

Classic Poetry Series

**Robert Duncan**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2012

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

**Robert Duncan(January 7, 1919 – February 3, 1988)**

# A Little Language

I know a little language of my cat, though Dante says  
that animals have no need of speech and Nature  
abhors the superfluous. My cat is fluent. He  
converses when he wants with me. To speak

is natural. And whales and wolves I've heard  
in choral soundings of the sea and air  
know harmony and have an eloquence that stirs  
my mind and heart—they touch the soul. Here

Dante's religion that would set Man apart  
damns the effluence of our life from us  
to build therein its powerhouse.

It's in his animal communication Man is  
true, immediate, and  
in immediacy, Man is all animal.

His senses quicken in the thick of the symphony,  
old circuits of animal rapture and alarm,  
attentions and arousals in which an identity rearrives.

He hears  
particular voices among  
the concert, the slightest  
rustle in the undertones,  
rehearsing a nervous aptitude  
yet to prove his. He sees the flick  
of significant red within the rushing mass  
of ruddy wilderness and catches the glow  
of a green shirt  
to delite him in a glowing field of green  
—it speaks to him—  
and in the arc of the spectrum color  
speaks to color.

The rainbow articulates  
a promise he remembers  
he but imitates  
in noises that he makes,  
this speech in every sense

the world surrounding him.  
He picks up on the fugitive tang of mace  
amidst the savory mass,  
and taste in evolution is an everlasting key.  
There is a pun of scents in what makes sense.

Myrrh it may have been,  
the odor of the announcement that filled the house.

He wakes from deepest sleep  
upon a distant signal and waits  
as if crouching, springs to life.

Robert Duncan

# A Poem Beginning With A Line From Pindar

I

The light foot hears you and the brightness begins  
god-step at the margins of thought,  
quick adulterous tread at the heart.  
Who is it that goes there?  
Where I see your quick face  
notes of an old music pace the air,  
torso-reverberations of a Grecian lyre.

In Goya's canvas Cupid and Psyche  
have a hurt voluptuous grace  
bruised by redemption. The copper light  
falling upon the brown boy's slight body  
is carnal fate that sends the soul wailing  
up from blind innocence, ensnared  
by dimness  
into the deprivations of desiring sight.

But the eyes in Goya's painting are soft,  
diffuse with rapture absorb the flame.  
Their bodies yield out of strength.  
Waves of visual pleasure  
wrap them in a sorrow previous to their impatience.

A bronze of yearning, a rose that burns  
the tips of their bodies, lips,  
ends of fingers, nipples. He is not winged.  
His thighs are flesh, are clouds  
lit by the sun in its going down,  
hot luminescence at the loins of the visible.

But they are not in a landscape.  
They exist in an obscurity.

The wind spreading the sail serves them.  
The two jealous sisters eager for her ruin  
serve them.  
That she is ignorant, ignorant of what Love will be,

serves them.

The dark serves them.

The oil scalding his shoulder serves them,  
serves their story. Fate, spinning,  
knots the threads for Love.

Jealousy, ignorance, the hurt . . . serve them.

## II

This is magic. It is passionate dispersion.

What if they grow old? The gods  
would not allow it.

Psyche is preserved.

In time we see a tragedy, a loss of beauty  
the glittering youth  
of the god retains—but from this threshold  
it is age  
that is beautiful. It is toward the old poets  
we go, to their faltering,  
their unaltering wrongness that has style,  
their variable truth,  
the old faces,  
words shed like tears from  
a plenitude of powers time stores.

A stroke. These little strokes. A chill.  
The old man, feeble, does not recoil.  
Recall. A phase so minute,  
only a part of the word in- jerrd.

The Thundermakers descend,

damerging a nuv. A nerb.  
The present dented of the U  
nighted stayd. States. The heavy clod?  
Cloud. Invades the brain. What  
if lilacs last in this dooryard bloomd?

Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower—  
where among these did the power reside  
that moves the heart? What flower of the nation  
bride-sweet broke to the whole rapture?  
Hoover, Coolidge, Harding, Wilson  
hear the factories of human misery turning out commodities.  
For whom are the holy matins of the heart ringing?  
Noble men in the quiet of morning hear  
Indians singing the continent's violent requiem.  
Harding, Wilson, Taft, Roosevelt,  
idiots fumbling at the bride's door,  
hear the cries of men in meaningless debt and war.  
Where among these did the spirit reside  
that restores the land to productive order?  
McKinley, Cleveland, Harrison, Arthur,  
Garfield, Hayes, Grant, Johnson,  
dwell in the roots of the heart's rancor.  
How sad "amid lanes and through old woods"  
echoes Whitman's love for Lincoln!

There is no continuity then. Only a few  
posts of the good remain. I too  
that am a nation sustain the damage  
where smokes of continual ravage  
obscure the flame.  
It is across great scars of wrong  
I reach toward the song of kindred men  
and strike again the naked string  
old Whitman sang from. Glorious mistake!  
that cried:

"The theme is creative and has vista."  
"He is the president of regulation."

I see always the under side turning,  
fumes that injure the tender landscape.  
From which up break  
lilac blossoms of courage in daily act  
striving to meet a natural measure.

III (for Charles Olson)

Psyche's tasks—the sorting of seeds  
wheat barley oats poppy coriander  
anise beans lentils peas —every grain  
in its right place  
before nightfall;

gathering the gold wool from the cannibal sheep  
(for the soul must weep  
and come near upon death);

harrowing Hell for a casket Proserpina keeps  
that must not  
be opened . . . containing beauty?  
no! Melancholy could like a serpent  
that is deadly sleep  
we are not permitted  
to succumb to.

These are the old tasks.  
You've heard them before.

They must be impossible. Psyche  
must despair, be brought to her  
insect instructor;  
must obey the counsels of the green reed;  
saved from suicide by a tower speaking,  
must follow to the letter  
freakish instructions.

In the story the ants help. The old man at Pisa  
mixed in whose mind  
(to draw the sorts) are all seeds  
as a lone ant from a broken ant-hill  
had part restored by an insect, was  
upheld by a lizard

(to draw the sorts)  
the wind is part of the process  
defines a nation of the wind—

father of many notions,



Who?

let the light into the dark? began  
the many movements of the passion?

West

from east men push.  
The islands are blessed  
(cursed) that swim below the sun,

man upon whom the sun has gone down!

There is the hero who struggles east  
widdershins to free the dawn and must  
woo Night's daughter,  
sorcery, black passionate rage, covetous queens,  
so that the fleecy sun go back from Troy,  
Colchis, India . . . all the blazing armies  
spent, he must struggle alone toward the pyres of Day.

The light that is Love  
rushes on toward passion. It verges upon dark.  
Roses and blood flood the clouds.  
Solitary first riders advance into legend.

This land, where I stand, was all legend  
in my grandfathers' time: cattle raiders,  
animal tribes, priests, gold.  
It was the West. Its vistas painters saw  
in diffuse light, in melancholy,  
in abysses left by glaciers as if they had been the sun  
primordial carving empty enormities  
out of the rock.

Snakes lurked  
guarding secrets. Those first ones  
survived solitude.

Scientia

holding the lamp, driven by doubt;  
Eros naked in foreknowledge  
smiling in his sleep; and the light  
spilled, burning his shoulder—the outrage

that conquers legend—  
passion, dismay, longing, search  
flooding up where  
the Beloved is lost. Psyche travels  
life after life, my life, station  
after station,  
to be tried

without break, without  
news, knowing only—but what did she know?  
The oracle at Miletus had spoken  
truth surely: that he was Serpent-Desire  
that flies thru the air,  
a monster-husband. But she saw him fair

whom Apollo's mouthpiece said spread  
pain  
beyond cure to those  
wounded by his arrows.

Rilke torn by a rose thorn  
blackend toward Eros. Cupidinous Death!  
that will not take no for an answer.

#### IV

Oh yes! Bless the footfall where  
step by step the boundary walker  
(in Maverick Road the snow  
thud by thud from the roof  
circling the house—another tread)

that foot informd  
by the weight of all things  
that can be elusive  
no more than a nearness to the mind  
of a single image

Oh yes! this  
most dear  
the catalyst force that renders clear

the days of a life from the surrounding medium!

Yes, beautiful rare wilderness!  
wildness that verifies strength of my tame mind,  
clearing held against indians,  
health that prepared to meet death,  
the stubborn hymns going up  
into the ramifications of the hostile air

that, decaptive, gives way.  
Who is there? O, light the light!  
The Indians give way, the clearing falls.  
Great Death gives way and unprepares us.  
Lust gives way. The Moon gives way.  
Night gives way. Minutely, the Day gains.

She saw the body of her beloved  
dismembered in waking . . . or was it  
in sight? Finders Keepers we sang  
when we were children or were taught to sing  
before our histories began and we began  
who were beloved our animal life  
toward the Beloved, sworn to be Keepers.

On the hill before the wind came  
the grass moved toward the one sea,  
blade after blade dancing in waves.

There the children turn the ring to the left.  
There the children turn the ring to the right.  
Dancing . . . Dancing . . .

And the lonely psyche goes up thru the boy to the king  
that in the caves of history dreams.  
Round and round the children turn.  
London Bridge that is a kingdom falls.

We have come so far that all the old stories  
whisper once more.  
Mount Segur, Mount Victoire, Mount Tamalpais . . .  
rise to adore the mystery of Love!

(An ode? Pindar's art, the editors tell us, was not a statue but a mosaic, an accumulation of metaphor. But if he was archaic, not classic, a survival of obsolete mode, there may have been old voices in the survival that directed the heart. So, a line from a hymn came in a novel I was reading to help me. Psyche, poised to leap—and Pindar too, the editors write, goes too far, topples over—listen to a tower that said, Listen to Me! The oracle had said, Despair! The Gods themselves abhor his power. And then the virgin flower of the dark falls back flesh of our flesh from which everywhere . . .

the information flows  
that is yearning. A line of Pindar  
moves from the area of my lamp  
toward morning.

In the dawn that is nowhere  
I have seen the willful children

clockwise and counter-clockwise turning.

Robert Duncan

# An African Elegy

In the groves of Africa from their natural wonder  
the wildebeest, zebra, the okapi, the elephant,  
have entered the marvelous. No greater marvelous  
know I than the mind's  
natural jungle. The wives of the Congo  
distil there their red and the husbands  
hunt lion with spear and paint Death-spore  
on their shields, wear his teeth, claws and hair  
on ordinary occasions. There the Swahili  
open his doors, let loose thru the trees  
the tides of Death's sound and distil  
from their leaves the terrible red. He  
is the consort of dreams I have seen, heard  
in the orchestral dark  
like the barking of dogs.

Death is the dog-headed man zebra striped  
and surrounded by silence who walks like a lion,  
who is black. It was his voice crying come back,  
that Virginia Woolf heard, turned  
her fine skull, hounded and haunted, stopt,  
pointed into the scent where  
I see her in willows, in fog, at the river of sound  
in the trees. I see her prepare there  
to enter Death's mountains  
like a white Afghan hound pass into the forest,  
closed after, let loose in the leaves  
with more grace than a hound and more wonder there  
even with flowers wound in her hair, allowing herself  
like Ophelia a last  
pastoral gesture of love toward the world.  
And I see  
all our tortures absolved in the fog,  
dispersed in Death's forests, forgotten. I see  
all this gentleness like a hound in the water  
float upward and outward beyond my dark hand.

I am waiting this winter for the more complete black-out,  
for the negro armies in the eucalyptus, for the cities  
laid open and the cold in the love-light, for hounds  
women and birds to go back to their forests and leave us  
our solitude.

. . .

Negroes, negroes, all those princes,  
holding cups of rhinoceros bone, make  
magic with my blood. Where beautiful Marijuana  
towers taller than the eucalyptus, turns  
within the lips of night and falls,  
falls downward, where as giant Kings we gathered  
and devoured her burning hands and feet, O Moonbar  
thee and Clarinet! those talismans  
that quickened in their sheltering leaves like thieves,  
those Negroes, all those princes  
holding to their mouths like Death  
the cups of rhino bone,  
were there to burn my hands and feet,  
divine the limit of the bone and with their magic  
tie and twist me like a rope. I know  
no other continent of Africa more dark than this  
dark continent of my breast.

And when we are deserted there,  
when the rustling electric has passed thru the air,  
once more we begin in the blind and blood throat  
the African catches; and Desdemona, Desdemona  
like a demon wails within our bodies, warns  
against this towering Moor of self and then  
laments her passing from him.

And I cry, Hear!  
Hear in the coiled and secretive ear  
the drums that I hear beat. The Negroes, all those princes  
holding cups of bone and horn, are there in halls  
of blood that I call forests, in the dark  
and shining caverns where

beats heart and pulses brain, in  
jungles of my body, there  
Othello moves, striped black and white,  
the dog-faced fear. Moves I, I, I,  
whom I have seen as black as Orpheus,  
pursued deliriously his sound and drownd  
in hunger's tone, the deepest wilderness.

Then it was I, Death singing,  
who bewildered the forest. I thot him  
my lover like a hound of great purity  
disturbing the shadow and flesh of the jungle.  
This was the beginning of the ending year.  
From all of the empty the tortured appear,  
and the bird-faced children crawl out of their fathers  
and into that never filld pocket,  
the no longer asking but silent, seeing nowhere  
the final sleep.

The halls of Africa we seek in dreams  
as barriers of dream against the deep, and seas  
disturbd turn back upon their tides  
into the rooms deserted at the roots of love.  
There is no end. And how sad then  
is even the Congo. How the tired sirens  
come up from the water, not to be toucht  
but to lie on the rocks of the thunder.  
How sad then is even the marvelous!

Robert Duncan

# Bending The Bow

We've our business to attend Day's duties,  
bend back the bow in dreams as we may  
til the end rimes in the taut string  
with the sending. Reveries are rivers and flow  
where the cold light gleams reflecting the window upon the  
surface of the table,  
the presst-glass creamer, the pewter sugar bowl, the litter  
of coffee cups and saucers,  
carnations painted growing upon whose surfaces. The whole  
composition of surfaces leads into the other  
current disturbing  
what I would take hold of. I'd been

in the course of a letter – I am still  
in the course of a letter – to a friend,  
who comes close in to my thought so that  
the day is hers. My hand writing here  
there shakes in the currents of... of air?  
of an inner anticipation of...? reaching to touch  
ghostly exhilarations in the thought of her.

At the extremity of this  
design  
'there is a connexion working in both directions, as in  
the bow and the lyre'–  
only in that swift fulfillment of the wish  
that sleep  
can illustrate my hand  
sweeps the string.

You stand behind the where-I-am.  
The deep tones and shadows I will call a woman.  
The quick high notes... You are a girl there too,  
having something of sister and of wife,  
inconsolate,  
and I would play Orpheus for you again,

recall the arrow or song  
to the trembling daylight



from which it sprang.

Robert Duncan

# Childhood's Retreat

It's in the perilous boughs of the tree  
out of blue sky the wind  
sings loudest surrounding me.

And solitude, a wild solitude  
's revealed, fearfully, high I'd climb  
into the shaking uncertainties,

part out of longing, part daring my self,  
part to see that  
widening of the world, part

to find my own, my secret  
hiding sense and place, where from afar  
all voices and scenes come back

—the barking of a dog, autumnal burnings,  
far calls, close calls— the boy I was  
calls out to me  
here the man where I am "Look!

I've been where you  
most fear to be."

Robert Duncan

# My Mother Would Be A Falconress

My mother would be a falconress,  
And I, her gay falcon treading her wrist,  
would fly to bring back  
from the blue of the sky to her, bleeding, a prize,  
where I dream in my little hood with many bells  
jangling when I'd turn my head.

My mother would be a falconress,  
and she sends me as far as her will goes.  
She lets me ride to the end of her curb  
where I fall back in anguish.  
I dread that she will cast me away,  
for I fall, I mis-take, I fail in her mission.

She would bring down the little birds.  
And I would bring down the little birds.  
When will she let me bring down the little birds,  
pierced from their flight with their necks broken,  
their heads like flowers limp from the stem?

I tread my mother's wrist and would draw blood.  
Behind the little hood my eyes are hooded.  
I have gone back into my hooded silence,  
talking to myself and dropping off to sleep.

For she has muffled my dreams in the hood she has made me,  
sewn round with bells, jangling when I move.  
She rides with her little falcon upon her wrist.  
She uses a barb that brings me to cower.  
She sends me abroad to try my wings  
and I come back to her. I would bring down  
the little birds to her  
I may not tear into, I must bring back perfectly.

I tear at her wrist with my beak to draw blood,  
and her eye holds me, anguished, terrifying.  
She draws a limit to my flight.  
Never beyond my sight, she says.  
She trains me to fetch and to limit myself in fetching.

She rewards me with meat for my dinner.  
But I must never eat what she sends me to bring her.

Yet it would have been beautiful, if she would have carried me,  
always, in a little hood with the bells ringing,  
at her wrist, and her riding  
to the great falcon hunt, and me  
flying up to the curb of my heart from her heart  
to bring down the skylark from the blue to her feet,  
straining, and then released for the flight.

My mother would be a falconress,  
and I her gerfalcon raised at her will,  
from her wrist sent flying, as if I were her own  
pride, as if her pride  
knew no limits, as if her mind  
sought in me flight beyond the horizon.

Ah, but high, high in the air I flew.  
And far, far beyond the curb of her will,  
were the blue hills where the falcons nest.  
And then I saw west to the dying sun-  
it seemd my human soul went down in flames.

I tore at her wrist, at the hold she had for me,  
until the blood ran hot and I heard her cry out,  
far, far beyond the curb of her will

to horizons of stars beyond the ringing hills of the world where  
the falcons nest  
I saw, and I tore at her wrist with my savage beak.  
I flew, as if sight flew from the anguish in her eye beyond her sight,  
sent from my striking loose, from the cruel strike at her wrist,  
striking out from the blood to be free of her.

My mother would be a falconress,  
and even now, years after this,  
when the wounds I left her had surely heald,  
and the woman is dead,  
her fierce eyes closed, and if her heart  
were broken, it is stilld

I would be a falcon and go free.  
I tread her wrist and wear the hood,  
talking to myself, and would draw blood.

Robert Duncan

# Often I Am Permitted To Return To A Meadow

as if it were a scene made-up by the mind,  
that is not mine, but is a made place,

that is mine, it is so near to the heart,  
an eternal pasture folded in all thought  
so that there is a hall therein

that is a made place, created by light  
wherefrom the shadows that are forms fall.

Wherefrom fall all architectures I am  
I say are likenesses of the First Beloved  
whose flowers are flames lit to the Lady.

She it is Queen Under The Hill  
whose hosts are a disturbance of words within words  
that is a field folded.

It is only a dream of the grass blowing  
east against the source of the sun  
in an hour before the sun's going down

whose secret we see in a children's game  
of ring a round of roses told.

Often I am permitted to return to a meadow  
as if it were a given property of the mind  
that certain bounds hold against chaos,

that is a place of first permission,  
everlasting omen of what is.

Robert Duncan

# Passage Over Water

We have gone out in boats upon the sea at night,  
lost, and the vast waters close traps of fear about us.  
The boats are driven apart, and we are alone at last  
under the incalculable sky, listless, diseased with stars.

Let the oars be idle, my love, and forget at this time  
our love like a knife between us  
defining the boundaries that we can never cross  
nor destroy as we drift into the heart of our dream,  
cutting the silence, slyly, the bitter rain in our mouths  
and the dark wound closed in behind us.

Forget depth-bombs, death and promises we made,  
gardens laid waste, and, over the wastelands westward,  
the rooms where we had come together bombd.

But even as we leave, your love turns back. I feel  
your absence like the ringing of bells silenced. And salt  
over your eyes and the scales of salt between us. Now,  
you pass with ease into the destructive world.  
There is a dry crash of cement. The light fails,  
falls into the ruins of cities upon the distant shore  
and within the indestructible night I am alone.

Robert Duncan

# Poetry, A Natural Thing

Neither our vices nor our virtues  
further the poem. "They came up  
and died  
just like they do every year  
on the rocks."

The poem  
feeds upon thought, feeling, impulse,  
to breed itself,  
a spiritual urgency at the dark ladders leaping.

This beauty is an inner persistence  
toward the source  
striving against (within) down-rusket of the river,  
a call we heard and answer  
in the lateness of the world  
primordial bellowings  
from which the youngest world might spring,

salmon not in the well where the  
hazelnut falls  
but at the falls battling, inarticulate,  
blindly making it.

This is one picture apt for the mind.  
A second: a moose painted by Stubbs,  
where last year's extravagant antlers  
lie on the ground.  
The forlorn moosey-faced poem wears  
new antler-buds,  
the same,

"a little heavy, a little contrived",  
his only beauty to be  
all moose.

Robert Duncan



## Rites Of Passage Ii

Something is taking place.  
Horns thrust upward from the brow.  
Hooves beat impatient where feet once were.  
My son, youth grows alarming in your face.  
Your innocent regard is cruelly charming to me now.  
You bristle where my fond hand would stir  
to stroke your cheek. I do not dare.

Irregular meters beat between your heart and mine.  
Snuffling the air you take the heat and scan  
the lines you take in going as if I were or were not there  
and overtake me.  
And where it seems but yesterday I spilled the wine,  
you too grow beastly to become a man.

Peace, peace. I've had enough. What can I say  
when song's demanded? —I've had my fill of song?  
My longing to sing grows full. Time's emptied me.

And where my youth was, now the Sun in you grows hot, your day  
is young, my place you take triumphantly. All along  
it's been for you, for this lowering of your horns in challenge. She  
had her will of me and will not

let my struggling spirit in itself be free.

Robert Duncan

# Styx

And a tenth part of Okeanos is given to dark night  
a tithe of the pure water under earth  
so that the clear fountains pour from rock face,  
tears stream from the caverns and clefts,  
down-running, carving woundrous ways in basalt resistance,  
cutting deep as they go into layers of time-layerd  
Gaia where She sleeps—

the cold water, the black rushing gleam, the  
moving down-rush, wash, gush out over  
bed-rock, toiling the boulders in flood,  
purling in deeps, broad flashing in falls—

And a tenth part of bright clear Okeanos  
his circulations— mists, rains, sheets, sheathes—  
lies in poisonous depths, the black water.

Styx this carver of caverns beneath us is.  
Styx this black water, this down-pouring.

The well is deep. From its stillness  
the words our voices speak echo.  
Resonance follows resonance.  
Waves of this sounding come up to us.

We draw the black water, pure and cold.  
The light of day is not as bright  
as this crystal flowing.

Three thousand years we have recited its virtue  
out of Hesiod.  
Is it twenty-five thousand  
since the ice withdrew from the lands and we

came forth from the realm of caverns where  
the river beneath the earth we knew  
we go back to.  
Styx pouring down in the spring from its glacial remove,  
from the black ice.

Fifty million years—from the beginning of what we are—  
we knew the depth of this well to be.

Fifty million years deep —but our knowing deepens  
—time deepens—  
this still water

we thirst for in dreams we dread.

Robert Duncan

# Such Is The Sickness Of Many A Good Thing

Was he then Adam of the Burning Way?  
hid away in the heat like wrath  
conceald in Love's face,  
or the seed, Eris in Eros,  
key and lock  
of what I was? I could not speak  
the releasing  
word. For into a dark  
matter he came  
and askt me to say what  
I could not say. "I .."

All the flame in me stopt  
against my tongue.  
My heart was a stone, a dumb  
unmanageable thing in me,  
a darkness that stood athwart  
his need  
for the enlightening, the  
"I love you" that has  
only this one quick in time,  
this one start  
when its moment is true.

Such is the sickness of many a good thing  
that now into my life from long ago this  
refusing to say I love you has bound  
the weeping, the yielding, the  
yearning to be taken again,  
into a knot, a waiting, a string

so taut it taunts the song,  
it resists the touch. It grows dark  
to draw down the lover's hand  
from its lightness to what's  
underground.

Robert Duncan

# The Song Of The Borderguard

The man with his lion under the shed of wars  
sheds his belief as if he shed tears.

The sound of words waits -  
a barbarian host at the borderline of sense.

The enamored guards desert their posts  
harkening to the lion-smell of a poem  
that rings in their ears.

-Dreams, a certain guard said  
were never designed so  
to re-arrange an empire.

Along about six o'clock I take out my guitar  
and sing to a lion  
who sleeps like a line of poetry  
in the shed of wars.

The man shedding his belief  
knows that the lion is not asleep,  
does not dream, is never asleep,  
is a wide-awake poem  
waiting like a lover for the disrobing of the guard;  
the beautiful boundaries of the empire  
naked, rapt round in the smell of a lion.

(The barbarians have passed over the significant phrase)

-When I was asleep,  
a certain guard says,  
a man shed his clothes as if he shed tears  
and appeared as a lonely lion  
waiting for a song under the shed-roof of wars.

I sang the song that he waited to hear,  
I, the Prize-Winner, the Poet Acclaimed.

Dear, Dear, Dear, Dear, I sang,  
believe, believe, believe, believe.

The shed of wars is splendid as the sky,  
houses our waiting like a pure song  
housing in its words the lion-smell  
of the beloved disrobed.

I sang: believe, believe, believe.

I the guard because of my guitar  
believe. I am the certain guard,  
certain of the Beloved, certain of the lion,  
certain of the Empire. I with my guitar.  
Dear, Dear, Dear, Dear, I sing.  
I, the Prize-Winner, the Poet on Guard.

The borderlines of sense in the morning light  
are naked as a line of poetry in a war.

Robert Duncan

## What I Saw

The white peacock roosting  
might have been Christ,  
featherd robe of Osiris,  
the radiant bird, a sword-flash,  
percht in the tree  
and the other, the fumed-glass slide  
—were like night and day,  
the slit of an eye opening in time  
vertical to the horizon

Robert Duncan