

Texts and Translations

Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé

Translations © Richard Stokes/Peter Low

I. Soupir

Mon âme vers ton front où rêve, ô calme sœur,
Un automne jonché de taches de rousseur,
Et vers le ciel errant de ton œil angélique
Monte, comme dans un jardin mélancolique,
Fidèle, un blanc jet d'eau soupire vers l'Azur !
-- Vers l'azur attendri d'octobre pâle et pur
Qui mire aux grands bassins sa langueur infinie
Et laisse, sur l'eau morte où la fauve agonie
Des feuilles erre au vent et creuse un froid sillon,
Se trainer le soleil jaune d'un long rayon.

II. Placet futile

Princesse ! à jalouser le destin d'une Hébée
Qui poind sur cette tasse au baiser de vos lèvres,
J'use mes feux mais n'ai rang discret que d'abbé
Et ne figurerai même nu sur le Sèvres.

Comme je ne suis pas ton bichon embarbé,
Ni la pastille ni du rouge, ni Jeux mièvres
Et que sur moi je sais ton regard clos tombé,
Blonde dont les coiffeurs divins sont des orfèvres !

Nommez-nous... toi de qui tant de ris framboisés
Se joignent en troupeau d'agneaux apprivoisés
Chez tous broutant les vœux et bêlant aux délires,

Nommez-nous... pour qu'Amour ailé d'un éventail
M'y peigne flûte aux doigts endormant ce bercail,
Princesse, nommez-nous berger de vos sourires.

III. Surgi du la croupe et du bond...

Surgi de la croupe et du bond
D'une verrerie éphémère
Sans fleurir la veillée amère
Le col ignoré s'interrompt.

Je crois bien que deux bouches n'ont
Bu, ni son amant ni ma mère,
Jamais à la même chimère,
Moi, sylphe de ce froid plafond!

Three Poems of Stéphane Mallarmé

I. Sigh

My soul rises toward your brow, where, o calm sister,
an autumn strewn with russet spots is dreaming—
And toward the restless sky of your angelic eye,
As, within a melancholy garden, faithful one,
A white fountain sighs toward the sky.
Toward the tender sky of a pale and pure October,
Which reflects its infinite languor in great basins,
And allows, upon stagnant water, where the tawny agony
Of leaves wanders in the wind and carves a cold furrow,
The yellow sun to draw itself out in a long ray.

II. Futile Supplication

Princess! In envying the fate of an Hébée
Who appears on this cup at the kiss of your lips,
I expend my ardor, but have only the modest rank of abbey,
And will certainly never appear nude on the porcelain.

Since I am not your bewhiskered lapdog,
Nor your lozenge, nor blush, nor affected games,
And since I know you look upon me with indifferent gaze,
Oh, blonde one, whose hairdressers are goldsmiths...

Appoint me, you whose laughs like raspberries
Are collected among flocks of docile lambs,
Grazing through all vows and bleating deliriously,

Appoint me, so that love, winged with a fan,
May paint me there, fingering a flute and lulling this fold,
Princess, appoint me shepherd of your smiles.

Risen from the bulge and stem

Risen from the bulge and stem
Of an ephemeral ornament of glass,
Without garlanding the bitter vigil,
The neglected neck stops short.

I truly believe that the two mouths never
Drank, neither her lover, nor my mother,
From the same Chimera,
I, sylph of this cold ceiling!

Le pur vase d'aucun breuvage
Que l'inexhaustible veuvage
Agonise mais ne consent,

Naïf baiser des plus funèbres!
À rien expirer annonçant
Une rose dans les ténèbres.

From Lieberson's *Neruda Songs*

III. No estès lejos de mí

No estés lejos de mí un solo día, porque cómo,
porque, no sé decirlo, es largo el día,
y te estaré esperando como en las estaciones
cuando en alguna parte se durmieron los trenes.

No te vayas por una hora porque entonces
en esa hora se juntan las gotas del desvelo
y tal vez todo el humo que anda buscando casa
venga a matar aún mi corazón perdido.

Ay que no se quebrante tu silueta en la arena,
ay que no vuelen tus párpados en la ausencia:
no te vayas por un minuto, bienamada,

porque en ese minuto te habrás ido tan lejos
que yo cruzaré toda la tierra preguntando
si volverás o si me dejarás muriendo.

V. Amor mío, si muero y tu no mueres

Amor mío, si muero y tú no mueres,
no demos al dolor más territorio:
amor mío, si mueres y no muero,
no hay extensión como la que vivimos.

Polvo en el trigo, arena en las arenas
el tiempo, el agua errante, el viento vago
nos llevó como grano navegante.
Pudimos no encontrarnos en el tiempo.

Esta pradera en que nos encontramos,
oh pequeño infinito! devolvemos.
Pero este amor, amor, no ha terminado,

y así como no tuvo nacimiento
no tiene muerte, es como un largo río,
sólo cambia de tierras y de labios.

The vase pure of any draught\o]
Save inexhaustible widowhood
Though dying does not consent—

Naive and most funereal kiss—
To breathe forth any annunciation
Of a rose in the shadows.

Translations by Hailey McAvoy

Don't be far from me

Don't be far from me, not even for one day because, well,
Because, I don't know how to say it—the day is long,
And I'll be waiting for you, as in an empty station,
When the trains are sleeping somewhere else.

Don't go for one hour because then,
In this hour, all of the droplets of despair will come together,
And sometimes all of the smoke that goes around looking
for a home will come to kill even this wounded heart.

Ah, may your shadow never be taken from the sand,
Ah, may your eyelids never blow away forever;
Don't go—not even for a minute, my dear love,

Because in that minute, you will have gone so far
That I will wander the earth asking
If you will come back, or if you'll leave me dying.

My love, if I die and you don't

My love, if I die and you don't,
Let's not give grief more territory:
My love, if you die and I don't,
We'll live an expanse unlike any before.

Dust in the wheat, sand in the deserts,
Time, flowing waters, the faint breeze
Carried us like seeds, sailing.
We might not have found each other in time.

This pasture where we've found each other—
Oh, little infinity!—we will leave.
But this love, my love, has not ended,

And, even as it has no birth,
It has no death. It is like a long river,
Only changing lands and lips.

Fried Cycle

I. Canal

My fingers are cold but go on smoking.
The hand in my pocket touches my passport.
I am lost, obviously, or I would not be here.

II. The Black Snagg...

The black snag, the turbid powerful current, the heavy falls.
Sad thoughts and incommunicable sensations
Of bright sunlight.

III. Depths

Suddenly there is nothing that is not revealed by faces alone.
America, like a hounded shark, not knowing where to turn,
Makes for the depths
Taking us down.

IV. The Flash of Lightning

The flash of lightning seen through closed eyelids.
The thunder falling from peak to peak.
The dark stairs climbing the bright stairwell.

V. Thaw

Hearing your voice rise in your parents' garden
I lie head back
Weeping without making a sound
That I can help.
Ice melts in the warm cold.
Even now the past will not be rushed.