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SHORTER PIECES

by
Robert Desnos

translated by
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*pieces individually or collectively available
for anyone who wants to read any of them*

ART POETIQUE

In the back of the throat
Picked up in the mud and the slime
Spit out, throw up, cast off--
I am the poem witness to the breath of my master--
Discard, rubbish, garbage
Like the diamond, the flame, and the sky's blue
Not pure, not virgin
But kissed in every corner
kissed screwed sucked fucked raped
I am the verse witness to the breath of my master
Screwing and raping
Nothing dirtier than a deflowering
Oof! that's it and you get out
Good muddy earth where I put my foot
I am the wind the great wind and the sea
I am the verse witness to the breath of my master
It cracks it farts it sings it snores
Great wind storm heart of the world
There is no more bad weather
I love all weather I love weather
I love the great wind
The great wind cries snow sun fire and everything of the earth muddy or dry
And let it crumble!
And let it rot
Rot old flesh old bones
Through the back of the throat
And let it break the teeth and set the gums to bleeding
I am the verse witness to the breath of my master
The water runs with its absurd humming-bird song
Of nightingale and alcohol burning in a casserole
running along my body
A mushroom rots in the corner of the shadowy forest
 where a woman of god's thunder is lost and splashes barefoot
It really rots at the foot of the oaks
A golden medal won't hold out
It's soft
Deep
It gives
It really rots at the foot of the oaks

A moon from long ago
Is reflected in this rot
Smell of death smell of life embracing smell
droll creatures of shadow must be rolling about
and fighting and embracing here
It really rots at the foot of the oaks
And that breathes still harder at the summit
Nets upset and the famous hummingbirds just now
Thrown down
Nightingales de-lunged
Foliage of immense palpitating forests
Dirtied and wrinkled like toilet paper
Tumultuous rising tides of the summit
of the forests your waves pull up towards the sky
the plump hills in a foam
of clearings and pastures veined with
rivers and minerals
Finally here it is coming from its lair
The bleeding flayed one singing with his throat alive
No nails at the end of his fingers
Orpheus they call him
Cold kisser the confident of Sybils
Bacchus castrato raving and fortunrteller
Once a man of good earth come forth from good seed by a good wind
Speaks bleeds dreams
Teeth broken kidneys split, arteries knotted
Heart of nothing
While the river runs rolls inebriates grotesque wrecks of barges with coal running
Reaches the plain reaches the sea
Foam rolling and wearing out
On the sand salt coral
I will enter in your waves
After the river exhausted
Watch out for your FLOTTES!
For your corals, your sand, your salt at your feasts
Issued for the from the walls with passwords
By the back of the throats
By the back of the teeth

Good weather
For men worthy of the name
Good weather for the rivers and trees
Good weather for the sea
The foam and the mud remain
And the joy of living
And a hand in mine
And the joy of living
I am the verse the witness of the breath of my master.

--translated by Jonathan P. Eburne

THE WIND AT NIGHT

On oceanic oceans the sunk sink
the doomed die chasing
chasers ring-dancing rondos
Godly gods! Human humans!
With my digital digits I dismantle brainy brains
 Such agonising agony!
But mastered mistresses have hirsute hair
 Heavenly heavens
 Earthly earth
But where is heaven on earth

--translated by Martin Sorrell

ONLY ONE THING ON HIS MIND

I'd spun it out that morning
brushing the teeth of the lovely animal
which patiently I'm taming.

A chameleon.

The pleasant creature smoked, as per usual,
a few cigarettes,
after which I left.

It was on the stairs I met her:

"I mauve" said she,
and while myself
I crystal in open skies
beneath her fluent gaze in my direction.

Then padlock and mistress!
You yellow pine in vessel fine I to seat if road vault.

The stairs, always the stairs turning library
and the crowd abysmally lower than sun can clash.

Back upstairs!
But in vain, memories that sardine!
hardly, hardly a button tirra-lirra-till.
Fall fall!

Here's the verdict:

"the dancer will be shot at dawn wearing tutu
and bijoux sacrificed in the flames of her body.
Soldier, bijoux blood.!"

But already I mirror.

Mistress you black square and if the clouds of a while ago forget me not,
they mill in sempiternal eternity.

--translated by Martin Sorrell

MOUTH-SHAPED HEART

Her coat was dragging like a sinking sun
and the pearls of her necklace were as lovely as teeth.

A snow of breasts that the house surrounded
and a fire of kisses in the hearth.

And the diamonds of her rings shone brighter than any eyes.

“Night visitor,
God believe in me!
--I hail you gracious with fullness
blessed be the womb of your fruit.

Outside the reeds of delicate proportions curve gently.

The cats screech louder than weathercocks.

Tomorrow at daybreak, breathe roses with dawn's fingers
and the shining cloud will transform softest down to a star.”

In the night it was the swearing of rails at the nonchalant trains
near the gardens where the forgotten roses
are uprooted love affairs.

“Night visitor,
one day I shall lie down in a winding sheet as in a sea.

Your looks are star beams
the streamers on your dress roads to the infinite.

Come in a balloon light as a heart
in spite of the magnet, an arch of triumph in its form.

The flowers of the orchestra pit become the liveliest hands of Haarlem.

The centuries of our life last scarcely seconds.
Scarcely do seconds last loves.

At each bend in the road a right angle like an old man.

The night quiet as a wolf climbs into my bed.

Visitor! Visitor! your shields are breasts!

In the studio vipers rear up as mean as tongues.
And the flower-like iron vices have become hands.

With whose foreheads will you lapidate the peoples?
What lion follows you roaring louder than a storm?

Here come the nightmares of phantoms.”

And the roof of the palate slammed as loudly as the doors of the tomb.

They nailed me with nails as thin as the dead
in a death of silence.

Now you will pay no more attention
to the birds of the cosmic song.

The sponge I wash myself with is only a dripping brain
and knives pierce me with the sharpness of your looks.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

DOOR OF THE SECOND INFINITE

To Antonin Artaud

The periscope inkwell waits for me where the road turns
my pen-holder returns to its shell
The sheet of paper unfurls its great white wings
Pretty soon its two claws
will tear out my eyes
I will see nothing of my former body
my former body!
You got to see it all dressed up
On the most ridiculous day
The women put their jewels in their mouth
like Demosthenes
But I am the inventor of a telephone
in glass from Bohemia and
English tobacco
in direct relation
of fear!

--translated by Patricia Terry

ARBITRARY FATE

To Georges Malkine

Here comes the time of the crusades.

Through the closed window the birds insist on speaking
like fish in an aquarium.

At the shop window
a pretty woman smiles.

Happiness you are only sealing wax
and I go by like a firefly.

A number of guardians pursue
an inoffensive butterfly escaped from the asylum.

Under my hands he becomes lace pants
and your eagle flesh
oh my dream when I caress you!

Tomorrow burials will be free
there will be no more catching colds
the language of flowers will be spoken
light will be cast by lamps unknown to this day.

But today is today.

I feel that my beginning is close
like June wheat
Policemen had me the handcuffs.

The statues turn away without obeying.
On their base I shall write insults
and the name of my worst enemy.

There in the distant ocean
between tides a lovely woman's body
causes the sharks to draw back.

They rise to the surface to look at themselves in the air
and dare not bite the breasts
the delicious breasts.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

IF YOU KNEW

Far from me and like the stars, the sea,
and all the props of poetic legend.

Far from me and present all the same without your knowledge,
Far from me and still more silent because I imagine you endlessly,
Far from me,
my beautiful mirage and my eternal dream,
you cannot know.

If you knew.

Far from me and perhaps
still farther from being unaware of me and still unaware.

Far from me because you doubtless do not love me or,
not so different, I doubt your love.

Far from me for you cleverly ignore my passionate desires.

Far from me you are cruel.

If you knew.

Far from me,
oh joyous as the flower dancing in the river on its watery stem,
oh sad as seven in the evening in the mushroom fields.

Far from me still silent as in my presence
and still joyous as the stork-shaped hour falling from on high.

Far from me at the moment when the alembics sing,
when the silent and noise sea curls up on the white pillows.

If you knew.

Far from me,
oh my present present torment,
far from me with the splendid sound of oyster shells
crunched under the night-walker's step, at dawn,

when he passes by the door of restaurants.
If you knew.

Far from me,
willed and material mirage.

Far from me an island turns aside at the passing of ships.

Far from me a calm herd of cattle mistakes the path,
stops stubbornly at the brink of a steep precipice,
far from me, oh cruel one.

Far from me,
a falling star falls in the night bottle of the poet.
He corks it instantly to watch the star enclosed within the glass,
the constellations come to life against the sides,
far from me,
you are far from me.

If you knew.

Far from me a house is built just now.

A white-clothed worker atop the structure sings a sad brief song
and suddenly, in the hod of mortar there appears the future of the house:
lovers' kisses and double suicides and nakedness
in the rooms of lovely unknown girls and their midnight dreams,
and the voluptuous secrets surprised by the parquet floors.

Far from me,
If you knew.

If you knew how I love you
and though you do not love me,
how I am happy,
how I am strong and proud,
with your image in my mind, to leave the universe.

How I am happy enough to perish from it.

If you knew how the world submits to me.

And you, oh beautiful unsubmitive one,
how you are also my prisoner.

Oh far-from-me to whom I submit.

If you knew.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

THE VOICE OF ROBERT DESNOS

So like the flower and the breeze
like the water's flowing with its passing shadows
like the smile glimpsed that famous midnight
so like everything like joy and sadness
it's past midnight its naked torso rising above belfreys and poplars
I summon to me all those lost in the countryside
old corpses young felled oaks
the threads of cloth rotting on the ground
and the linen drying near the farms
I summon to me tornadoes and hurricanes
tempests typhoons cyclones
tidal waves
earthquakes
I summon to me volcano smoke and that of cigarettes
smoke rings from luxury cigars
I summon to me loves and lovers
I summon to me the living and the dead
I summon to me gravediggers I summon murders
I summon executioners I summon pilots builders and architects
Murders
I summon flesh
I summon the one I love
I summon the one I love
I summon the one I love
triumphant midnight unfolds its satin wings and alights on my bed
belfreys and poplars bend to me desire
the former fall in ruin the latter fade
those lost in the countryside find their way in finding me
the old cadavers resuscitate at my voice
the young felled oaks become green
the shreds of cloth rotting in the ground and on the ground
 clack at my voice like the banner of rebellion
 the linen drying around the farms dresses adorable women
 whom I do not adore who come to me obey my voice and adore me
tornadoes twist in my mouth
hurricanes redden my lips even more
tempests growl at my feet
typhoons rumple my hair even more

I receive the drunken kisses of cyclones
tidal waves rush forward to die at my feet
earthquakes destroy only at my command
volcano smoke clothes me in its vapors
and cigarette smoke perfumes me
and smoke rings from cigars crown me
loves and love so long pursued take refuge in me
lovers listen to my voice
the living and the dead submit to me
 the former greeting me coldly
 the latter in friendship
gravediggers leave graves half dug
 declaring that I alone can order their nightly labor
murders salute
executioners invoke the revolution
invoke my voice
invoke my name
pilots steer according to my eyes
builders grow dizzy listening to me
architects leave for the desert
murders bless me
flesh quivers at my call

the one I love does not listen to me
the one I love does not hear me
the one I love does not answer me.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

OBSESSION

I bring you a bit of seaweed which was tangled
with the sea foam and this comb

But your hair is more neatly fixed than the clouds with the wind
with celestial crimson glowing in them
and are such that with quiverings of life
and sobs sometimes between my hands
they die with the waves and the reefs of the strand
so abundantly that we shall not soon again despair of perfumes
and their flight at evening
when this comb marks motionless
the stars buried in their rapid and silky flow
traversed by my hands seeking still at their root
the humid caress of a sea more dangerous
than the one where this seaweed was gathered
with the froth scattered by a tempest.

A star dying is like your lips.
They turn blue as the wine spilled on the tablecloth.

An instant passes with a mine's profundity.
With a muffled complaint the anthracite falls in flakes on the town
How cold it is in the impasse where I knew you.

A forgotten number on a house in ruins
The number 4 I think.

Before too long I'll find you again near these china-asters
The mines make a muffled snoring
The roofs are strewn with anthracite.

This comb in your hair like the end of the world!

the smoke the old bird and the jay
There the roses and the emeralds are finished
The precious stones and the flowers
The earth crumbles and stars screeching like an iron across mother-of-pearl
But your neatly fixed hair has the shape of a hand.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

SKY SONG

The flower of the Alps said to the seashell:
“you are shining”

The seashell said to the sea:
“you resound”

The sea said to the boat:
“you quiver”

The boat said to the fire:
“you are glowing”

The fire said to me:
“I glow less brightly than her eyes”

The boat said to me:
“I quiver less than your heart when she appears”

The sea said to me:
“I resound less than her name in your love”

The seashell said to me:
“I shine less than the phosphorous of desire in your empty dream”

The flower of the Alps said to me:
“she is lovely”

I said:
“she is lovely,
she is lovely,
she is touching.”

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

WITH OAKEN HEART AND BIRCHBARK

With the tender and hard wood of these trees,
with oaken heart and birchbark,
how many skies could one make,
how many oceans,
how many slippers for the pretty feet of Isabella the Vague?

With oaken heart and birchbark.

With the sky how many glances could one make,
how many shadows behind the wall,
how many slips for the body of Isabella the Vague?

With oaken heart and birchbark,
with the sky.

With oceans how many flames could one make,
how many reflections at palace edge,
how many rainbows above the head of Isabella the Vague?

With oaken heart and birchbark,
with the sky,
with oceans.

With slippers how many stars could one make,
how many paths in the night,
traces in the ashes,
how many stairs could one climb to meet Isabella the Vague?

With oaken heart and birchbark,
with the sky,
with oceans,
with slippers.

But Isabella the Vague, you know,
is only an image of dream seen through the polished leaves
of the tree of death and of love.

With oaken heart and birchbark.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

NIGHT SUICIDE

The green reeds bow down
 when the dragonfly appears at the bend of the path
I go towards a tombstone clearer than white snow
 like white milk white limestone white walls
The dragonfly splashes about in the pools of milk
The glass armor trembles shivers starts walking
Rainbows knot up Louis XV style
What?
Already the earth hidden by our path holds up its hand
Struggles with the glass armor
Knocks at the doors
Floats in the air
Yells
Moans weeps ah!
Ah! Ah! Ah!
Furrow you die in the sound blue rock
Great morsels of sponges falling from the sky cover up cemeteries
Wine runs thunderous
Milk hidden earth armor struggle on the grass turning now red now white
Thunder and lightning and rainbow
Ah!
Furrow you crevice and you sing
The little girl goes to school reciting her lesson

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

NOW IT'S NIGHT

You'll go away when you want to
The bed closes and unlaces voluptuous like a black velvet corset
And the shining insect rests on the pillow
Bursts open and regains the Blackness
The hammering wave arrives stays silent
Samoa the beautiful falls asleep in the cotton
Rabbit-burrow what are you doing with the curtains?
 rolling them about in the mud
Under a lucky star and in the depths of all mud
The shipwreck is stressed under the eyelid
I count and describe this sleep
I gather the flasks of night and arrange them on a shelf
The wooden bird's warbling mingles with the smash of corks like a look
Don't go there don't die there wrong place for joy
One more guest at the round table in the clearing of emerald green
 and resounding helmets near a heap of swords and bashed-in armor
Loving nerves lamp extinguished at day's end
I am sleeping

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

EBONY LIFE

A frightful calm will mark this day
And the shadow of street lamps and fire hydrants will tire out the light
All will fall quiet the most silent and the chattiest
Finally the squalling infants will die
Tugboats trains wind
Will slip along in silence
We'll hear the great voice coming from far to pass over the town
We'll await it a long time
Then towards milord's sun
When the dust of the stones and the absence of tears
 make up the sun's dress on the great deserted squares
Finally we'll hear the voice coming
Muttering long at the doors
It will pass over the town snatching drapes breaking panes
We'll hear it
What silence before it still greater the silence it won't disturb
 but accuse it of the misdemeanor of sudden death
 it will brand and denounce.

Oh day of misfortune and joy
The day the nearby day when the voice will pass over the town.

A phantom seagull told me she loved me as much as I love her
That this great terrible silence was my love
That the wind bearing the voice was the great revolt of the world
And that the voice would be in my favor.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

AT DAYBREAK

Will the schist brighten the white night of cork?

We'll be lost in midnight's corridor
with the calm horror of the dying sob
Come all you ever-famous lizards climbing plants
digital flesh-eaters

Come vines

Whistle of revolts

Come giraffes

I invite you to a feast

So grand the light of the glasses will equal the aurora borealis

Women's nails will be strangled swans

Not far from here a grass is drying by the roadside.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

SHADOWS! OH SHADOWS!

Frightened sycamore famous division of time flower of animal silence

Oh red red and blue red and yellow silex
surging forth from the hollow of the hands of nights and plains
in ferocious exclamations of the gaze plum-burst of glass shine
and acrobatic armpit or towers raised from the very depths of the abyss
to the voice that says I adore it.

Greetings harder than marble and more dazzling than the movable earth
and more majestic oh cloud than the nightingale
of Brazilian rosewood and fright.

Metal orgy and I'm speaking of the bumps of toads
and I mean of the sky and I imagine of the sun

Friends, let's fall silent before the great enclosed abysses
of the widow in *crepe de chine*.

If you want to obey her finally in sea and night through the sheets
of white linen I bear witness to and we were the first to know our white sheets.

Ferocious and he says to stork and snake:
"Come forth just at midnight in milk and eyes."

If you leave him near a gaslight
how beautiful the flowers will be in cups of candy.

I want and you command and wild chirping in the amber necklaces
die with a rain of sparks and flapping cloth
you scarcely knew it but you guessed it.

Shattered bottle folding flower
and how beautiful were her eyes and hands of the volcano which grooves it ah!

So then burst apart some lobster of a microscopic lens
evolving in a cloudless sky
won't he ever meet a comet or a crow?

Your eyes your lovely eyes devour the obscurity of silence and forgetting.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

WORDS OF THE ROCKS

The queen of the azure and the fool of emptiness pass in a cab

At each window manes of hair lean out calling
“See you soon!”

“See you soon!” say the jellyfish
“See you soon!” say the silks
Says mother-of-pearl
say the pearls
say the diamonds

Soon a night of nights without moon or star
A night of all the littorals and of all forests
A night of all love and of all eternity

A pane shatters in the watched window
A rag is clacking over the tragic countryside

You will be alone
Among the mother-of-pearl dust and the carbonized diamonds
The dead pearls
Alone among the silks like dresses emptied at your approaching
Among the tracks of jellyfish fleeing when you lifted your gaze
Alone perhaps the manes of hair will not flee
Will obey you

They will bend in your fingers like irrevocable condemnations

Long hair of girls who loved me
And whom I did not love
Remain at the windows oh manes of hair!

A night of all the littoral nights
A night of luster and of funerals
A staircase unwinds under my feet
and the night and the day reveal to my fate only shadows and failure

The immense column of marble doubt alone sustains the sky above my head
The empty bottles whose glass I shatter into dazzling splinters
The smell of cork abandoned by the sea
The nets of boats imagined by little girls
The debris of mother-of-pearl slowly powdering
An evening of all the evenings of love and eternity

The infinite profound pain desire poetry
love revelation miracle
revolution love
the profound infinite envelops me with talkative shadows

The eternal infinites shatter in splinters
oh manes of hair!

It will be a night of nights without moon or pearl
Without even broken bottles.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

IN LONG AGO

In long ago I passed by the castle of leaves
They were slowly turning yellow in the moss
And far off the seashells were hanging on hard to the rocks in the sea

Your memory or rather your tender presence was in the same place
Transparent presence and mine

Nothing had changed but everything had aged
at the same time as my temples and my eyes

Don't you love this commonplace?
let me be let me be this ironic satisfaction is so rare

Everything had aged but your presence

In long ago I passed by the pond of the single day
The waves were still illusory

The hulk of the shipwrecked vessel you know--
you remember that night of tempest and of kisses?--
was a shipwrecked vessel or a delicate woman's hat rolled by the wind
into the springtime rain that was in the same place

And then phooey la-la-la let's dance in the blackthorns!
The aperitifs had changed their names and color
The rainbows framing the mirrors
In long ago you loved me.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

FROM THE MARBLE ROSE TO THE IRON ROSE

The marble rose immense and white was alone on the deserted square
where the shadow stretched out to infinity.

And the marble rose alone under the sun and the stars was queen of solitude.

And order-less the marble rose on her rigid stalk
at the summit of the granite pedestal
was streaming with all the floods of the sky.

The moon paused pensive in her glacial heart
and the goddesses of the gardens
the goddesses of marble
came to try their cold breasts against her petals.

The glass rose resounded with all the sounds of the littoral.

There was not one sob of a broken wave
which didn't make her tremble.

About her fragile stalk and her transparent heart
rainbows were turning with the planets.

The rain slid in delicate globes down her leaves
set moaning by the wind
sometimes with fear of streams and glow worms.

The coal rose was a black phoenix
which the powder transformed to a fire rose.

But ceaselessly come forth from the shadowy corridors of the mine
where the miners gathered her respectfully
to take her to daylight in her vein of anthracite
the coal rose kept watch at the portals of the desert.

The blotting paper rose used to bleed sometimes at twilight
when the evening came to kneel at her feet.

The blotting paper rose guardian of all secrets and a bad counselor
bled with a thicker blood than sea-foam
and which was not her own.

The cloud rose appeared over the condemned cities
at the hour of volcanic eruptions
at the hour of fires
at the hour of riots
and above Paris
when the commune mixed the irised beings of petrol
and the smell of powder
she was lovely on the twenty-first of January
lovely in the month of October in the cold wind of the steppes
lovely in 1905 at the hour of miracles
at the hour of love.

The wood rose presided at the gallows.

She flowered at the top of the guillotine
then slept in the moss of the immense shadow of mushrooms.

The iron rose
had been hammered for centuries by forgers of sparks.

Each of her leaves was great like an unknown sky.
At the slightest shock she gave off the noise of thunder.
But how gentle she was to despairing girls in love
the iron rose.

The marble rose
the glass rose
the coal rose
the blotting-paper rose
the cloud rose
the wood rose
the iron rose
will always flower again
but today they are de-petaled on your carpet.

Who are you?
you who crush under your naked feet the fugitive debris
of the marble rose
the glass rose
the coal rose
the blotting-paper rose
the cloud rose
the wood rose
the iron rose.

--translated by Mary Ann Caws

APPARITION

Born from mud, sprung heavenwards,
more floating than a cloud,
harder than marble,

Born of joy, sprung from sleep,
more floating than flotsam,
harder than a heart,

Born of its heart, sprung from the skies,
more floating than sleep,
harder than the heavens,

Born, sprung,
floating more hard and more sky,
more heart and more marble,

And no more of sleep,
no more of clouds
and no more of flotsam,
and so much so more,

But from floating sleep
to heart of marble scattered like flotsam,
Down a meager landscape sky
springing and floating like a heart ...

And bleeding, oh bleeding
bleeding so much
That so much marble, abandoned,
laid out, standing as it sprang,
Will finish up floating like flotsam.

But it's no more about floating or springing or hardening.

But, form pure mud,
Making cement, marble, sky,
cloud, joy and flotsam
And a heart, it goes without saying,
and everything said thus far
And sleep, lovely sleep, good sleep,
A good sleep of mud
Born of coffee and night
and coal and ink
and widow's weeds
And a hundred million black
And the embrace of two blacks beneath the shade of pine trees
And ebony and multitudes of crows perched on carnage ...

So that at last,
recovering the universe,
There may blaze
A bouquet,
an immense bouquet of red roses.

--translated by Martin Sorrell

FEAST OF CORPUS DIABOLI

The last droplet of wine catches fire in the bottom of the glass
Where a chateau has just appeared.

The gnarled trees the line the route bow down before the traveler.

He comes from the nearest village,
He comes from a far-distant town,
Just passing by the base of the bell-towers.

At the window he see a red star stir,
Descend, shaking as it moves
Down the white road, the black countryside.

It heads for the traveller, who watches it arrive.

For an instant it shines in each of his eyes,
then alights on his forehead.

Startled by this glacial glow illuminating him,
He wipes his brow.

A bubble of wine forms on his finger.

Now the man moves away, getting smaller
In the night.

He has passed close to that spring where you come in the morning
to gather fresh cress,
He has passed close by the abandoned house.

It's the man with the drop of wine on his brow.

At this moment he's dancing in an immense room,
A brilliantly lit room,
Its burnished parquet floor
Deep as a mirror flashing light.

He and the woman he dances with are alone
In this immense room,
and he dances
To the sound of a powdered glass orchestra.

And the creatures of the night
Contemplate this solitary couple dancing.

--translated by Martin Sorrells

SPRING

You, Rose Selvy, wander out of reach
In the spring caught up in love's sweat,
In the scent of the rose budding on tower walls,
in the ferment of waters and earth.

Bleeding, a rose in his side, the dancer's stone body
Appears in the theatre in the midst of ploughing
A mute, blind, and deaf people
will applaud his dance and his spring death.

It is said. But the word written in soot
Is erased by the whims of the winds under fingers of rain
though we hear and obey it.

At the wash house, where the water runs,
a cloud pretends to be the soap and the storm as it pushes back
the moment when the sun will break the bushes into flower.

--translated by Katharine Conley