by merciless waters and threats.

Let's put all our treasures together  
-- the clocks, plates, cups cracked by the cold --  
into a sack and carry them  
to the sea  
and let our possessions sink  
into one alarming breaker  
that sounds like a river.  
May whatever breaks  
be reconstructed by the sea  
with the long labor of its tides.  
So many useless things  
which nobody broke  
but which got broken anyway

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Clothes

Every morning you wait,  
clothes, over a chair,  
to fill yourself with  
my vanity, my love,  
my hope, my body.  
Barely  
risen from sleep,  
I relinquish the water,  
enter your sleeves,  
my legs look for  
the hollows of your legs,  
and so embraced  
by your indefatigable faithfulness  
I rise, to tread the grass,  
enter poetry,  
consider through the windows,  
the things,  
the men, the women,  
the deeds and the fights  
go on forming me,  
go on making me face things  
working my hands,  
opening my eyes,  
using my mouth,  
and so,  
clothes,  
I too go forming you,  
extending your elbows,  
snapping your threads,  
and so your life expands  
in the image of my life.  
In the wind  
you billow and snap  
as if you were my soul,  
at bad times  
you cling  
to my bones,  
vacant, for the night,  
darkness, sleep

populate with their phantoms  
your wings and mine.  
I wonder  
if one day  
a bullet  
from the enemy  
will leave you stained with my blood  
and then  
you will die with me  
or one day  
not quite  
so dramatic  
but simple,  
you will fall ill,  
clothes,  
with me,  
grow old  
with me, with my body  
and joined  
we will enter  
the earth.  
Because of this  
each day  
I greet you  
with reverence and then  
you embrace me and I forget you,  
because we are one  
and we will go on  
facing the wind, in the night,  
the streets or the fight,  
a single body,  
one day, one day, some day, still.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode to Hope

Oceanic dawn  
at the center  
of my life,  
waves like grapes,  
the sky's solitude,  
you fill me  
and flood  
the complete sea,  
the undiminished sky,  
tempo  
and space,  
sea foam's white  
battalions,  
the orange earth,  
the sun's  
fiery waist  
in agony,  
so many  
gifts and talents,  
birds soaring into their dreams,  
and the sea, the sea,  
suspended  
aroma,  
chorus of rich, resonant salt,  
and meanwhile,  
we men,  
touch the water,  
struggling,  
and hoping,  
we touch the sea,  
hoping.

And the waves tell the firm coast:  
'Everything will be fulfilled.'

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Ironing

Poetry is white:  
it comes from water swathed in drops,  
it wrinkles and gathers,  
this planet's skin has to spread out,  
the sea's whiteness has to be ironed out,  
and the hands keep moving,  
the sacred surfaces get smoothed,  
and things are done this way:  
the hands make the world every day,  
fire conjoins with steel,  
linen, canvas, and cotton arrive  
from the scuffles in the laundries,  
and from light a dove is born:  
chastity returns out of the foam.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Maize

America, from a grain  
of maize you grew  
to crown  
with spacious lands  
the ocean foam.  
A grain of maize was your geography.  
From the grain  
a green lance rose,  
was covered with gold,  
to grace the heights  
of Peru with its yellow tassels.

But, poet, let  
history rest in its shroud;  
praise with your lyre  
the grain in its granaries:  
sing to the simple maize in the kitchen.

First, a fine beard  
fluttered in the field  
above the tender teeth  
of the young ear.  
Then the husks parted  
and fruitfulness burst its veils  
of pale papyrus  
that grains of laughter  
might fall upon the earth.  
To the stone,  
in your journey,  
you returned.  
Not to the terrible stone,  
the bloody  
triangle of Mexican death,  
but to the grinding stone,  
sacred  
stone of your kitchens.  
There, milk and matter,  
strength-giving, nutritious  
cornmeal pulp,

you were worked and patted  
by the wondrous hands  
of dark-skinned women.

Wherever you fall, maize,  
whether into the  
splendid pot of partridge, or among  
country beans, you light up  
the meal and lend it  
your virginal flavor.

Oh, to bite into  
the steaming ear beside the sea  
of distant song and deepest waltz.  
To boil you  
as your aroma  
spreads through  
blue sierras.

But is there  
no end  
to your treasure?

In chalky, barren lands  
bordered  
by the sea, along  
the rocky Chilean coast,  
at times  
only your radiance  
reaches the empty  
table of the miner.

Your light, your cornmeal, your hope  
pervades America's solitudes,  
and to hunger  
your lances  
are enemy legions.

Within your husks,  
like gentle kernels,  
our sober provincial  
children's hearts were nurtured,



until life began  
to shuck us from the ear.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To My Socks

Mara Mori brought me  
a pair of socks  
which she knitted herself  
with her shepherd's hands,  
two socks as soft as rabbits.  
I slipped my feet into them  
as if they were two cases  
knitted with threads of twilight and goatskin,  
Violent socks,  
my feet were two fish made of wool,  
two long sharks  
sea blue, shot through  
by one golden thread,  
two immense blackbirds,  
two cannons,  
my feet were honored in this way  
by these heavenly socks.  
They were so handsome for the first time  
my feet seemed to me unacceptable  
like two decrepit firemen,  
firemen unworthy of that woven fire,  
of those glowing socks.

Nevertheless, I resisted the sharp temptation  
to save them somewhere as schoolboys  
keep fireflies,  
as learned men collect  
sacred texts,  
I resisted the mad impulse to put them  
in a golden cage and each day give them  
birdseed and pieces of pink melon.  
Like explorers in the jungle  
who hand over the very rare green deer  
to the spit and eat it with remorse,  
I stretched out my feet and pulled on  
the magnificent socks and then my shoes.

The moral of my ode is this:  
beauty is twice beauty

and what is good is doubly good  
when it is a matter of two socks  
made of wool in winter.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Sadness

Sadness, scarab  
with seven crippled feet,  
spiderweb egg,  
scramble-brained rat,  
bitch's skeleton:  
No entry here.  
Don't come in.  
Go away.  
Go back  
south with your umbrella,  
go back  
north with your serpent's teeth.  
A poet lives here.  
No sadness may  
cross this threshold.  
Through these windows  
comes the breath of the world,  
fresh red roses,  
flags embroidered with  
the victories of the people.  
No.  
No entry.  
Flap  
your bat's wings,  
I will trample the feathers  
that fall from your mantle,  
I will sweep the bits and pieces  
of your carcass to  
the four corners of the wind,  
I will wring your neck,  
I will stitch your eyelids shut,  
I will sew your shroud,  
sadness, and bury your rodent bones  
beneath the springtime of an apple tree.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Salt

This salt  
in the salt cellar  
I once saw in the salt mines.  
I know  
you won't  
believe me  
but  
it sings  
salt sings, the skin  
of the salt mines  
sings  
with a mouth smothered  
by the earth.  
I shivered in those  
solitudes  
when I heard  
the voice  
of  
the salt  
in the desert.  
Near Antofagasta  
the nitrous  
pampa  
resounds:  
a  
broken  
voice,  
a mournful  
song.

In its caves  
the salt moans, mountain  
of buried light,  
translucent cathedral,  
crystal of the sea, oblivion  
of the waves.  
And then on every table  
in the world,  
salt,

we see your piquant  
powder  
sprinkling  
vital light  
upon  
our food.  
Preserver  
of the ancient  
holds of ships,  
discoverer  
on  
the high seas,  
earliest  
sailor  
of the unknown, shifting  
byways of the foam.  
Dust of the sea, in you  
the tongue receives a kiss  
from ocean night:  
taste imparts to every seasoned  
dish your ocean essence;  
the smallest,  
miniature  
wave from the saltcellar  
reveals to us  
more than domestic whiteness;  
in it, we taste infinitude.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To The Artichoke

The artichoke  
With a tender heart  
Dressed up like a warrior,  
Standing at attention, it built  
A small helmet  
Under its scales  
It remained  
Unshakeable,  
By its side  
The crazy vegetables  
Uncurled  
Their tendrills and leaf-crowns,  
Throbbing bulbs,  
In the sub-soil  
The carrot  
With its red mustaches  
Was sleeping,  
The grapevine  
Hung out to dry its branches  
Through which the wine will rise,  
The cabbage  
Dedicated itself  
To trying on skirts,  
The oregano  
To perfuming the world,  
And the sweet  
Artichoke  
There in the garden,  
Dressed like a warrior,  
Burnished  
Like a proud  
Pomegrante.  
And one day  
Side by side  
In big wicker baskets  
Walking through the market  
To realize their dream  
The artichoke army  
In formation.

Never was it so military  
Like on parade.  
The men  
In their white shirts  
Among the vegetables  
Were  
The Marshals  
Of the artichokes  
Lines in close order  
Command voices,  
And the bang  
Of a falling box.

But  
Then  
Maria  
Comes  
With her basket  
She chooses  
An artichoke,  
She's not afraid of it.  
She examines it, she observes it  
Up against the light like it was an egg,  
She buys it,  
She mixes it up  
In her handbag  
With a pair of shoes  
With a cabbage head and a  
Bottle  
Of vinegar  
Until  
She enters the kitchen  
And submerges it in a pot.

Thus ends  
In peace  
This career  
Of the armed vegetable  
Which is called an artichoke,  
Then  
Scale by scale,  
We strip off



The delicacy  
And eat  
The peaceful mush  
Of its green heart.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To The Book

When I close a book  
I open life.  
I hear  
faltering cries  
among harbours.  
Copper ignots  
slide down sand-pits  
to Tocopilla.  
Night time.  
Among the islands  
our ocean  
throbs with fish,  
touches the feet, the thighs,  
the chalk ribs  
of my country.  
The whole of night  
clings to its shores, by dawn  
it wakes up singing  
as if it had excited a guitar.

The ocean's surge is calling.  
The wind  
calls me  
and Rodriguez calls,  
and Jose Antonio--  
I got a telegram  
from the "Mine" Union  
and the one I love  
(whose name I won't let out)  
expects me in Bucalemu.

No book has been able  
to wrap me in paper,  
to fill me up  
with typography,  
with heavenly imprints  
or was ever able  
to bind my eyes,  
I come out of books to people orchards

with the hoarse family of my song,  
to work the burning metals  
or to eat smoked beef  
by mountain firesides.  
I love adventurous  
books,  
books of forest or snow,  
depth or sky  
but hate  
the spider book  
in which thought  
has laid poisonous wires  
to trap the juvenile  
and circling fly.  
Book, let me go.  
I won't go clothed  
in volumes,  
I don't come out  
of collected works,  
my poems  
have not eaten poems--  
they devour  
exciting happenings,  
feed on rough weather,  
and dig their food  
out of earth and men.  
I'm on my way  
with dust in my shoes  
free of mythology:  
send books back to their shelves,  
I'm going down into the streets.  
I learned about life  
from life itself,  
love I learned in a single kiss  
and could teach no one anything  
except that I have lived  
with something in common among men,  
when fighting with them,  
when saying all their say in my song.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To The Cat

The animals were imperfect,  
long-tailed,  
unfortunate in their heads.  
Little by little they  
put themselves together,  
making themselves a landscape,  
acquiring spots, grace, flight.  
The cat,  
only the cat  
appeared complete and proud:  
he was born completely finished,  
walking alone and knowing what he wanted.

Man wants to be fish or fowl,  
the snake would like to have wings  
the dog is a disoriented lion,  
the engineer would like to be a poet,  
the fly studies to be a swift,  
the poet tries to imitate the fly,  
but the cat  
only wants to be a cat  
and any cat is a cat  
from his whiskers to his tail,  
from his hopeful vision of a rat  
to the real thing,  
from the night to his golden eyes.

There is no unity  
like him,  
the moon and the flower  
do not have such context:  
he is just one thing  
like the sun or the topaz,  
and the elastic line of his contours  
is firm and subtle like  
the line of a ship's prow.  
His yellow eyes  
have just one  
groove

to coin the gold of night time.

Oh little  
emperor without a sphere of influence  
conqueror without a country,  
smallest living-room tiger, nuptial  
sultan of the sky,  
of the erotic roof-tiles,  
the wind of love  
in the storm  
you claim  
when you pass  
and place  
four delicate feet  
on the ground,  
smelling,  
distrusting  
all that is terrestrial,  
because everything  
is too unclean  
for the immaculate foot of the cat.

Oh independent wild beast  
of the house  
arrogant  
vestige of the night,  
lazy, gymnastic  
and alien,  
very deep cat,  
secret policeman  
of bedrooms,  
insignia  
of a  
disappeared velvet,  
surely there is no  
enigma  
in your manner,  
perhaps you are not a mystery,  
everyone knows of you  
and you belong  
to the least mysterious inhabitant,  
perhaps everyone believes it,

everyone believes himself the owner,  
proprietor,  
uncle  
of a cat,  
companion,  
colleague,  
disciple  
or friend  
of his cat.

Not me.  
I do not subscribe.  
I do not know the cat.  
I know it all, life and its archipelago,  
the sea and the incalculable city,  
botany,  
the gynecium and its frenzies,  
the plus and the minus of mathematics,  
the volcanic frauds of the world,  
the unreal shell of the crocodile,  
the unknown kindness of the fireman,  
the blue atavism of the priest,  
but I cannot decipher a cat.  
My reason slips on his indifference,  
his eyes have golden numbers.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Tomatoes

The street  
filled with tomatoes  
midday,  
summer,  
light is  
halved  
like  
a  
tomato,  
its juice  
runs  
through the streets.  
In December,  
unabated,  
the tomato  
invades  
the kitchen,  
it enters at lunchtime,  
takes  
its ease  
on countertops,  
among glasses,  
butter dishes,  
blue saltcellars.  
It sheds  
its own light,  
benign majesty.  
Unfortunately, we must  
murder it:  
the knife  
sinks  
into living flesh,  
red  
viscera,  
a cool  
sun,  
profound,  
inexhaustible,  
populates the salads

of Chile,  
happily, it is wed  
to the clear onion,  
and to celebrate the union  
we  
pour  
oil,  
essential  
child of the olive,  
onto its halved hemispheres,  
pepper  
adds  
its fragrance,  
salt, its magnetism;  
it is the wedding  
of the day,  
parsley  
hoists  
its flag,  
potatoes  
bubble vigorously,  
the aroma  
of the roast  
knocks  
at the door,  
it's time!  
come on!  
and, on  
the table, at the midpoint  
of summer,  
the tomato,  
star of earth,  
recurrent  
and fertile  
star,  
displays  
its convolutions,  
its canals,  
its remarkable amplitude  
and abundance,  
no pit,  
no husk,



no leaves or thorns,  
the tomato offers  
its gift  
of fiery color  
and cool completeness.

Pablo Neruda

# Ode To Wine

Day-colored wine,  
night-colored wine,  
wine with purple feet  
or wine with topaz blood,  
wine,  
starry child  
of earth,  
wine, smooth  
as a golden sword,  
soft  
as lascivious velvet,  
wine, spiral-seashelled  
and full of wonder,  
amorous,  
marine;  
never has one goblet contained you,  
one song, one man,  
you are choral, gregarious,  
at the least, you must be shared.  
At times  
you feed on mortal  
memories;  
your wave carries us  
from tomb to tomb,  
stonecutter of icy sepulchers,  
and we weep  
transitory tears;  
your  
glorious  
spring dress  
is different,  
blood rises through the shoots,  
wind incites the day,  
nothing is left  
of your immutable soul.  
Wine  
stirs the spring, happiness  
bursts through the earth like a plant,  
walls crumble,

and rocky cliffs,  
chasms close,  
as song is born.  
A jug of wine, and thou beside me  
in the wilderness,  
sang the ancient poet.  
Let the wine pitcher  
add to the kiss of love its own.

My darling, suddenly  
the line of your hip  
becomes the brimming curve  
of the wine goblet,  
your breast is the grape cluster,  
your nipples are the grapes,  
the gleam of spirits lights your hair,  
and your navel is a chaste seal  
stamped on the vessel of your belly,  
your love an inexhaustible  
cascade of wine,  
light that illuminates my senses,  
the earthly splendor of life.

But you are more than love,  
the fiery kiss,  
the heat of fire,  
more than the wine of life;  
you are  
the community of man,  
translucency,  
chorus of discipline,  
abundance of flowers.  
I like on the table,  
when we're speaking,  
the light of a bottle  
of intelligent wine.  
Drink it,  
and remember in every  
drop of gold,  
in every topaz glass,  
in every purple ladle,  
that autumn labored

to fill the vessel with wine;  
and in the ritual of his office,  
let the simple man remember  
to think of the soil and of his duty,  
to propagate the canticle of the wine.

Pablo Neruda

# Poesia

Y fue a esa edad... Llegó la poesía  
a buscarme. No sé, no sé de dónde  
salió, de invierno o río.  
No sé cómo ni cuándo,  
no, no eran voces, no eran  
palabras, ni silencio,  
pero desde una calle me llamaba,  
desde las ramas de la noche,  
de pronto entre los otros,  
entre fuegos violentos  
o regresando solo,  
allí estaba sin rostro  
y me tocaba.

Yo no sabía qué decir, mi boca  
no sabía  
nombrar,  
mis ojos eran ciegos,  
y algo golpeaba en mi alma,  
fiebre o alas perdidas,  
y me fui haciendo solo,  
descifrando  
aquella quemadura,  
y escribí la primera línea vaga,  
vaga, sin cuerpo, pura  
tontería,  
pura sabiduría  
del que no sabe nada,  
y vi de pronto  
el cielo  
desgranado  
y abierto,  
planetas,  
plantaciones palpitantes,  
la sombra perforada,  
acribillada  
por flechas, fuego y flores,  
la noche arrolladora, el universo.

Y yo, mínimo ser,  
ebrio del gran vacío  
constelado,  
a semejanza, a imagen  
del misterio,  
me sentí parte pura  
del abismo,  
rodé con las estrellas,  
mi corazón se desató en el viento.

Pablo Neruda

# Poetry

And it was at that age ... Poetry arrived  
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where  
it came from, from winter or a river.  
I don't know how or when,  
no they were not voices, they were not  
words, nor silence,  
but from a street I was summoned,  
from the branches of night,  
abruptly from the others,  
among violent fires  
or returning alone,  
there I was without a face  
and it touched me.

I did not know what to say, my mouth  
had no way  
with names,  
my eyes were blind,  
and something started in my soul,  
fever or forgotten wings,  
and I made my own way,  
deciphering  
that fire,  
and I wrote the first faint line,  
faint, without substance, pure  
nonsense,  
pure wisdom  
of someone who knows nothing,  
and suddenly I saw  
the heavens  
unfastened  
and open,  
planets,  
palpitating plantations,  
shadow perforated,  
riddled  
with arrows, fire and flowers,  
the winding night, the universe.

And I, infinitesimal being,  
drunk with the great starry  
void,  
likeness, image of  
mystery,  
felt myself a pure part  
of the abyss,  
I wheeled with the stars,  
my heart broke loose on the wind.

Pablo Neruda



# Poet's Obligation

To whoever is not listening to the sea  
this Friday morning, to whoever is cooped up  
in house or office, factory or woman  
or street or mine or harsh prison cell;  
to him I come, and, without speaking or looking,  
I arrive and open the door of his prison,  
and a vibration starts up, vague and insistent,  
a great fragment of thunder sets in motion  
the rumble of the planet and the foam,  
the raucous rivers of the ocean flood,  
the star vibrates swiftly in its corona,  
and the sea is beating, dying and continuing.

So, drawn on by my destiny,  
I ceaselessly must listen to and keep  
the sea's lamenting in my awareness,  
I must feel the crash of the hard water  
and gather it up in a perpetual cup  
so that, wherever those in prison may be,  
wherever they suffer the autumn's castigation,  
I may be there with an errant wave,  
I may move, passing through windows,  
and hearing me, eyes will glance upward  
saying 'How can I reach the sea?'  
And I shall broadcast, saying nothing,  
the starry echoes of the wave,  
a breaking up of foam and quicksand,  
a rustling of salt withdrawing,  
the grey cry of the sea-birds on the coast.

So, through me, freedom and the sea  
will make their answer to the shuttered heart.

Pablo Neruda

# Poor Creatures

What it takes on this planet,  
to make love to each other in peace.  
Everyone pries under your sheets,  
everyone interferes with your loving.  
They say terrible things about a man and a woman,  
who after much milling about,  
all sorts of compunctions,  
do something unique,  
they both lie with each other in one bed.  
I ask myself whether frogs are so furtive,  
or sneeze as they please.  
Whether they whisper to each other in swamps about illegitimate frogs,  
or the joys of amphibious living.  
I ask myself if birds single out enemy birds,  
or bulls gossip with bullocks before they go out in public with cows.  
Even the roads have eyes and the parks their police.  
Hotels spy on their guests,  
windows name names,  
canons and squadrons debark on missions to liquidate love.  
All those ears and those jaws working incessantly,  
till a man and his girl  
have to raise their climax,  
full tilt,  
on a bicycle.

Pablo Neruda

# Poor Fellows

What it takes on this planet,  
to make love to each other in peace.  
Everyone pries under your sheets,  
everyone interferes with your loving.  
They say terrible things about a man and a woman,  
who after much milling about,  
all sorts of compunctions,  
do something unique,  
they both lie with each other in one bed.  
I ask myself whether frogs are so furtive,  
or sneeze as they please.  
Whether they whisper to each other in swamps about illegitimate frogs,  
or the joys of amphibious living.  
I ask myself if birds single out enemy birds,  
or bulls gossip with bullocks before they go out in public with cows.  
Even the roads have eyes and the parks their police.  
Hotels spy on their guests,  
windows name names,  
canons and squadrons debark on missions to liquidate love.  
All those ears and those jaws working incessantly,  
till a man and his girl  
have to raise their climax,  
full tilt,  
on a bicycle.

Pablo Neruda

# Potter

Your whole body has  
a fullness or a gentleness destined for me.

When I move my hand up  
I find in each place a dove  
that was seeking me, as  
if they had, love, made you of clay  
for my own potter's hands.

Your knees, your breasts,  
your waist  
are missing parts of me like the hollow  
of a thirsty earth  
from which they broke off  
a form,  
and together  
we are complete like a single river,  
like a single grain of sand.

Pablo Neruda

# Puedo Escribir

Puedo escribir los versos màs tristes esta noche.

Escribir, por ejemplo: 'La noche està estrellada,  
y tiritan, azules, los astros, a lo lejos.'

El viento de la noche gira en el cielo y canta.

Puedo escribir los versos màs tristes esta noche.  
Yo la quise, y a veces ella tambièn me quiso.

En las noches como &eacute;sta la tuve entre mis brazos.  
La besè tantas veces bajo el cielo infinito.

Ella me quiso, a veces yo tambièn la quería.  
Còmo no haber amado sus grandes ojos fijos.

Puedo escribir los versos màs tristes esta noche.  
Pensar que no la tengo. Sentir que la he perdido.

Oir la noche inmensa, màs inmensa sin ella.  
Y el verso cae al alma como al pasto el rocío.

Què importa que mi amor no pudiera guardarla.  
La noche està estrellada y ella no està conmigo.

Eso es todo. A lo lejos alguien canta. A lo lejos.  
Mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Como para acercarla mi mirada la busca.  
Mi corazòn la busca, y ella no està conmigo.

La misma noche que hace blanquear los mismos &agrave;rboles.  
Nosotros, los de entonces, ya no somos los mismos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero cuànto la quise.  
Mi voz buscaba el viento para tocar su oído.

De otro. Serà de otro. Como antes de mis besos.  
Su voz, su cuerpo claro. Sus ojos infinitos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero tal vez la quiero.  
Es tan corto el amor, y es tan largo el olvido.

Porque en noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos,  
mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Aunque ésta sea el último dolor que ella me causa,  
y éstos sean los últimos versos que yo le escribo.

Pablo Neruda

# Saddest Poem

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

Write, for instance: "The night is full of stars,  
and the stars, blue, shiver in the distance."

The night wind whirls in the sky and sings.

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.  
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like this, I held her in my arms.  
I kissed her so many times under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her.  
How could I not have loved her large, still eyes?

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.  
To think I don't have her. To feel that I've lost her.

To hear the immense night, more immense without her.  
And the poem falls to the soul as dew to grass.

What does it matter that my love couldn't keep her.  
The night is full of stars and she is not with me.

That's all. Far away, someone sings. Far away.  
My soul is lost without her.

As if to bring her near, my eyes search for her.  
My heart searches for her and she is not with me.

The same night that whitens the same trees.  
We, we who were, we are the same no longer.

I no longer love her, true, but how much I loved her.  
My voice searched the wind to touch her ear.

Someone else's. She will be someone else's. As she once  
belonged to my kisses.

Her voice, her light body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, true, but perhaps I love her.  
Love is so short and oblivion so long.

Because on nights like this I held her in my arms,  
my soul is lost without her.

Although this may be the last pain she causes me,  
and this may be the last poem I write for her.

Pablo Neruda



# So That You Will Hear Me

So that you will hear me  
my words  
sometimes grow thin  
as the tracks of the gulls on the beaches.

Necklace, drunken bell  
for your hands smooth as grapes.

And I watch my words from a long way off.  
They are more yours than mine.  
They climb on my old suffering like ivy.

It climbs the same way on damp walls.  
You are to blame for this cruel sport.  
They are fleeing from my dark lair.  
You fill everything, you fill everything.

Before you they peopled the solitude that you occupy,  
and they are more used to my sadness than you are.

Now I want them to say what I want to say to you  
to make you hear as I want you to hear me.

The wind of anguish still hauls on them as usual.  
Sometimes hurricanes of dreams still knock them over.  
You listen to other voices in my painful voice.

Lament of old mouths, blood of old supplications.  
Love me, companion. Don't forsake me. Follow me.  
Follow me, companion, on this wave of anguish.

But my words become stained with your love.  
You occupy everything, you occupy everything.

I am making them into an endless necklace  
for your white hands, smooth as grapes.

Pablo Neruda

## Some Beasts

It was the twilight of the iguana:

From a rainbowed battlement,  
a tongue like a javelin  
lunging in verdure;  
an ant heap treading the jungle,  
monastic, on musical feet;  
the guanaco, oxygen-fine  
in the high places swarthed with distances,  
cobbling his feet into gold;  
the llama of scrupulous eye  
the widens his gaze on the dews  
of a delicate world.

A monkey is weaving  
a thread of insatiable lusts  
on the margins of morning:  
he topples a pollen-fall,  
startles the violet-flight  
of the butterfly, wings on the Muzo.

It was the night of the alligator:  
snouts moving out of the slime,  
in original darkness, the pullulations,  
a clatter of armour, opaque  
in the sleep of the bog,  
turning back to the chalk of the sources.

The jaguar touches the leaves  
with his phosphorous absence,  
the puma speeds to his covert  
in the blaze of his hungers,  
his eyeballs, a jungle of alcohol,  
burn in his head.

Pablo Neruda

# Sonata

Neither the heart cut by a piece of glass  
in a wasteland of thorns  
nor the atrocious waters seen in the corners  
of certain houses, waters like eyelids and eyes  
can capture your waist in my hands  
when my heart lifts its oaks  
towards your unbreakable thread of snow.

Nocturnal sugar, spirit  
of the crowns,  
ransomed  
human blood, your kisses  
send into exile  
and a stroke of water, with remnants of the sea,  
neats on the silences that wait for you  
surrounding the worn chairs, wearing out doors.

Nights with bright spindles,  
divided, material, nothing  
but voice, nothing but  
naked every day.

Over your breasts of motionless current,  
over your legs of firmness and water,  
over the permanence and the pride  
of your naked hair  
I want to be, my love, now that the tears are  
thrown  
into the raucous baskets where they accumulate,  
I want to be, my love, alone with a syllable  
of mangled silver, alone with a tip  
of your breast of snow.

Pablo Neruda

## Soneto Xvii

No te amo como si fueras rosa de sal, topacio  
o flecha de claveles que propagan el fuego:  
te amo como se aman ciertas cosas oscuras,  
secretamente, entre la sombra y el alma.

Te amo como la planta que no florece y lleva  
dentro de sí, escondida, la luz de aquellas flores,  
y gracias a tu amor vive oscuro en mi cuerpo  
el apretado aroma que ascendió de la tierra.

Te amo sin saber cómo, ni cuándo, ni de dónde,  
te amo directamente sin problemas ni orgullo:  
así te amo porque no sé amar de otra manera,

sino así de este modo en que no soy ni eres,  
tan cerca que tu mano sobre mi pecho es mía,  
tan cerca que se cierran tus ojos con mi sueño.

Pablo Neruda

# Song Of Despair

The memory of you emerges from the night around me.  
The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.  
It is the hour of departure, oh deserted one!

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart.  
Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked.

In you the wars and the flights accumulated.  
From you the wings of the song birds rose.

You swallowed everything, like distance.  
Like the sea, like time. In you everything sank!

It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.  
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.

Pilot's dread, fury of blind driver,  
turbulent drunkenness of love, in you everything sank!

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded.  
Lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

You girdled sorrow, you clung to desire,  
sadness stunned you, in you everything sank!

I made the wall of shadow draw back,  
beyond desire and act, I walked on.

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost,  
I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

Like a jar you housed infinite tenderness.  
and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar.

There was the black solitude of the islands,  
and there, woman of love, your arms took me in.

There was thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit.  
There were grief and ruins, and you were the miracle.

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me  
in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms!

How terrible and brief my desire was to you!  
How difficult and drunken, how tensed and avid.

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,  
still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds.

Oh the bitten mouth, oh the kissed limbs,  
oh the hungering teeth, oh the entwined bodies.

Oh the mad coupling of hope and force  
in which we merged and despaired.

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour.  
And the word scarcely begun on the lips.

This was my destiny and in it was my voyage of my longing,  
and in it my longing fell, in you everything sank!

Oh pit of debris, everything fell into you,  
what sorrow did you not express, in what sorrow are you not drowned!

From billow to billow you still called and sang.  
Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel.

You still flowered in songs, you still broke the currents.  
Oh pit of debris, open and bitter well.

Pale blind diver, luckless slinger,  
lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

It is the hour of departure, the hard cold hour  
which the night fastens to all the timetables.

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore.  
Cold stars heave up, black birds migrate.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.  
Only tremulous shadow twists in my hands.

Oh farther than everything. Oh farther than everything.

It is the hour of departure. Oh abandoned one!

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet IX: There Where The Waves Shatter

There where the waves shatter on the restless rocks  
the clear light bursts and enacts its rose,  
and the sea-circle shrinks to a cluster of buds,  
to one drop of blue salt, falling.

O bright magnolia bursting in the foam,  
magnetic transient whose death blooms  
and vanishes--being, nothingness--forever:  
broken salt, dazzling lurch of the sea.

You & I, Love, together we ratify the silence,  
while the sea destroys its perpetual statues,  
collapses its towers of wild speed and whiteness:

because in the weavings of those invisible fabrics,  
galloping water, incessant sand,  
we make the only permanent tenderness.

Pablo Neruda



## Sonnet Lxxiii: Maybe You'LI Remember

Maybe you'll remember that razor-faced man  
who slipped out from the dark like a blade  
and - before we realized - knew what was there:  
he saw the smoke and concluded fire.

The pallid woman with black hair  
rose like a fish from the abyss,  
and the two of them built up a contraption,  
armed to the teeth, against love.

Man and woman, they felled mountains and gardens,  
then went down to the river, they scaled the walls,  
they hoisted their atrocious artillery up the hill.

Then love knew it was called love.  
And when I lifted my eyes to your name,  
suddenly your heart showed me my way.

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet Lxxxix

And now you're mine. Rest with your dream in my dream.  
Love and pain and work should all sleep, now.  
The night turns on its invisible wheels,  
and you are pure beside me as a sleeping amber.

No one else, Love, will sleep in my dreams. You will go,  
we will go together, over the waters of time.  
No one else will travel through the shadows with me,  
only you, evergreen, ever sun, ever moon.

Your hands have already opened their delicate fists  
and let their soft drifting signs drop away; your eyes closed like two gray  
wings, and I move

after, following the folding water you carry, that carries  
me away. The night, the world, the wind spin out their destiny.  
Without you, I am your dream, only that, and that is all.

Pablo Neruda

# Sonnet Lxxxi: Rest With Your Dream Inside My Dream

Already, you are mine. Rest with your dream inside my dream.  
Love, grief, labour, must sleep now.  
Night revolves on invisible wheels  
and joined to me you are pure as sleeping amber.

No one else will sleep with my dream, love.  
You will go we will go joined by the waters of time.  
No other one will travel the shadows with me,  
only you, eternal nature, eternal sun, eternal moon.

Already your hands have opened their delicate fists  
and let fall, without direction, their gentle signs,  
you eyes enclosing themselves like two grey wings,

while I follow the waters you bring that take me onwards:  
night, Earth, winds weave their fate, and already,  
not only am I not without you, I alone am your dream.

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet Viii

If your eyes were not the color of the moon,  
of a day full [here, interrupted by the baby waking -- continued about 26  
hours later ]

of a day full of clay, and work, and fire,  
if even held-in you did not move in agile grace like the air,  
if you were not an amber week,

not the yellow moment  
when autumn climbs up through the vines;  
if you were not that bread the fragrant moon  
kneads, sprinkling its flour across the sky,

oh, my dearest, I could not love you so!  
But when I hold you I hold everything that is --  
sand, time, the tree of the rain,

everything is alive so that I can be alive:  
without moving I can see it all:  
in your life I see everything that lives.

Pablo Neruda

# Sonnet VIII: If Your Eyes Were Not The Color Of The Moon

If your eyes were not the color of the moon,  
of a day full [here, interrupted by the baby waking - continued about 26  
hours later ]

of a day full of clay, and work, and fire,  
if even held-in you did not move in agile grace like the air,  
if you were not an amber week,

not the yellow moment  
when autumn climbs up through the vines;  
if you were not that bread the fragrant moon  
kneads, sprinkling its flour across the sky,

oh, my dearest, I could not love you so!  
But when I hold you I hold everything that is -  
sand, time, the tree of the rain,

everything is alive so that I can be alive:  
without moving I can see it all:  
in your life I see everything that lives.

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet Xcv:Who Ever Desired Each Other As We Do

Who ever desired each other as we do? Let us look  
for the ancient ashes of hearts that burned,  
and let our kisses touch there, one by one,  
till the flower, disembodied, rises again.

Let us love that Desire that consumed its own fruit  
and went down, aspect and power, into the earth:  
We are its continuing light,  
its indestructible, fragile seed

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet Xi

I crave your mouth, your voice, your hair.  
Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets.  
Bread does not nourish me, dawn disrupts me, all day  
I hunt for the liquid measure of your steps.

I hunger for your sleek laugh,  
your hands the color of a savage harvest,  
hunger for the pale stones of your fingernails,  
I want to eat your skin like a whole almond.

I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your lovely body,  
the sovereign nose of your arrogant face,  
I want to eat the fleeting shade of your lashes,

and I pace around hungry, sniffing the twilight,  
hunting for you, for your hot heart,  
like a puma in the barrens of Quitratue.

Pablo Neruda

# Sonnet Xiii: The Light That Rises From Your Feet To Your Hair

The light that rises from your feet to your hair,  
the strength enfolding your delicate form,  
are not mother of pearl, not chilly silver:  
you are made of bread, a bread the fire adores.

The grain grew high in its harvest of you,  
in good time the flour swelled;  
as the dough rose, doubling your breasts,  
my love was the coal waiting ready in the earth.

Oh, bread your forehead, your legs, your mouth,  
bread I devour, born with the morning light,  
my love, beacon-flag of the bakeries:

fire taught you a lesson of the blood;  
you learned your holiness from flour,  
from bread your language and aroma.

Pablo Neruda



## Sonnet Xlii: I Hunt For A Sign Of You

I hunt for a sign of you in all the others,  
In the rapid undulant river of women,  
Braids, shyly sinking eyes,  
Light step that slices, sailing through the foam.

Suddenly I think I can make out your nails,  
Oblong, quick, nieces of a cherry:  
Then it's your hair that passes by, and I think  
I see your image, a bonfire, burning in the water.

I searched, but no one else had your rhythms,  
Your light, the shady day you brought from the forest;  
Nobody had your tiny ears.

You are whole, exact, and everything you are is one,  
And so I go along, with you I float along, loving  
A wide Mississippi toward a feminine sea.

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet Xvii

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,  
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms  
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;  
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,  
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.  
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;  
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,  
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,  
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet Xxv

Before I loved you, love, nothing was my own:  
I wandered through the streets, among  
Objects:  
Nothing mattered or had a name:  
The world was made of air, which waited.

I knew rooms full of ashes,  
Tunnels where the moon lived,  
Rough warehouses that growled 'get lost',  
Questions that insisted in the sand.

Everything was empty, dead, mute,  
Fallen abandoned, and decayed:  
Inconceivably alien, it all

Belonged to someone else - to no one:  
Till your beauty and your poverty  
Filled the autumn plentiful with gifts.

Pablo Neruda

# Sonnet Xxvii: Naked You Are As Simple As One Of Your Hands

Naked, you are simple as one of your hands,  
Smooth, earthy, small, transparent, round:  
You have moonlines, applepathways:  
Naked, you are slender as a naked grain of wheat.

Naked, you are blue as the night in Cuba;  
You have vines and stars in your hair;  
Naked, you are spacious and yellow  
As summer in a golden church.

Naked, you are tiny as one of your nails,  
Curved, subtle, rosy, till the day is born  
And you withdraw to the underground world,

as if down a long tunnel of clothing and of chores:  
Your clear light dims, gets dressed, drops its leaves,  
And becomes a naked hand again.

Pablo Neruda

## Sonnet Xxxiv (You Are The Daughter Of The Sea)

You are the daughter of the sea, oregano's first cousin.  
Swimmer, your body is pure as the water;  
cook, your blood is quick as the soil.  
Everything you do is full of flowers, rich with the earth.

Your eyes go out toward the water, and the waves rise;  
your hands go out to the earth and the seeds swell;  
you know the deep essence of water and the earth,  
conjoined in you like a formula for clay.

Naiad: cut your body into turquoise pieces,  
they will bloom resurrected in the kitchen.  
This is how you become everything that lives.

And so at last, you sleep, in the circle of my arms  
that push back the shadows so that you can rest--  
vegetables, seaweed, herbs: the foam of your dreams.

Translated by Stephen Tapscott

Submitted by Hen

Pablo Neruda

# Still Another Day: I

Today is that day, the day that carried  
a desperate light that since has died.  
Don't let the squatters know:  
let's keep it all between us,  
day, between your bell  
and my secret.

Today is dead winter in the forgotten land  
that comes to visit me, with a cross on the map  
and a volcano in the snow, to return to me,  
to return again the water  
fallen on the roof of my childhood.  
Today when the sun began with its shafts  
to tell the story, so clear, so old,  
the slanting rain fell like a sword,  
the rain my hard heart welcomes.

You, my love, still asleep in August,  
my queen, my woman, my vastness, my geography  
kiss of mud, the carbon-coated zither,  
you, vestment of my persistent song,  
today you are reborn again and with the sky's  
black water confuse me and compel me:  
I must renew my bones in your kingdom,  
I must still uncloud my earthly duties.

Pablo Neruda

## Still Another Day: XVII/Men

The truth is in the prologue. Death to the romantic fool,  
to the expert in solitary confinement,  
I'm the same as the teacher from Colombia,  
the rotarian from Philadelphia, the merchant  
from Paysandu who save his silver  
to come here. We all arrive by different streets,  
by unequal languages, at Silence.

Pablo Neruda

# Tell Me, Is The Rose Naked?

Tell me, is the rose naked  
Or is that her only dress?

Why do trees conceal  
The splendor of their roots?

Who hears the regrets  
Of the thieving automobile?

Is there anything in the world sadder  
Than a train standing in the rain?

Pablo Neruda



# The Dead Woman

If suddenly you do not exist,  
if suddenly you no longer live,  
I shall live on.

I do not dare,  
I do not dare to write it,  
if you die.

I shall live on.

For where a man has no voice,  
there, my voice.

Where blacks are beaten,  
I cannot be dead.  
When my brothers go to prison  
I shall go with them.

When victory,  
not my victory,  
but the great victory comes,  
even though I am mute I must speak;  
I shall see it come even  
though I am blind.

No, forgive me.  
If you no longer live,  
if you, beloved, my love,  
if you have died,  
all the leaves will fall in my breast,  
it will rain on my soul night and day,  
the snow will burn my heart,  
I shall walk with frost and fire and death and snow,  
my feet will want to walk to where you are sleeping, but  
I shall stay alive,  
because above all things  
you wanted me indomitable,  
and, my love, because you know that I am not only a man  
but all mankind.

Pablo Neruda

# The Dictators

An odor has remained among the sugarcane:  
a mixture of blood and body, a penetrating  
petal that brings nausea.  
Between the coconut palms the graves are full  
of ruined bones, of speechless death-rattles.  
The delicate dictator is talking  
with top hats, gold braid, and collars.  
The tiny palace gleams like a watch  
and the rapid laughs with gloves on  
cross the corridors at times  
and join the dead voices  
and the blue mouths freshly buried.  
The weeping cannot be seen, like a plant  
whose seeds fall endlessly on the earth,  
whose large blind leaves grow even without light.  
Hatred has grown scale on scale,  
blow on blow, in the ghastly water of the swamp,  
with a snout full of ooze and silence

Pablo Neruda

# The Eighth Of September

This day, Today, was a brimming glass.  
This day, Today, was an immense wave.  
This day was all the Earth.  
This day, the storm-driven ocean  
lifted us up in a kiss  
so exalted we trembled  
at the lightning flash  
and bound as one, fell,  
and drowned, without being unbound.  
This day our bodies grew  
stretched out to Earth's limits,  
orbited there, melded there  
to one globe of wax, or a meteor's flame.  
A strange door opened, between us,  
and someone, with no face as yet,  
waited for us there.

Pablo Neruda

# The Fear

They all ask me to jump  
to invigorate and to play soccer,  
to run, to swim and to fly.  
Very well.

They all advise me rest,  
they all send me to the doctor,  
looking at me a certain way.  
What happens?

They all advise me to travel,  
to come and to leave, to stay,  
to die and not to die.  
It does not matter.

They all see the difficulties  
of my surprised bowels  
by awful X-rayed portraits.  
I do not agree.

They all sting my poetry  
with relentless forks  
seeking, without doubt, a fly,  
I Am afraid.

I am afraid of everyone,  
of the cold water, of the death.  
I am like all the mortals,  
unavoidable.

And for that, in these short days  
I am not going to pay attention to them,  
I am going to open myself up and shut myself in  
with my more perfidious enemy,  
Pablo Neruda.

Pablo Neruda

# The Fickle One

My eyes went away from me  
Following a dark girl who went by.

She was made of black motherofpearl  
Made of darkpurple grapes,  
And she lashed my blood  
With her tail of fire.

After them all I go.

A pale blonde went by  
Like a golden plant  
Swaying her gifts.  
And my mouth went  
Like a wave  
Discharging on her breast  
Lightningbolts of blood.

After them all I go.

But to you, without my moving,  
Without seeing you, distant you,  
Go my blood and my kisses,  
My dark one and my fair one,  
My broad one and my slender one,  
My ugly one, my beauty,  
Made of all the gold  
And of all the silver,  
Made of all the wheat  
And of all the earth,  
Made of all the water  
Of sea waves,  
Made for my arms  
Made for my kisses,  
Made for my soul.

Pablo Neruda

# The House Of Odes

Writing  
these  
odes  
in this  
year nineteen  
hundred and  
fifty-five,  
readying and tuning  
my demanding, murmuring lyre,  
I know who I am  
and where my song is going.  
I understand  
that the shopper for myths  
and mysteries  
may enter  
my wood  
and adobe  
house of odes,  
may despise  
the utensils,  
the portraits  
of father and mother and country  
on the walls,  
the simplicity  
of the bread  
and the saltcellar. But  
that's how it is in my house of odes.  
I deposed the dark monarchy,  
the useless flowing hair of dreams,  
I trod on the tail  
of the cerebral reptile,  
and set things  
-- water and fire -  
in harmony with man and earth.  
I want everything  
to have  
a handle,  
I want everything to be  
a cup or a tool,

I want people to enter a hardware  
store through the door of my odes.  
I work at  
cutting  
newly hewn boards,  
storing casks  
of honey,  
arranging  
horseshoes, harness,  
forks:  
I want everyone to enter here,  
let them ask questions,  
ask for anything they want.  
I am from the South, a Chilean,  
a sailor  
returned  
from the seas.  
I did not stay in the islands,  
a king.  
I did not stay ensconced  
in the land of dreams.  
I returned to labor simply  
beside others,  
for everyone.  
So that everyone  
may live here,  
I build my house  
with transparent  
odes.

Pablo Neruda



# The Insect

From your hips down to your feet  
I want to make a long journey.

I am smaller than an insect.

Over these hills I pass,  
hills the colour of oats,  
crossed with faint tracks  
that only I know,  
scorched centimetres,  
pale perspectives.

Now here is a mountain.  
I shall never leave this.  
What a giant growth of moss!  
And a crater, a rose  
of moist fire!

Coming down your legs  
I trace a spiral,  
or sleep on the way,  
and arrive at your knees,  
round hardness  
like the hard peaks  
of a bright continent.

Sliding down to your feet  
I reach the eight slits  
of your pointed, slow,  
peninsular toes,  
and from them I fall down  
to the white emptiness  
of the sheet, seeking blindly  
and hungrily the form  
of your fiery crucible!

Pablo Neruda

# The Light Wraps You

The light wraps you in its mortal flame.  
Abstracted pale mourner, standing that way  
against the old propellers of the twilight  
that revolves around you.

Speechless, my friend,  
alone in the loneliness of this hour of the dead  
and filled with the lives of fire,  
pure heir of the ruined day.

A bough of fruit falls from the sun on your dark garment.  
The great roots of night  
grow suddenly from your soul,  
and the things that hide in you come out again  
so that a blue and palled people  
your newly born, takes nourishment.

Oh magnificent and fecund and magnetic slave  
of the circle that moves in turn through black and gold:  
rise, lead and possess a creation  
so rich in life that its flowers perish  
and it is full of sadness.

Pablo Neruda

# The Men

I'm Ramón González Barbagelata from anywhere,  
from Cucuy, from Paraná, from Rio Turbio, from Oruro,  
from Maracaibo, from Parral, from Ovalle, from Loconmilla,  
I'm the poor devil from the poor Third World,  
I'm the third-class passenger installed, good God!  
in the lavish whiteness of snow-covered mountains,  
concealed among orchids of subtle idiosyncrasy.

I've arrived at this famous year 20000, and what do I get?  
With what do I scratch myself? What do I have to do with  
the three glorious zeros that flaunt themselves  
over my very own zero, my own non-existence?  
Pity that brave heart awaiting its call  
or the man enfolded by warmer love,  
nothing's left today except my flimsy skeleton,  
my eyes unhinged, confronting the era's beginning.

The era's beginning: are these ruined shacks,  
these poor schools, these people still in rags and tatters,  
this cloddish insecurity of my poor families,  
is all this the day? the century's beginning, the golden door?

Well, enough said, I, at least, discreet,  
as in office, patched and pensive,  
I proclaim the redundancy of the inaugural:  
I've arrived here with all my baggage,  
bad luck and worse jobs,  
misery always waiting with open arms,  
the mobilization of people piled up on top of each other,  
and the manifold geography of hunger.

Pablo Neruda

# The Night In Isla Negra

Ancient night and the unruly salt  
beat at the walls of my house.  
The shadow is all one, the sky  
throbs now along with the ocean,  
and sky and shadow erupt  
in the crash of their vast conflict.  
All night long they struggle;  
nobody knows the name  
of the harsh light that keeps slowly opening  
like a languid fruit.  
So on the coast comes to light,  
out of seething shadow, the harsh dawn,  
gnawed at by the moving salt,  
swept clean by the mass of night,  
bloodstained in its sea-washed crater.

Pablo Neruda

# The Old Women Of The Ocean

To the solemn sea the old women come  
With their shawls knotted around their necks  
With their fragile feet cracking.

They sit down alone on the shore  
Without moving their eyes or their hands  
Without changing the clouds or the silence.

The obscene sea breaks and claws  
Rushes downhill trumpeting  
Shakes its bull's beard.

The gentle old ladies seated  
As if in a transparent boat  
They look at the terrorist waves.

Where will they go and where have they been?  
They come from every corner  
They come from our own lives.

Now they have the ocean  
The cold and burning emptiness  
The solitude full of flames.

They come from all the pasts  
From houses which were fragrant  
From burnt-up evenings.

They look, or don't look, at the sea  
With their walking sticks they draw signs in the sand  
And the sea erases their calligraphy.

The old women get up and go away  
With their fragile bird feet  
While the waves flood in  
Traveling naked in the wind.

Pablo Neruda

# The People

I recall that man and not two centuries  
have passed since I saw him,  
he went neither by horse nor by carriage:  
purely on foot  
he outstripped  
distances,  
and carried no sword or armour,  
only nets on his shoulder,  
axe or hammer or spade,  
never fighting the rest of his species:  
his exploits were with water and earth,  
with wheat so that it turned into bread,  
with giant trees to render them wood,  
with walls to open up doors,  
with sand to construct the walls,  
and with ocean for it to bear.

I knew him and he is still not cancelled in me.

The carriages fell to pieces,  
war destroyed doors and walls,  
the city was a handful of ashes,  
all the clothes turned to dust,  
and he remains to me,  
he survives in the sand,  
when everything before  
seemed imperishable but him.

In the going and coming of families  
at times he was my father or kinsman  
or perhaps it was scarcely him or not  
the one who did not return to his house  
because water or earth swallowed him up  
or a tree or an engine killed him,  
or he was the saddened carpenter  
who went behind the coffin, without tears,  
someone in the end who had no name,  
except those that metal or timber have,  
and on whom others gazed from on high

without seeing the ant  
for the anthill  
and so that when his feet did not stir,  
because the poor exhausted one had died,  
they never saw what they had not seen:  
already there were other feet where he'd been.

The other feet were still his,  
and the other hands,  
the man remained:  
when it seemed that now he was done for  
he was the same once more,  
there he was digging again at the earth,  
cutting cloth, minus a shirt,  
there he was and was not, like before,  
he had gone down and was once more,  
and since he never owned graveyards,  
or tombs, nor was his name carved  
on the stone he sweated to quarry,  
no one knew he had come  
and no one knew when he died,  
so that only when the poor man could  
he returned to life once more, without it being noted.

He was the man, no doubt of it, without heritage,  
without cattle, without a flag,  
and he was not distinguished from others,  
the others who were him,  
from the heights he was grey like the subsoil,  
tanned like the leather,  
he was yellow reaping the wheat,  
he was black down in the mine,  
he was the colour of stone on the fortress,  
in the fishing boat the colour of tuna,  
and the colour of horses in the meadow:  
how could anyone distinguish him  
if he was inseparable, elemental,  
earth, coal or sea vested in man?

Where he lived whatever  
a man touched grew:  
the hostile stones,

quarried  
by his hands,  
took on order  
and one by one formed  
the right clarity of a building,  
he made bread with his hands,  
moved the engines,  
the distances peopled themselves with towns,  
other men grew,  
bees arrived,  
and by man's creating and breeding  
spring walked the market squares  
between bakeries and doves.

The maker of loaves was forgotten,  
he who quarried and journeyed, beating down  
and opening furrows, transporting sand,  
when everything existed he no longer existed,  
he gave his existence, that's all.  
He went elsewhere to labour, and at last  
he was dead, rolling  
like a stone in the river:  
death carried him downstream.

I, who knew him, saw him descend  
till he was no longer except what he left:  
roads he could scarcely know,  
houses he never ever would live in.

I turn to see him, and I await him

I see him in his grave and resurrected.

I distinguish him among all  
who are his equals  
and it seems to me it cannot be,  
that like this we go nowhere,  
that to survive like this holds no glory.

I believe that this man  
must be enthroned, rightly shod and crowned.  
I believe that those who made such things



must be the masters of all these things.  
And that those who made bread should eat!

And those in the mines must have light!

Enough now of grey men enslaved!

Enough of the pale 'missing ones'!

Not another man passes except as a king.

Not a single woman without her crown.

Golden gauntlets for every hand.

Fruits of the sun for all the unknowns!

I knew that man and when I could,  
when he still had eyes in his head,  
when he still had a voice in his mouth  
I searched for him among tombs, and I said  
grasping his arm that was not yet dust:

'All will be gone, you will live on,

You ignite life.

You made what is yours.'

So let no one trouble themselves when  
I seem to be alone and am not alone,  
I am with no one and speak for them all:

Some listen to me, without knowing,  
but those I sing, those who do know  
go on being born, and will fill up the Earth.

Pablo Neruda

# The Portrait In The Rock

Oh yes I knew him, I spent years with him,  
with his golden and stony substance,  
he was a man who was tired -  
in Paraguay he left his father and mother,  
his sons, his nephews,  
his latest in-laws,  
his house, his chickens,  
and some half-opened books.  
They called him to the door.  
When he opened it, the police took him,  
and they beat him up so much  
that he spat blood in France, in Denmark,  
in Spain, in Italy, moving about,  
and so he died and I stopped seeing his face,  
stopped hearing his profound silence ;  
then once, on a night of storms,  
with snow spreading  
a smooth cloak on the mountains,  
on horseback, there, far off,  
I looked and there was my friend -  
his face was formed in stone,  
his profile defied the wild weather,  
in his nose the wind was muffling  
the moaning of the persecuted.  
There the exile came to ground.  
Changed into stone, he lives in his own country.

Pablo Neruda

# The Queen

I have named you queen.  
There are taller than you, taller.  
There are purer than you, purer.  
There are lovelier than you, lovelier.  
But you are the queen.

When you go through the streets  
No one recognizes you.  
No one sees your crystal crown, no one looks  
At the carpet of red gold  
That you tread as you pass,  
The nonexistent carpet.

And when you appear  
All the rivers sound  
In my body, bells  
Shake the sky,  
And a hymn fills the world.

Only you and I,  
Only you and I, my love,  
Listen to me.

- - - - -

LA REINA

Yo te he nombrado reina.  
Hay más altas que tú, más altas.  
Hay más puras que tú, más puras.  
Hay más bellas que tú, hay más bellas.  
Pero tú eres la reina.

Cuando vas por las calles  
nadie te reconoce.  
Nadie ve tu corona de cristal, nadie mira  
la alfombra de oro rojo  
que pisas donde pasas,  
la alfombra que no existe.

Y cuando asomas  
suenan todos los ríos  
en mi cuerpo, sacuden  
el cielo las campanas,  
y un himno llena el mundo.

Sólo tú y yo,  
sólo tú y yo, amor mío,  
lo escuchamos.

Pablo Neruda

# The Question

Love, a question  
has destroyed you.

I have come back to you  
from thorny uncertainty.

I want you straight as  
the sword or the road.

But you insist  
on keeping a nook  
of shadow that I do not want.

My love,  
understand me,  
I love all of you,  
from eyes to feet, to toenails,  
inside,  
all the brightness, which you kept.

It is I, my love,  
who knocks at your door.  
It is not the ghost, it is not  
the one who once stopped  
at your window.  
I knock down the door:  
I enter your life:  
I come to live in your soul:  
you cannot cope with me.

You must open door to door,  
you must obey me,  
you must open your eyes  
so that I may search in them,  
you must see how I walk  
with heavy steps  
along all the roads  
that, blind, were waiting for me.

Do not fear,  
I am yours,  
but  
I am not the passenger or the beggar,  
I am your master,  
the one you were waiting for,  
and now I enter  
your life,  
no more to leave it,  
love, love, love,  
but to stay.

Pablo Neruda

# The Saddest Poem

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

Write, for instance: "The night is full of stars,  
and the stars, blue, shiver in the distance."

The night wind whirls in the sky and sings.

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.  
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like this, I held her in my arms.  
I kissed her so many times under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her.  
How could I not have loved her large, still eyes?

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.  
To think I don't have her. To feel that I've lost her.

To hear the immense night, more immense without her.  
And the poem falls to the soul as dew to grass.

What does it matter that my love couldn't keep her.  
The night is full of stars and she is not with me.

That's all. Far away, someone sings. Far away.  
My soul is lost without her.

As if to bring her near, my eyes search for her.  
My heart searches for her and she is not with me.

The same night that whitens the same trees.  
We, we who were, we are the same no longer.

I no longer love her, true, but how much I loved her.  
My voice searched the wind to touch her ear.

Someone else's. She will be someone else's. As she once  
belonged to my kisses.

Her voice, her light body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, true, but perhaps I love her.  
Love is so short and oblivion so long.

Because on nights like this I held her in my arms,  
my soul is lost without her.

Although this may be the last pain she causes me,  
and this may be the last poem I write for her.

Pablo Neruda



# The Song Of Despair

You swallowed everything, like distance.  
Like the sea, like time.  
In you everything sank!  
It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.  
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.  
Pilot's dread, fury of a blind diver,  
turbulent drunkenness of love,  
in you everything sank!

Pablo Neruda

# The Tree Is Here, Still, In Pure Stone

The tree is here, still, in pure stone,  
in deep evidence, in solid beauty,  
layered, through a hundred million years.  
Agate, cornelian, gemstone  
transmuted the timber and sap  
until damp corruptions  
fissured the giant's trunk  
fusing a parallel being:  
the living leaves  
unmade themselves  
and when the pillar was overthrown  
fire in the forest, blaze of the dust-cloud,  
celestial ashes mantled it round,  
until time, and the lava, created  
this gift, of translucent stone.

Pablo Neruda

# The United Fruit Co.

When the trumpet sounded, it was  
all prepared on the earth,  
the Jehovah parcelled out the earth  
to Coca Cola, Inc., Anaconda,  
Ford Motors, and other entities:  
The Fruit Company, Inc.  
reserved for itself the most succulent,  
the central coast of my own land,  
the delicate waist of America.  
It rechristened its territories  
as the 'Banana Republics'  
and over the sleeping dead,  
over the restless heroes  
who brought about the greatness, the liberty and the flags,  
it established the comic opera:  
abolished the independencies,  
presented crowns of Caesar,  
unsheathed envy, attracted  
the dictatorship of the flies,  
Trujillo flies, Tacho flies,  
Carias flies, Martines flies,  
Ubico flies, damp flies  
of modest blood and marmalade,  
drunken flies who zoom  
over the ordinary graves,  
circus flies, wise flies  
well trained in tyranny.

Among the blood-thirsty flies  
the Fruit Company lands its ships,  
taking off the coffee and the fruit;  
the treasure of our submerged  
territories flow as though  
on plates into the ships.

Meanwhile Indians are falling  
into the sugared chasms  
of the harbours, wrapped  
for burials in the mist of the dawn:

a body rolls, a thing  
that has no name, a fallen cipher,  
a cluster of the dead fruit  
thrown down on the dump.

Pablo Neruda

# The Weary One

The weary one, orphan  
of the masses, the self,  
the crushed one, the one made of concrete,  
the one without a country in crowded restaurants,  
he who wanted to go far away, always farther away,  
didn't know what to do there, whether he wanted  
or didn't want to leave or remain on the island,  
the hesitant one, the hybrid, entangled in himself,  
had no place here: the straight-angled stone,  
the infinite look of the granite prism,  
the circular solitude all banished him:  
he went somewhere else with his sorrows,  
he returned to the agony of his native land,  
to his indecisions, of winter and summer.

Pablo Neruda

# The White Mans Burden

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig  
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:  
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,  
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off it seemed  
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,  
a shout muffled by huge autumns,  
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there, the hazel-sprig  
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance  
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind  
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood---  
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent

Pablo Neruda

# The Wide Ocean

Ocean, if you were to give, a measure, a ferment, a fruit  
of your gifts and destructions, into my hand,  
I would choose your far-off repose, your contour of steel,  
your vigilant spaces of air and darkness,  
and the power of your white tongue,  
that shatters and overthrows columns,  
breaking them down to your proper purity.

Not the final breaker, heavy with brine,  
that thunders onshore, and creates  
the silence of sand, that encircles the world,  
but the inner spaces of force,  
the naked power of the waters,  
the immovable solitude, brimming with lives.  
It is Time perhaps, or the vessel filled  
with all motion, pure Oneness,  
that death cannot touch, the visceral green  
of consuming totality.

Only a salt kiss remains of the drowned arm,  
that lifts a spray: a humid scent,  
of the damp flower, is left,  
from the bodies of men. Your energies  
form, in a trickle that is not spent,  
form, in retreat into silence.

The falling wave,  
arch of identity, shattering feathers,  
is only spume when it clears,  
and returns to its source, unconsumed.

Your whole force heads for its origin.  
The husks that your load threshes,  
are only the crushed, plundered, deliveries,  
that your act of abundance expelled,  
all those that take life from your branches.

Your form extends beyond breakers,  
vibrant, and rhythmic, like the chest, cloaking

a single being, and its breathings,  
that lift into the content of light,  
plains raised above waves,  
forming the naked surface of earth.  
You fill your true self with your substance.  
You overflow curve with silence.

The vessel trembles with your salt and sweetness,  
the universal cavern of waters,  
and nothing is lost from you, as it is  
from the desolate crater, or the bay of a hill,  
those empty heights, signs, scars,  
guarding the wounded air.

Your petals throbbing against the Earth,  
trembling your submarine harvests,  
your menace thickening the smooth swell,  
with pulsations and swarming of schools,  
and only the thread of the net raises  
the dead lightning of fish-scale,  
one wounded millimetre, in the space  
of your crystal completeness.

Pablo Neruda



# Tie Your Heart At Night To Mine, Love,

Tie your heart at night to mine, love,  
and both will defeat the darkness  
like twin drums beating in the forest  
against the heavy wall of wet leaves.

Night crossing: black coal of dream  
that cuts the thread of earthly orbs  
with the punctuality of a headlong train  
that pulls cold stone and shadow endlessly.

Love, because of it, tie me to a purer movement,  
to the grip on life that beats in your breast,  
with the wings of a submerged swan,

So that our dream might reply  
to the sky's questioning stars  
with one key, one door closed to shadow.

Pablo Neruda

# Tonight I Can Write The Saddest Lines

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, 'The night is shattered  
and the blue stars shiver in the distance.'

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.  
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms  
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.

She loved me sometimes, and I loved her too.  
How could one not have loved her great still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.  
To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more immense without her.  
And the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture.

What does it matter that my love could not keep her.  
The night is shattered and she is not with me.

This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.  
My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

My sight searches for her as though to go to her.  
My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.

The same night whitening the same trees.  
We, of that time, are no longer the same.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.  
My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing.

Another's. She will be another's. Like my kisses before.  
Her voice. Her bright body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but maybe I love her.  
Love is so short, forgetting is so long.

Because through nights like this one I held her in my arms  
my sould is not satisfied that it has lost her.

Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer  
and these the last verses that I write for her.

Pablo Neruda

# Tower Of Light

O tower of light, sad beauty  
that magnified necklaces and statues in the sea,  
calcareous eye, insignia of the vast waters, cry  
of the mourning petrel, tooth of the sea, wife  
of the Oceanian wind, O separate rose  
from the long stem of the trampled bush  
that the depths, converted into archipelago,  
O natural star, green diadem,  
alone in your lonesome dynasty,  
still unattainable, elusive, desolate  
like one drop, like one grape, like the sea.

Pablo Neruda

# Triangles

Three triangles of birds crossed  
Over the enormous ocean which extended  
In winter like a green beast.  
Everything just lay there, the silence,  
The unfolding gray, the heavy light  
Of space, some land now and then.  
Over everything there was passing  
A flight  
And another flight  
Of dark birds, winter bodies  
Trembling triangles  
Whose wings,  
Frantically flapping, hardly  
Can carry the gray cold, the desolate days  
From one place to another  
Along the coast of Chile.  
I am here while from one sky to another  
The trembling of the migratory birds  
Leaves me sunk inside myself, inside my own matter  
Like an everlasting well  
Dug by an immovable spiral.  
Now they have disappeared  
Black feathers of the sea  
Iron birds  
From steep slopes and rock piles  
Now at noon  
I am in front of emptiness. It's a winter  
Space stretched out  
And the sea has put  
Over its blue face  
A bitter mask.

Pablo Neruda

# Unity

There is something dense, united, settled in the depths,  
repeating its number, its identical sign.

How it is noted that stones have touched time,  
in their refined matter there is an odor of age,  
of water brought by the sea, from salt and sleep.

I'm encircled by a single thing, a single movement:  
a mineral weight, a honeyed light  
cling to the sound of the word "noche";  
the tint of wheat, of ivory, of tears,  
things of leather, of wood, of wool,  
archaic, faded, uniform,  
collect around me like walls.

I work quietly, wheeling over myself,  
a crow over death, a crow in mourning.  
I mediate, isolated in the spread of seasons,  
centric, encircled by a silent geometry:  
a partial temperature drifts down from the sky,  
a distant empire of confused unities  
reunites encircling me.

Pablo Neruda

# Walking Around

It so happens I am sick of being a man.  
And it happens that I walk into tailorshops and movie  
houses  
dried up, waterproof, like a swan made of felt  
steering my way in a water of wombs and ashes.

The smell of barbershops makes me break into hoarse  
sobs.

The only thing I want is to lie still like stones or wool.  
The only thing I want is to see no more stores, no gardens,  
no more goods, no spectacles, no elevators.

It so happens that I am sick of my feet and my nails  
and my hair and my shadow.  
It so happens I am sick of being a man.

Still it would be marvelous  
to terrify a law clerk with a cut lily,  
or kill a nun with a blow on the ear.  
It would be great  
to go through the streets with a green knife  
letting out yells until I died of the cold.

I don't want to go on being a root in the dark,  
insecure, stretched out, shivering with sleep,  
going on down, into the moist guts of the earth,  
taking in and thinking, eating every day.

I don't want so much misery.  
I don't want to go on as a root and a tomb,  
alone under the ground, a warehouse with corpses,  
half frozen, dying of grief.

That's why Monday, when it sees me coming  
with my convict face, blazes up like gasoline,  
and it howls on its way like a wounded wheel,  
and leaves tracks full of warm blood leading toward the  
night.

And it pushes me into certain corners, into some moist  
houses,  
into hospitals where the bones fly out the window,  
into shoeshops that smell like vinegar,  
and certain streets hideous as cracks in the skin.

There are sulphur-colored birds, and hideous intestines  
hanging over the doors of houses that I hate,  
and there are false teeth forgotten in a coffeepot,  
there are mirrors  
that ought to have wept from shame and terror,  
there are umbrellas everywhere, and venoms, and umbilical  
cords.

I stroll along serenely, with my eyes, my shoes,  
my rage, forgetting everything,  
I walk by, going through office buildings and orthopedic  
shops,  
and courtyards with washing hanging from the line:  
underwear, towels and shirts from which slow  
dirty tears are falling.

Translated by Robert Bly

Pablo Neruda



# Walking Around (Original Spanish)

(Original Spanish; can someone provide the title?)

Sucede que me canso de ser hombre.  
Sucede que entro en las sastrerías y en los cines  
marchito, impenetrable, como un cisne de fieltro  
Navegando en un agua de origen y ceniza.  
El olor de las peluquerías me hace llorar a gritos.  
Sólo quiero un descanso de piedras o de lana,  
sólo quiero no ver establecimientos ni jardines,  
ni mercaderías, ni anteojos, ni ascensores.  
Sucede que me canso de mis pies y mis uñas  
y mi pelo y mi sombra.  
Sucede que me canso de ser hombre.  
Sin embargo sería delicioso  
asustar a un notario con un lirio cortado  
o dar muerte a una monja con un golpe de oreja.  
Sería bello  
ir por las calles con un cuchillo verde  
y dando gritos hasta morir de frío  
No quiero seguir siendo raíz en las tinieblas,  
vacilante, extendido, tiritando de sueño,  
hacia abajo, en las tapias mojadas de la tierra,  
absorbiendo y pensando, comiendo cada día.  
No quiero para mí tantas desgracias.  
No quiero continuar de raíz y de tumba,  
de subterráneo solo, de bodega con muertos  
ateridos, muriéndome de pena.  
Por eso el día lunes arde como el petróleo  
cuando me ve llegar con mi cara de cárcel,  
y aúlla en su transcurso como una rueda herida,  
y da pasos de sangre caliente hacia la noche.  
Y me empuja a ciertos rincones, a ciertas casas húmedas,  
a hospitales donde los huesos salen por la ventana,  
a ciertas zapaterías con olor a vinagre,  
a calles espantosas como grietas.  
Hay pájaros de color de azufre y horribles intestinos  
colgando de las puertas de las casas que odio,  
hay dentaduras olvidadas en una cafetera,  
hay espejos

que debieran haber llorado de vergüenza y espanto,  
hay paraguas en todas partes, y venenos, y ombligos.  
Yo paseo con calma, con ojos, con zapatos,  
con furia, con olvido,  
paso, cruzo oficinas y tiendas de ortopedia,  
y patios donde hay ropas colgadas de un alambre:  
calzoncillos, toallas y camisas que lloran  
lentas lágrimas sucias.

Pablo Neruda

(English Translation of Walking Around by Robert Bly)

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Pablo Neruda

# Waltz

I touch hatred like a covered breast;  
I without stopping go from garment to garment,  
sleeping at a distance.

I am not, I'm of no use, I do not know  
anyone; I have no weapons of ocean or wood,  
I do not live in this house.

My mouth is full of night and water.  
The abiding moon determines  
what I do not have.

What I have is in the midst of the waves,  
a ray of water, a day for myself,  
an iron depth.

There is no cross-tide, there is no shield, no costume,  
there is no special solution too deep to be sounded,  
no vicious eyelid.

I live suddenly and other times I follow.  
I touch a face suddenly and it murders me.  
I have no time.

Do not look for me when drawing  
the usual wild thread or the  
bleeding net.

Do not call me: that is my occupation.  
Do not ask my name or my condition.  
Leave me in the middle of my own moon  
in my wounded ground.

Pablo Neruda

# Water

Everything on the earth bristled, the bramble  
pricked and the green thread  
nibbled away, the petal fell, falling  
until the only flower was the falling itself.  
Water is another matter,  
has no direction but its own bright grace,  
runs through all imaginable colors,  
takes limpid lessons  
from stone,  
and in those functionings plays out  
the unrealized ambitions of the foam.

Pablo Neruda

# We Are Many

Of the many men whom I am, whom we are,  
I cannot settle on a single one.  
They are lost to me under the cover of clothing  
They have departed for another city.

When everything seems to be set  
to show me off as a man of intelligence,  
the fool I keep concealed on my person  
takes over my talk and occupies my mouth.

On other occasions, I am dozing in the midst  
of people of some distinction,  
and when I summon my courageous self,  
a coward completely unknown to me  
swaddles my poor skeleton  
in a thousand tiny reservations.

When a stately home bursts into flames,  
instead of the fireman I summon,  
an arsonist bursts on the scene,  
and he is I. There is nothing I can do.  
What must I do to distinguish myself?  
How can I put myself together?

All the books I read  
lionize dazzling hero figures,  
brimming with self-assurance.  
I die with envy of them;  
and, in films where bullets fly on the wind,  
I am left in envy of the cowboys,  
left admiring even the horses.

But when I call upon my DASHING BEING,  
out comes the same OLD LAZY SELF,  
and so I never know just WHO I AM,  
nor how many I am, nor WHO WE WILL BE BEING.  
I would like to be able to touch a bell  
and call up my real self, the truly me,  
because if I really need my proper self,

I must not allow myself to disappear.

While I am writing, I am far away;  
and when I come back, I have already left.  
I should like to see if the same thing happens  
to other people as it does to me,  
to see if as many people are as I am,  
and if they seem the same way to themselves.  
When this problem has been thoroughly explored,  
I am going to school myself so well in things  
that, when I try to explain my problems,  
I shall speak, not of self, but of geography.

Pablo Neruda

# What Spain Was Like

Spain was a taut, dry drum-head  
Daily beating a dull thud  
Flatlands and eagle's nest  
Silence lashed by the storm.  
How much, to the point of weeping, in my soul  
I love your hard soil, your poor bread,  
Your poor people, how much in the deep place  
Of my being there is still the lost flower  
Of your wrinkled villages, motionless in time  
And your metallic meadows  
Stretched out in the moonlight through the ages,  
Now devoured by a false god.

All your confinement, your animal isolation  
While you are still conscious  
Surrounded by the abstract stones of silence,  
Your rough wine, your smooth wine  
Your violent and dangerous vineyards.

Solar stone, pure among the regions  
Of the world, Spain streaked  
With blood and metal, blue and victorious  
Proletarian Spain, made of petals and bullets  
Unique, alive, asleep - resounding.

Pablo Neruda



## Xvii (I Do Not Love You...)

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,  
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms  
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;  
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,  
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.  
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;  
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,  
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,  
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Translated by Stephen Tapscott

Anonymous Submission

Pablo Neruda

# Your Feet

When I cannot look at your face  
I look at your feet.  
Your feet of arched bone,  
your hard little feet.  
I know that they support you,  
and that your sweet weight  
rises upon them.  
Your waist and your breasts,  
the doubled purple  
of your nipples,  
the sockets of your eyes  
that have just flown away,  
your wide fruit mouth,  
your red tresses,  
my little tower.  
But I love your feet  
only because they walked  
upon the earth and upon  
the wind and upon the waters,  
until they found me.

Pablo Neruda

# Your Hands

When your hands leap  
towards mine, love,  
what do they bring me in flight?  
Why did they stop  
at my lips, so suddenly,  
why do I know them,  
as if once before,  
I have touched them,  
as if, before being,  
they travelled  
my forehead, my waist?  
Their smoothness came  
winging through time,  
over the sea and the smoke,  
over the Spring,  
and when you laid  
your hands on my chest  
I knew those wings  
of the gold doves,  
I knew that clay,  
and that colour of grain.  
The years of my life  
have been roadways of searching,  
a climbing of stairs,  
a crossing of reefs.  
Trains hurled me onwards  
waters recalled me,  
on the surface of grapes  
it seemed that I touched you.  
Wood, of a sudden,  
made contact with you,  
the almond-tree summoned  
your hidden smoothness,  
until both your hands  
closed on my chest,  
like a pair of wings  
ending their flight.



# Your Laughter

Take bread away from me, if you wish,  
take air away, but  
do not take from me your laughter.

Do not take away the rose,  
the lance flower that you pluck,  
the water that suddenly  
bursts forth in joy,  
the sudden wave  
of silver born in you.

My struggle is harsh and I come back  
with eyes tired  
at times from having seen  
the unchanging earth,  
but when your laughter enters  
it rises to the sky seeking me  
and it opens for me all  
the doors of life.

My love, in the darkest  
hour your laughter  
opens, and if suddenly  
you see my blood staining  
the stones of the street,  
laugh, because your laughter  
will be for my hands  
like a fresh sword.

Next to the sea in the autumn,  
your laughter must raise  
its foamy cascade,  
and in the spring, love,  
I want your laughter like  
the flower I was waiting for,  
the blue flower, the rose  
of my echoing country.

Laugh at the night,

at the day, at the moon,  
laugh at the twisted  
streets of the island,  
laugh at this clumsy  
boy who loves you,  
but when I open  
my eyes and close them,  
when my steps go,  
when my steps return,  
deny me bread, air,  
light, spring,  
but never your laughter  
for I would die.

Pablo Neruda