

MARK SPITZER

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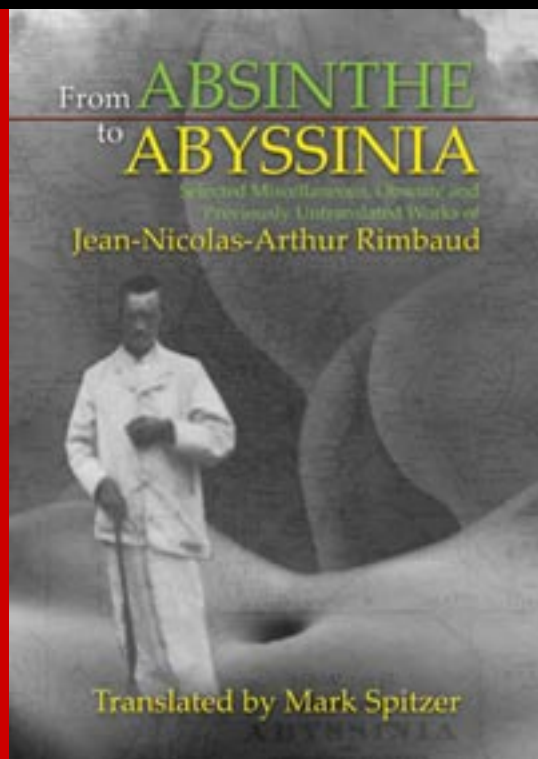
Mark Spitzer, novelist, poet, and translator, grew up in Minneapolis where he earned his Bachelor's degree at the University of Minnesota in 1990. He then moved to the Rockies, where he earned his Master's in Creative Writing from the University of Colorado. After living on the road for some time, he found himself in Paris, as Writer in Residence for two years at the bohemian bookstore Shakespeare and Company, where he translated French works, including the poetry and plays of Jean Genet. His bilingual book of poems, *En Delire*, was published in France, and his translation of *The Church*, by Louis-Ferdinand Celine (co-translated with Simon Green) will some day be published by Green Integer Books. His eco-novel *Bottom Feeder*, about a giant catfish named Old Shithead, is available from Creative Arts Book Company. To see an image of the giant catfish he strapped to his Buick to promote the book, causing fender-benders from Maine to San Diego, click on "Signings" in the adjacent column. His novel *Chum* has been serialized by the [Exquisite](#)

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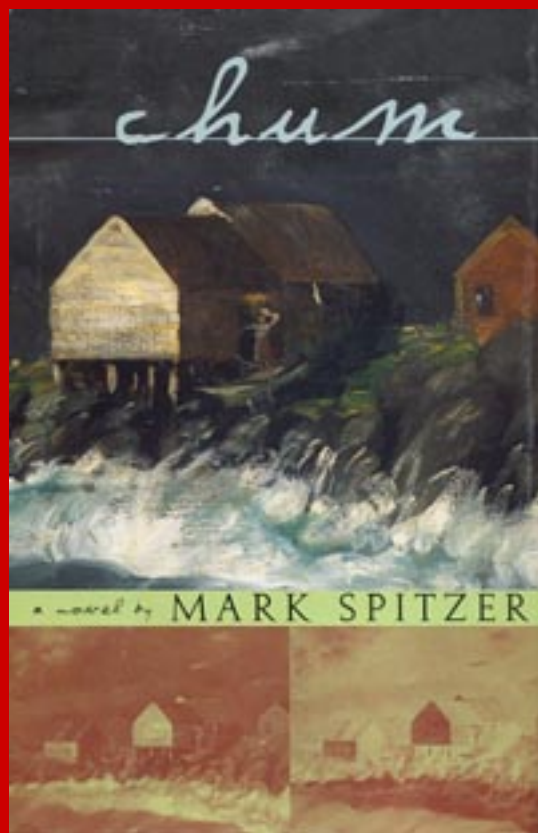
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[Corpse](#), and is now available from Zoland Books. Chapbooks *Motorhead* and *Notch of the Sorceress* are available from MuscleHead Press (send \$5 to 3700 County Rd. Route 24, Russell, NY, 13684). From *Absinthe to Abyssinia: Selected Miscellaneous, Obscure and Previously Untranslated Works of Jean-Nicolas-Arthur Rimbaud* will soon be published by Creative Arts. In the fall of 2002, he will be Assistant Professor of English at Truman State University in Missouri, where he will teach Creative Writing and catch muskellunge daily.



BOTTOM FEEDER



A NOVEL BY
MARK SPITZER

The
Collected
Poems of

Georges Bataille

Translated
with an
Introduction by Mark Spitzer

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
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FOREWORD

by Edmund White

Whereas Genet's fiction is lucid, his poems, which he wrote at the same time, are sometimes obscure, although his language is always so seductive that one scarcely notices the difficulty. Often poem and novel treat the same theme, even if in very different ways. For example, in *Miracle of the Rose* a persistent fantasy of being a cabin-boy on a pirate ship keeps cropping up, a theme that also haunts the poems, if glancingly. Or the prison colonies in Guyana, abolished before Genet began writing, are major erotic sites in both his poetry and his fiction. As the ultimate hell holes where incorrigible prisoners condemned to life sentences were sent, these colonies obviously appealed to a writer who sought beauty in filth, goodness in evil, peace in desperation.

Although Genet later came to admire the abstract splendors of Mallarmé's poetry, his own verse is too passionate, too lavishly lyric, too impulsive to suggest such a model. In fact, he is obviously indebted to both Cocteau and Rimbaud. From Cocteau he derived his way of mixing classical diction with lowlife contemporary characters and situations, though Genet, to be sure, pushes this contrast much farther than Cocteau ever dared. From Rimbaud Genet derives the knack for interjecting sudden releases of lyric violence into patterned narratives, the sea imagery, the longing for escape and transformation as well as Romantic conviction that carries the reader through the thickets of dense, obscure language.

Mark Spitzer has worked on these translations with a monastic patience and a martyr's zeal, and they require both ardor and dedication, since they are dense, heavily coded, daringly pornographic at times, and at other times far more lushly over-the-top than English comfortably tolerates. To my ear, at least, he has invented eloquent, viable English poems -- the first test if these verses are to find a new audience. His versions are far more accurate than the other attempts at Englishing I have read, partly because Spitzer has been more attentive than his predecessors to Genet's gnarled syntax. Finally, he has carefully researched Genet's use of prison argot, especially the private language that was spoken at Mettray, the reform school where Genet was imprisoned as an adolescent and the main station of the Cross of his imagination. For instance, only someone privy to this dialect would know that "une biche dorée" is not only "a gilded doe" but also (at least for the inmates of Mettray) a young boy who is sodomized for the first time.

Genet was always inspired by poetry in the literal sense of the word -- he inhaled it, he breathed it as naturally as other people breathe the air. At Mettray he discovered the poetry of Ronsard, an encounter that electrified his sensibility and gave him the ambition to become a writer. In his twenties and early thirties he was too poor to buy poetry, but he tore Rimbaud's "Bateau ivre" out of a book to send to a German friend and he was arrested once for stealing a fine edition of Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes*. In his fiction he

often buries paraphrases of lines he knew by heart. He could quote from memory whole scenes of Racine's verse dramas. At the end of his life he gracefully and spontaneously referred to death using Mallarmé's phrase, "this shallow stream" (ce ruisseau peu profond).

No reader can truly understand Genet's plays or novels without grasping his poetry -- which Mark Spitzer has made available in a convincing, accurate translation for the first time in English.

- Edmund White
Paris, 1994.

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by Mark Spitzer

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

by Mark Spitzer

"He [Céline] said (in 1950) (in a newspaper interview in Paris) that there were only two real writers in France at the time, himself and Jean Genêt [sic]. He dismissed Genêt half-jokingly for the obvious reason known to us all. Yet he was wise enough to recognize Genêt. I feel that Genêt completed the tragedy of the French Queer Underworld for Balzac, but in Rimbaud's terms, or rather under Rimbaud's terms, and under Villon's critical eye (as Baudelaire watches from a distant balcony). This investigation was something portly Bourgeois master Balzac could never have dared to undertake... And I say Céline was right about Genêt."

-Jack Kerouac..

When I first started translating the poetry of Genet, I just wanted to know what he had to say. Then I found that the previous English translations were full of obvious blunders, as well as translation liberties which worked to inject the poems with qualities the originals never possessed. In some cases, an overwhelming flowery flow was ascribed to the verse -- in others, sexual detail was exaggerated by translators vying for a more homo-pornographic tone than the originals ever included (for example, the addition of extraneous cocks and superfluous sodomies). In other instances, accuracy was sacrificed in order to maintain the rhyme-scheme. I objected to this.

But then again, I objected to pretty much everything at that time. I was a scraggly young expatriate living in Paris, who identified myself as a poet. I found it ironic that Genet the novelist and Genet the playwright were regarded with respect, whereas Genet the poet was pretty much considered an awkward adolescent who couldn't find a voice, so stole from others. I was convinced, however, that part of this stigma had to do with the critical reception of the poems in English, which had suffered due to clumsy translations. And since it was obvious to me that Genet's use of metaphoric imagery was rich in the visionary tradition of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, I felt that the poems had been unjustly represented.

That's why I spent a decade translating the poetry of Genet. At first my focus was on sound; I wanted to keep the assonance, alliteration, and meter similar to the original. But the more research I did, the more I began to lean toward a literal translation; that is, a translation that took into account what the poet had to say, rather than what sounded good in English. Still, I looked for ways to work with multiple meanings while maintaining the music. In the process of this, I opted for free verse and I cut a lot of punctuation. Ultimately, the line lengths were limited by the bi-lingual templates I installed them on.

Still, I wouldn't say these translations have reached their final evolution. Right now, they're more finished than they've ever been, but that doesn't mean they're written in stone. What they are written in is hypertext, which affords me the luxury of making

changes whenever I want.

But back to Paris, where I worked with experts on Genet and the language, as well as with original texts at the Bibliothèque Nationale and the IMEC Archives. I was fortunate enough to meet Edmund White at that time, who had just published *Genet: A Biography* in three different languages. He assisted me on the first and second poem and gave me a copy of a never-before-translated poem. He also wrote the foreword to my book and advised me on cryptic argot.

The biggest challenge in translating Genet, though, was making sense of his algebraic logic. Sometimes, the subject was five lines from the verb, and other times, adjectives modified air. Gender was also frequently distorted. Genet's fondness for archaic idioms, ambiguous connections, and his employment of secret syntax was befuddling as well.

For example, roses occupy a mysterious place in the work of Genet; they're personified and sexualized, but never in a way that's clear to the reader. Similarly, there's a recurring image of a hanging foot that has continued to baffle scholars for decades.

Which brings me to this point: anyone who claims to understand the elusive poetry of Genet is fooling himself, and maybe others. For instance, some versions of "Un Chant d'amour" employ the word "col" (*neck*), whereas other versions use the word "vol" (*flight*, or, by extension, *flurry* or *flock*) in relation to doves. What the poet originally meant, of course, is debatable -- and the poems are full of such moments.

Due to such uncertainty, the French texts used here remain unedited, to preserve the anomalies that past editors have attempted to clarify by correcting through guesswork. Misprints and errors in the French texts are therefore listed at the end of this collection.

I should also note that the poems translated here are not the poems that have been translated in the past; rather, they are rarely used texts, which I picked for their enigmatic errors and intriguing typos which set them apart from the usually used versions of the verse. I did this because of my appreciation for the more obscure texts which often provide for a slightly different personality to the poems, and other times raise questions that are not considered when working with the texts translated by Steven Finch and others.

Concerning the Estate of Genet: They turned out to be the most unreasonable humans I have ever dealt with. They made promises they didn't keep regarding rights, they lied about posthumous legal issues, and in the end, they cost me two good publishers who intended to put the book out world-wide. This led to agents and arbitrators arguing for years, and finally a letter from the Estate, informing me that if I had any respect for Genet, I would stop trying to obtain appropriate authorization.

Well, guess what? Now it's the age of the Internet, and your permission, Ms. Marston, is no longer necessary, since under International Copyright Law, the electronic publication of these "interpretations *after* Genet" do not interfere with any sales of any in-print versions of the poetry. Furthermore, you are the one who lacks respect for Genet. Otherwise, these translations would have been accessible years ago, instead of free of charge to everyone now, and easily re-postable if your lawyers manage to get them taken down (after much expense on your part, and a whole lot of negative publicity on your intent to censor "intellectual property," I assure you).

That said, I'd like to thank Edmund White, Professor Camille Naish, Professor Sam Gannon, Professor Alan Taylor, Albert Dichy, Ian H. Magedera, Janine Cortell, Christine Eisen, Alfredo Merosati, Julian Lord, Emanuel Boetsch and Renaud O'Riley for assistance

on these translations. I'd also like to acknowledge the Bibliothèque Nationale, the IMEC Archives, and the Special Collections at the University of California (Berkeley) and Kent State, for providing access to their resources. Special thanks also to Karl Orend, Thomas Christensen, Rex Rose and Andrei Codrescu (who unknowingly and postmodernly influenced the Berriganizing of these traductions in their final evolution via theories of George Steiner). Other forms of assistance were provided by Joe Swanson, Pete Sniogowski, Kent Maguire, Tony Dare, Kevin P.O. Phelan, Majella O'Shea, Stephanie Keho, the Mountain Gals, and the historic George Whitman of Shakespeare and Company. But most of all, I am indebted to my friends Armel and Mélina Cusin-Gogat, who not only spent hundreds of hours in the translating process with me, but fed me as well. Wherever you are, these translations are for you.

- Mark Spitzer

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The Prisoner Condemned to Death Translation by Mark Spitzer

*To the memory
of Maurice PILORGE
twenty-year-old murderer*

The wind rolling a heart across the yard
a sobbing angel hung in a tree
the column of azure twisting the marble
make emergency portals
open in my night.

A poor falling bird and the taste of ash (1)
the memory of an eye asleep on the wall
and this sorrowful fist which threatens the azure
make your face descend
to the hollow
of my hand.

This hard face, lighter than a mask
is heavier in my hand than the coveted jewels
in the fingers of the fence; it is drenched in tears
somber and ferocious
a green sheen
covers it.

Your face is stern: like a Greek shepherd's
it shudders in the hollow of my closed hands
your mouth is that of a dead woman's
your eyes are roses
and your nose could be
an archangel's beak.

If your visage sings, then what great evil
melted the sparkling frost of your malicious modesty
dusting your hair with bright stars of steel
and crowning your hair with thorns?

Tell me what mad misfortune makes your eye burst
with a despair so great that savage grief
is horrified to adorn your round mouth
with a smile of mourning
despite your icy tears?

Tonight, golden child, don't sing "Lunar Studs"

Le Condamné à mort by Jean Genet

*A la mémoire
de Maurice PILORGE
assassin de vingt ans*

Le vent qui roule un cœur sur le pavé des cours,
Un ange qui sanglotte accroché dans un arbre,
La colonne d'azur qu'entortille le marbre
Font ouvrir dans ma nuit des portes de secours.

Un pauvre oiseau qui tombe et le goût de la cendre,
Le souvenir d'un œil endormi sur le mur,
Et ce poing douloureux qui menace l'azur
Font au creux de ma main ton visage descendre.

Ce visage plus dur et plus léger qu'un masque,
Et plus lourd à ma main qu'aux doigts du réceleur
Le joyau qu'il convoite; il est noyé de pleurs.
Il est sombre et féroce, un bouquet vert le casque.

Ton visage est sévère: il est d'un pâtre grec.
Il reste frémissant aux creux de mes mains closes.
Ta bouche est d'une morte et tes yeux sont des roses,
Et ton nez d'un archange est peut-être le bec.

Le gel étincelant de ta pudeur méchante
Qui pourrait tes cheveux de clairs astres d'acier,
Qui couronnait ton front des pins du rosier
Quel haut-mal l'a fondu si ton visage chante?

Dis-moi quel malheur fou fait éclater ton œil
D'un désespoir si haut que la douleur farouche,
Affolée, en personne, orne ta ronde bouche
Malgré tes pleurs glacés, d'un sourire de deuil?

Ne chante pas ce soir les <<Costauds de la Lune>>!
Gamin d'or sois plutôt princesse d'une tour
Rêvant mélancolique à notre pauvre amour;

be instead a sad princess in a tower dreaming
of our poor love -- or the blond cabin-boy
watching from the main mast.

And descend toward evening to sing on the deck
the *Ave Maris Stella* among the sailors
bald and kneeling, already holding
their leaping dicks
in roguish hands.

To screw you, handsome adventurous cabin-boy
as the muscular sailors get hard beneath their pants
my love, my love, will you steal the keys
which will open for me
the sky of trembling masts?

Where royally you sow enchanting white snow
upon on my page, in my silent prison: (2)
the terror, the dead in the lavender blossoms
death with her roosters
and phantoms of lovers...

On his velvet feet, a prowling guard passes
the memory of you lies in my hollow eyes
maybe we can escape by crossing the roof
they say Guiana
is a very hot place. (3)

Oh the sweetness of the colony
impossible and faraway
oh the sky of Escape, the sea and the palms
the transparent dawn, the delirious dusk
the calm nights, shorn heads
and Smooth-Skinned Punks! (4)

Oh Love, let's dream together of a tough lover
immense like the Universe
though his body stained by shadows
he will shackle us naked in these somber hostels
between his thighs of gold
upon his belly
smoking

A dazzling pimp carved from an archangel
hardens above the bouquets
of carnations and jasmine
that your luminous hands will carry trembling
to his noble flank, deranged
by your kiss.

Sadness in my mouth! Bitterness swelling
swelling my poor heart! My perfumed loves

Ou sois le mousse blond qui veille à la grand'hune.

Et descend vers le soir pour chanter sur le pont
Parmi les matelots à genoux et nus tête
L'ave maris stella. Chaque marin tient prête
Sa verge qui bondit dans sa main de fripon.

Et c'est pour t'emmancher, beau mousse d'aventure
Qu'ils bandent sous leur froc les matelots musclés.
Mon Amour, mon Amour, voleras-tu les clés
Qui m'ouvriront ce ciel où tremble la mature

D'où tu sèmes, royal, les blancs enchantements
Qui neigent sur mon page, en ma prison muette:
L'épouvante, les morts dans les fleurs de violette....
La mort avec ses coqs; Ses fantômes d'amants...

Sur ses pieds de velours passe un garde qui rôde.
Repose en mes yeux creux le souvenir de toi.
Il se peut qu'on s'évade en passant par le toit.
On dit que la Guyane est une terre chaude.

O la douceur du baigne impossible et lointain!
O le ciel de la Belle, ô la mer et les palmes,
Les matins transparents, les soirs fous, les nuits calmes,
O les cheveux tondus et les Peaux-de-Satin!

Rêvons ensemble, Amour, à quelque dur amant
Grand comme l'Univers mais le corps taché d'ombres
Qui nous bouclera nus dans ces auberges sombres,
Entre ses cuisses d'or, sur son ventre fumant,

Un mac éblouissant taillé dans un archange
Bandant sur les bouquets d'œillets et de jasmins
Que porteront tremblants tes lumineuses mains
Sur son auguste flanc que ton baiser dérange.

Tristesse dans ma bouche! Amertume gonflant
Gonflant mon pauvre cœur! Mes amours parfumées
Adieu vont s'en aller! Adieu couilles aimées!
O sur ma voix coupée adieu chibre insolent!

will soon go away, farewell! Farewell
beloved balls! Above my chopped-
off voice, farewell
brazen cock!

Don't sing, you scamp, show savageness!
Be the young girl with the pure radiant neck
or if you're not afraid, the melodious child
dead within me long before
the axe chops off
my head.

Child of honor, so beautiful, crowned with lilacs!
Bend yourself over my bed, let my rising prick
beat your gilded cheek. Listen
as your lover the killer
recounts his story
in a thousand sparks. (5)

He sings that he has had your body, your face
and your heart -- which the spurs
of a massive cavalier
will never open. Oh child
to have your round knees
cool neck, soft hands
to be your age!

To fly, to fly your blood-splattered sky
and make a masterpiece with the dead, gathered
here and there, in the meadows, the brush
dazzled from preparing his death
his adolescent sky...

The solemn mornings, the rum, the cigarettes...
the shadows of tobacco, of the colony and sailors
visit my cell where the specter of a killer
with a big dick rolls me over
clutching me.

«

The song that crosses a blackened world
is the cry of a pimp carried by your music
is the song of a hanged man stiff as a stick
is the enchanted call
of an amorous thief.

A sleeper of sixteen calls for help
which no sailor offers to the terrified sleeper
one child remains standing, pinned to the wall
another sleeps shackled
with twisted legs.

Gamin ne chantez pas, posez votre air d'apache!
Soyez la jeune fille au pur cou radieux,
Ou si tu n'as de peur l'enfant mystérieux
Mort en moi bien avant que me tranche la hache.

Enfant d'honneur si beau couronné de lilas!
Penche-toi sur mon lit, laisse ma queue qui monte
Frapper ta joue dorée. Écoute il te raconte,
Ton amant l'assassin sa geste en mille éclats.

Il chante qu'il avait ton corps et ton visage,
Ton cœur que n'ouvriront jamais les éperons
D'un cavalier massif. Avoir tes genoux ronds!
Ton cou frais, ta main douce, ô même avoir ton âge!

Voler voler ton ciel éclaboussé de sang
Et faire un seul chef d'œuvre avec les morts cueillies
Ça et là dans les prés, les haies, morts éblouies
De préparer sa mort, son ciel adolescent...

Les matins solennels, le rhum, la cigarette...
Les ombres du tabac, du bain et des marins
Visitent ma cellule où me roule et m'étreint
Le spectre d'un tueur à la lourde braguette.

«

La chanson qui traverse un monde ténébreux
C'est le cri d'un marlou porté par la musique.
C'est le chant d'un pendu raidi comme une trique.
C'est l'appel enchanté d'un voleur amoureux.

Un dormeur de seize ans appelle de bouées
Que nul marin ne lance au dormeur affolé.
Un enfant reste droit contre le mur collé.
Un autre dort bouclé dans ses jambes noués.

«

J'ai tué pour les yeux bleus d'un bel indifférent
Qui jamais ne comprit mon amour contenue,

«

I have killed for the blue eyes
of an indifferent beauty
he never understood my stifled love
in her black gondola, an unknown lover
as pretty as a ship is dead
from worshipping me.

When you are ready, armed for the crime
masked with cruelty, covered in blond locks
to the brief mad cadence of violins
slaughter a lady
backing your scam.

Despite the hour, a knight of iron
impassive and cruel, will appear on earth
in the vague gesture
of an old woman weeping.
Above all, do not shudder
before his bright glare.

This apparition comes from the frightening sky
of crimes of passion. An amazing child
will be born from his body of astonishing splendors
from the scented sperm
of his wondrous prick.

Rock of black granite on the carpet of wool
one hand on his hip, listen to him walk
toward the sun of his sinless body
and stretch out tranquil
to the edge of his fountain.

Each festival of the blood delegates a dashing lad
to support the child in his very first trial
appease your new anguish and fright
suck his hard member
like an icicle.

Tenderly nibble the dick which beats your cheek
kiss its swollen head, plunge
the package of my cock
into your throat, swallowed in a single gulp
choke on love, spit it out
and pout!

Worship on two knees like a totem pole
my tattooed torso, worship till you cry
my sex breaks you (6)

Dans sa gondole noire une amante inconnue,
Belle comme un navire et morte en m'adorant.

Toi quand tu seras prêt, en arme pour le crime,
Masqué de cruauté, casqué de cheveux blonds,
Sur la cadence folle et brève des violons
Égorge une rentière en amour pour ta frime.

Apparaîtra sur terre un chevalier de fer,
Impassible et cruel, visible malgré l'heure
Dans le geste imprécis d'une vieille qui pleure.
Ne tremble pas surtout, devant son regard clair.

Cette apparition vient du ciel redoutable
Des crimes de l'amour. Enfant des profondeurs
Il naîtra de son corps d'étonnantes splendeurs,
Du foutre parfumé de sa queue adorable.

Rocher de granit noir sur le tapis de laine
Une main sur sa hanche, écoute-le marcher.
Marche vers le soleil de son corps sans péché,
Et t'allonge tranquille au bord de sa fontaine.

Chaque fête du sang délègue un beau garçon
Pour soutenir l'enfant dans sa première épreuve.
Apaïse ta frayeur et ton angoisse neuve,
Suce son membre dur comme on suce un glaçon.

—
Mordille tendrement le paf qui bat ta joue,
Baise sa tête enflée, enfonce dans ton cou
Le paquet de ma bite avalé d'un seul coup.
Ètrangle-toi d'amour, dégorge, et fais ta moue!

Adore à deux genoux, comme un poteau sacré
Mon torse tatoué, adore jusqu'aux larmes
Mon sexe qui te rompt, te frappe mieux qu'une arme,
Adore mon bâton qui va te pénétrer.

Il bondit sur tes yeux; il enfile ton âme
Penches un peu la tête et le vois se dresser.
L'apercevant si noble et si propre à baiser
Tu t'inclines très bas en lui disant: "Madame"!

beating you better than a weapon
 worship my rod
 which will penetrate you.

It leaps before your eyes, it pierces your soul
 bend the head a bit and watch it spring up
 perceiving it so noble and fit to kiss (7)
 you bow very low and whisper to it:
 "Madame"!

Madame, listen to me! Madame, we die here!
 The manor is haunted! The prison shudders in flight!
 Help, we're off! Carry us away
 into your chamber in the sky
 Lady of Mercy!

Summon the sun so it will come and console me
 strangle all these roosters!
 Put the executioner to sleep!
 The day smiles wickedly behind my window
 prison is a tasteless school for dying.

«

Let your smiling wolf teeth rest upon my neck
 my neck without armor and without hate
 which my hand, lighter and graver than a widow's
 strokes beneath my collar
 without even stirring your heart

Oh come my beautiful sun
 oh come my night of Spain
 arrive before my eyes that die tomorrow
 and open my door, bring me your hand
 lead me far away from here
 to wander in delirium.

The sky may awake, the stars may flourish
 the flowers may sigh, and in the meadows
 the black grass may welcome the dew
 where morning comes to drink
 the bell may toll: I alone
 am going to die.

Oh come my rose sky, oh come my blond basket!
 Visit your prisoner condemned in the night
 rip into flesh, kill, climb, bite
 but come! Place your cheek
 against my round head.

We haven't yet finished speaking of love

Madame écoutez-moi! Madame on meurt ici!
 Le manoir est hanté! La prison vole et tremble!
 Au secours, nous bougeons! Emportez-nous ensemble,
 Dans votre chambre au Ciel, Dame de la merci!

Appelez le soleil, qu'il vienne et me console.
 Étranglez tous ces coqs! Endormez le bourreau!
 Le jour sourit mauvais derrière mon carreau.
 La prison pour mourir est une fade école.

«

Sur mon cou sans armure et sans haine, mon cou
 Que ma main plus légère et grave qu'une veuve
 Effleure sous mon col, sans que ton cœur s'émeuve
 Laisse tes dents poser leur sourire de loup.

O viens mon beau soleil, ô viens ma nuit d'Espagne
 Arrive dans mes yeux qui seront morts demain.
 Arrive, ouvre ma porte, apporte-moi ta main,
 Mène-moi loin d'ici battre notre campagne.

Le ciel peut s'éveiller, les étoiles fleurir,
 Et les fleurs soupiner, et des prés l'herbe noire
 Accueillir la rosée où le matin va boire,
 Le clocher peut sonner: moi seul je vais mourir.

O viens mon ciel de rose, O ma corbeille blonde!
 Visite dans sa nuit ton condamné à mort.
 Arrache-toi la chair, tue, escalade, mords,
 Mais viens! Pose ta joue contre ma tête ronde.

Nous n'avions pas fini de nous parler d'amour.
 Nous n'avions pas fini de fumer nos gitanes.
 On peut se demander pourquoi les Cours condamnent
 Un assassin si beau qu'il fait pâlir le jour.

Amour viens sur ma bouche! Amour ouvre les portes!
 Traverse les couloirs, descends, marche léger,
 Vole dans l'escalier, plus souple qu'un berger,
 Plus soutenu par l'air qu'un vol de feuilles mortes.

we haven't yet finished smoking our cigs
 we wonder why the Courts condemn
 a murderer so beautiful
 he pales the day.

Love, come to my mouth! Love, open doors!
 descend, walk softly, cross corridors
 fly through the stairwell more supple than a shepherd
 more borne by the air than a flurry
 of dead leaves.

Oh pass through the walls, and if you must
 walk to the edge -- of rooftops, of oceans
 Cover yourself with light, use threats, use prayer
 But come, my bitch (8)
 an hour before my death.

«

In my rocking cell, open to the song of the high pines
 (hung from thin cords knotted by sailors
 whom the clear morning gilds) the killers on the wall
 wrap themselves in dawn.

Who carved a Rose of the Winds in the plaster? (9)
 Who dreams of my house
 from the bottom of his Hungary?
 what child rolled on my rotten straw
 at the instant of awakening
 remembering friends?

Ramble my Madness, beget for my joy
 a consoling hell peopled with beautiful soldiers
 naked to the waist -- and pull from pansy pants
 strange flowers with odors
 that strike me like lightning.

Uproot from who knows where the craziest gestures
 strip children, invent tortures, mutilate Beauty
 work their faces over, and give Guiana to the lads
 so they can meet.

Oh my old Maroni, oh Cayenne the sweet!
 I see the bent-over bodies
 of fifteen to twenty convicts (10)
 gathered around the blond pretty-boy
 smoking butts spat by the guards
 into the flowers and the moss.

One wet stub is enough to sadden us all
 erect, alone, above the rigid ferns

O traverse les murs; s'il le faut marche au bord
 Des toits, des océans; couvre-toi de lumière,
 Use de la menace, use de la prière,
 Mais viens, ô ma frégate une heure avant ma mort.

«

Les assassins du mur s'enveloppent d'aurore
 Dans ma cellule ouverte au chant des hauts sapins,
 Qui la berce, accrochée à des cordages fins
 Noués par des marins que le clair matin dore.

Qui grava dans le plâtre une Rose des Vents?
 Qui songe à ma maison, du fond de sa Hongrie?
 Quel enfant s'est roulé sur ma paille pourrie
 A l'instant du réveil d'amis se souvenant?

Divague ma Folie, enfante pour ma joie
 Un consolant enfer peuplé de beaux soldats,
 Nus jusqu'à la ceinture, et des frocs résédas
 Tire d'étranges fleurs dont l'odeur me foudroie.

Arrache on ne sait d'où les gestes les plus fous.
 Dérobe des enfants, invente des tortures,
 Mutila la beauté, travaille les figures,
 Et donne la Guyane aux gars, pour rendez-vous.

O mon vieux Maroni, ô Cayenne la douce!
 Je vois les corps penchés de quinze à vingt fagots
 Autour du mino blond qui fume les mégots
 Crachés par les gardiens dans les fleurs et la mousse.

Un clop mouillé suffit à nous désoler tous.
 Dressé seul au dessus des rigides fougères
 Le plus jeune est posé sur ses hanches légères
 Immobile, attendant d'être sacré l'époux.

Et les vieux assassins se pressant pour le rite
 Accroupis dans le soir tirent d'un bâton sec
 Un peu de feu que vole, actif, le petit mec
 Plus élégant et pur qu'une émouvante bite.

the youngest poses motionless
upon his graceful hips
waiting to be made
the spouse.

And the old killers squatting in the night
crowd together for the rite
to pull from a dry stick
a bit of fire stolen by
the sprightly guy
more elegant and pure
than a rousing cock.

Even the toughest bandit with shiny muscles
bows with respect before this frail brat
raise the moon into the sky
a struggle abates
as the mysterious folds
of the black flag
undulate.

Your gestures of lace envelop you so well!
One shoulder propped against the blushing palm
you smoke. And the smoke in your throat descends
while the convicts solemnly dance
gravely, silently, taking turns

from your mouth they'll take one perfumed drop
not two, of the round smoke flowing
from your tongue to theirs
triumphant brother.

Terrible divinity, invisible and wicked
you remain impassive, sharp, of bright metal
attentive to yourself alone, fatal dealer
taken away on the thread
of your hammock
which sings.

Your delicate soul floats beyond the mountains
accompanying again the bewitched flight
of an escapee from the colony
dead at the bottom of a valley
from a bullet in the lungs
without even thinking
of you.

Rise into the air of the moon, my child (11)
come spill in my mouth a bit of heavy sperm
rolling from your throat to your teeth, my Love
to impregnate, finally
our adorable wedding.

Le bandit le plus dur, dans ses muscles polis
Se courbe de respect devant ce gamin frêle.
Monte la lune au ciel. S'apaise une querelle.
Bougent du drapeau noir les mystérieux plis.

T'enveloppent si fin, tes gestes de dentelle!
Une épaule appuyée au palmier rougissant
Tu fumes. La fumée en ta gorge descend
Tandis que les bagnards, en danse solennelle,

Graves, silencieux, à tour de rôle, enfant,
Vont prendre sur ta bouche une goutte embaumée,
Une goutte, pas deux, de la ronde fumée
Que leur coule ta langue. O frangin triomphant,

Divinité terrible, invisible et méchante,
Tu restes impassible, aigu, de clair métal,
Attentif à toi seul, distributeur fatal
Enlevé sur le fil de ton hamac qui chante.

Ton âme délicate est par de là les monts
Accompagnant encor la fuite ensorcelée
D'un évadé du bagne, au fond d'une vallée
Mort, sans penser à toi, d'une balle aux poumons.

Élève-toi dans l'air de la lune ô ma gosse.
Viens couler dans ma bouche un peu du sperme lourd
Qui roûle de ta gorge à tes dents, mon Amour,
Pour féconder enfin nos adorables noces.

Colle ton corps ravi contre le mien qui meurt
D'enculer la plus tendre et douce des fripouilles.
En soupesant charmé tes rondes, blondes couilles,
Mon vit de marbre noir t'enfile jusqu'au cœur.

Oh vise-le dressé dans son couchant qui brûle
Et va me consumer! J'en ai pour peu de temps,
Si vous l'osez, venez, sortez de vos étangs,
Vos marais, votre boue où vous faites des bulles

Stick your enraptured body to mine
 which dies from bugging
 the softest sweetest scoundrel
 in weighing in wonder your round blond balls
 my cock of black marble pierces you
 to the heart.

Oh aim it erect into his sunset which burns
 and comes to consume me!
 Souls of my victims, I don't have much time
 come, if you dare, leave your ponds
 your marshes, your mud

Where you blow bubbles! Kill me! Burn me!
 An exhausted Michelangelo, I have sculpt from life
 but Lord, I have always served beauty:
 my belly, my knees, my red hands
 of alarm.

The roosters of the hen-house, the Gallic lark
 the milkman's cans, a bell in the air
 a footstep on the gravel
 my pane white and clear
 there's a joyful glow
 on the prison of slate.

Gentlemen, I am not afraid!
 If my head should roll in he guillotine basket
 with your pale head, mine by luck
 upon your slender haunches! (12)
 Or to put even prettier:
 upon your neck
 my darling...

Look out! Tragic king with the half-open mouth
 I have access to your gardens of desolate sand
 where you get hard, stiff, alone
 with two fingers raised
 a veil of blue linen
 covering your head.

Through my stupor I see your pure double!
 Love! Song! My queen!
 Is that a male specter in your pale pupil
 glimpsed during play
 examining me
 on the plaster of the wall?

Don't be stern, let *matins* be sung
 from your bohemian heart, grant me one lone kiss...
 my God, I am going to croak without being able
 to squeeze you to my heart

Ames de mes tués! Tuez-moi! Brûlez-moi!
 Michel-Ange exténué, j'ai taillé dans la vie
 Mais la beauté Seigneur, toujours je l'ai servie,
 Mon ventre, mes genoux, mes mains roses d'émoi.

Les coqs du poulailler, l'alouette gauloise,
 Les boîtes du laitier, une cloche dans l'air,
 Un pas sur le gravier, mon carreau blanc et clair,
 C'est le luisant joyeux sur la prison d'ardoise.

Messieurs je n'ai pas peur! Si ma tête roulait
 Dans le son du panier avec ta tête blanche,
 La mienne par bonheur sur ta gracile hanche
 Ou pour plus de beauté, sur ton cou mon poulet....

Attention! Roi tragique à la bouche entr'ouverte
 J'accède à tes jardins de sable, désolés,
 Où tu bandes, figé, seul, et deux doigts levés,
 D'un voile de lin bleu ta tête recouverte.

Par mon délire idiot je vois ton double pur!
 Amour! Chanson! Ma reine! Est-ce ton spectre mâle
 Entrevu lors des jeux dans ta prunelle pâle
 Qui m'examine ainsi sur le plâtre du mur?

Ne sois pas rigoureux, laisse chanter matine
 A ton cœur bohémien; m'accorde un seul baiser...
 Mon Dieu je vais claquer sans te pouvoir presser
 Dans ma vie une fois sur mon cœur et ma pine!

«

Pardonnez-moi mon Dieu parce que j'ai péché!
 Les larmes de ma voix, ma fièvre, ma souffrance,
 Le mal de m'envoler du beau pays de France,
 N'est-ce pas assez monseigneur pour aller me coucher
 Trébuchant d'espérance.

Dans vos bras embaumés, dans vos châteaux de neige!
 Seigneur des lieux obscurs, je sais encore prier.
 C'est moi mon père, un jour, qui me suis écrit:
 Gloire au plus haut du ciel, au dieu qui me protège

and prick!

«

Forgive me God for I have sinned!
The tears of my voice, my fever, my suffering
the evil of fleeing the beautiful land of France
isn't this enough, Lord, for me to go to bed
stumbling with hope?

In your perfumed arms, in your castles of snow!
Lord of dark places, I still know how to pray
Father, it's me, who once cried out:
"Glory to the highest of heaven, to Hermes
the tender-footed god
who protects me!"

From death I ask for peace and long sleeps
the songs of the Seraphs
their perfumes, their garlands
small angels of fleece in big hot cloaks
and I hope for moonless sunless nights
above the motionless moors.

This isn't the morning they guillotine me
I can sleep easy.
On the floor above, my lazy love
my golden boy, my pearl will awake
to stomp with hard boots
upon my shorn skull.

«

As if an epileptic lives next door
the prison sleeps standing
in the dark of a dead man's song
if sailors on the water see ports approaching
then my sleepers take flight
toward another
America.

«

I have dedicated this poem to the memory of my friend Maurice Pilorge, whose radiant face and body haunt my sleepless nights. In spirit, I relive with him the last forty days he spent with chains on his feet and sometimes on his wrists in the cell of those condemned to death in the Prison of Saint-Brieuc. The newspapers missed the point. They sympathized with imbecilic articles to illustrate his death, which coincided with the entry into office of Desfourneaux, the executioner. Commenting on the attitude of Maurice before

Hermès au tendre piéd!

Je demande à la mort la paix, les longs sommeils,
Les chants des Séraphins, leurs parfums, leurs guirlandes,
Les angelots de laine en chaudes houpelandes,
Et j'espère des nuits sans lunes ni soleils
Sur d'immobiles landes.

Ce n'est pas ce matin que l'on me guillotine.
Je peux dormir tranquille. A l'étage au dessus
Mon mignon paresseux, ma perle, mon Jésus,
S'éveille. Il va cogner de sa dure bottine
A mon crane tondu.

«

Il paraît qu'à côté vit un épilectique.
La prison dort debout au noir d'un chant des morts.
Si des marins sur l'eau voient s'avancer les ports
Mes dormeurs vont s'enfuir vers une autre Amérique.

«

J'ai dédié ce poème à la mémoire de mon ami Maurice Pilorge dont le corps et le visage radieux hantent mes nuits sans sommeil. En esprit je revis avec lui les quarante derniers jours qu'il passa, les chaînes aux pieds et parfois aux poignets, dans la cellule des condamnés à mort de la prison de Saint-Brieux. Les journaux manquent d'à propos. Ils commirent d'imbéciles articles pour illustrer sa mort qui coïncidait avec l'entrée en fonction du bourreau Desfourneaux. Commentant l'attitude de Maurice devant la Mort le journal l'Œuvre dit «<que cet enfant eut été digne d'un autre destin>>. Bref on le ravala. Pour moi, qui l'ai connu et qui l'ai aimé, je veux ici, le plus doucement possible, tendrement, affirmer qu'il fut digne, par la double et unique splendeur de son âme et de son corps, d'avoir le bénéfice d'une telle mort. Chaque matin, quand j'allais, grâce à la complicité d'un gardien ensorcelé, par sa beauté, sa jeunesse et son agonie d'Appollon, de ma cellule à la sienne pour lui porter quelques cigarettes, levé tôt il fredonnait et me saluait ainsi, en souriant: «<Salut Jeannot du matin!>> Originaire du Puy de Dôme il avait un peu l'accent d'Auvergne. Les jurés, offensés par tant de grâce, stupides mais pourtant prestigieux dans leur rôle de Parques le condamnèrent à 20 ans de travaux forcés pour cambriolage de villas sur la côte, et le lendemain, parce qu'il avait tué son amant Escudero pour lui voler moins de mille francs, cette même Cour d'assises condamnait mon ami Maurice Pilorge à avoir la tête tranchée. Il fut exécuté le 17 mars 1939 à Saint-Brieux.

Death, the newspaper *l'Œuvre* stated "this child was worthy of another destiny." In short, they debased him. As for me, who knew and loved him, I desire here, to affirm as gently and as tenderly as possible, that he was dignified, by the double and unique splendor of his body and soul, of having the benefit of such a death. Each morning, when I went from my cell to his, to bring him some cigarettes--thanks to the complicity of a jailer enchanted by his beauty, his youth, and his grace of Apollo--having risen early, he would be humming and would greet me with a smile: "Salut, Johnny of the morn!" A native of Puy de Dôme, he had a trace of the accent of Auvergne. Offended by so much grace, the stupid jurors, prestigious in their role as Fates, condemned him to twenty years of hard labor for burglarizing villas on the coast, and the next day, because he had killed his lover Escudero to steal less than a thousand francs from him, this very Court condemned my friend Maurice Pilorge to have his head chopped off. He was executed March 17, 1939 at Saint-Brieuc.

Source of Text

The version used here is taken directly from one of the original copies of *Le Condamné à mort* (less than 100 copies printed), which Genet had published at his own expense while a prisoner at Fresnes in 1942. This particular version comes from the Bibliothèque Nationale and contains "hand-written corrections" which were supposedly made by Genet. Albert Dichy, one of the foremost authorities on Genet, however, was skeptical of the photocopy I showed him of this version. He suggested that Genet would have corrected "assasin" [sic] which was misspelled in the dedication. Nevertheless, having compared handwriting samples of Genet to corrections made in the translated text, it's safe to say that the corrections were made by Genet himself.

End Notes

1. "Oiseau" can mean *guy* as well as *bird*. The verb "tomber" (*to fall*) includes the slang context of *to get busted* or *arrested*.

2. The gender of the noun "page" is masculine here, therefore meaning *pageboy*. However, Genet often purposely feminized male words and vice versa. A *page of paper* (the feminine form of the noun) is also being alluded to.

3. The prison colony Devil's Island, off French Guiana, was no longer in use when Genet wrote "Le Condamné à mort." Nevertheless, it occupied a sacred and utopic space in Genet's imagination, and he often referred to it as "Le Bagne."

4. In French prison argot, the word "Belle" (*a beautiful woman*) also refers to the ideal of Escape. "Peaux-de-Satin" (*Skins-of-Satin*) is colloquial for *male prostitutes* or *punks*.

5. In a wedding ceremony, the "enfant d'honneur" (*child of honor*) is either a flower-girl or young boy who carries the train of the bride's dress. Also, "dorée" (*gilded*) is slang for *sodomized* or *buggered* (see endnote 2 for "The Galley"). All following instances of "gilded" in these translations include this meaning.

6. The verb "romp" (*breaks*) has several meanings. First of all, Genet uses it to imply anal violation. Secondly, "romp" refers to the breaking of a condemned man on the wheel. Thirdly, "romp" can mean breaking one's chains.

7. The verb "baiser" (*to kiss*) also means *to screw* or *fuck*. The same goes for "enfile" (*skewers, pierces*), two lines earlier.

8. A "frigate" is a butt-boy.

9. A "Rose of the Winds" is an illustration that resembles a compass, often seen in old maps of the sea.

10. The Maroni is a river in French Guiana, of which Cayenne is the

capital city. Besides being slang for *convict*, "fagot" can also mean *curmudgeon* or *comrade*. This word, however, has nothing to do with the English word "faggot," spelled with two g's.

11. Even though the subject is male, Genet deliberately feminized "gosse" (*youngster, kid*), which can also mean *little one, sweetheart* or *wife*.

12. "Son" refers to sawdust, which was used in baskets to absorb blood during decapitations.

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FUNERAL MARCH

Translation by Mark Spitzer

I

STAGNATING in a corner, a bit of night remains.
Sparkling with hard blows in our timid sky
(the trees of silence hang some sighs)
a rose of glory at the summit of this void.

Traucherous is the sleep where the prison takes me
though more obscurely in my secret corridors
is that haughty lad passing deeply through his woods
illuminating the sailors who make beautiful dead.(1)

II

HE SHACKLES ME WITHIN
this twenty-year-old turnkey
And he shackles me forever!
A sole gesture, his eye, his hair in his teeth:
my heart opens, and the turnkey, with a festive cry
imprisons me inside.

This malicious door is scarcely shut again
with too much kindness
and already you return. Your perfection haunts me
and I hear today our love recounted
through your mouth which sings.

This stabbed tango which the cell listens to
This tango of farewells.
Is it you, my Lord, upon this radiant air?
Your soul will have cut through secret routes
to escape the gods.

III

WHEN YOU SLEEP horses break from the night
upon your flat breast, and the gallop of beasts
disperses the darkness where sleep conducts
its powerful machine, torn from my head
without the slightest noise.

Sleep makes so many branches
flower from your feet
that I am afraid to die strangled by their cries.
On the curve of your delicate hip, before it fades
I decipher a pure face written

Marche funèbre

by Jean Genet

I

IL RESTE un peu de nuit dans un angle à croupir.
Etincelle en coups durs dans notre ciel timide
(Les arbres du silence accrochent des soupirs)
Une rose de gloire au sommet de ce vide.

Perfide est le sommeil où la prison m'emporte
Et plus obscurément dans mes couloirs secrets
Eclairant les marins qui font de belles mortes
Ce gars hautain qui passe au fond de ses forêts.

II

C'EST EN MOI qu'il me boucle et c'est jusqu'à perpète
Ce gâfe de vingt ans!
Un seul geste son œil ses cheveux dans les dents:
Mon cœur s'ouvre et le gâfe avec un cri de fête
M'emprisonne dedans.

A peine refermée avec trop de bonté
Cette porte méchante
Que déjà tu reviens. Ta perfection me hante
Et j'entends notre amour aujourd'hui raconté
Par ta bouche qui chante.

Ce tango poignardé que la cellule écoute,
Ce tango des adieux.
Est-ce toi mon Seigneur sur cet air radieux?
Ton âme aura coupé par de secrètes routes
Pour échapper aux dieux.

III

QUAND TU DORS des chevaux déferlent de la nuit
Sur ta poitrine plate et le galop des bêtes
Ecarte la ténèbre où le sommeil conduit
Sa puissante machine arrachée à ma tête
Et sans le moindre bruit

Le sommeil fait fleurir de tes pieds tant de branches
Que j'ai peur de mourir étouffé par leurs cris.
Je déchiffre au défaut de ta fragile hanche
Avant qu'il ne s'efface un pur visage écrit
En bleu sur ta peau blanche.

in blue on your white skin.

But should a turnkey awaken you, my tender thief
when you wash your hands (those birds which flit
about your grove, laden with a hundred griefs)
then ruthlessly you shatter the shaft of stars
upon your crying face.

In your funereal remains
glorious gestures are retained
your hand which flung it, seeding it with rays.
Your undershirt, your shirt, and your black belt
astonish my cell and leave me dumbstruck
before your beautiful ivory.

IV

BEAUTIFUL NIGHTS of the full day
darkness of Pilorge
within your black windings
my knife is forged.

My God, here I am naked
in my terrible Louvre.
Scarcely recognized
your closed fist opens me.

I am nothing but love
all my branches burn
if I darken the day
then the shadow recoils within me.

In pure air it is possible
for my dry body to crumble to dust
against the wall
I possess the flash of lightning.

The heart of my sun
is burst by the rooster's crow
though sleep never dares
to spill its dreams here.

Withering to my desires
I fix on the silence
when birds of fire
spring from my tree.

V

FROM LADIES believed to be of cruel nature
their messengers bear ornaments.
These prowlers of alleys rise at night
and on a sign from them you boldly set out.

Such a kid, quivering in his dress of grace
was the angel sent to me, whose luminous trace
I followed confused, maddened through the course

Mais qu'un gâfe t'éveille ô mon tendre voleur
Quand tu laves tes mains ces oiseaux qui voltigent
Autour de ton bosquet chargé de cent douleurs
Tu casses sans douceur des étoiles la tige
Sur ton visage en pleurs.

Ta dépouille funèbre a des poses de gloire
Ta main qui la jetait la semant de rayons.
Ton maillot ta chemise et ta ceinture noire
Etonnent ma cellule et me laissent couillon
Devant ton bel ivoire.

IV

BELLES NUITS du plein jour
Ténèbres de Pilorge
C'est dans vos noirs détours
Mon couteau que l'on forge.

Mon dieu me voici nu
Dans mon terrible Louvre.
A peine reconnu
Que ton poing fermé m'ouvre.

Je ne suis plus qu'amour
Toutes mes branches brûlent
Si j'obscurcis le jour
En moi l'ombre recule.

Il se peut qu'à l'air pur
Mon corps sec tombe en poudre
Posé contre le mur
J'ai l'éclat de la foudre.

Le cœur de mon soleil
Le chant du coq le crève
Mais jamais le sommeil
N'ose y verser ses rêves.

Séchant selon mes vœux
Je fixe le silence
Quand des oiseaux de feu
De mon arbre s'élancent.

V

DES DAMES que l'on croit de nature cruelle
Leurs pages messagers portent des ornements.
Ils se lèvent la nuit ces rôdeurs de ruelle
Et sur un signe d'eux vous partez hardiment.

Or tel gosse vibrant dans sa robe de grâce
Me fut l'ange envoyé dont je suivais confus
Par la course affolé la lumineuse trace
Jusqu'à cette cellule où luisait son refus.

all the way to this cell where his refusal was shining.

VI

WHEN I'VE wished to sing in other scales than his
my plume embroiling itself in rays of light
with a dizzying word, headfirst
I stupidly fell, conducted by this error
to the bottom of his rut.

VII

NOTHING ANYMORE
will trouble the eternal season
where I find myself caught.
The still water of solitude
guards me and fills the prison.
I am twenty years old forever
despite your study.

To please you, oh urchin of a deaf beauty
I will remain clothed until I die
and your soul leaving your decapitated body
will find in mine a white abode.

Oh to know you sleep beneath my modest roof!
You speak through my mouth
and through my eyes gaze
this room is yours and my verse is yours.
Relive what pleases you
I am keeping watch.

VIII

PERHAPS it was you, the demon who wept
behind my high walls?
Returned among us more nimble than a ferret
my divine scoundrel

Through a new death destiny destroys again
our desolate loves
for it was you again, Pilorge, don't lie
these stolen shadows!

IX

THE CHILD I was seeking
scattered among so many kids
is dead in his bed, alone
like a royal prince.
Hesitating on his toe
a grace shoes him
and covers his body
with a royal flag.

VI

QUAND J'AI voulu chanter d'autres gammes que lui
Ma plume s'embrouillant dans les rais de lumière
D'un mot vertigineux la tête la première
Stupide je tombais par cette erreur conduit
Au fond de son ornière.

VII

RIEN NE TROUBLERA plus l'éternelle saison
Où je me trouve pris. L'eau de la solitude
Immobile me garde et remplit la prison.
J'ai vingt ans pour toujours et malgré votre étude.

Pour te plaire ô gamin d'une sourde beauté
Je resterai vêtu jusqu'à ce que je meure
Et ton âme quittant ton corps décapité
Trouvera dans mon corps une blanche demeure.

Oh savoir que tu dors sous mon modeste toit!
Tu parles par ma bouche et par mes yeux regardes
Cette chambre est la tienne et mes vers sont de toi.
Revis ce qu'il te plaît car je monte la garde.

VIII

PEUT-ÊTRE c'était toi le démon qui pleurait
Derrière ma muraille?
Revenu parmi nous plus preste qu'un furet
Ma divine canaille

Le sort détruit encor par un nouveau trépas
Nos amours désolées
Car c'était encor toi Pilorge ne mens pas
Que ces Ombres volées!

IX

L'ENFANT que je cherchais épars sur tant de gosses
Est mort dans son lit seul comme un prince royal.
Hésitant sur l'orteil une grâce le chausse
Et recouvre son corps d'un étendart loyal

A la douceur d'un geste où s'accroche une rose
Je reconnais la main dévalisant les morts!
Seul tu fis ces travaux qu'un soldat même n'ose
Et tu descends chez eux sans craintes ni remords.

In the sweetness of a rose-holding gesture
 I recognize the hand plundering the dead!
 A soldier would never do the deeds
 that you, alone, did
 and you descend among them
 with neither dread
 nor remorse.

Like your body
 a black undershirt gloved your soul
 and when you profaned against the designated tomb
 you carved with the point of a blade
 the figure of a rebus
 aligned by lightning.

We have seen you rise, carried by madness
 hanging by your hair
 to the crowns of iron
 in pearly lace and roses soiled
 arms twisted from being seized alive.

Barely returned to bring us your smile
 you disappeared so quickly I believed
 that without telling us, your sleeping grace
 wandered other skies for another face.

On a passing child I glimpse
 flashes of your well-built body
 I wish to speak to you through him
 but a subtle gesture from him
 makes you fade from him
 and plunges you into my verse
 where you cannot escape.

Which angel then
 permitted you to pass
 unflinchingly through matter
 cleaving the air with your hand
 like the delicate whirl at the tip of a missile
 that traces and destroys its own precious path?

We were desolated by your narrow escape.
 A brilliant tailspin placed you in our arms.
 You pecked our necks and wished to please us
 and your hand was forgiving
 to all these shorn hairs.

But you no longer appear, blond kid whom I seek.
 I tumble in a word and see you in reverse.
 You move away from me, I am saved by verse.
 Through a bramble of cries I lead myself astray.

To seize you the Sky set subtle traps
 ferocious and new, in league with Death
 watching from the top of an invisible throne
 the cords and knots
 on bobbins of gold.

Comme ton corps un maillot noir gantait ton âme
 Et quand tu profanais le tombeau désigné
 Tu découpais avec la pointe d'une lame
 La ligne d'un rébus par la foudre aligné.

Nous t'avons vu surgir porté par la folie
 Aux couronnes de fer accroché par les tifs
 Dans la dentelle en perle et les roses salies
 Les bras entortillés d'avoir été pris vifs.

A peine revenu nous porter ton sourire
 Et tu disparaissais si vite que j'ai cru
 Que ta grâce endormie avait sans nous le dire
 Pour un autre visage autres ciels parcouru.

De ton corps bien taillé sur un enfant qui passe
 J'entrevois les éclats je lui veux te parler
 Mais un geste de lui subtil de lui t'efface
 Et te plonge en mes vers d'où tu ne peux filer.

Quel ange a donc permis qu'à travers les solides
 Tu passes sans broncher fendant l'air de ta main
 Hélice délicate à l'avant d'un bolide
 Qui trace et qui détruit son précieux chemin?

Nous étions désolés par ta fuite légère.
 Un tête-queue brillant te mettait dans nos bras.
 Tu bécotais nos cous et tu nous voulais plaire
 Et ta main pardonnait à tous ces cheveux ras.

Mais tu n'apparais plus gosse blond que je cherche.
 Je tombe dans un mot et t'y vois à l'envers.
 Tu t'éloignes de moi un vers me tend la perche.
 D'une ronce de cris je m'é gare à travers.

Pour te saisir le Ciel fit de sublimes pièges
 Féroces et nouveaux œuvrant avec la Mort
 Qui surveillait du haut d'un invisible siège
 Les cordes et les nœuds sur des bobines d'or.

Il se servit encor du trajet des abeilles
 Il dévida si long de rayons et de fil
 Qu'il fit captive enfin cette rose merveille:
 Un visage d'enfant qui s'offrait de profil.

Ce jeu s'il est cruel je n'oserais m'en plaindre
 Un chant de désespoir en crevant ton bel œil

The Sky even used the passage of bees
unwinding so many rays and so much thread(2)
that he finally made captive this rose marvel:
a child's face offering itself in profile.

If this game is cruel I wouldn't dare complain
in bursting your beautiful eye
a song of despair went mad to see you
embraced by so much horror
and this song, for a thousand years
made your coffin tremble.

Caught in the snares of gods, strangled by their silk
you are dead without even knowing why or how.
You triumph over me
but lose at the game of the goose(3)
where I dare to rape you
my fugitive lover.

In spite of black soldiers who will lower their lances
you cannot flee from the bed where an iron mask
pins you rigid -- but suddenly you spring forth
fall back without moving
and return to hell.

X

MY BELOVED DUNGEON

in your stirring shadow
my eye, by chance, discovered a secret.
I have slept sleeps the world has never known
where terror knots itself.

Your dark corridors are meanderings of the heart
and their mass of dreams organize in silence
a mechanism bearing resemblance to verse
and its exact rigor.

From my eye and my temple
your night lets flow a flood of ink
so heavy that the plume I steep here
will bring forth flowering stars
like one sees in a barrage.

I advance in a liquid darkness
where formless conspiracies
slowly start to take shape.
Why should I howl for help?
All my gestures break apart
and my cries are too
beautiful.

From my muffled distress you will only know
strange beauties revealed by the day.
After thousands of their tricks
the hoodlums that I listen to
crowd together in the open air.

S'affola de te voir par tant d'horreur étreindre
Et ce chant pour mille ans fit vibrer ton cercueil.

Pris au piège des dieux étranglé par leur soie
Tu es mort sans savoir ni pourquoi ni comment.
Tu triomphes de moi mais perds au jeu de l'oie
Où je t'ose forcer mon fugitif amant.

Malgré les soldats noirs qui baisseront leurs lances
Tu ne peux fuir du lit où le masque de fer
T'immobilise raide et soudain tu t'élances
Retombes sans bouger et reviens en enfer.

X

MON CACHOT bien-aimé dans ton ombre mouvante
Mon œil a découvert par mégarde un secret.
J'ai dormi des sommeils que le monde ignorait
Où se noue l'épouvante.

Tes couloirs ténébreux sont méandres du cœur
Et leur masse de rêve organise en silence
Un mécanisme ayant du vers la ressemblance
Et l'exacte rigueur.

Ta nuit laisse couler de mon œil et ma tempe
Un flot d'encre si lourde qu'elle en fera sortir
Des étoiles de fleurs comme on le voit d'un tir
La plume que j'y trempe.

J'avance dans un noir liquide où des complots
Informes tout d'abord lentement se précisent.
Qu'hurlerais-je au secours? Tous mes gestes se brisent
Et mes cris sont trop beaux.

Vous ne saurez jamais de ma sourde détresse
Que d'étranges beautés que révèle le jour.
Les voyous que j'écoute après leurs mille tours
A l'air libre se pressent.

Ils dépêchent sur terre un doux ambassadeur
Un enfant sans regard qui marque son passage
En crevant tant de peaux que son joyeux message
Y gagne sa splendeur.

Vous pâlissez de honte à lire le poème
Qu'inscrit l'adolescent aux gestes criminels
Mais vous ne saurez rien des nœuds originels

They dispatch a soft ambassador on earth
 a child who doesn't care, and marks his passage
 by bursting so many skins
 that his joyous message
 gains its splendor here.

You pale with shame from reading the poem
 inscribed by the adolescent with criminal gestures
 but you will never know
 anything of the original knots
 of my somber wrath

For the odors rolling in his night are too strong.
 He will sign Pilorge and his apotheosis
 will be the bright scaffold of gushing roses
 beautiful effect of Death.

XI

CHANCE -- the greatest of chances!
 Too often made my plume create
 at the heart of all my poems
 the rose with the white word of Death
 embroidered on the arm bands
 of the black warriors I love.

What gardens can flower through my night
 what painful games happen here
 that petals are plucked from this cut rose
 and who silently takes it to the blank page
 where your laughter greets it?

But if I know nothing precise about Death
 from having spoken so much of her
 and in a grave way
 then she must live within me
 in order to rise so easily
 and flow from my drivel
 at the least of my words.

I know nothing of her
 it's said that the magic of her beauty
 eats away eternity
 but this pure movement explodes with failure
 and betrays the secret of a tragic disorder.

Pale from moving in a climate of tears
 she comes with bare feet exploding in puffs
 to my very surface where these bouquets
 teach me of the stifled
 tenderness of Death.

I will abandon myself to your arms, gorgeous Death
 for I know how to rediscover
 the moving meadow of my open childhood
 where you will lead me to the side
 of the stranger with the flowery dick.

De ma sombre véhème

Car les parfums roulant dans sa nuit sont trop forts.
 Il signera Pilorge et son apotheose
 Sera l'échafaud clair d'où jaillissent les roses
 Bel effet de la Mort.

XI

LE HASARD fit sortir - le plus grand! des hasards
 Trop souvent de ma plume au cœur de mes poèmes
 La Rose avec le mot de Mort qu'à leurs brassards
 Portent brodés en blanc les noirs guerriers que j'aime.

Quel jardin peut fleurir tout au long de ma nuit
 Et quels jeux douloureux s'y livrent qu'ils effeuillent
 Cette rose coupée et qui monte sans bruit
 Jusqu'à la page blanche où vos rires l'accueillent.

Mais si je ne sais rien de précis sur la Mort
 D'avoir tant parlé d'elle et sur le mode grave
 Elle doit vivre en moi pour surgir sans effort
 Au moindre de mes mots s'écouler de ma bave.

Je ne connais rien d'elle, on dit que sa beauté
 Use l'éternité par son pouvoir magique
 Mais ce pur mouvement éclate de ratés
 Et trahit les secrets d'un désordre tragique.

Pâle de se mouvoir dans un climat de pleurs
 Elle vient les pieds nus explosant par bouffées
 A ma surface même où ces bouquets de fleurs
 M'apprennent de la Mort des douceurs étouffées.

Je m'abandonnerai belle Mort à ton bras
 Car je sais retrouver l'émouvante prairie
 De mon enfance ouverte et tu me conduiras
 Auprès de l'étranger à la verge fleurie.

Et fort de cette force ô reine je serai
 Le ministre secret de ton théâtre d'ombres.
 Douce Mort prenez-moi me voici préparé
 En route, à mi-chemin de votre ville sombre.

XII

SUR UN MOT ma voix bute et du choc tu jaillis
 Au miracle si prompt que joyeux à tes crimes!

And strong with this strength, oh queen, I will be
the secret minister of your theater of shadows.
Sweet Death, take me, I'm ready
here I am, on my way
to your somber city.

XII

ON A WORD my voice stumbles
and from the shock you spring forth
as eager for this miracle
as you are for your crimes!

Who then will be astonished
when I lay down my files
to thoroughly explore
the thickets of the word?

My friends keep watch to slip me some ropes
you fall asleep on the grass throughout the prison.
For you, and even your friendship
I don't give a damn.
I guard this luck
the judges grant me.

Is this you, other me, without your silver slippers
Salome, who brings a cut rose to me?
This bleeding rose, finally unwrapped from its linen
is it hers, or is it the head of Jean?

Pilorge, answer me! Make your eyelid twitch
Speak to me askewly, sing from your throat
chopped near your hair and fall from your rosebush
word by word, oh my Rose
enter my prayer!

XIII

OH MY PRISON where I die without aging
I love you.
Life, laced with death, drains from me.
Their slow heavy waltz is danced in reverse
each unwinds sublime reason
opposed to the other.

Still, I have too much room, this is not my tomb
my cell is too large and my window too pure.
Waiting to be reborn in the prenatal night
I allow myself to live so I
can be recognized by Death
through a higher sign.

To everyone except the Sky I shut my door forever
and I only grant a friendly minute
to the young thieves whom my ear spies upon

Qui donc s'étonnera que je pose mes limes
Pour éprouver à fond du verbe les taillis?

Mes amis qui veillez pour me passer des cordes
Autour de la prison sur l'herbe endormez-vous.
De votre amitié même et de vous je m'en fous.
Je garde ce bonheur que les juges m'accordent.

Est-toi autre moi sans tes souliers d'argent
Salomé qui m'apporte une rose coupée?
Cette rose qui saigne enfin développée
De son linge est la sienne ou la tête de Jean?

Pilorge réponds-moi! Fais bouger ta paupière
Parle-moi de travers chante par ton gosier
Tranché par tes cheveux tombe de ton rosier
Mot à mot ô ma Rose entre dans ma prière!

XIII

OÙ SANS VIEILLIR je meurs je t'aime ô ma prison.
La vie de moi s'évade à la mort enlacée.
Leur valse lente et lourde à l'envers est dansée
Chacune dévidant sa sublime raison
L'une à l'autre opposée.

J'ai trop de place encor ce n'est pas mon tombeau
Trop grande est ma cellule et pure ma fenêtre.
Dans la nuit prénatale attendant de renaître
Je me laisse vivant par un signe plus haut
De la Mort reconnaître.

A tout autre qu'au Ciel je ferme pour toujours
Ma porte et je n'accorde une minute amie
Qu'aux très jeunes voleurs dont mon oreille épie
De quel espoir cruel l'appel à mon secours
Dans leur chanson finie.

Mon chant n'est pas truqué si j'hésite souvent
C'est que je cherche loin sous mes terres profondes
Et j'amène toujours avec les mêmes sondes
Les morceaux d'un trésor enseveli vivant
Dès les débuts du monde.

Si vous pouviez me voir sur ma table penché
Le visage défait par ma littérature
Vous sauriez que m'écœure aussi cette aventure
Effrayante d'oser découvrir l'or caché
Sous tant de pourriture.

with cruel hope, the call for my help
within their finished song.

If I hesitate often my song is not faked
for I search far beneath my deep terrains
and I always emerge with the same soundings
pieces of a treasure buried alive
since the beginnings of the world.

If you could see me above my table bent
face wasted by my literature
you would know that it sickens me also
this dreadful adventure
of daring to discover
the gold hidden
beneath so much
putrification.

A joyous aurora bursts in my eye
like the bright morning a carpet
was laid on the stones
to muffle your walk
across the labyrinths
of suffocated corridors
from your threshold
to the gates
of dawn.

Une aurore joyeuse éclate dans mon œil
Pareille au matin clair qu'un tapis sur les dalles
Pour étouffer ta marche à travers les dédales
Des couloirs suffoqués l'on posa de ton seuil
Aux portes matinales.

Source of Text

The text used here is from the original version of *Chants secrets*, published by L'Arbalète, Décines, France, 1945. Copies are numbered 1-400. Lithograph by Emile Picqu.

End Notes

1. "Belles mortes" (*beautiful dead*) refers to *dead women* or *feminized men*.
2. "Rayons" (*rays*) also means *honeycombs*.
3. "Jeu de l'œie" (*the game of the goose*) is a children's game similar to chutes and ladders, but might have other goosular connotations.

MARK SPITZER

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THE GALLEY

Translation by Mark Spitzer

A liberated convict, hard and ferocious, flings
a galley-slave into the yard
but with a flourish of sword
the pimp, Southern Cross
and the murderer, North Pole (1)
remove from an other
his earrings of gold.
The most beautiful are flowering
with strange maladies.
Their guitar-butts burst in melody.
The foam of the sea wets us with spit.
Are we cast up
from the throats
of a pasha?

«

They speak of beating me and I hear your blows.
Who rolls me, Harcamone, and stitches me
in your pleats?

«

Green-armed Harcamone, high-flying queen
on your nocturnal odor
and the woods awakened
through the horror of his name
this grieving convict sings
on my galley
and his song
devastates me.

«

The oars weighed down by chains and shame
the studs, the pirates, these bulls of the sea
and your gesture wrought by a thousand years
recount them
and the silence
with the night of your clear eye.

«

By the threads of death
the weapons of these nights
carried my arms paralyzed by wine
the azure of nostrils
traversed by the rose gone astray

La Galère

by Jean Genet

Un forçat délivré dur et féroce lance
Un chiourme dans le pré mais d'une fleur de lance
Le marlou Croix du Sud l'assassin Pôle-Nord
Aux oreilles d'un autre ôtent ses boucles d'or.
Les plus beaux sont fleuris d'étranges maladies.
Leur croupe de guitare éclate en mélodies.
L'écume de la mer nous mouille de crachats.
Sommes-nous remontés des gorges d'un pacha?

«

On parle de me battre et j'écoute vos coups.
Qui me roule Harcamone et dans vos plis me coud?

«

Harcamone aux bras verts haute reine qui vole
Sur ton odeur nocturne et les bois éveillés
Par l'horreur de son nom ce bagnard endeuillé
Sur ma galère chante et son chant me désole.

«

Les rameaux alourdis par la chaîne et la honte
Les marles les forbans ces taureaux de la mer
Ouvragé par mille ans ton geste les raconte
Et le silence avec la nuit de ton œil clair.

«

Les armes de ces nuits par les fils de la mort
Portées mes bras cloués de vin l'azur qui sort
De naseaux traversés par la rose égarée
Où tremble sous la feuille une biche dorée...
Je m'étonne et m'égare à poursuivre ton cours
Étonnant fleuve d'eau des veines du discours.

where a gilded doe shudders under the brush... (2)
 I astonish myself and lose myself
 in pursuing your course
 Astonishing river
 from the veins of discourse.

«

«

Stink up my palate with these toughts that you guard
 bound up in your curls above two folded arms
 open your torso of gold so I can see them
 embalmed by the salt in your chest. (3)

«

«

A lamp shines here
 above my half-open coffins
 adorned with wet flowers
 and watches over
 my drowned ones.

«

«

Make a gesture, Harcamone
 stretch your arm a bit
 show me the path
 you will flee by.

You sleep or you die
 but you will rejoin
 this madwoman

where free in their shackles
 the galley-slaves fly
 returning like me
 to prisons, to ports
 to marvelous dungeons
 staggering from hot wines.

«

The melodious farts you muffle
 imprison a green bouquet of frail tender pimps
 nostril swollen, we must await them
 and reach them transported
 by their veiled chariots.

«

My childhood is scarcely laid upon the night
 of flaming papers, mixing this silk
 with the russet splendor a big pimp releases
 in the calm faraway wind
 escaping his body.

«

Nevertheless, the doe is caught in her leafy snare
 in the dawn she awakes, a transparent farewell

«

Empeste mon palais de ces durs que tu gardes
 Dans tes cheveux bouclés sur deux bras repliés
 Ouvre ton torse d'or et que je les regarde
 Embaumés par le sel dans ton coffre liés.

Entr'ouverts ces cercueils ornés de fleurs mouillées
 Une lampe y demeure et veille mes noyées.

Fais un geste Harcamone allonge un peu ton bras
 Montre-moi ce chemin par où tu t'enfuiras.
 Mas tu dors ou tu meurs et rejoins cette folle
 Où libres dans leurs fers les galériens s'envolent.
 Ils regagnent des ports titubants de vins chauds
 Des prisons comme moi de merveilleux cachots.

Ces pets mélodieux où vous emmitouflez
 Cellule un bouquet vert de macs frileux et tendres
 La narine gonflée il faudra les attendre
 Et gagner transporté dans leurs chariots voilés

Mon enfance posée à peine sur la nuit
 De papiers enflammés et mêler cette soie
 A la rousse splendeur qu'un grand marlou déploie
 Du vent calme et lointain qui de son corps s'enfuit.

Pourtant la biche est prise à son piège de feuille
 Dans l'aurore elle éveille un adieu transparent
 Qui traverse ton œil ton cristal et s'éprend
 D'une larme tombée dans la mer qui l'accueille.

goes through your eye, your crystal, and falls in love
with a tear fallen in the sea, welcoming it.

«

A thief in distress, a thief at sea.
And so dark Harcamone with an iron face
ribbons and hair pull him into the mud
or the sea. And of death?
Dressing her shorn dome
in the pleats of the flag
the amused pimp laughs.
Death, however, is clever
I don't dare joke.

«

To the bottom of our story I sleepily plunge
and strangle myself with your throat
sulking scented Harcamone.
On the sea like a sweet-pea
your cabin-boy stolen from death calls for help
fine foam on his mouth
torn by Black Soldiers of the sky
on this water returned.
They dress him with foam and velvet algae.
Love makes their turbaned pricks waltz
(doe, bridling the azure and budding rose)
ropes and bodies were stiff with knots.
And the galley was getting hard.
A dizzying word
from the end of the world
abolished the beautiful order.
I saw maws bite
manacles and lace.

«

Alas, my captive hand is dead without dying.
The gardens don't say where the doe is dressed
in a robe of snow, killed by my grace
to clothe her better in a shroud of foam.

«

The prison which keeps us backs away.
In howling its distress
an unmoving fist on your vine
tangles me in your leaves
to the shoots of your
coldly adorned voice,
Harcamone.

Let's abandon France upon our galley...
the cabin-boy I was must've pleased the malicious.
I was rowing in front of the splendid strangler
made drowsy by this laughing beauty
as flowers entwined
(bindweed unbound, those roses

Un voleur en détresse un voleur à la mer.
Ainsi sombre Harcamone au visage de fer,
Des rubans des cheveux le tirent dans la vase
Ou la mer. Et la mort? Coiffant sa boule rase
Dans les plis du drapeau rit le mac amusé.
Mais la mort est habile et je n'ose ruser.

«

Au fond de notre histoire ensommeillé je plonge
Et m'étrangle à ta gorge Harcamone boudeur
Parfumé. Sur la mer comme un pois de senteur
Ton mousse écume fine à sa bouche écornée
Par les Joyeux du ciel sur cette eau retournée
Volé même à la mort appelle à son secours.
Ils le vêtent d'écume et d'algues de velours.
L'amour faisant valser leur bite enturbanée
(Biche bridant l'azur et rose boutonnée)
Les cordes et les corps étaient roides de nœuds.
Et bandait la galère. Un mot vertigineux
Venu du fond du monde abolit le bel ordre.
Manicles et lacets je vis des gueules mordre.

«

Hélas ma main captive est morte sans mourir.
Les jardins disent non où la biche est vêtue
D'une robe de neige et ma grâce la tue
Pour la mieux d'un linceul d'écume revêtir.

«

La prison qui nous garde à reculons s'éloigne.
En hurlant sa détresse une immobile poigne
A ta vigne me mêle à ta feuille aux sarments
De ta voix Harcamone à ses froids ornements.
Abandonnons la France et sur notre galère...
Le mousse que j'étais aux méchants devait plaire.
Je ramais en avant du splendide étrangleur.
Dont le bel assoupi où s'enroulent les fleurs
(Liserons déboués, roses de la Roquette)
Organisait rieur derrière la braguette
Un bocage adorable où volent des pinsons.
La biche s'enfuyait au souffle des chansons
D'un galérien penché sur la corde du songe.

of Roquette) (4)

and behind his fly he organized
 an adorable grove where finches fly.
 The doe slipped away to the whisper of songs
 of a galley-slave bent over
 the riggings of dreams.

«

The tree's blue branches
 stretch from the salt to the sky.
 My solitude sings
 to my vespers of blood
 an air of golden bubbles
 squeezing from my lips.

«

A boy of love with a rose shirt on
 was trying out ravishing poses on his bed.
 A pale hoodlum from Marseille, a star in his teeth
 lost in the struggle of love with me.
 My hand was smuggling opium loads
 a burden of distress -- and from thick forests
 in constellated valleys
 was wandering paths
 in the shadow of your eyes
 to rediscover your hands
 your pockets, that eagle's nest
 and the famous door where silence carries off
 a treasure of darkness.
 My laughter was smashing itself in the headwind.
 I offer my sore gums in disgust
 to the larvae of a prison
 where I've just been admitted.

«

In the shadow on the wall, from what navigator --
 his fingernail worn by the salt
 though just my height
 among the bleeding hearts confusing the thoughts
 the profiles, the cries of Alas
 our weapons laid down
 indecipherable to he who doesn't
 struggle in the night
 where wolves are words --
 will the shining fingernail let
 the devouring clamor of my mad eyes
 shred to the bone
 the name of
 Andovorante?

«

The proud fellow in front
 who was rearing from shame

«

L'arbre du sel au ciel ses rameaux bleus allonge.
 Ma solitude chante à mes vêpres de sang
 Un air de bulles d'or aux lèvres se pressant.

«

Un enfant de l'amour ayant chemise rose
 Essayait sur son lit de ravissantes poses.
 Un voyou marseillais pâle une étoile aux dents
 De la lutte d'amour avec moi fut pendant.
 Ma main passait en fraude un fardeau de détresses
 Des cargaisons d'opium et de forêts épaisses
 En vallons constellés parcourait des chemins
 A l'ombre de vos yeux pour retrouver vos mains.
 Vos poches ce nid d'aigle et la porte célèbre
 Où le silence emporte un trésor de ténèbre.
 Mon rire se cassait contre le vent debout.
 Gencive douloureuse offerte avec dégoût
 Aux larves d'une prison où l'on vient de m'admettre.

«

Dans l'ombre sur le mur de quel navigateur
 Son ongle usé du sel mais juste à ma hauteur
 Parmi les cœurs saignants que brouillent les pensées
 Les profils les hélas nos armes déposées
 Indéchiffrable à qui ne se bat dans la nuit
 Où des loups sont les mots aura l'ongle qui luit
 Laisse de mes yeux fous la clameur dévorante
 Déchirer jusqu'à l'os le nom d'Andovorante?

«

Le fier gaillard d'avant qui se cabrait de honte
 Était serré de près par le membre d'un comte.
 On le cognait brutal des poings et des genoux.
 Des mâles foudroyés dégringolaient sur nous.
 (Les genoux clairs de lumière et de boue
 Les genoux à genoux sur le pont qui s'ébroue
 Les genoux ces chevaux qui se cabrent dans l'eau
 Les genoux couronnés croupes de matelots)
 La rose du soleil s'effeuillait sur les Iles.
 Le navire filait de mystérieux milles.
 On criait à voix basse un ordre où des baisers

was being held close by the member of a count.
 They were beating him with fists and knees.
 Thunderstruck men were tumbling around us.
 (Knees bright with light, with mud
 knee to knee, splashing on the deck
 knees, those horses rearing in the water
 crowned knees, rumps of sailors)
 The rose of the sun was shedding petals on the Isles.
 The ship was spinning for mysterious miles.
 They were crying out in voices low
 an order where kisses passed like madmen
 unable to rest. On the foam
 a dormant water within me was stretching
 the fragile reflection
 of an unbreakable cabin-boy. (5)

«

Your teeth, Lord, your eye, speak to me of Venice!
 Those birds in the hollow of your boxwood legs!
 My laziness makes that chain on your feet
 even heavier than the error
 conducting me here!

«

The pillow-lace squeals and the curtain rats.
 With your finger you collect the vapors of the pane.
 Your delicate sleep knots itself
 and your mouth puckers
 when your beautiful eye vanishes
 above a rooftop sea.

«

In the torn-corner mouth
 of a lad well suited to wave and wind
 passing awesomely through oriflammes
 I often saw a cig twist
 in my feminine skirts. (6)
 A twenty-year-old galley-slave
 pitiful and scoffed at
 saw himself dying
 nailed to the yard-arm.

«

Harcamone, do you sleep, your head reversed
 Your face in the water, by a dream traversed?
 You walk on my sand where heavy fruit falls
 while in a strange way your velvet balls
 burst in my eyes
 into flowers on a magic tree.
 What I love about dying in your choked voice
 is the hot water swelling this tightened drum.
 Sometimes you say a word and the meaning is lost
 though the voice bearing it is so heavily swollen
 that it's split by this bruised voice

Passaient comme des fous sans savoir se poser.
 Le fragile reflet d'un incassable mousse
 Une eau dormante en moi l'allongeait sur la mousse.

«

Vos dents Seigneur votre œil me parlent de Venise!
 Ces oiseaux dans le creux de vos jambes de buis!
 A vos pieds cette chaîne où ma fainéantise
 Alourdit encore plus l'erreur qui m'y conduit!

«

Trop la guipure parle et le rideau dénonce.
 Les vapeurs du carreau tu les cueilles du doigt.
 Ton fin sommeil se noue et ta bouche se fronce
 Quand se perd ton bel œil sur une mer de toit.

«

Un gars bien balancé par la vague et le vent
 Dans sa gueule ébréchée où je voyais souvent
 S'entortiller la pipe à mes jupes de femmes
 Ce gars passait terrible au milieu d'oriflammes.
 Un chiourme de vingt ans piteux et bafoué
 Se regardait mourir à la vergue cloué.

«

Harcamone dors-tu la tête renversée
 La figure dans l'eau d'un songe traversée
 Tu marches sur mon sable où tombent en fruits lourds
 D'une étrange façon tes couilles de velours
 Éclatant sur mes yeux en fleurs dont l'arbre est fée.
 Ce que j'aime à mourir dans ta voix étouffée
 C'est l'eau chaude qui gonfle ce tambour tendu.
 Parfois tu dis un mot dont le sens est perdu
 Mais la voix qui le porte est si lourde gonflée
 Qu'il la crève il ferait de cette voix talée
 Couler sur ton menton un flot de sang lépreux
 Mon mandrin fier et plus qu'un guerrier coléreux.

«

Aux branches d'un jeune arbre à peine rattachées
 D'autres fleurs j'ai volé qui couraient en riant
 Les pieds sur ma pelouse et mon ombre couchée
 Et m'éclaboussant d'eau ces roses s'y baignant.

a flood of leprous blood flows down your chin
fiercer than a warrior's wrath
my proud mandrin. (7)

«

From the barely reattached
branches of a sapling
I have stolen other flowers
whose feet once ran
laughing on my lawn
where my shadow lay
bathing those roses
splashing me with water.

«

(Handfuls of stems, corollas erect
corollas of feathers and members of lead)
a fatal air sounds in their swift caress
with water cast off
by blows from fine heels.

«

From alleys, hot flowers
leave toward the evening
I am alone, wrapped in a damp flag
who among you will untangle me
from these damp folds
and cruel flames?

«

Is there a country as cool as your laughter?
Your tongue licking snow on the reefs
the salt of algae and azure on the belly
and the vibrating song of your lyre-like body.

«

To pursue the doe here
is a game I make up as I go.
An arousing queen, exiled and so sweet
deflowered by each leap
is untangled beneath
the wet cloak of a doe.
Frozen with respect
I find in the edges of your face
a captive queen chained to the shore.
Sleep, handsome Harcamone
killer who wishes to cross the gorges
in my winged shoes.

«

In that fragile instant when everything was possible
we were walking on the astonished

«

(Tiges à pleines mains corolles se redressent
Corolles sont de plume et les membres de plomb)
Il sonne un air fatal à leurs vives caresses
Avec l'eau rejetée à coups de fins talons.

«

Chaudes fleurs qui sortez vers le soir des ruelles
Je suis seul enfermé dans un drapeau mouillé
De ces humides plis de ces flammes cruelles
Belles fleurs qui de vous saura me débrouiller?

«

Est-il pays plus frais que celui de vos rires.
Neige sur les écueils votre langue léchant
Le sel d'algues d'azur sur le ventre et le chant
Vibrant dans votre corps tourné comme une lyre?

«

Y poursuivre la biche est un jeu que j'invente
A mesure. On débrouille une reine émouvante
Exilée et si douce à chaque bond cassé
Sous le manteau mouillé d'une biche. Glacé
De respect je retrouve aux bords de ton visage
Une reine captive enchaînée au rivage.
Dormez belle Harcamone assassin qui voulez
Les gorges traverser dans mes souliers ailés.

«

Sur cet instant fragile où tout était possible
Nous marchions sur l'azur étonné mais paisible.
La galère en désordre était d'une beauté
Moins étrange que douce un village enchanté
Un air de désespoir accompagnant sa fête
(il neigeait quelle paix sur la calme tempête!)
De violons et de valse. Elle avait sur les bras
Tout son fardeau sacré dans un funèbre aura
De colonnes de fûts de cordes et de torsos.
L'océan se tordait sous sa fragile écorce.
Le ciel disait sa messe il pouvait de nos cœurs
Compter les battements. Dure était la rigueur
De cet ordre terrible où la beauté tremblait.
Nous allions en silence à travers des palais
Où la mort solennelle avait passé sa vie.

but peaceful azure.
 The galley in disorder was of a beauty
 less strange than sweet
 an enchanted village
 an air of despair
 along with its feast
 (it was snowing, what peace
 upon the calm tempest!)
 of violins and waltzes.
 In the funereal aura of her arms
 she had all her sacred burden
 of columns, shafts, ropes and torsos.
 The ocean was writhing beneath her thin skin.
 The sky was saying its mass
 and counting the beats of our hearts.
 Hard was the rigor of this terrible order
 where beauty trembled.
 Silently we moved through palaces
 where solemn death had spent its life.
 I no longer had the desire, nor the strength
 to rise to the air, what's the use?
 My most beautiful friends
 are becoming accustomed to the world
 and the air
 of tombs.

«

And all those bright children were flying in the sails.
 At full speed, the dream bearing you
 was spinning away.
 The broken garland was knotted by love
 to the feet of death
 and death was cheated.
 I experienced a dreadful motionless moment
 for I knew this elusive beautiful world
 had been seized in an eternity
 more hard and more solid
 than that of Egypt
 hardly less sordid.
 They left some bulls strangled by the knot
 formed by three men
 and the salty wind's hand
 pardoned their sins.
 This galley was a carousel
 broken by an evening of anger.
 And yet what grace astonished my eye!
 Solemn monument:
 bodies lacking simple coffins
 by the dream
 we were embalmed empalmed! (9)
 Press your hands of sponge
 To my salty torso
 bring your fingers of love!
 I know how to return
 from formless turns.

«

De remonter à l'air je n'avais plus l'envie
 Ni la force à quoi bon mes amis les plus beaux
 S'accommodant du monde et de l'air des tombeaux.

«

Et tous ces clairs enfants volaient dans la voilure.
 Le songe vous portant filait à toute allure.
 La guirlande rompue fut par l'amour nouée
 Jusqu'aux pieds de la mort et la mort fut jouée.
 Je vivais immobile un moment effrayant
 Car je savais saisi ce beau monde fuyant
 Dans une éternité plus dure et plus solide
 Que celle de l'Égypte à peine moins sordide.
 On quittait des taureaux par le nœud étranglé
 De trois hommes formé. La main du vent salé
 Pardonnait les péchés. C'était cette galère
 Un manège cassé par un soir de colère.
 Et pourtant quelle grâce émerveille mon œil!
 Solennel monument cadavres sans cercueil
 Cercueils sans ornements nous étions par le songe
 Embaumés empaumés.
 Pressez vos mains d'éponge!
 A mon torse salé portez vos doigts d'amour.
 Je saurai revenir des informes détours.

«

Brouillard au bout des doigts si je touche à ta robe
 Animal tu fondras pour d'air bleu devenir
 Une larme roulant de ton étrange globe
 Sur ton pied sec à toi biche se doit m'unir.

«

La bruyère est si rose approche un éventail
 De ta joue un soupir dégonfle le silence.
 Le hallier se blottit dans l'ombre au lent travail
 Je resterai donc seul. Qui soupire et s'avance
 Nuit? Sur tes bois s'éveille un vaisseau mal ancré

If I touch your dress
 there'll be fog upon my fingertips
 You'll melt from blue air, animal
 and turn into a tear
 rolling from your odd orb
 to your dry foot
 uniting me to you
 my doe.

«

The heather is so rosy, place a fan to your cheek
 a sigh deflates the silence.
 The thistle nestles in the slow-moving shadow
 and so I'll stay alone.
 Who sighs and advances, night?
 Above your woods
 a badly anchored vessel
 awakes in the sky.
 O delicate doe,
 your ear hears
 a soft rustle of branches
 as it listens to the murmur of gilded air
 clearly breaking the ice...

«

Bunches of poisoners hanging from ropes
 convicts dicking each other
 mixing their ages.
 From the Grand Fatigue a sleeping child
 returned naked, stained by vomited sperm.
 The most heart-rending sobs of the sail
 gathered to cast off
 like the point of a star
 while the heart and lips of a lad
 rested on my neck
 thus crowning me
 and completing the destruction.
 My efforts to rediscover your lands were in vain.
 Fetid and solitary, my head was sinking
 to the bottom of the sea of odiferous dreams
 to what absurd depths I don't know.
 A sudden Greek fracas made the ship shudder
 and with a final smile
 it wiped itself out.
 A first star flowered in the sky of slang.
 That was the night the name
 the silence, and the scream
 of a charming galley-slave
 knew its place
 in our querulous groves
 where this doe weeps
 a being of the night, whose lazy pants
 lowered the flap for my free vessel.
 Deep in my blue hand the water rose closes.
 (the ether vibrates obediently

Dans le ciel. Biche fine un doux bruit de ramure
 Ton oreille recueille et le doigt d'air doré
 Net cassant cette glace écoute leur murmure...

«

Grappes d'empoisonneurs suspendus aux cordages
 Se bitent les bagnards en mélangeant leurs âges.
 De la Grande Fatigue un enfant endormi
 Revenait nu taché par le sperme vomi.
 Et le plus déchirant des sanglots de la voile
 Appareiller cueilli comme un rameau d'étoile
 Sur mon cou reposait cœur et lèvres d'un gars
 Mettait une couronne achevait les dégâts.
 Mes efforts étaient vains pour retrouver vos terres.
 Ma tête s'enlisait fétide et solitaire
 Au fond des mers du lit du songe des odeurs
 Jusqu'à je ne sais quelle absurde profondeur.
 Un fracas grec soudain fit trembler le navire
 Qui s'effaça lui-même en un dernier sourire.
 Une première étoile au ciel d'argot fleurit.
 D'un galérien charmant connaissant sa demeure
 Dans nos bosquets plaintifs où cette biche pleure
 Un être de la nuit dont le froc paresseux
 Baissa le pont de toile à mon libre vaisseau.
 La rose d'eau se ferme au fond de ma main bleue.
 (L'éther vibre docile aux sursauts de ma queue.
 De nocturnes velours sont tendus ces palais
 Que traversait mon chibre et que tu désolais
 A bondir sans détours jusqu'aux étoiles nues
 Parcourant le pied vif de froides avenues.)
 Sur le ciel tu t'épands Harcamone! et froissé
 Le ciel clair s'est couvert mais d'un geste amusé.

«

Un cavalier chantait du ciel à la galère
 Par les astres gelés les systèmes solaires.

«

Escaladant la nue et l'éternelle nuit

with the leaps of my prick.
 These palaces are hung with nocturnal velvets
 which my cock passed through
 and you left desolate
 in leaping straight to the naked stars
 swiftly wandering cold avenues)
 Harcamone, you spread yourself across the sky!
 and offended, the bright sky is obscured
 with a gesture of amusement.

«

A cavalier was singing
 from the heavens to the galley
 through the frozen stars
 the solar systems.

«

Scaling the heavens and the eternal night
 who fixed the galley to the pure sky of ennui
 at the feet of the virgin calling her bees?

«

Stars, I vomit you, and my pain is similar
 to that of your dead hanging hand, Harcamone.
 Wind your legs and arms around me
 oh my rambling rose
 but close your wings again.
 Let's not leave anything behind
 no files, no string, no clues
 let's hop into these chariots
 I hear rolling beneath
 your thin undershirt.

«

But I no longer have hope
 they've cut these stems from me.
 Farewell studs of seventeen
 to twenty years old
 farewell studs
 of the evening.

«

Voyage on the moon
 or the sea I don't know
 Harcamone with a rosy neck
 circled by a noose.

«

Oh my slaughtered beauty, you walk
 on the bottom of the sea
 carried by each step
 on your wave of heavy scents

Qui fixa la galère au ciel pur de l'ennui
 Sur les pieds de la vierge appelant ses abeilles?

«

Astres je vous dégueule et ma peine est pareille
 Harcamone à ta main ta main morte qui pend.
 Enroule autour de moi ô mon rosier grim pant
 Tes jambes et tes bras mais referme tes ailes.
 Ne laissons rien traîner ni limes ni ficelles.
 Pas de traces sortons sautons dans ces chariots
 Que j'écoute rouler sous ton mince maillot.

«

Mais je n'ai plus d'espoir, on m'a coupé ces tiges.
 Adieu marlous du soir de dix-sept à vingt piges.

«

Voyage sur la lune ou la mer je ne sais
 Harcamone au cou rose entouré d'un lacet.

«

O ma belle égorgée au fond de l'eau tu marches
 Portée à chaque pas sur tes parfums épais
 Sur leur vague qui frise et se déforme après
 Et tu traverses lente un labyrinthe d'arches.

«

Dans l'eau de tes étangs de noirs roseaux se traînent
 A ton torse à tes bras se noue un écheveau
 De ces rumeurs de mort plus fort que les chevaux
 Emmêlés l'un dans l'autre aux brancarts d'une reine.

«

Source of Text

This is the *re-membered* version of Genet's most dismembered poem. In the past, this poem has always been stanzically misrepresented; the stanzas being so long that the printers were forced to chop up the strophes so they'd fit on the page. But by using

which curls and unfurls after
as you slowly cross
a labyrinth of arches.

«

In the water of your pools, black reeds trail
from your torso and your arms
forming a skein of rumors of death
stronger than horses
tangled in each other
to the shanks
of a queen.

«

"La Galère (Fragments)" -- which was originally dedicated to Nico Dakis and published in *La Table ronde*, vol. 3, 1945 -- as a guide for realigning the stanzic form, the actual context of the original *La Galère*, of which 80 copies were published in 1947 by Jaques Layou's "Librairie à Paris, Passage des Panoramas, et imprimée sur les presses de l'Hôtel de Sagonne" (with illustrations by Léonor Fini) -- was applied to the original structure in order to reconstruct the poem. Stars have been installed to clearly mark the stanzic breaks.

End Notes

1. The word "marlou" (*pimp*) or "marle," also refers to a homosexual male who plays the dominant role.
2. The "gilded doe" (*biche dorée*) is a buggered boy. This meaning goes back to the argot of the reform school Mettray. As Edmund White explains in the biography *Genet*, the word "biche" finds its roots in the reflexive verb "se bicher" (*to escape*), and thus, also means *runaway boy*. These contexts are relevant to all instances of "doe" and "gilded" in the poems of Genet.
3. The French verb "embaumer" (*to embalm*) also means *to perfume*.
4. "Bel" (*beauty*) refers to a beautiful male. When Genet was fifteen years old, he was held at the Petite-Roquette Prison in Paris.
5. The verb "casser," like "rompre" (see endnote 6, "The Prisoner Condemned to Death"), is used by Genet to suggest rape.
6. Whereas "pipe" is slang for *cigarette*, the image of a more sexual pipe is also being alluded to.
7. Besides having phallic connotations, "mandrin" (a *machine punch* or *lathe blade*) can also be a bandit such as Mandrin, a dashing brigand of folklore, who, like Robin Hood, stole from the rich and gave to the poor.
8. Again, "broken" implies penetration.
9. The verb "empaumé" (*to palm, to swindle*) also includes the meaning of *to seduce*.

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THE PARADE

Translation by Mark Spitzer

SILENCE, we must stay awake tonight
without sitting or lying down
each of us, to guard ourselves
against the packs.

The black rosette of death
pricks its flowering heart
from a kiss colored by the blood.
We must stay awake to cling
to the clear ropes
of dawn.

Charming child, the tower is high
where you climb with a snowy foot
in the brambles of your clothes
the roses of shame
bend over.

THERE'S SINGING in the eastern courtyard
silence wakes the men
silence cut by shadow.
We are proud to be
buttfuckers.

Silence again, we must stay awake
the executioner will ignore the festivity
when the sky takes your head
from the pillow
by your hair.

DURING THE NIGHT of June 17th to 18th, at the camp of the Parade, the execution of thirty thousand adolescents took place. Millions of stars, the splinters of mica, sugar, brambles, honey-suckles, small paper flags, the tracts of the sky, the glory of water, the summer vacations of children, the Mourning, the Absence -- all tried to lend a hand.

Without even knowing it, the press spoke a lot about that boy whom a snake charmer buggered, half-dead in the ropes.

SLAVES of a sin keeping you in grief
through my wrists of foam you twist the killer;
his cries and blue crimes drip ink in your eye
which reveals you and fogs you
with death.

La Parade

by Jean Genet

SILENCE, il faut veiller ce soir
Chacun prendre à ses meutes garde.
Et ne s'allonger ni s'asseoir
De la mort la noire cocarde

Piquer son cœur et l'en fleurir
D'un baiser que le sang colore.
Il faut veiller se retenir
Aux cordages clairs de l'aurore.

Enfant charmant haut est la tour
Où d'un pied de neige tu montes.
Dans la ronce de tes atours
Penchent les roses de la honte.

ON CHANTE dans la cour de l'Est
Le silence éveille les hommes.
Silence coupé d'ombre et c'est
De fiers enculés que nous sommes.

Silence encor il faut veiller
Le Bourreau ignore la fête
Quand le ciel sur ton oreiller
Par les cheveux prendra ta tête.

DANS LA NUIT du 17 au 18 juin, eut lieu, au camp de la Parade, l'exécution capitale de trente mille adolescents. Des millions d'étoiles, les éclats du mica, du sucre, les ronces, les chèvre-feuilles, les petits drapeaux en papier, les tracts du ciel, la gloire des eaux, les grandes vacances des enfants, le Deuil, l'Absence voulurent apporter leur concours.

Sans le savoir, la presse parla beaucoup de cet enfant qu'un charmeur de serpent enculait, à demi-mort dans les cordages.

ESCLAVES d'un péché qui vous maintient en deuil
Vous tordez l'assassin par mes poignets d'écume;
Ses cris, ses crimes bleus égouttent dans votre œil
L'encre qui vous révèle et de mort vous embrume.

O mes pâles larrons, gardez ce fils des dieux,

Oh my pale thieves, guard this son of the gods
so he can croak! Your black uniform
is his death.

Now, the child on the straw
stretches his leafy ankles
to the bottom of the heavens
so they fall asleep.

SCOUNDREL, will you dare to ever bite me again
remember that I am the page of the Monarch
you roll beneath my hand
like a wave beneath my barque
oh my wild quail, crushed
by my fingers

your swell fills me.

I

TRANSPARENT TRAVELER
from the panes of the thicket
through the route of the blood
brought back to my mouth
fingers full of moon
and footstep wide awake
I hear the evening beating
asleep on my bed.

II

YOUR SOUL is back from the confines of myself
prisoner of a sky of idle ways
where the night of a thief slept easily
in the hollow of a poem
beneath the sky of my hand.

A ROSE AVALANCHE
is dead between our sheets.
This muscled rose, this chandelier of the Opera
fallen from sleep, black with cries and ferns
which the hand of a shepherdess installs around us
this rose awakens!
Beneath the shrouds of grief rigged by the tale!
Vibrant bugles of the sky, wandered by bees
appease the clenched brow of my boxer.
Shackle the bound body of the sweating rose.
So he stays asleep. I want to wrap him
in swaddling clothes
to know that we are cruel hunters of angels
and to make things even darker and stranger
among the flowers -- to be at the awakening
as my death is mourned with pomp
by those twisted serpents and that frightened snow.
Oh the voice of beaten gold, aggressive brat

Qu'il crève! C'est sa mort votre noir uniforme.

Or l'enfant, sur la paille allonge au fond des cieux,
Ses chevilles de feuille afin qu'elles s'endorment.

CANAILLE oserez-vous me mordre une autre fois
Retenez que je suis le page du Monarque
Vous roulez sous ma main comme un flot sous ma barque
Votre houle me gonfle, ô ma caille des bois

Ma caille emmitouflée, écrasée sous mes doigts.

I

TRANSPARENT voyageur des vitres du hallier
Par la route du sang revenu dans ma bouche
Les doigts chargés de lune et le pas éveillé
J'entends battre le soir endormi sur ma couche.

II

VOTRE AME est de retour des confins de moi-même
Prisonnière d'un ciel aux paresseux chemins
Où dormait simplement dans le creux d'un poème
Une nuit de voleur sous le ciel de ma main.

UNE AVALANCHE rose est morte entre nos draps.
Cette rose musclée ce lustre d'Opéra

Tombé du sommeil, noir de cris et de fougères
Qu'installe autour de nous une main de bergère,
Cette rose s'éveille!

Sous les haubans de deuil que le conte appareille!
Vibrants clairons du ciel tout parcourus d'abeilles
Apaisez les sourcils crispés de mon boxeur.
Bouclez le corps noué de la rose en sueur.
Qu'il dorme encor. Je veux l'entortiller de langes
Afin de nous savoir cruels dénicheurs d'anges
Et pour que plus étrange et sombre, chez les fleurs
Soit au réveil, ma mort avec faste pleurée
Par ces serpents tordus, cette neige apeurée.
O la voix d'or battu, dur gamin querelleur
Que tes larmes sur mes doigts que tes larmes coulent
De tes yeux arrachés par le bec d'une poule
Qui picorait en songe, ici les yeux, ailleurs
Des graines préparées
Par cette main légère ouverte à mon voleur.

let your tears flow on my fingers
from your eyes torn out by the beak of a hen
pecking here in dream
while somewhere else
 grains are prepared
by this light hand
open to my thief.

YOUR BLUE FEET with branches and stars(1)
ran on my shore and leapt in my hand
daring that love your laughter unlatches
to tread boldly across it
with inhuman feet!

You awake in me as quickly as
the specters in my teeth
to haunt the stairwell so swiftly that
my solitude must therefore be you
Guy, my heart multiplied.

but to wander me
take off your shoes.

End Note

1. "Branches" is slang for the chains of galley slaves.

TES PIEDS BLEUS traversés d'étoiles et de branches
Tu cours sur mon rivage et bondis dans ma main
Mais ose cet amour que ton rire déclenche
Hardiment le fouler de tes pieds inhumains!

Tu t'éveilles de moi avec leur promptitude
Les spectres de mes dents, pour hanter l'escalier
Si rapide il faut donc Guy que ma solitude
Par toi-même soit toi mon cœur multiplié

Mais pour me parcourir enlève tes souliers.

Source of Text

The text used here was taken from the first edition of *Poèmes*, published by L'Arbalète, Décines, 1948. Copies are numbered 1-1000.

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MARK SPITZER

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LOVE SONG

Translation by Mark Spitzer

To Lucien Sénémaud

SHEPHERD, descend from the sky
of your sleeping ewes!
(beautiful Winter, I surrender you
to the down of a shepherd)
If your sex is still frosted beneath my breath
dawn undoes it from this fragile dress.

Is it a question of loving at sunrise?
Their songs still sleep in the throats of herdsmen.
Let's draw our curtains open on this marble decor:
Your dumbstruck face
sprinkled with sleep.

Oh your grace overwhelms me, I'm blacking out
beautiful vessel dressed for the wedding of the Isles
and the evening. High yardarm! Hard insult
oh my black continent, my dress
of vast grief!

Angry golden clusters, an instant out of God
(He breathes and falls asleep)
lightened from returning you.
Aided by your hand, I believe the sky descends
and tenderly lays its white gloves
on our eyes.

Its softness, above all, isolates you
and scatters this November rain
on your delicate brow.
Dawn twilight, what shadow, what Africa
envelops your members
where a serpent dwells!

Leaf, waltz in reverse. Fogs, stray.
To what tree do you tie this scarf
flower of the wind?
My finger breaks the frost
on the wood of your harp
Girl of the rushes
standing, hair parted.

Un Chant d'amour

by Jean Genet

A Lucien Senemaud

BERGER descends du ciel où dorment tes brebis!
(Au duvet d'un berger bel Hiver je te livre)
Sous mon haleine encore si ton sexe est de givre
Aurore le défait de ce fragile habit.

Est-il question d'aimer au lever du soleil?
Leurs chants dorment encore dans le gosier des pâtres.
Ecartons nos rideaux sur ce décor de marbre:
Ton visage ahuri saupoudré de sommeil.

O ta grâce m'accable et je tourne de l'œil
Beau navire habillé pour la noce des Iles
Et du soir. Haute vergue! Insulte difficile
O mon continent noir ma robe de grand deuil!

Colère en grappes d'or un instant hors de Dieu
(Il respire et s'endort) soulagé de vous rendre.
Aidé de votre main je crois le ciel descendre
Et tendre déposer ses gants blancs sur nos yeux.

C'est sa douceur surtout qui t'isole et répand
Sur ton front délicat cette pluie de novembre.
Quelle ombre quelle Afrique enveloppent tes membres
Crépuscule de l'aube habité d'un serpent!

Valse feuille à l'envers et brouillards égarés
A quel arbre nouez, fleur du vent cette écharpe?
Mon doigt casse le gel au bois de votre harpe
Fille des joncs debout les cheveux séparés.

On the brim of my cap
 a sprig of hazel hung awry
 tickles my ear. In your neck
 I hear a sputtering bird.
 My horses sleep upright
 in the path.

Caressing the shoulder of the sea
 my eye distracted (my sandal wet
 with the wing unstitched)
 I feel my swollen hand
 on your mossy heat
 fill with white flocks
 unseen in the air.

From your hip to your neck, my lambs go to graze
 to browse through fine grass burnt from the sun
 flowering acacia rolls in your voice
 the bee will steal the honey
 of their echoes.

But the green flag of the prowlers of death
 must watch over somewhere
 and catch itself in the poles
 and shake the night, the azure
 while dusting your shoulders
 and piercing your sand-buried feet
 with streams of air.

In order for me to climb again
 naked on blue stairways
 solemn and sinking in these dream-waves
 weary of perishing forever
 inches from my lips
 the horizon fell asleep
 in your folded arms.

Your naked arms will whinny, quartering my night.
 Damien, these dark horses disembowel deep water.
 Centaurs born from the belly
 take me galloping away.
 But if sleep flees me
 the arms of a dying negro.

I have adorned their nostrils
 with roses, with ribbons(1)
 and the hair of stripped girls
 I have wanted to caress their sunlit dresses
 my arm outstretched above the stream:

Au bord de ma casquette un brin de noisetier
 De travers accroché l'oreille me chatouille.
 Dans votre cou j'écoute un oiseau qui bafouille.
 Et dorment mes chevaux debout dans le sentier.

Caressant l'œil distrait l'épaule de la mer
 (Ma sandale est mouillée à l'aile décousue)
 Je sens ma main gonflée sur ta chaleur moussue
 S'emplier de blancs troupeaux invisibles dans l'air.

Vont paître mes agneaux de ta hanche à ton cou,
 Brouter une herbe fine et du soleil brûlée,
 Des fleurs d'acacia dans ta voix sont roulées
 Va l'abeille voler le miel de leurs échos.

Mais le vert pavillon des rôdeurs de la mort
 Doit veiller quelque part, se prendre dans les pôles.
 Secouer la nuit, l'azur, en poudrer vos épaules
 Dans vos pieds ensablés percer des sources d'air.

Pour me remonter nu sur de bleus escaliers
 Solennels et sombrant dans ces vagues de rêves
 Las de périr sans fin à deux doigts de mes lèvres
 L'horizon s'endormait dans vos bras repliés.

Vos bras nus vont hennir écartelant ma nuit.
 Damien ces noirs chevaux éventrent l'eau profonde.
 Au galop m'emportez centaures nés du ventre.
 Bras d'un nègre qui meurt si le sommeil me fuit.

J'ai paré de rubans, de roses leurs naseaux,
 De chevelure encore aux filles dépouillées,
 J'ai voulu caresser leur robe ensoleillée
 De mon bras allongé au-dessus du ruisseau:

Votre épaule rétive a rejeté ma main:
 Elle meurt désolée à mon poignet docile:
 Main qui se hâte en vain coupée, mais plus agile
 (Les cinq doigts d'un voleur aux ongles de carmin).

Your stubborn shoulder has rejected my hand:
 it dries up deserted on my docile wrist:
 the hastening hand chopped off in vain
 (five fingers of a thief with carmine nails)
 is now more agile.

So many hands on the edges of paths and woods!
 Close to your neck, the heel of my hand
 loved living naked
 but hardly became
 a monster to your eyes
 I will kiss your fingers
 in mine.

Shot at by surprise
 a soldier smiles at me
 with a trellis of blood on the wall of white-lime.
 The shred of a discourse caught in the branches
 and in the grass a hand
 on rotting toes.

I speak of a country flayed to the bone.
 France, with perfumed eyes, you are our image
 as sweet as her nights, maybe even more
 oh France, and like them
 wounded by words
 falling short.

Slow ceremony
 to the sound of twenty muffled drums.
 Nude cadavers paraded through the town.
 Beneath the moon a brass band files by
 at the time of plowing
 in our wooded vales.

Poor hand bound to melt!
 You still leap in the grass.
 From a wound or the blood of stones?
 Who can be born, what page and what angel
 of ivy chokes me?
 What soldier bearing
 your dead nails?

Should I lay myself at these feet uncurling the sea?
 Beautiful love story: a child of the village
 saves the errant sentinel on the beach
 where the amber of my hand
 attracts an iron lad!

In his torso, asleep -- in a strange way
 creamy almond star, oh curled up little girl
 -- This tolling of the blood in the path's azure

Tant de mains sur le bord des chemins et des bois!
 Auprès de votre col elle aimait vivre nue
 Mais un monstre à vos yeux à peine devenue
 Sur ma main le talon je baiseraï vos doigts.

Fusillé par surprise un soldat me sourit
 D'une treille de sang sur mur de chaux blanche.
 Le lambeau d'un discours accroché dans les branches
 Et dans l'herbe une main sur des orteils pourris.

Je parle d'un pays écorché jusqu'à l'os.
 France aux yeux parfumés vous êtes notre image.
 Douce comme ses nuits, peut-être davantage
 Et comme elles, blessée ô France, à demi-mot.

Lente cérémonie au son de vingt tambours
 Voilés. Cadavres nus promenés par la ville.
 Sous la lune un cortège avec cuivres défile
 Dans nos vallons boisés, au moment des labours.

Pauvre main qui va fondre! Et vous sautez encor
 Dans l'herbe. D'une plaie ou du sang sur les pierres
 Qui peut naître, quel page et quel ange de lierre
 M'étouffer? Quel soldat portant vos ongles morts?

Me coucher à ces pieds qui défrisent la mer?
 Belle histoire d'amour: un enfant du village
 Sauve la sentinelle errante sur la plage
 Ou l'ambre de ma main attire un gars de fer!

Dans son torse, endormie - d'une étrange façon
 Crémeuse amande, étoile, ô fillette enroulée
 - Ce tintement du sang dans l'azur de l'allée
 C'est du soir le pied nu sonnante sur mon gazon.

Cette forme est de rose et vous garde si pur.
 Conservez-la. Le soir déjà vous développez
 Et vous m'apparaissez (ôtées toutes vos robes)

is the evening's bare foot
sounding on my lawn.

This form that keeps you so pure
is of a rose. Preserve it.
The evening already reveals you
and you appear to me (all clothes removed)
wrapped in your sheets
or standing against
a wall.

At the edge of this badly shaken brimming petal
my lip dares to gather a falling tear
its milk swells my neck like a flight of doves.
oh remain a rose
with a pearl
on the petal.

Spiny fruit of the sea, your rays flay me
but the fine nail of the evening can split your rind.
My pink tongue drinks at these edges full-force.

If my heart inside the gold of a false chignon
should founder while anchored alive
without being able to vomit itself
into a sea of bile
harnessed to your sex
then I wander motionless in great strides
this world without kindness
where you see me sleep.

I roll beneath the sea
and your wave above
fashions axles
twisted by your storms
yet I will go far
for the sky at work
with the thread of the horizon
has sewn me in a sheet.

Around your house I prowl without hope.
My sad whip hangs from my neck.
I watch through the shutters your beautiful eyes
those arbors, those palaces
of foliage where evening
will die.

Whistle dirty songs
strut around looking tough!
Your brood-crushing heel in the rushes
carves the April morning air
with gilded shells in the wind

Enroulé dans vos draps ou debout contre un mur.

Ose ma lèvre au bord de ce pétale ourlé
Mal secoué cueillir une larme qui tombe,
Son lait gonfle mon cou comme un col de colombes.
O restez une rose au pétale emperlé.

Epineux fruits de mer m'écorchent tes rayons
Mais l'ongle fin du soir saura fendre l'écorce.
Boire ma langue rose à ces bords toute force.
Si mon cœur retenu dans l'or d'un faux chignon

Chavire ancré vivant sans pouvoir se vomir
Dans une mer de bile à ton sexe attelée
Je parcours immobile en d'immenses foulées
Ce monde sans bonté où tu me sens dormir.

Je roule sous la mer et ta vague au-dessus
Travaille ses essieux tordus par tes orages
Pourtant j'irai très loin car le ciel à l'ouvrage
Du fil de l'horizon dans un drap m'a cousu.

Autour de ta maison je rôde sans espoir.
Mon fouet triste prend à mon cou. Je surveille
A travers les volets tes beaux yeux ces charmillés
Ces palais de feuillage où va mourir le soir.

Siffle des airs voyous, marche le regard dur,
Dans les jones ton talon écrasant des couvées
Découpe dans le vent en coquilles dorées
L'air des matins d'avril et cravache l'azur

Mais vois qu'il ne s'abîme et s'effeuille à tes pieds
O toi mon clair soutien, des nuits la plus fragile
Etoile, entre dentelle et neige de ces îles
D'or tes épaules, blanc le doigt de l'amandier.

flogging the azure.

But see that it doesn't plummet and shed at your feet
oh star, my bright supporter in the most fragile nights
between the lace and snow of these isles:

your shoulders gold

and white

the finger of

the almond

tree.

Source of Text

The text used here is the earliest published version of the poem. It appeared in *View*, vol. VI, 1946.

End Note

1. "Naseaux" (*nostrils*) refers to horse nostrils.

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MARK SPITZER

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THE FISHERMAN OF LE SUQUET⁽¹⁾ Translation by Mark

to Lucien SÉNÉMAUD

Around him, time, air, and the landscape blurred.
Laid on the sand, what I saw between the spread
branches of his naked legs
was shuddering.

The sand kept the trace of his feet, but also kept
the trace of his sex moved by the warmth
and unrest of the evening.
Each crystal sparkled.

- What's your name?

- And yours?

Since that night, I've loved the malicious child
light, fanciful, vigorous
whose approaching body makes water shiver
along with the sky, the rocks, the houses
the boys, the girls
and the page on which I write.

My patience is a medal upon your lapel.

A golden dust floats all around him. Makes him
distant from me.

His eyes: amidst the thistles, the blackthorns
and vaporous autumn dress.

His hands illuminate objects. Obscuring them more.
Animating them and killing them.

The big toe of his left foot with the ingrown nail
sometimes searches my nostril
sometimes my mouth.
It's enormous, but then the foot
and leg could follow.

You want to fish in the thawing of snows
in my ponds of rings held in
Ah, to plunge your naked arms
in my beautiful eyes
which two steel rows of black lashes protect
beneath a sky of storm and high pines

Le Pêcheur du Suquet by Jean Genet

à Lucien SÉNÉMAUD

Autour de lui le temps, l'air, le paysage devenaient indécis.
Couché sur le sable, ce que j'en apercevais entre les
branches écartées de ses jambes nues, tremblait.

Le sable gardait la trace de ses pieds, mais gardait aussi la
trace d'un sexe ému par la chaleur et le trouble du soir.
Chaque cristau étincelait.

- Comment t'appelles-tu?

- Et toi?

De cette nuit j'aime l'enfant malicieux, léger, fantasque et
vigoureux dont le corps fait frissonner, à son approche,
l'eau, le ciel, les rochers, les maisons, les garçons et les
filles. Et la page sur quoi j'écris.

Ma patience est une médaille à ton revers.

Une poussière d'or flotte autour de lui. L'éloigne de moi.

Ses yeux: parmi les chardons, les épines noires, la robe
vaporeuse de l'automne.

Ses mains éclairent les objets. Les obscurcissent encore.
Les animent et les tuent.

Le gros orte il de son pied gauche, à l'ongle incarné,
quelquefois fouille ma narine, quelquefois ma bouche. Il
est énorme mais le pied, puis la jambe y passeraient.

Tu veux pêcher à la fonte des neiges
Dans mes étangs de bagues retenus
Ah dans mes beaux yeux plonger tes bras nus
Que d'acier noir deux rangs de cils protègent
Sous un ciel d'orage et de hauts sapins
Pêcheur mouillé couvert d'écailles blondes
Dans tes yeux mes doigts d'osier mes pâles mains

wet fisherman covered with blonde scales
 in your eyes, my fingers of wicker
 my pale hands see
 the saddest fish in the world
 flee from the bank where I crumble my bread.

Aspen. At the summit of yourself, balanced
 alone, your rosy heel hangs from the branches
 the rising sun. Aspen, your murmur
 shivers on my teeth. Your broken fingers
 comb the azure and rend the bark
 making you soft and fringed with snow
 Oh Aspen. Construct this torso
 wounded deep but soothed by the plume.
 My lips force him
 to blossom.

When the sun illumines the heather
 on your beautiful calves, your slopes, I go
 slowly by the rocks where you spoke to me
 blond spahi, on your knees in the light.
 A serpent awakes to the voice of the dead.
 Beneath my burst foot partridges take flight.
 At sunset I will see the seekers of gold
 labor beneath the crazed moon.
 The breakers of tombs draw straws.

What a shadow at your feet, your shiny shoes!
 Your frozen feet in my pools of tears
 your carmelite feet, dusty and bare
 splashed with sky, your blessed feet
 will mark my white shoulders this evening
 (forests filled with wolves by the moon)
 Oh my fisherman in the shadows of my willows
 executioner covered with stars and nails
 held up by the white arm of the jetty.

On the green tree, erect -- bowing your brow
 (animal of love, golden tree with two heads)
 above its foliage -- hot beast entwined
 you hang by a single foot
 a slow waltz sounds in the azure
 from the harmonica, but do your eyes see
 an astonishing dawn from the mizen-mast?
 Oh naked fisherman with a subtle heart
 come down from the tree, fear
 my singing leaves.

Farewell Queen of the Sky, farewell
 my Flower of skin, carved in my palm.
 Oh my silence, inhabited by a phantom
 your eyes, your fingers, silence.
 Your pallor. Silence
 these waves on the steps again
 where your foot always brings on night.
 A clear angelus rings beneath its arch.
 Farewell sun, escaping from my heart
 on an atrocious and nocturnal gait.

Voient les poissons les plus tristes du monde
 Fuir, de la rive où j'émiette mon pain.

Tremble. Au sommet de toi seul balancé
 Ton talon rose accroche à la ramure
 Le soleil levant. Tremble ton murmure
 Frissonne sur mes dents. Tes doigts cassés
 Peignent l'azur et déchirent l'écorce
 O tremble qui te fait doux et frangé
 De neige. Erige, exige ce torse
 Blessé profond mais de plume allégé.
 A s'épanouir mes lèvres le forcent.

Quand le soleil allume la bruyère
 Lentement sur vos pentes beaux mollets
 Je vais par les rocs d'où tu me parlais
 Spahi blond à genoux dans la lumière.
 Un serpent s'éveille à la voix des morts.
 Sous mon pied crevé des perdrix s'envolent.
 Au couchant je verrai les chercheurs d'or
 Faire leur travail sous la lune folle.
 Les briseurs de tombeaux tirer au sort.

Que d'ombre à tes pieds tes souliers vernis!
 Tes pieds glacés dans mes étangs de larmes
 Tes pieds poudrés de déchaussés de Carme
 Eclaboussés de ciel tes pieds bénis
 Marqueront ce soir mes blanches épaules
 (Forêts que la lune peuple de loups)
 O mon pêcheur à l'ombre de mes saules,
 Bourreau couvert d'étoiles et de clous
 Debout, tenu par le bras blanc du môle.

A l'arbre vert dressé - ton front penché
 (Animal d'amour arbre d'or à deux têtes)
 Sur son feuillage - enlacé chaude bête
 Par un seul pied tu restes accroché,
 Sonne dans l'azur une valse lente
 A l'harmonica mais tes yeux voient-ils
 Du mât de misaine une aube étonnante?
 O pêcheur nu de l'arbre au cœur subtil
 Descends, descends, crains mes feuilles qui chantent.

Adieu Reine du Ciel, adieu ma Fleur
 De peau découpée dans ma paume.
 O mon silence habité d'un fantôme,
 Tes yeux, tes doigts, silence. Ta pâleur.
 Silence encor ces vagues sur les marches
 Où chaque fois ton pied pose la nuit.
 Un angélus clair tinte sous son arche.
 Adieu soleil qui de mon cœur s'enfuit
 Sur une atroce et nocturne démarche.

Enfouis sous vos pieds les trésors de la nuit

Go supplely on paths of embers
 where treasures of night
 are buried beneath your feet.
 Peace is with you. In the nettles, the rushes
 the blackthorns, the forests
 your step sets measures
 of darkness.

And each of your feet, each step of jasmine
 buries me in a porcelain tomb.
 You obscure the world.

The treasures of this night: Ireland and its revolts
 muskrats fleeing in the moors, an arch of light
 the wine arisen from your stomach
 the wedding in the valley
 a hanged man swinging
 from the apple tree in bloom
 and finally, that region
 where your breeches
 protected by a hawthorn in bloom
 are approached from the heart
 in the throat.

From all parts, pilgrims descend.
 They skirt your haunches where the sun sets
 sadly climbing the wooded slopes of your thighs
 where even day is dark.

Through grassy moors
 under your unbuckled belt
 we arrive near him
 our mouths dry, our feet
 and shoulders beat.
 In its radiance, even Time is veiled
 with a crepe above
 from which the sun, the moon
 and the stars, your eyes
 can shine.

Time is somber at his feet.
 Nothing flowers here
 except strange violet flowers
 from rough bulbs.
 To our heart bring our hands
 and to our teeth bring fists.

What is loving you? I am afraid to see this water spill
 between my poor fingers. I don't dare swallow you.
 My mouth holds the shape of a vain column.
 Lightly it descends in an autumn fog.
 I arrive in love like one enters the water.
 Palms forward, blinded, my sobs held back
 swell with air, your presence in myself
 and your presence is heavy, eternal.
 I love you.

Sur des chemins de braise allez en souplesse.
 La paix est avec vous.
 Dans les orties, les ajoncs, les prunelliers, les forêts, votre pas
 Dépose des mesures de ténèbres.
 Et chacun de vos pieds, chaque pas de jasmin
 M'ensevelit dans une tombe de porcelaine.
 Vous obscurcissez le monde.

Les trésors de cette nuit: l'Irlande et ses révoltes, les rats
 musqués fuyant dans les landes, une arche de lumière, le
 vin remonté de ton estomac, la noce dans la vallée, au
 pommier en fleur un pendu qui se balance, enfin cette
 région que l'on aborde de cœur dans la gorge, dans ta
 culotte protégée d'une aubépine en fleur.

De toutes parts les pèlerins descendent.
 Ils contournent tes hanches où le soleil se couche,
 Gravissent avec peine les pentes boisées de tes cuisses
 Où même le jour il fait nuit.

Par d'herbeuses landes, sous ta ceinture
 Déboulée nous arrivons la gorge sèche
 L'épaule et les pieds las, auprès de Lui.
 Dans son rayonnement le Temps même est voilé d'un crêpe
 au-dessus duquel le soleil, la lune, et les étoiles, vos
 yeux, vos pleurs brillent peut-être.
 Le Temps est sombre à son pied.
 Rien n'y fleurit que d'étranges fleurs violettes
 De ces bulbes rugueux.
 A notre cœur portons nos mains
 Et les poings sur nos dents.

Qu'est-ce t'aimer? J'ai peur de voir cette eau couler
 Entre mes pauvres doigts. Je n'ose t'avalier.
 Ma bouche encor modèle une vaine colonne.
 Légère elle descend dans un brouillard d'automne.
 J'arrive dans l'amour comme on entre dans l'eau,
 Les paumes en avant, aveuglé, mes sanglots
 Retenus gonflent d'air ta présence en moi-même
 Où ta présence est lourde, éternelle. Je t'aime.

LE VOLEUR

Ou la nuit se devêt mais travaille à ses fleurs
 Les poings clairs du boucher ont retenu ma rose.
 O nuit de cet enfant découvert sous mes pleurs
 Organise un poème où sa verge est enclose.

THE THIEF

Where night undresses but works at its flowers
 the butcher's bright fists have gripped my rose.
 Oh night of that child discovered in my tears
 construct a poem where his dick is enclosed.

THE NIGHT

My treasures, unwound by his thin phalanxes
 were flowing to the heels in your divine sleep
 and your breath was veiling the lament of
 chickadees, thief bleeding from the nose
 on my vermillion nails!

THE THIEF

Without reaching me, wind passes in slow steps.
 I'm being killed -- killed badly. I'm afraid.
 Oh handsome stubborn prick, come
 without danger through the morning meadows
 bring me the sea and the dawn of shepherds.

THE TREE

From my prison, thief, shackled armies escape
 if you pass shuddering at my feet.
 My heart refuses to resist, my branches(2)
 come undone. I know you're dying
 trampled by their boots.

THE THIEF

He awakes sometimes to visit my pockets
 he robs me, and already, threatened by poison
 my eagle watches over him, and takes him
 to some high rocks and hides him
 in the hollow of my past.

THE TREE

Hands full of lightning
 I am shattered by your radiance.
 They want me to be thunderstruck
 by your games, thief
 too quickly your hand
 will be taken in its turn
 a tree is adorned
 with a bold destiny.

THE THIEF

On each of my fingers, a rustling leaf!
 All this green chaos, this foliage stirring.

LA NUIT

Mes trésors dévidés par ses maigres phalanges
 Jusqu'aux talons coulaient dans ton divin sommeil
 Et son souffle voilait la plainte des mésanges
 Voleur saignant du nez sur mes ongles vermeils!

LE VOLEUR

Le vent passe à pas lents sans m'atteindre. On me tue.
 On me tue mal. J'ai peur. O venez sans danger
 Par les prés matinaux verge belle et têtue
 Apportez-moi la mer et l'aube des bergers.

L'ARBRE

De ma prison voleur s'échappent si tu passes
 Frémissant à mon pied des bataillons bouclés.
 Ne résiste mon cœur, mes branches se délient.
 Je te sais expirant, par leurs bottes foulé.

LE VOLEUR

Ils s'éveille parfois pour visiter mes poches
 Il me vole et déjà du poison menacé
 Mon aigle le surveille et sur de hautes roches
 L'emporte et le dérobe au creux de mon passé.

L'ARBRE

Des éclairs pleins les mains ton beau rayon me brise.
 On veut que foudroyé je le sois par vos jeux
 Voleur ta main trop vive à son tour sera prise
 Un arbre s'est paré d'un destin courageux.

LE VOLEUR

A chacun de mes doigts une feuille qui bouge!
 Tout ce désordre vert un feuillage émouvant.
 Le front du ravisseur de pâle devient rouge
 Dans ses boucles frissonne une étoile au Levant!

LA NUIT

The forehead of the pale ravisher reddens(3)
in his locks a star quivers
in the East.

THE NIGHT

But of whom do you speak? Fishermen retreat
their eyes like the sea, deep in the abyss.
The tide is exact, and this foam, having surfaced
with laughter, is a precious sign for you.

THE GUNNER

In leather hosen I cross the woods
feet twisted from socks of wool.
Thief, neither the sea, nor your shit
nor your breath can prevent
everything from trembling
beneath me.

THE THIEF

Immortal horse-woman in your organdy dress
on a wounded steed, you are a hypocrite!
Like lost petals your beautiful fingers were shed
farewell my great garden
terraced by the sky!

And so I stay alone, forgotten by him, sleeping in my
arms. The sea is calm. I don't dare budge. His
presence would be more terrible than his voyage
out of me. Maybe he'll vomit
upon my chest.

Then what would I do? Pick through his puke?
Search through the wine, the meat, the bile, those
violets and those roses which the threads of
blood dilute and loosen?

Blades of Fire, broken foils!
When the moon watches over me
I am troubled by the sea.
The blood of the sea flows from my ear.
Melancholy fisherman, your downcast eyes
your leaden eyes in their traveling sky
burst my boils again without pity
as I stream out turning to swamp
in the night that will turn
the will o' wisps blue
tongue of fire
watching over
my passage.

Mais de qui parlez-vous? Les pêcheurs se retirent
Comme la mer au fond de l'abîme, leurs yeux.
La marée est exacte et cette écume au rire
Remontée est pour vous un signe précieux.

L'ARTILLEUR

Les pieds entortillés de chaussettes de laine
Dans mes houzeaux de cuir je traverse les bois.
Ni la mer ou ta merde et non plus ton haleine
Voleur pour empêcher que tout tremble sous moi.

LE VOLEUR

Vous êtes hypocrite immortelle écuycère
En robe d'organdi sur un cheval blessé!
En pétales perdus vos beaux doigts s'effeuillèrent
Adieu mon grand jardin par le ciel terrassé!

Ainsi je reste seul, oublié de lui qui dort dans mes bras. La
mer est calme. Je n'ose bouger. Sa présence serait plus
terrible que son voyage hors de moi. Peut-être vomirait-il
sur ma poitrine.

Et qu'y pourrais-je faire? Trier ses vomissures?
Y chercher parmi le vin, la viande, la bile, ces violettes et ces
roses qu'y délayent et délient les filets de sang?

Des lames de Feu, des fleurets brisés!
La mer me travaille où la lune veille.
Le sang dans la mer fuit de mon oreille.
Pêcheur mélancolique ô vos yeux baissés
Vos yeux plombés dans leur ciel de voyage
Crèvent encor sans pitié mes abcès
Car je m'écoule et deviens marécage
Où va la nuit bleuir les feux follets
Langue de feu qui veille mon passage.

Source of Text

The text used here is the "revised version," from *Œuvres complètes*,
vol. 3, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 1953.

End Notes

1. As well as being a medieval quarter near the Port of Cannes, Le Suquet is also a ramparted structure in the same locality.
2. As noted in the endnote for "The Parade," "naseaux" (*nostrils*) refers to horse nostrils.
3. "Ravisseur" (*ravisher*) also contains the context of *kidnapper*, *abductor* or *rapist*.

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DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SUN AND MOON

Translation by Mark Spitzer

THE MOON (*with a bandaged eye*)

To no end! My role is to indefinitely stretch the motionless shadow of objects. It inscribes itself in the paleness of my light. And my light is round. Nothing moves... The earth turns beneath my eye... The prison colony dwells in silence... and even though my light is deaf, it listens... she is an immense old woman who hears the slightest noise... Roger, the little informess, gathers flowers... and plucks their petals... in a low voice... From here, the prison colony appears as soft as moleskin... In his tomb, Rocky spits... he weeps... he ages... my role is to confound time, to confound the nights...

THE SUN (*valiantly*)

Me, I name the days! Each of my rays brands them, specifies them, ennobles them. Not one day resembles the previous one. And each has its name. I give you rhythm. My first arrow ignites intelligence and -- Behold! -- extinguishes it as a result! The prison colony thinks because of me. It conceives itself without dreaming. It hastens toward itself. I am the sun and I polish my arrows. I gave the idea to Ferrand, of going back to his workshop and working at the forge of fuckery: Noon. The Warden examines the state of the accounts presented to him by the Treasurer. A cent is a cent, a day is a day, precisely. (*sadly*) Already, night comes...

THE MOON

Yes. To obtain this eternally serene but relentless light, I must clean my mess kit. Always in circles... in the same way. Otherwise I'd diffuse a dim light -- and I'd pick up false clues. I must be that immense ear which hears Rocky sighing... I hear him. He spits... he turns over... his covers stir... I hear the pleats falling on his dirty feet... Rocky is leaning against the wall... he breathes through his nose... air passes through his nostril hairs... Nobody tries to escape... The chaplain is astonished by the meaning of the word "chaplainess"... he wants to cry... He says: "The chaplain isn't the husband of the chaplainess, the chaplainess isn't..." My arm is weary from cleaning my mess kit in circles, and the fatigue of a night...

THE SUN

Bells, chimes! The flowers turn toward me. Their glances follow me. I clean time. I make myself scintillate. The most beautiful day of our life... is today! About eight in the crimson morning, apoplectic, a prisoner falls. I lack juice. Through a single action, even idleness is active when I dart my rays. (*he looks at his wrist-watch*) At half past noon the Warden fans himself. Is he digesting? At seven in the

Dialogue de la lune et du soleil by Jean Genet

LA LUNE (*un bandeau sur l'œil*)

A n'en plus finir! Mon rôle est d'allonger indéfiniment l'ombre immobile des objets. Elle s'inscrit dans la pâleur de ma lumière. Et ma lumière est ronde. Rien ne bouge... Sous mon œil la terre tourne... Le baigne vit en silence... Bien que sourde, ma lumière écoute... Elle est une immense vieille qui enregistre le bruit le plus sourd... Roger, la petite donneuse cueille... recueille... effeuille... à voix basse... Vu d'ici, le baigne a la douceur d'une taupe... Dans sa tombe Rocky crache... il pleure... il vieillit... Mon rôle est de confondre le temps, de confondre les nuits...

LE SOLEIL (*vaillamment*)

Moi les jours de les nommer! Chacun de mes rayons les marque, les précise, les anoblit. Aucun jour ne ressemble au précédent. Et chacun a son nom. Je vous rythme. Ma première flèche allume l'intelligence et - prodige! - l'éteint du coup! A partir de moi le baigne pense. Il se pense sans rêver. Il s'active vers le baigne. Je suis le soleil et j'astique mes flèches. Ferrand je lui ai donné l'idée de rejoindre son atelier et de travailler à la forge qui de tringle: midi. Le Directeur examine l'état de compte que lui présente l'Econome. Un sou est un sou, un jour est un jour, aussi précisément. (*triste*) Et c'est déjà la nuit qui vient...

LA LUNE

Oui. Pour obtenir cette lumière toujours sereine - mais implacable, je dois nettoyer ma gamelle. Toujours en rond... dans le même sens. Sinon je diffuserais une lumière trouble et j'enregistrerais de faux indices. Je dois être cette immense oreille qui entend les soupirs de Rocky... Je l'entends. Il crache... il se retourne... ses couvertures bougent... J'entends le pli qui tombe sur ses pieds sales... Rocky est appuyé contre le mur... il respire par le nez... l'air passe à travers les poils des narines... Personne ne cherche à s'évader... L'aumonier s'étonne du sens du mot aumônier... Il a envie de pleurer... Il dit: <<L'aumonier n'est pas le mari de l'aumônier, l'aumônier n'est pas... Mon bras est las de nettoyer en rond ma gamelle, et la fatigue d'une nuit...>>

LE SOLEIL

Sonnailles, carillons! Les fleurs se tournent vers moi. Elles me suivent du regard. Je nettoie le temps. Je m'oblige à scintiller. Le plus beau. Le plus beau jour de notre vie c'est aujourd'hui. Vers huit

evening, the sun falls... in a haze...

THE MOON

To the vertical ease of cypress, I propose the confusion of lianas. We flow, we crawl. Minutes and hours overlap. Time is elastic. It stretches, it lengthens, it shrinks. It's a mish-mash. We smoke. We get hard. We drowse. Electric currents circulate in the filaments enclosing the walls. Rocky has just shat. He squats in his corner. He removes his hand from his covers... he extends his arm... he touches the wall... he caresses the typical portrait of the killer:

average forehead
average nose
average mouth

A mass of shadows has just added itself to the total mass of nights. This passing night is, at the same time, all the darkness of the times...

THE SUN

The days pass and don't resemble each other. History is written day by day, it is deducted in days (*with a shout*) all Glorious! Ferrand forges a ring. At ten o'clock he will go clean the knife, his tool, for tomorrow morning we work. At three o'clock -- three o'clock! Light is triumphant. The entire prison colony knows it's moved away from the shores where women had power. Here, nothing can recall them. There are never any baptisms or weddings by the chaplain. The day is a male, entirely, in his solitary, sterile erectness...

THE MOON

I am all absent femininity, left behind on ancient shores, says the night. The convicts slink in my black, hollow, full, pale belly. Each night is knocked up. The convicts forget their age and their agony accelerates. Rocky coughs... he spits, but not as far as the night before... he caresses the image of Forlano, a little more faded...

THE MOON

Night opens its immense ass, where the forgotten day will bury itself...

THE SUN

The day.

THE MOON

The night, devouress...

du matin cramoisi, apoplectique, un bagnard tombe. Je manque le jus comme je veux. Par un acte. Même la paresse est active. Ils le savent bien. Les Nègres du corps de garde, que la paresse est active quand je darde. (*il regarde son bracelet montre*) A midi et demi le Directeur s'évente. Il digère? A sept heures du soir, le soleil tombe, ... en poudre ...

LA LUNE

A la verticale aisance des cyprès j'oppose la confusion des lianes. On coule, on rampe. Les minutes, les heures se chevauchent. Le temps est élastique. Il s'étire, il s'allonge, il rétrécit. Mic-Mac. On fume. On bande. On somnole. Le courant électrique circule dans les fils qui ferment l'enceinte. Rocky vient de chier. Il s'accroupit dans son coin. Il sort sa main de sa couverture... il étend son bras... il touche le mur... il caresse le portrait parlé de l'assassin:

front moyen
nez moyen
bouche moyenne

Une masse d'ombre vient de s'ajouter à la masse totale des nuits. Cette nuit qui passe est à la fois toutes les ténèbres des temps...

LE SOLEIL

Les jours passent et ne se ressemblent pas. L'histoire s'écrit par journée, elle se décompte en jours. (*dans un cri*) tous glorieux! Ferrand forge une bague. A dix heures il ira nettoyer le couteau, son outil, car demain matin on travaille. A trois heures - trois heures! La lumière est triomphale. Le bain tout entier sait qu'il s'est éloigné des rivages où la femme était puissante. Ici rien qui doivent la rappeler. Jamais de baptêmes ni de mariages par l'aumonier. Le jour est un mâle tout entier dans sa solitaire et stérile érection...

LA LUNE

Je suis toute la féminité absente, laissée sur les anciens rivages, dit la nuit. Les forçats se coulent dans mon ventre noir, creux, plein, blême. Chaque nuit est engrossée. Les forçats oublient leur âge et leur agoni s'accélère. Rocky tousse... il crache, mais moins loin que la nuit précédente... il caresse le portrait de Forlano, un peu plus effacé...

LA LUNE

La nuit ouvre son cul immense où vient s'enfouir le jour oublié...

LE SOLEIL

Le jour.

LA LUNE

La nuit, dévoreuse...

THE SUN

A day passes...

THE MOON

Night dwells.

THE SUN

Days pass.

THE MOON

Night dwells.

LE SOLEIL

Un jour passe...

LA LUNE

La nuit demeure.

LE SOLEIL

Les jours passent.

LA LUNE

La nuit demeure.

Source of Text

Along with the six known poems of Genet, the posthumous piece "Dialogue de la lune et du soleil" is included here for two reasons. First of all, it is definitely "poetic" and secondly, it illustrates a stylistic progression wherein the poetic voice of Jean Genet arrives at its most mature state (i.e., the poet controls language rather than the other way around). This piece was given to me by Edmund White, prior to its publication in the "narrative filmscript" *Le Baigne*, which was written in 1952 but published by L'Arbalète, Décines, 1994.

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Errors in the Translated Texts

For information on the sources used in these translations, see the bottom of the French column for each individual work.

"Le Condamné à mort"

Dedication: "assasin" is a misspelling of "assassin."

Stanza 3: "réceleur" does not have an accent mark above the first "e."

Stanza 5: "des pines": it is unlikely that Genet would have intentionally began his poem with the awkward and out-of-context argot of "des pines du rosier" (*penises of the rosebush*). Most likely, "des pines" was a mistake made on the part of the printer, an inmate incarcerated for counterfeiting food-ration coupons. All following reeditions of "Le Condamné à mort" include the correction "d'épines."

Stanza 9: "mature" is missing the circumflex above the "a."

Stanza 15: "apuuvre" has an extra "u."

Stanza 22: "noués" is a misspelling of "nouées."

Stanza 47: "dan" is a misspelling of "dans."

Stanza 52: "de là" is a corruption of "delà."

Stanza 53: the circumflex in "roûle" is a mistake.

Stanza 55: "dresé" is a misspelling of "dressé."

Stanza 62: for some strange reason, "assez" (*enough*), in the "hand-corrected" Bibliothèque Nationale version used in this translation, was scribbled out by the same pen which made the other alterations. This particular alteration makes little sense and is most likely a mistake. However, Genet has been known to intentionally confuse his work -- perhaps for the purpose of bewildering anyone who might pay attention to the differences between his various texts. This mistake, coupled with the oversight of "assasin" in the dedication, could be an indicator of a rush editing job on Genet's part.

Stanza 63: "osbcurs" is a misspelling of "obscur." There is not supposed to be an accent in "piéd."

Stanza 65: "crane" is missing the circumflex above the "a."

Stanza 66: "épilectique" is a misspelling of "épileptique."

Prose dedication: "Saint-Brieux" is a misspelling of "Saint-Brieuc." "ponr" is a misspelling of "pour." "bénéfice" is missing an accent above the second "e."

"Marche funèbre"

Section IX, i: "étandart" is a misspelling of "étandard."

Section XIII, iii: "Est-toi" was later corrected to "Est-ce."

"La Galère"

Stanza 8: "Mas" is a misspelling of "Mais."

Stanza 15: "déboués," later changed to "dénoués," is most likely a mistake.

Stanza 21: "toit" should be plural.

Stanza 40: "brancarts" is a misspelling of "brancards."

"Un Chant d'amour"

Dedication: the accents in Lucien Sénémaud's name were left out.

Stanza 16: "le" was left out of the second line.

Stanza 18: "aves" is a misspelling of "avec."

Stanza 22: in the *View* version of "Un Chant d'Amour" (1946) as well as in *Poèmes* (1948), the third line ends with "col de colombes" (*neck of doves*), rather than "vol de colombes" (*flight of doves*) -- a correction which was made in *Œuvres Complètes* (1951) as well as all subsequent versions of the poem. Thus, this translation opts to also view "col" as a misprint of "vol." It

is doubtful that Genet would have strained for such an awkward and out-of-context analogy as "col de colombes" when the much more poetic context of "vol de colombes" was obvious and available.

Stanza 27: "prend" is a misprint of "pend."

"Le Pêcheur du Suquet"

Strophe 22: "Ou" is missing the accent over the "u."

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English Translations of Jean Genet's Poetry

Books

The Complete Poems of Jean Genet. Edited by David Fisher and Paul Mariah. Translations by Frank O'Hara, David Fisher, Paul Mariah, Chet Roaman, Nanos Valaoritis and Guy Wernham. *ManRoot*, no. 12, 1981.

Treasures of the Night: The Collected Poems of Jean Genet. Translated by Steven Finch. Gay Sunshine Press, San Francisco, 1981.

Magazines, Journals, Anthologies, Pirated Editions

The Man Condemned to Death/Le Condamné à Mort. Translated by Diane di Prima, Alan Marlowe, and Harriet and Bret Rohmer. Pirated edition, New York, circa 1965. Missing quatrain 26. Also, a different though similar translation, by the same translators, appeared in *Signal: A Quarterly Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1965. Also missing quatrain 26.

"The Man Condemned to Death." Translated by Guy Wernham. *ManRoot*, no. 5, December 1971. Missing quatrains 26 and 32.

"The Man Condemned to Death." Translated by Jack Hirschman (into haikus). *Bastard Angel*, no. 3, fall 1974.

"The Man Sentenced to Death." Translated by Steven Finch. *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, Penguin Books, London, 1983. Quatrains 41 to 61. Whole translation published in *Treasures of the Night*, above.

"The Prisoner Condemned to Death." Translated by Mark Spitzer. *La Selva Subterranea/The Underground Forest*, summer/fall 1992. First 21 quatrains.

The Love Song/Under Sentence of Death. Translated by Lola Pozo, Onan City, pirated edition, "Station - Caroline." Distributed by City Lights, San Francisco, circa 1960. First 33 quatrains of "Le Condamné à mort," all of "Un Chant d'amour."

"Un Chant d'amour." Translated by Frank O'Hara. *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, no. 5, vol. 6, April 1964. This translation, published in *The Complete Poems of Jean Genet* as well, was also supposedly published in *The World* (issue unknown).

"A Love Song." Translated by James Kirkup. *The Window*, no. 7, February 1954.

"La Parade." Translated by Lee Ray. *Little Caesar*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1977.

"La Parade." Translated by Paul Mariah, Tony Montague and Chet Roaman. *ManRoot*, no. 9, October 1973.

"Jean Genet -- From: Le Pecheur du Suquet." [sic] Translated by Edwin Morgan. *The Outsider*, vol. 1, no. 2, summer 1962. First 10 strophes.

"A Colloquy... from Le Pêcheur du Suquet." Translated by Edwin Morgan. *The Outsider*, vol. 1, no. 3, spring 1963. Strophes 22-32.

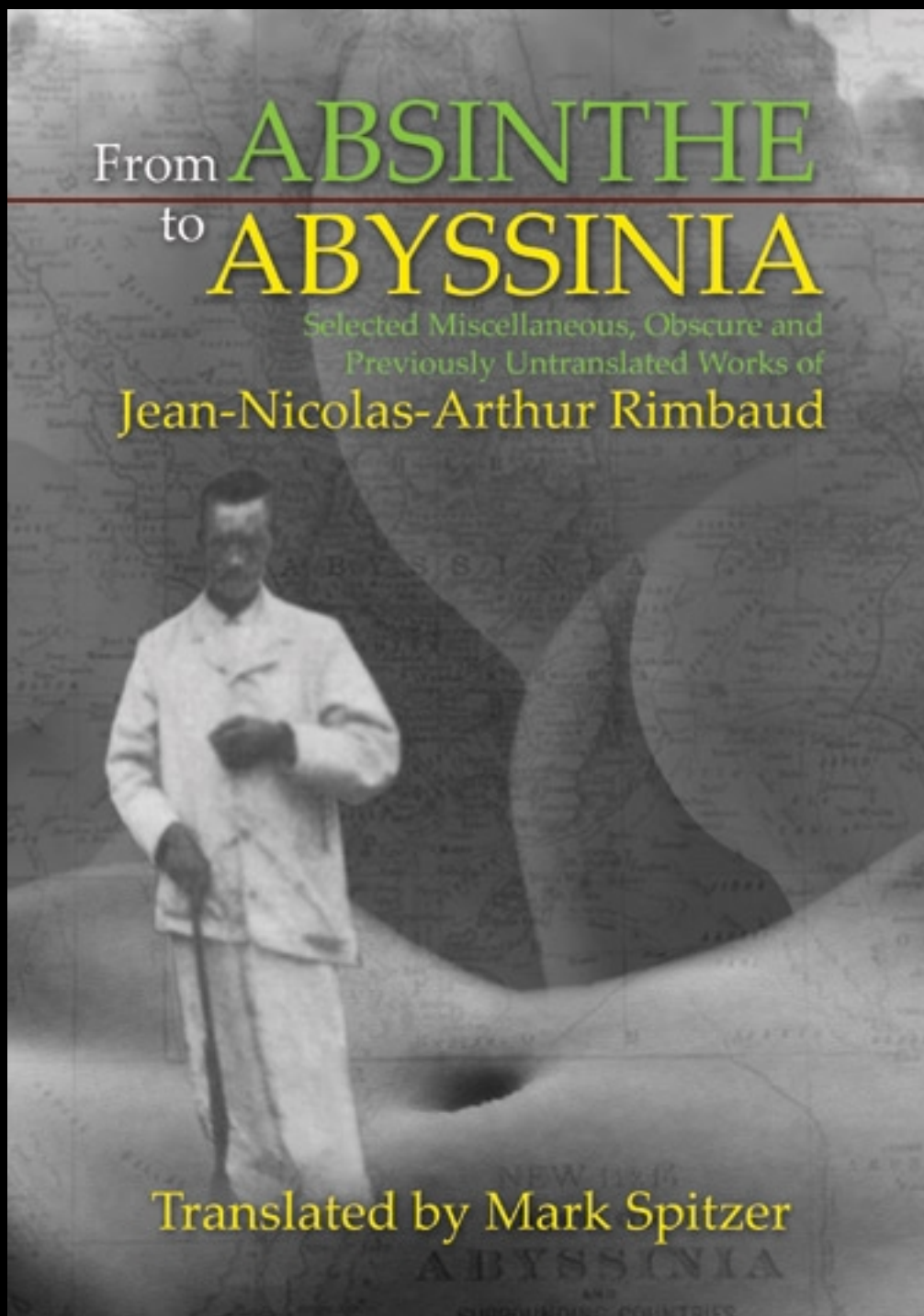
"In the Death Cell" and "Purple Flowers." Translated by Edwin Morgan. *The Insect Trust Gazette*, no. 1, summer 1964. Quatrains 38-40 from "Le Condamné à mort," strophes 16-20 from "Le Pêcheur du Suquet."

"The Fisherman of Suquet." Translated by Edmund White. *The Selected Writings of Jean Genet*, Ecco Press, Hopewell, NJ, 1993.

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From Absinthe to Abyssinia
Selected Miscellaneous, Obscure and Previously
Untranslated Works
of Jean-Nicolas-Arthur Rimbaud



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Even the most accurate and faithful translators of Rimbaud (Louis Varese, Wallace Fowlie, and Oliver Bernard) have misunderstood the

poetry, and consequently, have left less-than-accurate impressions of his work. Mark Spitzer asserts "No translation should ever be trusted, especially when the text is so complex that even the experts in the original language are stumped by multiple meanings, secret syntax and elusive argot. Such is the case with Rimbaud."

With *From Absinthe to Abyssinia*, Spitzer strives to retain the meaning of the original text, honoring the imagination of the poet. He offers a balance in what we know about Rimbaud, in relationship to what we pretend to know.

Mark Spitzer is the translator of *The Collected Poems of Georges Bataille* (Dufour Editions, 1998), and co-translator of *The Church*, by Louis-Ferdinand Celine (Green Integer, 2002). He has also translated Jean Genet, Blaise Cendrars, and other works by Celine and Bataille.

Review: "Great Leaps of Language! These are not simply translations of Rimbaud, they're resurrections of the poet's provocatively brilliant spirit, as it might, as it must, live among us now. Mark Spitzer makes us feel the poet afresh, through a gusty freshness of his own. Essential reading." -Jack Hirschman

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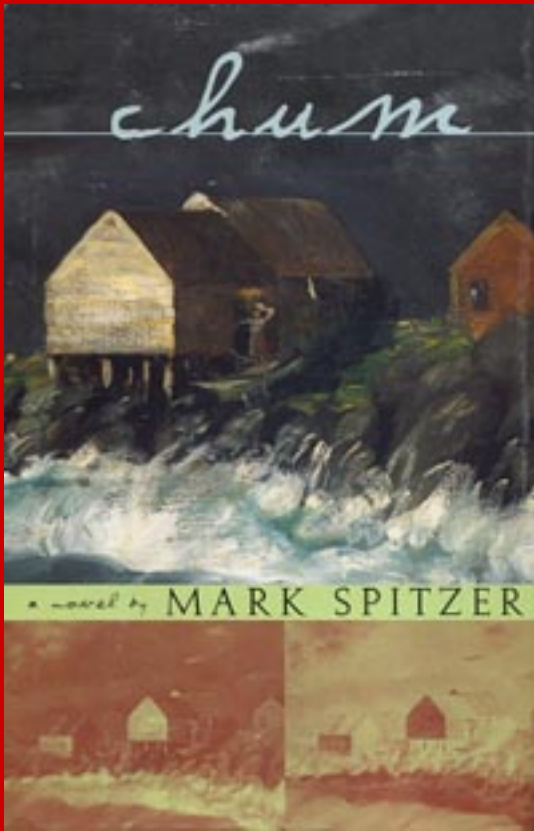
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Chum

a novel by Mark Spitzer

"It's something that Kierkegaard at his most suicidal moment would feel at home with." - Andrei Codrescu.

"Mark Spitzer's *Chum* is a side-splittingly funny, ultra-raunchy ride through the Alaska nobody wants to believe exists. Read it and weep, this Moby Dick of the millenium." - Jo-Ann Mapson.

"If Ingmar Bergman were still making movies, he would be the perfect director for a film based on Mark Spitzer's *Chum*. This book reminds me of the film *Shadows of Forgeotten Ancestors*, Johan Bojer's *The Last of*

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the Vikings, and any Tom Robbins novel. The Rasputin-like Mother Kralik would scare the pants off of Kafka." - Barry Gifford.

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MARK SPITZER



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Bottom Feeder
a novel by Mark
Spitzer

Six miles into Phantom Loon Lake, Ontario, a swell can sometimes be seen rising at dusk. The swell is Old Shithead, the last known surviving Copper Lake catfish on the planet, a creature of unmentionable proportions. For centuries, the legend of this lunkercat has grown larger than the mythic Big One itself. Bottom Feeder is the myth of a modern cast of wacky characters who all have different fish stories about Old Shithead- and so, in an eco-guerilla, monkey-wrenching kind of way, these poor souls battle for the preservation of the catfish.

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"A big fish as old as America lives at the bottom of Spitzer's

drifting contemporaries' minds. This is a novel redolent of the sap and sorrow of the North country, its byways as raw as fishguts and its heart as red as the vanishing lakes."

-Andrei Codrescu

Welcome to the Zipping, Zinging, adrenalized world of Mark Spitzer. A world rendered in the bold colors of a fauve painting; and a world of spark and verve and 'emagination,' of Grizzly professors and cig-shaking codgers and giant catfish, characters who dance through this great Whale of a fish story, making us think while they make us laugh.

-David Gessner Author of A Wild, Rank Place
and Under the Devil's Thumb

At once comedic and strangely melancholy, Bottom Feeder is a quintessentially American book. Spitzer is a young writer to watch: he is coming on strong, and there is no stopping him."

-Luis'Alberto Urrea
Author of Nobody's Son
and Across theWire

Mark Spitzer grew up fishing the Mississippi River. He received his BA from the University of Minnesota and his MA from the University of Colorado. He now lives in Louisiana, a writer, editor, and certified eccentric.



Photo by Robin Becker



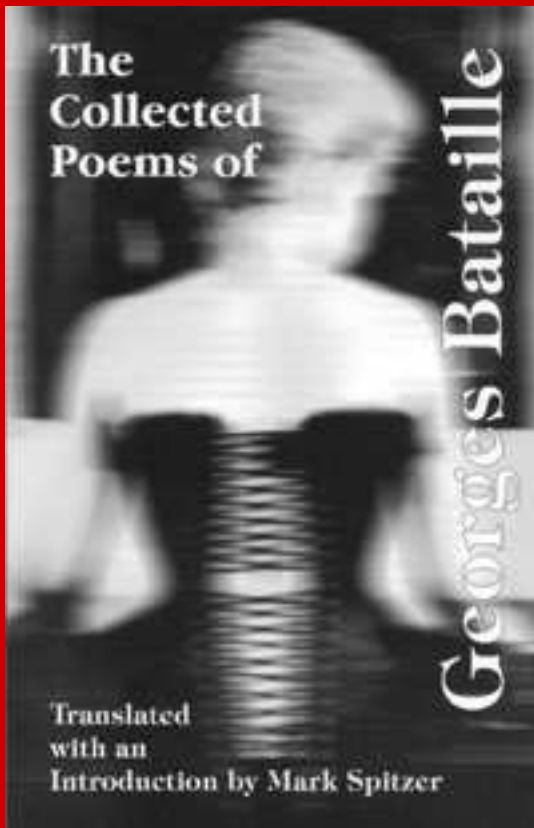
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MARK SPITZER



[Order The Collected Poems of Georges Bataille](#) in softcover here!

[Order Collected Poetry by Georges Bataille](#) in hardcover here!

The collected Poems of Georges Bataille

Translated with an Introduction by Mark Spitzer

"Bataille was one of the most important writers of our century"

- Michel Foucault

"Bataille's poetry oozes and spurts direct from his genitals. More than anyone except Rabelais and the bawdy folk imagination, he has set the genitals and its environs up on soapboxes to make speech. To catch this obscene though often elegant ejecta, Mark Spitzer has set to work a fine ear. . . .The brilliant cloaka shimmers in his [renderings]."

- Andrei Codrescu

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We have a courageous translator to thank for restaging these cryptic scenarios there's now a first-rate production of Bataille's poems in English

- Robert I Hurley

Georges Bataille is known primarily because of his controversial writings such as his novel *The Story of the Eye* and his historical/philosophical work *The Trail of Gilles de Rais* as well as for his influential theoretical and philosophical works. All of these prose works have been translated into English but, except for a few pieces, not his poetry This is the first collected English translation of his poetry. This is the poetry of a philosopher but it is also a poetry with an obsessively erotic often scatological edge frequently pushing the boundary of what is or isn't obscene. As Bataille wrote in his *Eroticism Death & Sensuality* poetry "leads to the same place as all forms of eroticism -- to the blending and fusion of separate objects. It leads us to eternity, it leads us to death, and through death to continuity. Poetry is eternity; the sun matched with the sea."

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