

Texts and Translations

Widmung

Poetry by Friedrich Rückert

Du meine Seele, du mein Herz,
Du meine Wonn', o du mein Schmerz,
Du meine Welt, in der ich lebe,
Mein Himmel du, darein ich schwebe,
O du mein Grab, in das hinab
Ich ewig meinen Kummer gab!

You my soul, you my heart,
You my joy, O you my grief,
You my world in which I live,
My heaven you, to which I soar,
O you my grave, in which
I bury forever my sorrows!

Du bist die Ruh, du bist der Frieden,
Du bist vom Himmel mir beschieden.
Dass du mich liebst, macht mich mir wert,
Dein Blick hat mich vor mir verklärt,
Du hebst mich liebend über mich,
Mein guter Geist, mein bess'res Ich!

You are rest, you are consolation,
You are bestowed on me from heaven.
Your love for me gives me my worth,
Your eyes transfigure me in mine,
You raise me lovingly above myself,
My guardian angel, my better self!

Silent Noon

Poetry by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.

All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour glass.

Deep in the sunsearched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:
So this winged hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

En sourdine

Poetry by Paul Verlaine

Calmes dans le demi-jour
Que les branches hautes font,
Pénétrons bien notre amour
De ce silence profond.

Calm in the half light
made by the tall branches,
let our love be imbued
with this deep silence.

Mêlons nos âmes, nos cœurs
Et nos sens extasiés,
Parmi les vagues langueurs
Des pins et des arbousiers.

Ferme tes yeux à demi,
Croise tes bras sur ton sein,
Et de ton cœur endormi
Chasse à jamais tout dessein.

Laissons-nous persuader
Au souffle berceur et doux
Qui vient à tes pieds rider
Les ondes des gazons roux.

Et quand, solennel, le soir
Des chênes noirs tombera
Voix de notre désespoir,
Le rossignol chantera.

Im Zimmer

Poetry by Johannes Schlaf

Herbstsonnenschein.
Der liebe Abend blickt so still herein.
Ein Feuerlein rot
Knistert im Ofenloch und loht.

So!—Mein Kopf auf deinen Knie'n.
So ist mir gut;
Wenn mein Auge so in deinem ruht.
Wie leise die Minuten ziehn!

Crescent Moon

Poetry by Amy Lowell

Slipping softly through the sky
Little horned, happy moon,
Can you hear me up so high?
Will you come down soon?

On my nursery window-sill
Will you stay your steady flight?
And then float away with me
Through the summer night?

Let us merge our souls, our hearts
and our ecstatic senses
with the vague languors
of the pines and the arbutus.

Half close your eyes,
fold your arms across your breast,
and from your sleeping heart
forever drive away all purpose.

Let us surrender
to the soothing, gentle zephyr
that comes to ruffle at your feet
the waves of russet grass.

And when, solemnly, evening
falls from the dark oak trees,
voices of our despair,
the nightingale will sing.

Autumn sunshine.
The lovely evening looks in so silently.
A little red fire
Crackles and blazes in the hearth.

Like this!—With my head on your knees.
Like this I am content;
When my eyes rest in yours like this.
How gently the minutes pass!

Brushing over tops of trees,
Playing hide and seek with stars,
Peeping up through shiny clouds
At Jupiter or Mars.

I shall fill my lap with roses
Gathered in the Milky Way,
All to carry home to mother.
Oh! what will she say!

Little rocking, sailing moon,
Do you hear me shout — Ahoy!
Just a little nearer, moon,
To please a little boy.

Var det en dröm?

Poetry by Josef Julius Wecksell

Var det en dröm, att ljuvt en gång
jag var ditt hjärtas vän?
Jag minns det som en tystnad sång,
då strängen darrar än.

Jag minns en törnros av dig skänkt,
en blick så blyg och öm;
jag minns en avskedstår, som blänkt.
Var allt, var allt en dröm?

En dröm lik sippans liv så kort
uti en vårgrön ängd,
vars fågring hastigt vissnar bort
för nya blommors mängd.

Men mången natt jag hör en röst
vid bittra tårars ström:
göm djupt dess minne i ditt bröst,
det var din bästa dröm!

Lonely House

From Street Scene, lyrics by Langston Hughes

At night when everything is quiet,
this old house seems to breathe a sigh.
Sometimes I hear a neighbor snoring,
sometimes I hear a baby cry.

Was it a dream, that once upon a blissful time
I was your heart's friend?
I remember it like a silent song
Whose melody still lingers on.

I remember you gave me a rose
With a look so shy and tender,
I remember the glistening of a parting tear.
Was it all just a dream?

A dream like a wildflower's life,
So brief in the verdant meadow,
Whose beauty quickly withers away
Within an ocean of new flowers.

But on many a night I hear a voice
Through a stream of bitter tears.
Hide this memory deep in your heart
For this was your best dream.

Sometimes I hear a staircase creaking,
sometimes a distant telephone,
then the quiet settles down again.
The house and I are all alone.

Lonely house, lonely me.
Funny, with so many neighbors,
how lonely it can be.

Lonely street, lonely town.
Funny, you can be so lonely
with all these folks around.

I guess there must be something
I don't comprehend.
Sparrows have companions,
even stray dogs find a friend.

The night for me is not romantic!
Unhook the stars and take them down.
I'm lonely in this lonely house, in this lonely town.

A Letter from Sullivan Ballou

Written by Major Sullivan Ballou on July 14, 1861 in Washington, D.C.

My very dear Sarah,

The indications are very strong
that we shall move in a few days — perhaps tomorrow.
Lest I should not be able to write again,
I feel impelled to write a few lines that may
fall upon your eye when I am no more.

I have no misgivings about or lack of confidence
in the cause in which I am engaged,
and my courage does not halt or falter.
I know how strongly American civilization
now leans on the triumph of the government
and how great a debt we owe
to those who went before us
through the blood and sufferings of the revolution.
And I am willing, perfectly willing
to lay down all my joys in this life
to help maintain this government
and to pay that debt . . .

Sarah, my love for you is deathless.
It seems to bind me with mighty cables
that nothing but omnipotence could break;
and yet my love of country comes over me
like a strong wind and bears me unresistably on
with all these chains to the battlefield.
The memories of the blissful moments
I have spent with you come creeping over me,
and I feel most gratified to God and to you
that I have enjoyed them so long.

And hard it is for me to give them up
and burn to ashes the hopes of future years when,
God willing,
we might still have lived and loved together,
and seen our sons grown up
to honorable manhood around us.

I have, I know, but a few and small claims
upon divine providence,
but something whispers to me,
perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar,
that I shall come home to my loved ones unharmed.

If I do not, my dear Sarah,
never forget how much I love you,
and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield,
it will whisper your name.

Forgive my faults
and the many pains I have caused you.
How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been!
How gladly would I wash out with my tears
every little spot upon your happiness . . .

But, oh, Sarah!
If the dead can come back to this earth
and flit unseen around those they loved,
I shall always be near you;
in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights,
always, always.
And if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek,
it shall be my breath,
as the cool air fans your throbbing temple,

it shall be my spirit passing by.
Sarah, do not mourn me dead;
think I am gone and wait for thee,
for we shall meet again . . .

Deep River

Traditional Spiritual

Deep river, my home is over Jordan.
Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground.

Oh, don't you want to go to that gospel feast?
That promised land, where all is peace?

Deep river, my home is over Jordan.
Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground.

Bright Rails

Poetry by Willa Cather

How smoothly the train runs beyond the Missouri;
even in my sleep I know when I have crossed the river.
They run like running water,
like youth running away...
They spin... along their bright rails singing and humming,
singing and humming, humming.
They run remembering.
They run rejoicing, as if they too were going home.
How smoothly the train runs beyond the Missouri.

Malam Syahdu

Poetry by E. Zainudin

Malam syahdu bergema
Dengan irama hati tulus memuji,
Mendoa suci bermohon ampun
Dari segala dosa noda.

Maha Besar berikanlah hamba kurnia
Dan cahaya dalam hidup.
Malam syahdu bergema
Dengan irama suci.

Silent night has chimed
With the rhythm of the heart purely praising,
In holy prayer, asking for forgiveness
from all sins.

The Almighty, would you give us blessings
And illuminations in life.
Silent night has chimed
With a sacred rhyme.

Cita-cita

Poetry by Usmar Ismail

Cita-cita, Kurasakan lincah,
Menari-nari di dalam jiwa.
Kudengar kau nyaring,
Bernyanyi-nyanyi di dalam dada,
Bagai seruling, tiada henti,
Menyorakkan gembira ria:
“Bahagia ‘kan dating di esok hari!”

Dreams, I feel agile,
Dancing in my soul.
I hear you singing,
Soaring in my heart,
Like a flute relentlessly
Shouting happily:
“Happiness will come tomorrow!”

Gadis Bernyanyi di Cerah Hari

Text by Anonymous poet

Gadis bernyanyi nyaring di cerah hari,
Nada beruntai tinggi menusuk hati.
Lukiskan mega senja ombak dan Perahu,
Bawa jiwaku serta mengalun melagu.
Senyummu ngiring lagu di cerah hari.

A girl is singing aloud on a bright day,
Notes stringing high pierce the heart.
Painting twilight clouds, waves, and boats,
Taking my soul away, singing.
Your smile accompanies a song on a bright day.

Ombak membuih, bayu menyejuk sepoi,
Bisikkan kasih suci sebening intant.
Khayalkan daku ke persada keindahan.

Bubbly waves, cool and breezy winds,
Whispering sacred love, crystal clear.
Imagine me in a beautiful land.

Senantiasa ‘kan terkenang jua.
Jeritan merdumu mempesona.
Nyalakan gairah jiwaku di kala lesu.
Kukejar cahaya bahagia.

It will always be remembered,
Your enchanting sweet cry,
Lighting my passion when I’m down.
I chase the light of happiness.

The Giver of Stars

Poetry by Amy Lowell

Hold your soul open for my welcoming.
Let the quiet of your spirit bathe me
With its clear and rippled coolness,
That, loose-limbed and weary, I find rest,
Outstretched upon your peace, as on a bed of ivory.

Let the flickering flame of your soul play all about me,
That into my limbs may come the keenness of fire,
The life and joy of tongues of flame,
And, going out from you, tightly strung and in tune,
I may rouse the blear-eyed world,
And pour into it the beauty which you have begotten.

O Boundless, Boundless Evening

Original German text by Georg Heym

English Translation by Christopher Middleton

O boundless, boundless evening. Soon the glow
Of long hills on the skyline will be gone,
Like clear dream country now, rich-hued by sun.
O boundless evening where the cornfields throw
The scattered daylight back in an aureole.
Swallows high up are singing, very small.
On every meadow glitters their swift flight,
In woods of rushes and where tall masts stand
In brilliant bays. Yet in ravines beyond
Between the hills already nests the night.

Questa o quella

From Verdi's Rigoletto, libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

Questa o quella per me pari sono
a quant'altre d'intorno mi vedo;
del mio core l'impero non cedo
meglio ad una che ad altre beltà.
La costoro avvenenza è qual dono
di che il fato ne infiora la vita;
s'oggi questa mi torna gradita
forse un'altra doman lo sarà.

La costanza, tiranna del core,
detestiamo qual morbo crudele
sol chi vuole si serbi fedele;
Non v'ha amor se non v'è libertà.
De' i mariti il geloso furore,
degli amanti le smanie derido,
anco d'Argo i cent'occhi disfido
se mi punge una qualche beltà.

This girl or that girl are equal
to all the others I see around me,
the core of my being I will not yield
to one beauty or another.
Their attractiveness is what they are gifted
from fate and embellishes life.
Perhaps today this girl welcomes me,
perhaps tomorrow another girl will demand me.

Constancy is a tyrant to the heart,
it is a hated cruel disease to
only those who want you to be faithful;
There can be no love if there is no freedom.
Husbands' jealous rage,
lovers' woes I despise,
I defy the hundred eyes of Argo
if I fancy a few beauties.