

TEXTS

Four Surreal Poems
collected poetry of Paul Éluard
translation by Glen Roven

The arc of your eyes makes the rounds of my heart
A circuit of dance and gentleness,
Halo of time, cradle nocturnal and sure.
And if I no longer know all I have lived
it is because your eyes have not always seen me.
Leaves of daylight moss of dew,
Reeds of the wind, perfumed smiles
Wings covering the world with light
Boat charged with the sky and the sea,
Hunters of the sounds and fountains of color,
Scents hatched from a clutch of dawns
That rest forever on the straw of stars,
As daylight depends on innocence
The whole world depends on your pure eyes
And all of my blood flows through their gaze.

I am in front of this feminine land
Like a child in front of the fire
Smiling vaguely with tears in my eyes
In front of this land where all moves in me
Where mirror mist where mirrors clear
Reflecting two nude bodies
season on season
I've so many reasons to lose myself
On this roadless earth under horizonless skies
Good reasons I ignored yesterday
And I'll never ever forget
Good keys of gazes keys their own daughters
in front of this land where nature is mine
In front of the fire
the first fire Good mistress reason
Identified star
On earth under sky in and out of my heart
Second bud first green leaf

That the sea covers with sails
And the sun finally coming to us
I am in front of this feminine land
Like a branch in the fire.

The bull's ear out of the window
Current strength of the light in the prism
Beat the poor straw into gold.
On the table a bottle of wine.
Eyes, cover your mouth with kisses,
This is a good one.
Farmers, bloody custom,
Bull disaster, seriously beautiful,
It's a good one.
Love is in the open mouth.
Heavy clouds, sunshine helps,
Pain of the bloody farmers,
The logo of the cow,
The bull is under the sword of the wind.

You ought to see yourself die
To know you are still alive
The tide is high and your heart is low
Son of the earth eating flowers fruit of the ash
In your chest darkness forever covers the sky
Sun loose the rope the walls are no longer dancing
Sun leaves the birds inscrutable ways

Le passage des rêves
by Paul Valery (1871-1945)
translation by Benjamin C.S. Boyle

La Dormeuse

Quels secrets dans son coeur brûle ma jeune amie,
Ame par le doux masque aspirant une fleur ?
De quels vains aliments sa naïve chaleur
Fait ce rayonnement d'une femme endormie ?
Souffle, songes, silences, invincible accalmie,
Tu triomphes, ô paix plus puissante qu'un pleur,

Quand de ce plein sommeil l'onde grave et l'ampleur
Conspirant sur le sein d'une telle ennemie.
Dormeuse, amas doré d'ombres et d'abandons,
Ton repos redoutable est chargé de tels dons,
O biche avec langueur longue auprès d'une grappe,
Que malgré l'âme absente, occupée aux enfers,
Ta forme au ventre pur qu'un bras fluide drape,
Veille; ta forme veille, et mes yeux sont ouverts.

The Sleeper (MARGOT PLEASE PUT THIS NEXT TO LA
DORMEUSE)

What secrets burn in your heart my young friend,
Whose spirit, through the soft mask, breathes in a flower?
From what futile nourishment does its naïve heat
Shine upon this sleeping woman?
Sighs, dreams, silences, invincible calm,
You Triumph, o peace stronger than tears,
When from this deep sleep the shadow and the light
Conspire in the breast of true enemy.
Sleeping one, golden mass of shadows and abandons,
Your perfect sleep is infused with such gifts,
O languorous doe, so long near the cluster of flowers,
That despite an absent soul, laboring in Hell,
Your form, lying prostrate save for a fluid arm draped to one side,
Awakens; your form awakens, and my eyes are open.

Les Pas

Tes pas, enfants de mon silence,
Saintement, lentement placés,
Vers le lit de ma vigilance
Procèdent muets et glacés.
Personne pure, ombre divine,
Qu'ils sont doux, tes pas retenus!
Dieux !... tous les dons que je devine
Viennent à moi sur ces pieds nus!
Si, de tes lèvres avancées,
Tu prépares pour l'apaiser,
A l'habitant de mes pensées,
La nourriture d'un baiser,
Ne hâte pas cet acte tendre,

Douceur d'être et de n'être pas,
Car j'ai vécu de vous attendre,
Et mon coeur n'était que vos pas.

The Footfalls (MARGOT PLEASE PUT THIS NEXT TO LAS PAS)

Your steps, children of my silence,
Saintly, slowly placed
Near my sleepless bed
Proceed mute and frozen.
Pure soul, divine shadow,
How soft they are, your withheld steps!
Gods!... all the gifts that I can imagine
Come to me on those bare feet.
If, with your advancing lips,
You prepare to pacify them,
To the inhabitant of my thoughts,
The sustenance of a kiss,
Do not hasten this tender act,
The sweetness of being and of not being,
I have lived only to wait for you
And my heart was ever only your steps.

Le Sylphe

Ni vu ni connu
Je suis le parfum
Vivant et défunt
Dans le vent venu!
Ni vu ni connu
Hasard ou génie?
A peine venu
La tâche est finie!
Ni lu ni compris?
Aux meilleurs esprits
Que d'erreurs promises!
Ni vu ni connu,
Le temps d'un sein nu
Entre deux chemises!

The Sylph (PLEASE PUT THIS NEXT TO LE SYLPHE)

Unseen and unknown

I am the perfume
Living and lost
In the coming wind!
Unseen and unknown,
Chance or design?
Barely arrived
The work is finished!
Unread and ungrasped?
To the greatest minds
The error can promise!
Unseen and unknown
The hour of a naked breast
Between two sheets!

A L'aurore

A l'aurore, avant a chaleur,
La tendresse de la couleur,
A peine épars sur le monde,
Etonne et blesse la douleur.
O Nuit, que j'ai tout soufferte,
Souffrez ce sourire des cieux
Et cette immense fleur offerte
Sur le front d'un jour gracieux.
Grande offrande de tant de roses,
Le mal vous peut-il soutenir
Et voir rougissantes les choses
A leurs promesses revenir?
J'ai vu se feindre tant de songes
Sur mes ténèbres sans sommeil
Que je range entre les mensonges
Même la force du soleil,
Et que je doute si j'accueille
Par le dégoût, par le désir,
Ce jour très jeune sur la feuille
Dont l'or vierge se peut saisir.

At dawn (Please put this next to A L'aurore)

At dawn, before the day's heat,
The tenderness of the color

Barely spreading over the world,
Surprises and wounds the sadness.
O Night, in which I suffered all,
Suffer this celestial smile
And this immense flower offered
At the start of a grateful day.
Great offering, so full of roses,
Can evil hold you up
And see the reddening results
Of their returning promises?
I saw, pretending to myself, so many dreams
In my sleepless darkness
That I place among the deceptions
Even the force of the sun –
And that I doubt if I can welcome
By disgust, by desire,
This new day on the leaf
Whose virgin-gold light can itself seize.

The Joy of Uncreating
selections from Joan Joffe Hall

Joy of Uncreating
This is a vision of the joy
of uncreating:
a black hole
sucking in the light,
light coining aspen leaves,
daisies, and the tips of grasses
as it falls
back in concentric circles
into a tunnel or a barn door
or the velvet space
between trees.
Everything
is clear
because the light is passing.
This is the music:
transience,

silence between the notes.
We are the instruments.
We know ourselves
by the silences
and because the light is passing.
As the light pulses by
fence posts sing.
Some grave formality
is at hand, some joy
moving us toward the end.

Illumination
When the eye re-opened
there was light
then play between
light and shadow
then bodies — shape and
color — each with its
familiar name:
hand, glass.
And it was
like overhearing
the Greek lesson
and recognizing
the word “gift.”

Of Laughter and Farewell (2013)
by Vachel Lindsay

Under the Blessing of your Psyche Wings

Though I have found you like a snow-drop pale, On sunny days have found
you weak and still, Though I have often held your girlish head Drooped on
my shoulder, faint from little ill: - Under the blessing of your Psyche-wings I
hide to-night like one small broken bird, So soothed I half-forget the world
gone mad: - And all the winds of war are now unheard. My heaven-doubting
pennons feel your hands With touch most delicate so circling round, That
for an hour I dream that God is good. And in your shadow, Mercy's ways
abound. I thought myself the guard of your frail state, And yet I come to-

night a helpless guest, Hiding beneath your giant Psyche-wings, Against the pallor of your wondrous breast.

By the Spring, at Sunset

Sometimes we remember kisses, Remember the dear heart-leap when they came: Not always, but sometimes we remember The kindness, the dumbness, the good flame Of laughter and farewell. Beside the road Afar from those who said "Good-by" I write, Far from my city task, my lawful load. Sun in my face, wind beside my shoulder, Streaming clouds, banners of new-born night Enchant me now. The splendors growing bolder Make bold my soul for some new wise delight. I write the day's event, and quench my drouth, Pausing beside the spring with happy mind. And now I feel those kisses on my mouth, Hers most of all, one little friend most kind.

Lilacs

by Walt Whitman

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.
Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.
O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.
Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song,
As low and wailing,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from the recesses,
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring.
I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the
dead
I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear
sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

Remember

By Christina Rossetti

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.