

VALERY ALEFF

POEMS I

LANDSCAPES OF DESTINY

(1995)

LEAVES OF FEAR

I disagree with those poets
Who testify to the flight
Of Time and the autumn—
To while away the time.

Leaves never fall so nothing
Rustles under our feet
As we proceed
Through the dark forest in search of
Virgil or a sleeping beauty.

Anxiety

Rustles in our body,
Our present and future,
Our permanent state of mind.
We cannot leave them behind:
These words, these months,
This path winding through the forest.

That's why leaves never fall.

AT THE END OF SOMETHING

One sunny morning I went
Out of my house, determined
To begin a new life, to end
My old misery.

I boldly stepped
Into a landscape, thinking
There was another house behind
That landscape, *my* house—
The one I'd been looking for
Ever since...Ever since what?
Not the foggiest idea:
Only Mnemosyne can read
The memories of the dead,
Attacking Time and Life
In the rear.

There was nothing behind,
Nor was there any landscape.

My house
Turned out to be located
At the end of something.
At the end of what?
Of a steppe? Of a bog?

Alas, only God
And the Martians know
Our geography.

A SECRETIVE MOOD

Those trees are growing so profusely
They obstruct the view.

What do they hide?
A poisonous landscape? A deceitful
Cloud? An angel on his deathbed, scribbling
A farewell letter: 'Yours truly—'?

Angels hide their agonies from gods,
Demons and humans. Their agonies
Last for centuries. Deceitful clouds are
Motionless.

Was the Garden of Eden
Created for the same purpose?
To hide another garden—
The Garden of Eden?

Does every flower
Hide a particle of Evil
Or the deathbed of a nymph?

THE IRREDEEMABLE GLANCE

Anything can be reduced to an absurdity,
And whatever *is* absurd seems so
Only at first glance.
Then you find out it is not absurd,
Not at all, not at all.
It is just normal.
The same words were used yesterday
By lots of people,
The same words, in the same order.
And the same house stood
Just opposite your window,
The same absurd house.
And the same smart pedestrian
Stood beneath your balcony,
Looking at the house opposite.
He is still right under your balcony,
Staring, staring, gliding
Through a vista of days.
And every day is reduced to a second
In your memory, in your memory.
The absurd second!
The irredeemable second!
The second in the shape of a human eye
That looks somewhere else.

PERSPECTIVE

According to my dictionary
'Second sight' is the power
To see future events
Or events happening at a distance,
As if present—
A time-traveller
Armed with a telescope.

I don't care
About the future. Nor am I longing
To see what happens in New Zealand,
In some backyard.

I'm curious about
What gets tantalisingly stuck
In the present,
Within my field of vision,
As soon as I open my eyes
And sit up in my bed.

I wish I were endowed
With the power of first sight.
The unhindered eye of Cimabue.

POETRY

So many stories have been told in vain!

People nod to show they understand
Every word, every thought,
And depart as if nothing had happened.

The stories they hear or read do not change their faces.
Their faces are story-less: their own lives
Cannot be found in them.

Only death writes on their faces
His long or short poems,
His epics and his sonnets.

No, even death
Doesn't write anything
On their faces.

A QUESTION OF ROUTINE

My body is an inexhaustible source of pain.
How often I forget it!

My pain, my multifarious pain.
A morning pain. An evening pain.
Nobody else is likely to know it
As well as I do. In minute detail.
Even my mother did not feel it,
For all the tears she shed
In response to my groans.

Tears are painless.
I wish I could just stand
By my bedside, dropping
Compassionate tears
On my wriggling body.

Poetry

Is hardly an appropriate medium
For describing a pain in one's toe.

But what am I supposed
To do? How can I write
About love or a dove
Or a brook or a rook
When I feel a tremendous pain in my toe?

An imaginary tale of woe
Seems out of place
Under the circumstances.

Surgical instruments
Instead of an eagle.

Pain doesn't care about poetry—
Or beauty, for that matter.

At least *my* pain does not.

EVERY CLOUD...

Who will care for the children
When their parents die?
Nobody. They will leave their house
And wander about the streets, begging for money
And cleaning the windscreens of motorcars.

Such wanderings
Might help a potential writer
(A future Dickens!)
To gather enough material
For a score of novels.
But they've no gift for writing,
Those children,
Those homeless children
(The homeless children of the future).
Anyway they're bound to die
Before writing anything.

They will be spared
The corporal punishment
Reserved for the children
Whose writings abound
In spelling mistakes.

A POET LAUREATE

In one of his longish poems
He called his destiny a 'murderer'.
The poem was entitled
Madame Tussaud's.

In the mornings
His destiny carried a gun—
A machine gun, whenever he was
In a pessimistic mood.
At night, after a hearty dinner,
His destiny might hold
A vial of arsenic—
A sign of indigestion.

'Laurel wreaths are also exhibited
At Madame Tussaud's,' he said once.

IN MEMORY OF FEDERICO FELLINI

One elegy engenders another:
The world is swarming with the dead
Who walk in our midst and outstare us.

They influenced our fates
During their lifetimes.
They are still with us.

We might carelessly walk around,
But for their inquisitive looks.
They don't leave us in peace,
Worried as they are
About their heritage,
About *their* world.
Are we up to our tasks?

Are my poems recited
In *Otto e mezzo*?

We didn't meet during your lifetime
Except in cinemas. That's enough.

You've been awaiting my elegy
For almost two years.

WE ARE AT A CRITICAL TIME IN HISTORY

1

We are at a critical time in history.
Rivers flow uphill and the sea
Doesn't await our ships any longer.

Look how they float
In the air, under the sky!
We call them castles
For some reason.

'No harm done,' we say,
Smiling apologetically.
'Castles in the air!'

But our ships are no castles.
What's more, they're supposed
To carry us down to the sea.

Any schoolboy can destroy them
By shooting a few stones
From his catapult.

So children get assassinated
At critical times in history:
Preventive measures are essential.

2

We are at a critical time in history,
Paving the way to another epoch,
More glorious, less troublesome—
A transitory period, so to speak.

People are always on the move.
They have no time to stop
And form a picture of Time.

Their Time is scattered all around

Like the toys of a negligent child.
(He will never grow old.)

And their wine is watery.
It has nothing in common
With human blood.

HOMAGE TO MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI

Your films *are* boring:
We are used to putting up
Only with our own despair,
However slow and silent.
(Despair *can't* be otherwise.)
We may hide it
From ourselves for years.
But others are supposed
To speak up, especially in films.
We have no time for their silent
Comings and goings.
They should blow up
Their houses and public buildings
Instead of fiddling with photographs.

You had a house blown up,
Several times in quick succession—
In *Zabriskie Point*,
In the heroine's mind. You prefer
Silent explosions (accompanied
By Pink Floyd), the ones
Which last for ages. You favour
Sterile explosions.

Anyway
The world is indestructible.

MUMBLING

There's no cause for anxiety:
Everything has happened already.
Of course you might fall ill
And death is still to come.
But what is it compared
With the sufferings you've endured
Throughout your life?

What is it compared
With your *present* sufferings,
Your *present* state of mind?
Just another pain,
Another rainy day.
It's raining already.
It never rains but it pours.

Language is killing you.
Don't get bogged down in words:
They stab you in the back,
They stab you in the neck.
Words of endearment,
Words of encouragement.

You'd better get up and
Draw the curtain aside.
Look out of the window!
Is it raining?
It's pouring down.

MOTHER LOVE

(Diary of a Voyeur)

Let's have a look through the telescope!
What do we see? Another world?
Another chaos? No such luck!
We are alone in the cosmos.
Nobody else wants to be born
Into the world. Only men and women.
And animals. They are even more stupid
Than human beings. Animals. Doing nothing
To avoid life. They never cut it short.
They never cut it in pieces, as far as I know.
They never drown themselves. Not even lemmings—
Consciously, I mean!

Nor do they seem
To enjoy themselves. Consciously! At least
They don't really enjoy themselves on earth.

They run around or sleep or gnaw on bones
Or sip their milk or brutally kill each other
Or greedily devour their next of kin.

They also have mothers
And their mothers protect them. What for?
Why don't mothers devour their children?

Some of them do, as well I know—
Within my telescope!

READING MONTAIGNE

You advise us to shout whenever
Pain becomes unbearable.

In your opinion we must share our lodgings
With death. Anyway he is always there,
Sitting in our armchairs, drinking our wine.
You advise us to overlook his mistakes.

Contrary to accepted ideas,
Death makes many mistakes,
Otherwise we wouldn't be alive.
So many opportunities missed!

You ask us not to wag our index-fingers
At death, saying we might not
Forgive him next time.

According to your essays,
We must forgive both death and life.
And you advise us to write 'life'
Neither with a capital L
Nor with a small one.

Generally speaking,
Your letters are of middle size.

THE FORCE OF LOGIC

*...la chaîne proposera à 14.50 la demi-finale Australie-
Nouvelle Zélande (si la logique est respectée).*

Télépoche

Logic is seldom respected.

Life has its own logic.

Death has its own logic.

Death doesn't submit to the logic of eternity.

And the origin of art lies in the discrepancy

Between the human mind and Destiny.

England won. Australia lost.

The England versus New Zealand match

Ought to have been announced.

A LADDER

'The ancients said that poetry
Is a ladder to God.' (A quote
From Montale's poem *Syria*
Translated by Arrowsmith.)

We quote our predecessors
And often question their wisdom.

I don't think poetry
Is a ladder to God.
Nor is it a road to men, for
Nobody reads poetry nowadays.
A path leading to itself—
That is what poetry has become
Over the last decades. And yet
Poetry is *not* art for art's sake;
It's written for the sake of the dead
And the unborn.
And for the sake of angels.

But there's always a pair of wings
In a lumber room or in an attic.
And anyone can be born once again.

SENTENCES

Take a fresh sheet of paper and start again...

Turn over a new leaf...

As if a fresh sheet of paper were different from the ones

Lying crumpled

In the wastepaper basket! They're all alike. So are

Wastepaper baskets and rubbish bins. And our handwriting

Has not changed overnight, let alone

Our poems and contracts,

Our promises and declarations of love. Even the style of our

Farewell letters has not altered:

We still say goodbye instead of adieu.

You turn over a new leaf and realise it's old:

Five years old, ten years old.

A very old leaf. An autumnal leaf streaked with tear-marks.

And you realise you can't really turn it over:

It's glued to your past and also to your future. You're not allowed

To cut the pages of your book. Nor are you allowed to

Read them: the writer's handwriting

Alters every minute.

Sometimes you succeed

In deciphering a word, two words: express coach,

Teatime, tear-jerker, new leaf.

Or even an entire sentence:

'Take a fresh sheet of paper and start again!'

IN MEMORY OF ANDREY NIKOLSKY

Suicide is often indistinguishable
From an ordinary, 'normal' death
Which doesn't incite neighbours
And local priests to shake their heads
Disapprovingly.

A car accident?
A premeditated self-murder?
You might have been drunk.
Between ourselves,
You always stood on the brink
Of another world, not necessarily
The Hereafter.

Was the road slippery?
Was it raining at night?
The road curves down
Into the valley...
'It's a dangerous road!'
And they nod their heads—
Approvingly.
A telegraph pole...
'It *was* raining last night!'

Let them think you were
A reckless driver,
An inveterate drunkard...

TO VLADIMIR MARTYNOV

Every time I go to Moscow
I promise myself to call you.
I never do. Why dream of the past
When the present is so huge
That even a new *Inferno*
Wouldn't encompass it? And my gaze,
My short-sighted gaze,
Wanders around my room, sometimes
Taking in the nearby woods—
Nothing else.

But *this* present, *my* present,
However truncated and despondent,
Is far superior to any past—
Yours or mine or ours—
Merely because
I'm not writing this poem in the past;
Nor will you read it in the past.

I hope you might read it in the future.

MODERN LYRICS

Idlers lounging at street corners...
Cars...clouds...Apparently
The world sounds like one sentence—
A short one at that. No suspension points!

Nothing is isolated
Except a few solitary maniacs
Who shut themselves away from the world
And brazenly impugn the propositions
Of modern physics.

And I don't quite see how
That passer-by over there
Is linked to your despair.

Does he call you in the evenings,
Keeping silent until
You hang up on him?

Will modern physics
Eventually make him
Stab you to death
In your bathroom?

SELF-CONGRATULATION REACHED FEVER PITCH

Nine years ago
I was dying in Finland—
I *thought* I was dying.
As a matter of fact
I just had a bout of fever.

I reviewed my earthly existence,
Slowly, not without satisfaction:
I was prejudiced in my own favour.
I went so far as to congratulate myself
On my achievements.

Were I a censor
I would remove that episode
From my record, leaving only
The fever and the splitting headache.
Both lasted for two days.

A NEW MADELEINE

(Homage to Proust)

She managed to pack a lot of sightseeing
Into the short time she had in London.

She can't remember what it was. A monument,
A square. What she remembers is a sensation.
A pillar, a picture. She remembers her own tears.
(She is not in the habit of crying.)

All the year round she tries to remember
The shape of the thing. She looks at pillars,
She talks to children. She seduces strangers
Who make love to her in hotel rooms.

She thinks it might have been a man.
Not a monument, not a book.

REAL LIFE

I intended it as a compliment,
But she looked deeply offended.
A commonplace occurrence.
Daily routine.
Incomprehension, absurdity—
Call it what you will.
You didn't stand in that room.
You can nod or shake your heads,
Conjuring up in your minds
A few similar cases
(An international crisis,
Among other things),
Accusing words or gods
Or our modern civilisation
Or merely your neighbours
Who are rather noisy in the evenings.
(But they inevitably knock on your walls
Whenever *you* make the slightest noise.)

You were *not* in that room.
I was. And I *suffered*—
Not because I'm a coward or a gentleman.
I *experienced* that misunderstanding.
I *lived* through that absurdity
Which lasted for a few days.
(It is still hidden
At the bottom of her glance;
It still crops up in our discussions
In the guise of a misplaced emphasis.)
And one doesn't bother
About general trends
When confronted with a grimace of disgust.
And one doesn't blame anybody.

A NEW REFUTATION OF AMNESIA

We can't forget anything:
Amnesia is just another variety
Of memory, which induces us
To look for our past
Outside ourselves—
Outside our mind!

Our hands still remember
Her face (whoever she is),
Its gradients, its velvety smoothness.

Our eyes remember her glance—
The way she glanced at us
From behind her fan!
All we have to do is
Look at ourselves in a mirror,
Reading the memoirs of our eyes.

And the books on our shelves
Remember her gait, her hats
And the ball-dress she wore
On the day of our encounter.

The books also remember
Ourselves,
Whoever we are.

GENERALITIES

Notes written in the margin
Are more important
That the main text.
(I said something along these lines
In one of my poems.)

The world itself is a commentary
In the margin; a sign at the bottom
Of a page. We are not likely to read
The upper part of that page.

A COMMENTARY:
Why does everybody
Feel duty bound
To cover blank sheets of paper
With words, numbers, signatures,
(Lakes, forests, mountains)?

A NOTE:
'The world is a signature.'
I don't recall who said that.

HALL OF MIRRORS

The reflection of trees in a lake,
Narcissus...

Many poems have been written
About those reflections.
(And one of my novels.)
Clouds, lovers, the moon...

Water welcomes everybody and
Everything. Water even
Reflects our moods, especially
When we are tempted to drown ourselves.

But there are always
Doctors beside us
Who advise us against drowning:
They scorn the hospitality
Of rivers and suchlike.

'A mermaid invited me to dinner,
Yesterday. I can't possibly
Stand her up!'

So *they* invite us
To dinner in order
To make us forget
The *other* invitation.

We spend the whole evening
In a three-star restaurant,
Drinking water, water, water.

THE MEETING POINT

You might be...worthier of yourself.

Charles Dickens

Apparently the human brain
Remains 'in embryo' (the expression
Used by brain specialists), growing
And changing throughout our lives.

It might even overstep
The bounds of the Hereafter
If we were allowed
To think after death,
Correcting our earthly mistakes,
Becoming better—*worthier*
Of our heavenly state.

What happens is this:
The brain grows, grows,
And so does decay.
They meet at some point
And begin to interact.

Decay stunts the growth of the brain
(The *positive* growth, as it were)
And even usurps its vulnerable parts.
The brain realises that, sooner or later,
Everything is bound to fall into decay.

Then it realises that everything
Has already fallen into decay.

Then it realises that
Nothing has ever been
Otherwise.

Then it invents the 'soul'
Which neither grows
Nor changes.
Consequently

The soul is *not* subject
To the tyranny of decay.

Then it realises
The soul has been invented
Already.

The last idea occurs to him
In the Hereafter.

Probably
Under the influence
Of nectar.

LINGUISTICS

'Sometimes I dream of my past.

In my dreams
My friends speak French or English.
They seem to have forgotten Russian.'

I wrote this short poem
Nine or ten years ago.
Russia was still the Soviet Union.

In 1990 I returned to Moscow
And met my friends. We talked
In Russian, not in French.

Only poetry and dreams
Are fond of ambiguities.

Life often speaks
In plain Russian,
In plain English.

I still don't know which one is
More indulgent and forbearing.

THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER

You were my neighbour in Moscow.
 An actress, a singer, my friend's mother.
 The order is of no importance:
 Your beauty comes first anyway.

You might be dead by now.
 The old film I watched last night
 Does justice neither to your life
 Nor to your beauty.

You went through four husbands
 In the space of five years.
 And your son is an honorary member
 Of the Moscow Lonely Heart's Club.
 (There must be such an institution in Russia.)

You are his Greta Garbo and Maria Callas.
 And his wife.

In the film
 You had no children.

And you had only one husband,
 Your *first* husband—a famous actor.

THE ANATOMY OF ANATOMY

We have always been long-winded:
Even Homer failed to keep silent
When life itself seemed to impose immobility
On poets and soldiers alike—
After Achilles' death.

What does it matter
If Troy was destroyed or spared by cunning,
Bloodthirsty Greeks?

Achilles' heel is far more important.
What it stands for goes
Beyond a poem or a continent,
Beyond an epoch or a nasty mood.

Yet it is enclosed
Within the palms of our hands.

In this respect
Any gypsy is better
Than Schliemann.

THE BEAUTY OF TRAINS

Trains seem to have forgotten their former majesty
And mystery. Yet they remember *something*.
They remember love and hatred: the birth of a love affair
And the death of a life-long hatred. And also
The birth of a tragedy. And the books
We've read and admired. And the desire to find oneself
Sitting opposite a famous man or a dead philosopher
Whom one might ask so many questions. And the pleasure
Of pointless discussions, some of them imaginary.
And the fear of death which has plenty of time
To worm its way into our consciousness, becoming
A full-time occupation. And a number of decisions,
A number of promises, a number of questions.
(Why didn't I take a plane? What is she doing now?)
A few murders, a few suicides. And the beauty
Of a young girl who is bound to get off
At some country station.

NOTHING ELSE

I am seldom in an ugly mood.
Loneliness inspires only one state of mind
Which is neither bad nor good. I look at the screen
Of my computer. A white rectangle.
Such is my mood—the white rectangle.
Nothing else. Write on it whatever you please:
Desert rat, desertion, deservedly, desiderata.
Can you call it a mood? Hardly. Just a white
Rectangle with a few words on it. Is it enough?
I think it is. It all depends.
It depends how you tackle the problem.

INCEST

My first love. Recently
I saw your photograph
In my schoolmate's album.

You're twelve years old. Photographs
Are destructive.

I realised
Why I had fallen in love with you.
(An unrequited love.)

You're the first
And the last. My present mistress
Looks like both your mother and your
Daughter.

And I'll become
Your grandfather in a few years.

HAMLET

In one of his posthumous poems
 Cavafi speaks of *Hamlet*. He obviously
 wants to counterbalance the general opinion
 which condemns Claudius and exonerates Hamlet
 from whatever crime he actually committed
 or might have committed, had Shakespeare allowed
 his imagination to run its course for another hour.

Carried away by *his* inspiration, Cavafi
 denies the murder which happens to be
 the mainspring of Shakespeare's play,
 endowing Claudius with a peaceful
 disposition: 'A quiet, gentle man,
 a man who loved peace...' he says
 in Edmund Keeley's translation.
 (Every work of art is a translation.
 Cavafy's poems are no exception to the rule,
 even when read in the original.)

So Cavafy thought
 Claudius was a loveable man
 unable to kill his brother.
 But Claudius was a failure:
 the late King of Denmark
 enjoyed his Kingship
 and also a beautiful wife
 who might have belonged to Claudius
 had *he* been the elder brother
 and consequently a King.
 So he decided to become one.

Claudius couldn't have become
 the Russian Emperor
 or the King of Scotland.
 (Incidentally
 Macbeth was still
 the King of Scotland.)
 The only country where

Claudius had *some* prospects of success
was Denmark.

As he had no wish
to wait for his brother's death
(and he knew it was too late
to become the elder brother
of his brother) he decided
to assassinate the late King
of Denmark and ignominiously
profit from his premature death
by both marrying Gertrude and
becoming the King of Denmark.

Such is the argument of Shakespeare's play.

Scholars and theatregoers
cannot do otherwise but
espouse this theory which,
as a matter of fact,
is just a theory.

Cafavi disagrees with Shakespeare.
I disagree with Cafavi.

I think Claudius was a failure.
So he grew rancorous.
In the course of time.
He was full of rancour against his brother
who enjoyed his Kingship and a beautiful wife.
He saw him every day. (Claudius saw his brother—
the late King of Denmark.) And every blessed day
he saw his wife. His libido was aroused.
So was his sense of injustice. He decided
to kill his brother, replacing him
both on the throne and in the royal,
canopied, four-poster bed.

And he did replace him
 both on the throne and in the royal,
 canopied, four-poster bed. History
 is rather simple. Why
 should we re-write it?
 What for?

All failures are like that.
 They store up their humiliations
 and quarrel with their wives
 or kill their friends.
 In the course of time.

And Hamlet was a womaniser.
 He loved women and wished
 to protect them. 'Frailty,
 thy name is woman,' he said.
 ('Women! Your name is perfidy'—
 in Pasternak's translation.
 I wonder how many women
 have been murdered on account
 of this mistranslation.)
 'To a nunnery!' he tells Ophelia.
 (Perfidious women shouldn't be sent to nunneries:
 there are other places for perfidious women.)
 He wants to protect Ophelia
 (from himself, in all probability).
 He wants to protect his mother
 from Claudius who *might* have been
 a loveable man, an honourable man. Still,
 he was a man. And women
 should be protected from men.
 Thus reasoned Hamlet.

He believed his mother had a lover.
 Once he came to his mother's room,
 heard a noise and thrust his rapier
 through the arras. (Lovers usually
 hide themselves behind curtains
 and tapestries.) 'O, I am slain,'

says Polonius in the original.

He *was* slain. And he *might* have been
Gertrude's lover, for all *I* know.

Now Hamlet is bundled off to England.
But he can't possibly be crowned
in England. So he returns
to Denmark—the only country
where he stands a fair chance
of becoming a legitimate sovereign.
Besides, he makes it his duty to murder
Gertrude's legitimate lover.

Eventually Claudius got killed.
Hamlet was also instrumental
in bringing about the execution
of Rozencrantz and Guildenstern—Ophelia's
unfortunate, much-lamented lovers.

I disagree with Cafavi
on yet another point:
the ghost was *not*
'a fit of fancy,
an optical illusion'
(in Philip Sherrard's translation).
The whole story was
a tissue of lies,
a pure fabrication.

A REPRESSED FEAR

Moths are less *important*
Than butterflies: the Almighty
Denies them many-coloured beauty.

So I wasn't unduly disturbed
When a huge moth perished
In the immobile fire
Of my halogen lamp.

Needless to say,
I had done nothing
To prevent the accident.
I might have extinguished the lights
And lain down in bed.
I might have closed my eyes.

Its death was no symbol.
(And yet I suspect
Symbols are neither beautiful
Nor outlandish.) At least
I didn't read its disappearance
As a portent of evil things to come.
I didn't *feel* anything.

What would I feel
If a man were assassinated
On my doorstep?

Would I merely
Call the police?

I wonder if
There's a police station
In the Moth Kingdom.

HOW TO LIVE?

How to write poetry?

Sometimes it's enough
To look around and
Enumerate the objects
Within your field of vision:
The moon, a cherry-tree, a butterfly.

It might be enough
For a poem, a haiku.
But life is different.
Life steers clear
Of poetic licences.

In everyday life
You can't get away with a description
Of an armchair: you must sit down in it.

And you might find
That somebody is ensconced
In another armchair—
Just opposite you.

Consequently
You might get involved
In a conversation—
Out of politeness.
In everyday life
You're not supposed
To forget your manners.

It's not enough to write down:
'A man was sitting in an armchair.'
You must *talk* to that man;
You must follow his train of thought.
You must smile back

Whenever *he* deigns to smile.

It's not enough

To look around and

Enumerate catastrophes; you must

Participate in them.

It's not enough

To write down:

'Weakness.'

HOMAGE TO OMAR KHAYYAM

The moon, a pond, a feeling of sadness...
That's what Japanese poetry is about.
(Come to think of it,
All poetry is like that:
European, American...)

Mono-no-aware...
Suspension points...
Life is always
Unfinished,
Interrupted...
Su... Ma... Na...
Time is dripping
Down the wall.
And we are always
On a drip.
Always, always.
Let's have a drink!

JUST A MERE SOUND IS THIS NAGASENA

They drag my name through the mire.
But what's my name? Just a thing
Anybody can drag through the mire
Or throw out of the window
Or stamp upon in a corridor.
A miserable thing. Surely not myself.

Sometimes I lie in corridors.
Visitors come and go.
They don't stamp on my body;
They *jump* over it

I never throw myself
Out of the window.

Over the last seven years
I've become estranged from my name
Which lies in my enemies' pockets
Beside dirty handkerchiefs
And pieces of silver.

I hear my name now and then.
I see it fly through the air.
The sun sets it aglow.
The moon-wave carries it heavenward.
How beautiful my name appears
In those moments!
How beautiful *I* am
During those flights!

So I'm not tempted
To forget my name *completely*.
I just keep it at bay.

OVERPOPULATION

How to escape the crowds?
Even our solitude is crammed with people:
Fears and memories and great expectations.
Our thoughts move towards strangers
And the future.

No birth control
Will ever save us from our hopes
And forebodings.

And the dead
Leave their tombs, weary of waiting
For the Last Judgement or a medium.

SHADOWS

I didn't recognise her. I didn't kiss her.
I neither said 'hello' nor 'good-bye'. But her shadow
Was eloquent, telltale. And I remembered her.

What's the moral of the story?
Are all humans shadows?
Are we the shadows of ourselves?
Or the shadow of God?
Do we live in Plato's cave?
Do we live at all?

These questions are vulgar and presumptuous.
Why answer them?

Anyway
Even shadows can embrace.
Even shadows are warm.

A SCHOLAR

All we need is to shift
The world into a better light
So we can read it.

The world is a library and
Every library, however small,
Contains at least a dozen miracles.

A VISION

She was a well-known
Television personality.
Year by year
She smiled at the invisible audience.
And I smiled back at her.

I thought she could not see my smile
So I was rather surprised when,
As we met by the Louvre the other day,
She thanked me for my kindness and benevolence:
'Others desire or criticise me. Only you enjoy
My pure image without projecting it
Into the world of flesh and decay. To you
I'm chaste and immortal.'

She was an image. An ethereal outline.

THE LANDSCAPES OF DESTINY

Events have their auras.
They aren't limited in Time.
They often happen *before*
They actually happen.

They're like clouds in the distance.
The only difference is: those clouds
Are invisible. No signs at all. Only
A slight presentiment, a touch of
Melancholy in one's voice, a shiver
On a hot summer afternoon.

A woman turns her eyes away
All of a sudden. Why?
'What's wrong, Madam?'
'I'm perfectly all right.'
She is to die at 1 a.m.

In every landscape
One tree grows awry.
We're not likely
To single it out.

THE LANDSCAPES OF DESTINY II

Apparently, in the last years of his life,
Stalin often took refuge by the sea.

He stared at the Black Sea
And thought about his death.

Water looks like death;
Both are anonymous.
Water can adopt any shape:
It is nothing, so to speak.

Whenever we look at the sea
We forget our face.

Water spreads about like eternity,
Being as liquid as eternity.

Any sea looks like a cemetery.
Why did Stalin stare at the Black Sea?
He hadn't forgotten anything.
He knew he'd become his own victim.
Yet he felt no remorse:
He thought every man
Was his own victim.

The waves licking his body
Held no promise of a new life:
They merely reminded him
That the Black Sea hadn't died
A few seconds before,
As he might have believed.

Water does not die so easily.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A report came out ten years ago
And there haven't been any
Confirmations or refutations of it yet.
So people don't dare to rest or to work:
Whatever they do might 'go against the grain'.
They neither walk nor lie down.
All day long they crouch on their chairs,
Waiting for the door to open.
A tale of the past.
(Anybody could open that door:
A god, a prince, a boss, a torturer.)

All doors are wide-open.
All sorts of people come in
And go out. They bear neither
Crowns nor
Axes. They smile and ask,
'How are you today?'
All reports are hourly updated.

A tale of the past.

All doors are closed.

THE LANDSCAPES OF DESTINY III

Human destiny is often compared
To a train where we're cooped up.

Nothing really seems to change:
The same compartments, the same berths.
The ticket inspector doesn't grow old
As he punches the same ticket, again and again.
A pain replaces a pain, love becomes hatred,
But the quantity remains—the quantity of life.

Only landscapes change beyond the windows.

They might have been painted
By the Cartesian '*Trompeur*'
Or a mischievous child.

So our destinies are immobile.
Our days and nights are interchangeable.
No wonder we confuse them.
We often begin as if about to end
While standing in the middle.

I don't think my beginning
Was in my end. And my end
Is not in my beginning,
As far as I know.

On the other hand
The beginning and the end
Might be in the middle.

We might fall in love
On the brink of the grave,
On our deathberths.

OUTSIDE CHANCE**(1993)**

LARGER THAN LIFE

Works of art are never finished.
Books and scores are no coffins.
A number of grimaces are missing
From every novel and the C Major chord
Doesn't resound long enough
At the end of Schubert's *Great Symphony*.

 In compensation,
The B Minor chord resounds in the distance—
Always!

Works of art are bigger
Than Space and Time.

Time is no longer
Than a caesura.

Time is shorter
Than your glance.

HOMAGE TO ANAXIMANDER

*es sind
noch Lieder zu singen jenseits
der Menschen.*

Paul Celan

Archangels are weary.
They cannot even walk.
They sit in armchairs
And stare at me.
In their all-absorbing eyes
I am reflected and completed:
Their eyes extend my life
Far beyond its bounds.

At the back of their eyes
I am immortal.

They're so weary
With my immortality
They shut their eyes
Now and then.
I disappear;
I go out for a while.

There are lots of stars
Outside Creation.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

'I am upset and embarrassed
By the rude and childish manner
In which the world is reduced
To a caricature,' said the old man.
He gestured towards the window.

I looked out of the window
And noticed nothing except
A knot of dwarfs in the street,
A banner above their heads.

The tallest dwarf wore a sandwich board
On which was written 'Alexander the Great'.

PEDESTRIANIZATION

If one flew eastward
Farther and farther,
Disregarding
Gravitational pull
And general scepticism,
One might reach the castle of Apollo.

If one sailed southwest—
To where the Morning reigns—
Disregarding
The ferocity of hurricanes
And the whiteness of leviathans,
One might see the Mount of Purgatory.

No one travels so far nowadays.
Even the Moon is forgotten,
Let alone Mars and Venus.

No one writes any more
About Phaethon and Ulysses.
No one thinks of them.

And Zeus's thunderbolt
Lies rust-covered
In a Californian barn.

Millions of pedestrians
Keep walking from point A
To point B
And back to point A.

They're not likely
To reach point C,
Let alone point K.

ANOTHER VISIT TO MOSCOW

Why should I see myself in ditches,
Beyond unknown windows? I never lived
In those houses
Nor slept in those ditches
Beside stray dogs and drunkards. Why do I keep
Looking at them? Why do I recognise myself
Everywhere?

I don't like Moscow,
But I *am* this city and my past
Grows longer with every new house
And every new ruin.

Why have I killed
So many people? How have I managed
To heal my uncountable wounds—
All of them nearly fatal?

Am I immortal?
Am I Ivan the Terrible?

He didn't live in France.
He didn't write this poem.

VICIOUS CIRCLE

Forbidden fruit grows everywhere
And we eat it all the time:
There's nothing else to eat.

Even fools know too much.
Even the impotent rape baby girls.

Even St Augustine
Sinned in his cradle.

So Lewis Carroll
Built a minus-world
Beyond the looking glass.

He built this world for us,
Not for Alice.
There everything was 'plus'.

The Tree of Knowledge stood
Upside down and its fruit,
Though by no means forbidden,
Tasted like the forbidden fruit.

In short, it was a wonderful park.

Somebody mistook it
For the garden of Eden.

ANOTHER TOWER

Silence is no applause.

No-man's land is not Manhattan.

An ivory tower is not a television tower:

It can't even send a signal of distress.

OUTSIDE CREATION

The future will conquer the present,
Some day or other. Let it conquer the past
As well! My memory is so cumbersome
One brain can't accommodate it.

I remember what has never occurred in my life,
Nor in anybody else's. I remember
What has never happened at all,
Neither on Earth nor on Venus:
Such things do not happen!

They've happened somewhere:
In a parallel history,
In a perpendicular world.
They're far more important
Than whatever has happened
In *our* world.

I'm not saying
They're more beautiful
Or more attuned
To our sense of justice.
They're more *important*—
Carrying weight, so to speak.

Our history is a mere nothing
Compared with *that* history.
Our history would be crushed to a pulp
Under the weight of *those* events.
Our words aren't long enough to describe them.

ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP

Wolves are just a feature of Russian folklore.

Russians confuse them with dogs.

Their mistake is understandable:

Russian dogs have eaten a lot of people.

When a dog is on the prowl

Everyone in Russia takes it for a wolf.

Lights are extinguished, curtains drawn,

Voices and music die down.

Painters represent the Russian soul

In the shape of a wolf;

Yet the soul is spherical.

Our souls often prowl

Indoors, outdoors—

Around the streets.

They're far more dangerous

Than wolves and Russian dogs.

We don't lower our voices.

THE LURE OF SOLIPSISM

We mounted a staircase
And saw an attic full of cobwebs.
You looked disappointed.

Alas, my Tower of Babel
Leads only to where I keep
My discarded manuscripts,
My childish dreams.

There's nothing else
In my house,
In my heaven.

You need other companions,
Other travel agents and guides.

The world isn't confined to my attic.
(Suppose it were?)

THE UNWRITTEN POEM

*My work consists of two parts, the one presented here
plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this
second part which is the important one.*

Wittgenstein, A Letter to Ludwig Ficker

I cannot live another life
Nor die before or after my death.
So I'll die at a quarter to five
And not at a quarter past seven.

I cannot leave my own house:
I've no more freedom than a mouse
Whose life hangs on a piece of cheese.

Oddly enough, life begins
On the outskirts of life
Where inaudible symphonies
Are performed by Toscanini
And the Nobel Prize
Is awarded not for a novel
But for a doodle in the margin.

MOSCOW HOTELS

I am always surprised at the patience of hotels.
They put up with permanent turmoil and strangers.
They've no time to get used to their bodies
And their souls and their suitcases.

Moscow hotels get used to prostitutes
Who seldom depart and grow old while foreigners
Enjoy their exotic manners: there are masochists
Among the foreigners. No matter how old
Prostitutes are, they always have clients:
There are lovers of old women among the foreigners.

Hotels grow old; no one keeps them in proper repair;
There are too many old women inside them.

They loiter about lobbies
And brush against the foreigners.
They stroll along corridors
And knock at every door.

Moscow hotels sound like forests
In which there are only woodpeckers.

Moscow hotels look like ruins
Where dwell old women.

NOSTALGIA

Old songs never die.
Somebody is bound
To recall what was sung
And hummed
And whistled before
The First World War
And the Wars of the Roses.

Old songs resound everywhere:
In houses, in pubs, in tombs,
Around funeral pyres.
The dead adore them and refuse
To learn new tunes and words.

The living don't like new songs.
Old songs remind them
Of their dead friends
And relatives—of their childhood;
They were innocent and happy
And believed in Red Riding Hood.

Why aren't they happy now?

They're not happy, otherwise
They would go for a walk
And forget the good old times.
But they remain indoors.

They listen to their badly-scratched records
And look at their moth-ruined clothes.

And Red Riding Hood rides past
On Wellington's horse.

LE BATEAU IVRE

The tide was coming in
And I returned home.

An hour later
My room was flooded
And I couldn't get out of bed.
(I'd lost my boots two weeks before.)

Two hours later
My bed began to float:
I no longer needed a pair of boots
Or a boat.

My bed floated through the doorway
And I found myself in the garden.
Looking down, I saw all my flowers.
(They had already become seaweed.)
A little way off, a few people
Were perched on treetops.
(The trees had already shrunk to bushes.)
Some of them prayed, others laughed or cried.
I yearned for the kick of champagne.

I looked down again
And saw our cemetery.
(It had already become a sea kingdom.)
In the delirious crowd
I recognised my parents,
My grandparents
And my sister.
(I've never had a sister.)
I waved and blew kisses to them.
They recognised me too.

THE LEVITY OF SHADOWS

Shadows can't keep still:
They move about all the time,
Even when their originals are motionless.

They have the fidgets;
They are extremely nervous.
And they assert themselves, bounding gracefully
Across boulevards and meadows.

Meanwhile their originals talk in pubs and
Drink beer and brandy. Shadows
Climb New York skyscrapers
And jump down, their arms outstretched
And flapping like wings. They do not die.

Their originals writhe in pain at home.

HEART SURGERY

Did I ever love this woman?

Is it possible?

What heart did I have thirty years ago?

Life cannot wrench one's heart so utterly

Without breaking it.

BEETHOVEN'S POSTHUMOUS WORKS

No sign forewarned them of the multiple pile-up.

There was no eclipse of the sun.

The air was sweet.

Even the stars were propitious.

Everybody said, 'Have a nice trip!'

(By various little economies

They had managed to save enough money

For a holiday.)

The voice on the radio forecast happiness.

There was a good clear stretch

Of motorway. The landscapes

Smiled back at them, friendly and harmless.

At a petrol station they listened in bliss

To the final movement of Beethoven's *Ninth*.

(They didn't depart until it had finished.)

An hour later they heard

Beethoven's *Tenth* and also

His *Seventh Piano Concerto*.

CONTRA SPINOZA

God mingles with the crowd
And goes wherever we go.

A government is overthrown.
Yet He's against violence.

He doesn't wish to oppose humans.
Why deprive them of their free will?

He goes to funfairs and
Has His fortune told
By charlatans.

He's sometimes shot
By contract killers.

He smiles in mortuaries
And laughs in tombs.

UNA SELVA OSCURA

Sitting on a tree stump,
I write another *Commedia*,
A candle in my hand:
The forest is too dark.

I write it over and over again;
There's nothing else to write.
Paradise, Purgatory, Hell.
There are no other lives.

Everybody is Dante
And all his characters.

ODE TO THE OPEN AIR

What do we need our houses for?
They provide us with food and clothes
But abandon us in the hour of solitude
And in the hour of danger.

They don't protect us from assassins
But keep the heavens and stars at bay:
Shooting stars never fall on our beds.

MESTRE DE GAY SABER

The aim of poetry is to praise Creation.
But poets are human beings;
They dwell on their torments
Instead of listening to bumblebees.

And bumblebees go on droning
Outside a poem, outside inspiration.

And the sun rises every morning
Outside Hume's apprehension.

The twilight of the gods is an ordinary twilight
That can be enjoyed even by lunatics—
In a garden, outside *Der Ring des Nibelungen*—
Because God created light and night.

ANGST

Should I walk slower?

Should I lie down?

Time might stop by my bedside.

Should I forget everything,

Leaving the soil of the future untilled?

The future doesn't grow in deserts.

The future grows amidst ruins.

Why are we so fond of forebodings?

Why can't we live in the present

And leave the future alone?

The future knows its job.

When in doubt, it repeats the past

And Madame Bovary dies once more,

Swallowing some arsenic or

Drowning in a bath.

CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

Plausible explanations are too plausible.
They satisfy only the indifferent.
The wise assume reality is an enigma—
An unfathomable thought of a deity.

A spaceship bursts into flames,
A power station explodes.
Who is to blame? A man, a demon?
Apparently somebody
Has opened something...
Yet everything remains closed.

And even angels have no keys.

DISTORTING MIRRORS

Oculus animi index.

What can be seen at the bottom of my eyes?

My soul withdraws into itself whenever
A stranger tries to capture it.

Many look me straight in the eyes;
Sometimes they reach out their hands.

What do they see?
My achievements,
My crimes?

What can be seen in the eyes
Of a short-sighted man?
A small world enveloped in clouds;
A woman wearing a veil.

Not much. Fragments of things.
Half-truths, half-lives.

In the meantime

Rooks and wild ducks go streaming
Across the windy sky.
And then the moist spring
Brings on a good growth of grass.

And Edouard Manet paints
Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe.

THE WAY OF TAO

*I'm so tired. I'd rather live like a landscape. A house
perched on the hilltop...*

From a letter

My thoughts are headstrong.
They fall into step,
Get out of step.

For a while
They follow my line of argument—
The one dictated by my soul—
Then swerve out of the formation
And fall out.

Having disowned one leg,
I skip around on the other leg
For hours and hours, lest
I lose my equilibrium.

A house perched on the hilltop—
The way you wanted to live.
The harmony of a landscape.
A pause in Mahler's *Tragic Symphony*.
No contradictions, no torments.

I wonder if the house is empty.

SCAPEGOATS

Time feeds upon our losses:
They are the stuff
Our history is made on.

If all of them were stowed in Time—
On its treasure island
Situating on the rim of eternity—
We would live not nowadays
But in the thirty-fifth century.

Our losses are too numerous for Time;
They outnumber our sighs and hopes.
And our victories sink into defeats:
No time to turn them to advantage.

Time is too narrow, drainpipe-like.
We can hardly squeeze through it
On our way to another love or loss.

God created Adam.
Our scapegoats are:
Governments, signs
Of the zodiac, weather,
Neighbours, black cats.

And last but not least—
Time.

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

If one stares at a mountain long enough
The mountain becomes a eucalyptus tree
And vice versa.

If one lives long enough
A minute becomes an hour;
And love, a habit.

Life becomes death
And death, life—
Automatically.

Time prevails upon everything:
Even death tires of it
As the wind smoothes tombstones.

And children abandon their games.

OMNIPRESENCE

Poets have often deplored
The shortness of human memory.

A great many books have burnt
In various libraries.

Yet history is so colossal,
So unbearable.
And nothing can be effaced—
Not a face, not a word.

A streak of moonlight
Comes in through my window.
No one will ever forget this colour!

THE VOICE

My answerphone
Talks to strangers
And friends alike.

Voices get angry;
Voices calm down;
Voices die away;
Voices come back.

How many human voices
Are there in the universe?
Do the stars speak too?

Do the stars know
My telephone number?
Is the Earth listed
In their directory?

There's only one voice
In the entire universe.

An outgoing message.

DAS LIED DES IDIOTEN

*Alles kommt und kreist
immerfort um den Heiligen Geist,
um den gewissen Geist (du weisst)-,
wie gut.*

Rilke, *Das Lied des Idioten*

I do not understand
The language of angels.
They talk and I see them.
And they move about, flying
Under the canopy of heaven
Or under my ceiling—
In circles, in ellipses.
How nice!

What are they trying
To impart to me? What secret?
Does everybody know
What they talk about
Except myself?
Is that nice?

I've stroked their faces
On so many paintings—
Throughout my life.
Why don't they reward me
By carrying my body
Towards their heavenly mansion?
My soul is already up there,
Lying on a bed.
The table is set.
How nice!

EMPTINESS

*We forget one another, quiet and pure, altogether
powerful and empty.*

*The emptiness is irradiated by the light of the heart and
heaven.*

The Secret of the Golden Flower

In the deepest well
There is no water.

Thales proved that everything is made of water
By falling into a well while staring at the stars.

The ancient sages of China
Explored wells in search of emptiness.
They dug and bored and drilled for emptiness.
The deeper they went
The greater the emptiness they found.
They reached the centre of the earth.

Everything is made of emptiness.
One need not descend anywhere
To find it.

HOMAGE TO KAFKA

Crying for help
Is quite common:
Even insects
Succumb to the temptation.
Yet insects are believed
To have no fear of death.

Only angels know
That help comes rather seldom,
Friends or bystanders being afraid
Of getting involved
And so forth.

And if someone, on the spur of the moment,
Decides to save his fellow man,
It is usually too late—
Beyond help, as it were.
And the victim dies beside the portcullis
Of an inaccessible castle.

What's the point in feeling his pulse?
His story has already been written
And nothing can be changed in it—
Not a comma.

The writing of the story
Was its happy ending.

THE WRONG EPITAPH

He made no pretence to learning:
He couldn't tell a Renoir from a Turner,
And his musical tastes did him no credit.
But he was a family man.

He worked eight hours at his office
And went back home afterwards:
He never played dominoes with his colleagues.
His wife adored him. So did his daughter.

He took a holiday every summer.
Two beaches knew his spread-eagled body.
Two restaurants in London knew his voice.
A number of sheets knew his pyjamas.

He was as solid as a rock.
He died of a heart attack at forty-four.
God punished him as an example to others.
'Here lies the best of fathers...'

THE MURDER

A deceptive air of innocence...
A shot fired in the darkness...
A woman zooming away in a Cadillac...

Everything
Happens so quickly in movies.

Only an hour elapses
Between a childlike smile—
The deceptive air of innocence—
And a sardonic, cruel grin.

In real life, the metamorphosis
Might take years, decades...

Meanwhile, back at the ranch—
In case you haven't noticed—
You've got a bullet in your heart.

THE WAY OF ALL FLESH

He says the opposite
Of everything I say.

He does the opposite
Of everything I do.

What does he hear
When I listen to Mozart's *Requiem*?
Some military march?

What does he feel
When I am in love?
Hatred or indifference?

Why doesn't he despair more often?
I wish he'd blown his brains out
Twenty years ago.

Why didn't he die
When I was born?

Why doesn't he grow younger?

THE BEAUTY OF IGNORANCE

I've never sought advice
From fortune tellers.
The palm of my hand
Remains as mysterious
As the tales of stars.

Mirrors reflect my fate,
Not crystal balls.

And you, my darling,
Have nothing in common
With the Queen of Spades.
And I am no King of Clubs.

I prefer to watch my failures
And bitter disappointments
Descend upon me slowly,
As if in doubt.

In the absence of oracles,
One's destiny is prone
To doubts and drawn-out
Meditations. Even accidents
Are slow-moving in comparison
With history books and bare facts.

Instead of dying a violent death,
My hopes will grow weaker and older
While listening to the voice of wisdom.

The beauty of old hopes painted by Rembrandt...
Light is more enticing in small quantities.

THE RIVER DOESN'T WELCOME THE SAME MAN

(Homage to Heraclitus)

I don't mind becoming
Somebody else
In the course of time:
In the course of centuries
Or merely
In the course of a conversation.
A word, a joke are liable
To change us. And we wall up
A window in our memory.
And we build another castle
In the air or under water.
And somebody disappears
From the old photographs—
A friend, a relative.
And a happy smile
Looks like a frown now.
And a pearl-like tear
Turns into a raindrop.
The world is flexible,
The past compliant.

THE CONSERVATION OF THE DEAD

(1991, 2007)

HOMAGE TO PAPAGENO

Birds. How we admire them
As they fly above treetops, near the sun!
Earth-unbound, heaven-fostered beings.

We'd give anything to find out
What they feel and think and fear.
We strive to learn their ways.

Alas, unfledged and ponderous,
We can't follow them in their wing-beats.
Our planes grow bleary-eyed
As they teeter through the moodiness of clouds.
Our bicycles fall into ditches and rivers.

We feather our interiors like nests
Or huge motherly wings.
Yet our children die unprotected.
Day and night we squirm with pain.

We speak to birds now and then.
Our speeches get us nowhere.
We also whistle their tunes.

TO MAYA PLISETSKAYA

The plot and music of *Swan-Lake*
Are often spurned and scorned by those
Who seek their pleasures and joys in churches
Or picture galleries. In James Joyce,
Arnold Shoenberg and William Blake.

Yet everyone adored your wings.
(Dedalus would have melted with envy;
Icarus would have remained on earth
To see you at the Bolshoi Theatre.)

Can it be that from the precincts
Of our collective Hell
You have flown off, bound for Paradise?

OUR MEETINGS

1

You were like a child, my dear, dear Alexander.

I should have kept an eye on you, like a tutor.

I should have tied your hands to prevent you

From playing with matches and setting fire

First to your soul and then to your body.

What did you do to yourself in those days

And nights? I was away. How should I know?

How can anyone know? Shall I give chase

To your shadow and, having pinned it down,

Pump you for the information? I'm not a hound

Nor a KGB agent. Pneumonia... scarlet fever...

What the hell... Your death will remain for ever

Incognito. Only the mirror in the bathroom

Saw you. Why didn't you use the phone?

I'm still trying to save you. *Postfactum*

Medicines. Your life was yours alone

And you had no wish to share it with others,

Not even with the neighbours next door

Who, familiar with the porosity of your wall,

Would have heard your shouts. Silence.

2

Why were you silent?

Did you consent

To Death

On your desert island?

Were you a tool

In his hands?

Do you remember

This verse by Mandelstam?

'Only my equal

Can kill me'?

Only his equal.
 Himself.
 Yourself.
 Did you...
 Curiosity killed the cat.

3

The dead are usually asked
 All sorts of stupid questions:
 'How is it up there?' 'Is God nice?'
 'Have you seen your grandma?' et cetera.

The living wish to know if it's
 Hot or cold in Hell, and how
 Assassins and victims are treated.
 Do they dwell in the same bower?

4

Purgatory, Hell, Paradise...
 In a bower or in a burrow—
 A Kafkaesque *Bau*... Let *them* decide!
 Let *them* choose a locale!
 Friends must be allowed
 To meet in the Hereafter,
 If only once in a while.

I'm not particularly interested
 In the geography of the Hereafter.
 Poets see it as an amphitheatre.
 Simple folk think it is a garden
 Or a frying pan.

I hope it is a meeting place
 Where artists talk and partake
 Of the gods' meal—ambrosia, nectar...
 There must be a good French restaurant

Up or down there!

Paradise is the theatre

Of my hopes and memories.

WORDS

Funeral orations are in high demand nowadays.
People refuse to die unless assured
Of an appropriate literary farewell.

Corpses can forego wreaths and ribbons
But they yearn for beautiful platitudes:
'He's been the most faithful...' and suchlike.

How are we supposed to practise this art?
Funeral oration is an art in its own right,
Accessible to the few, performed by the many.

How are we supposed to train ourselves?
In front of the living? They wouldn't understand
Our dead words. Amidst empty coffins?

But coffins are not to be filled up with words.
Besides, they don't reverberate like the blackness
Of clothes, like the sadness of faces.

So we don't practise this art.
We improvise our laudatory speeches.
Sometimes the dead smile at us
In response to a felicitous metaphor.

THE INVISIBLE CITY OF KITEZH

I was deeply ashamed of myself:
Not a tear or a spasm betraying
The whereabouts of my soul.
Nearer and nearer the city we drove.
It was as if, astride a camel,
We were roaming devil-knows-where
In a neutral landscape, far from home.

Moscow, I did love you once
But now you must be dead, like Ophelia,
Or mad or just unhappy. To a nunnery!
Do whatever you like. I don't feel you
Any longer. And I closed my eyes.

And the city began to grow.

AN OFFENCE AGAINST THE HIGHWAY CODE

I went through a red light.
There was no policeman in sight
So I thought, 'That's all right.'

Presently two public buildings
Collapsed on the right-hand side.
I thought they had been destroyed
By parcel bombs or letter bombs—
A common occurrence, nowadays.

A great many tombs
Opened at the nearby cemetery.
The corpses climbed out
And rose into the air.
I realised Doomsday had come
And hurried home.

My flat was upside-down.
Usually I don't care
But this time I put my affairs
In order.
Just in case...

I sat down and began to wait.
I trumped up excuses for all my faults.
I vindicated all my sins.
And of course
I prayed.

Soon I was brought
Before the Supreme Judge.

THE DENIAL OF HELL

Time has betrayed me very often.
I no longer trust it. I confide
In space and death. I put my glass
Down on the table. Lo and behold!
It is still there at quarter past five.

Death alone can destroy
The indestructible: the sense
Of guilt, the sense of shame, sixth
Sense—the existential nonsense.

THE IMMORTALITY OF SHAKESPEARE

The world was a multiplication
Table. A tree was Burnam wood.
Where had you gone, my friend Horatio?
I was in a suicidal mood.

I told your answerphone:
'Adieu, old fellow, the rest is silence!'
You didn't answer. You weren't in.
Or you're fed up with my theatrics.

For many years I've been dying;
Simultaneously I ripe and rot.
I'm in them both—the fire and frying
Pan. I am and I am not.

RUSSIAN DEPRESSION

Neither sunshine nor moonshine. All is asleep.
Sounds, lights and life have dwindled away.
The guitar strings are loosened. The deep
Sorrow of an old lost song holds sway.

Chaliapin sways on a swing and sings it—
The melancholy song that has come true.
'Your days are numbered, your death is imminent.'
He gulps down some vodka and mocks my rue.

He cocks his weird eye at the miller's daughter—
Pushkin's *rusalka*—who quivers and screams.
The Garden of Eden, wherever I lost it,
Was only a rose in her maidenly dreams.

IN A COMA

I was wanted on the phone.
'Why don't they leave me alone?'
I shouted and went to my doom,
I mean, to the adjacent room.
'Who's speaking?' I said.
'I'm sorry, you're dead,'
Announced an unknown voice.
'Anyway you had no choice.'
I answered, '*Nu ĭ durak!*'
(What a fool!) and hung up.

Upon my return I found
A bunch of chrysanthemums.
The air smelt of frankincense.

Whatever record I play now,
I hear a funeral march
Or *Ein deutsche Requiem*.
The orchestra is conducted
By Willem Mengelberg.

THE ODE TO INSOMNIA

The Kings in Shakespeare's dramas
Have nothing but praise for sleep
As if their murders, the panoramas
Of future wars might disappear

And trouble them no more.
As if indeed there was a hole
Designed for evil—
A dustbin
Of guilty consciences
And forebodings.

Sleep is no help at all:
Nothing dissolves in it. On the contrary!
What we seem to have forgotten
Surfaces again in a dream
To haunt us ever after.

Our enemies
Become far more dangerous
Under cover of night.
Why should we offer them another cover—
Our sleep?

Besides,
Nine dreams out of ten
Are nightmares.

AN ENDURANCE TEST

I must get used to the absence of everything.
Things disappear. Steadily. I am neither blind
Nor paralytic. I keep my eyes wide-open
And reach out my hand. Regularly. I find
Nothing. I repeat: nothing.

Perhaps it's just a dream. I repeat—a dream.
And the desert will soon become an oasis.
Where the hell is my alarm clock?
I pinch myself and cry with pain.
Nothing. Except the pain. Nothing.

What am I supposed to do? Without anything?
Should I call the police? What for?
No robbery to report. No murder.

I am still alive.
How do I know?
I have a pain in my arm.

So I won't call the police.
I'll do nothing.
I'll just wait and listen.
They say that everything comes to those who wait.

THE CALL

'Abandon your wife, abandon your children
And go on foot till you find Our Lord!'
Some heeded the voice and became pilgrims.

They wandered all over Europe non-stop,
Their food and clothes reduced to a minimum.
They encountered animals and waded through bogs.

They did not come across the Christian
Or any other deity. They never took stock
Of their situation and so continued

Their wanderings. They were good folk.
Their space-time seemed unlimited.

THE WINTER PALACES OF ST PETERSBURG

Peaceful and beautiful,
The city spread before me
For miles and miles.

No one was storming the Winter Palace:
The underpaid and oppressed workmen
Strolled along the Nevsky in quest
Of the Holy Grail and a morsel of fish.

Yet the beauty was destroyed.

The sun stood now
At the zenith of its power.
(The Russian heavens
Swarm with tyrants.)
The snow disappeared.
(Where to? Siberia?)
So did the palaces.

Cracks and crannies,
Holes and moles.

Only snow can be beautiful in Russia
And the faces of survivors.

A REPORT FROM THE TWENTY-FIFTH CENTURY

Our modern world is just and happy.
Nowadays no one dies of hunger.
We have forgotten the word 'anger'
And even its synonyms. Nowadays thunder

Sounds like the *Jupiter Symphony*.
Our schoolboys never play soldiers.
Psychiatrists have vanquished our phobias.
We don't fear death. Its tyranny

Is a thing of the past. Of course
Sometimes, somewhere, someone
Does have a fear of death
And thus spoils the fun.
The son of a bitch goes to the chair.

THE SAVIOURS OF HUMANITY

At daybreak, in an echo-loving street
Two men conversed about the Golden Age.
The golden apples of the Hesperides
Rolled pell-mell on the pavement as they walked.

No apple was picked, let alone eaten.
'A hell of an obstacle race,' growled the shorter man.
To both the golden apples were nothing
But rubber balls carelessly left behind
By some street urchins—future footballers.

And how did they account for the colour?
They took no notice of colours, in general.
They were preoccupied with essences only.

The apple core might have been on their agenda,
Not the apple itself.

They were preoccupied
With the future.

BLINDNESS

Sweating and swearing, he pounded away
On the whitewashed wall of his room.
In expectation of an answer?

Who was to answer him? His neighbour?
His neighbour's wife? God? Did he hope
To bring the entire skyscraper down
Upon his tiny avocado-shaped head?
Once and for all!

Meanwhile the clear-cut solution
To all his lifelong problems
Lay just a few yards off, near
A half-open window.

THE INVISIBLE MAN

People are often unaware
Of their own virtues.
(Psychiatrists call them 'hidden'.
They say that hidden virtues
Lie dormant in the human psyche
For years and years and years.)

A notorious sadist
Rapes his neighbour's daughter
On a bridge in Moscow.
Once the deed is done,
Once his blood has cooled,
He looks at the prostrate body
Objectively.
'I don't need her any more,'
He mutters to himself.
And cold-bloodedly
He kills his neighbour's daughter.

Two minutes later
He looks at her again
And all of a sudden
Discovers
The feeling of pity,
Compassion and commiseration.
The tears of repentance saturate
The collar of his shirt.

He's a warm-hearted man,
A nice, loveable man.
Until recently
Nobody knew it.

A DEFORMATION

I've got several brains in my head.
Some of them are closed. (I don't know
What goes on inside them.) Others, open—
Half-open, in point of fact.

People say I'm not open-minded.
I'm often accused of narrow-mindedness.
I don't mind.

THE UNFINISHED OPERA

The conductor puts down his baton
And departs, accompanied by catcalls.
Donna Anna remains by her father's side.
He is dead. She is half-alive:
She cannot budge from where she stands.

Don Giovanni has already left the stage.
Now he is free from theatrical laws.
So he comes back and kisses Donna Anna.
He rapes her before the horror-stricken audience
And, whistling, nips down to the nearest pub.
Donna Anna remains on the stage.

She can neither shout for help
Nor lean upon Don Ottavio's shoulder.
The night grows colder.

A BELATED REVENGE

We met again and I recalled
Your stubbornness and beauty.
(In this order, not the other way round.)
Still beautiful, but no longer stubborn,
You offered me what I had feverishly desired
Twenty-four years ago.
I declined the offer, leaving you on the boulevard
Where we had bungled (nineteen years ago)
Our only kiss.

In the days of my youth
You followed not your instincts
(They followed my body helter-skelter)
But unnatural laws.

I used to hate your stubbornness,
The way your mother's precepts
Materialised in your gestures.
I was by no means masochistic
In the country of masochists and sadists.

Now I am both a masochist
And a sadist. Why refuse
To follow you in the darkness
('Through the night,' as a poet said)?

I will take the consequences:
Insomnia, self-hatred, tears.
Laws are far stronger
Than your brand-new ideas.

The law of fatigue.
The law of failure.

THE TRUCE OF GOD

I don't remember the motives.
How did all this start
On Neglinnaya Street?
We had a quarrel and parted.
I left for good. Ever since
A black rainbow has been spanning our souls.

Even now. Oh God! Has your memory
Never forgotten a comma?
Am I a stone-waller?
Shan't we lie at the same cemetery
When the time comes?

THE SANDGLASS

So many lives, oh Lord!
 I've gone through so many lives
 In the space of forty-three years
 (Such a small space for so many corpses).

A brand new life
 —*A vita nuova*—
 Pursues me now
 Over Europe and Asia,
 Over Versailles.

Why collect all these images
 And thoughts
 And sounds?
 What's this museum for?
 And this library?
 And this concert-hall?

Why should I drag my history
 Around?
 Up hill
 And down
 Dale?
 As far down as Hell.

Oh, if only I were the library of Alexandria
 After the fire,
 And the owner of a stolen painting
 Never to be returned
 (The uninsured one
 Into the bargain),
 And the deafness of Beethoven
 (Not Beethoven himself)!

Dead leaves and loves,
 Falls and women together
 (And also Pushkin's falls and women)—
 My luggage trolley.

I'm both the cemetery
And the family
Of the departed.
I hold my own skull
And pity myself.

And the sand trickles down from my eyes.

ANOTHER DANGER OF NARCISSISM

Madness is no exception in human society.
It's almost the rule; and it's contagious.

Is it hard to distinguish a normal individual
From a madman? You have only
To look the suspect straight in the eyes
And, after a while, you'll see something. Compare
What you've seen with the mirror
Where your own eyes are reflected!

Do you notice any difference? If you do,
The individual opposite is a dangerous lunatic.
(Don't forget that your eyes are normal.
You know your eyes are normal, don't you?
A conviction from which you shouldn't be swayed!)

So rise from your chair, say good-bye and go.
Go away!

Another piece of advice:
Don't look at yourself in the mirror too often!

THE CONSERVATION OF THE DEAD

Madame Bovary, c'est moi.

Gustave Flaubert

Look for the poet in his poem.

Look for Puccini in *La Bohème*.

Look for the tyrant underground:

His masterpieces are safe and sound.

A ROMANTIC HYMN TO THE KABBALATH

In its primordial existence, the Torah already contained all the combinational possibilities that might manifest themselves in it in accordance with men's deeds and the needs of the world. Had it not been for Adam's sin, its letters would have combined to form a completely different narrative. In messianic times to come, therefore, God will reveal new combinations of letters that will yield an entirely new content.

Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*

Once upon a time
Adam pointed his finger
At everything,
His lips moving up and down.

Ever since
The universe has been
What it is.
(It was Adam who called
A spade a spade
And death death.
He also found
The name for *the Titanic*.)

Nothing will ever change
Unless we bestow other names
Upon familiar, unfamiliar
And invisible things.

Let us obliterate
The word 'sky'.
Let us call it 'bed'.
We'll then go to heaven
And lie down on it
And stretch out on it—
A new Milky Way.
Let us call it
'The Mystic Way'.

Let us turn next
To the problem of longevity
And call life 'immortality'.
(If weary of life,
In the long run,
We can always call it 'life' again.)

'Love'.
What a beautiful word!
And it is short enough
To be uttered
(Or exhaled)
In a paroxysm of passion
And during a crisis of asthma.
Yet this beautiful word
Goes with the adjective
'Unrequited'.

Never mind.
Who'll dare to change
The dialogues of Romeo and Juliet?

And what about our earth?
It has always been dust.
Now it is ashes.
Let us call it Venus.
Let us lie down
And kiss
And hug
The goddess of love.

THIRST

What does the vampire say
When he visits us at night
In his funeral array?

Nothing. But we know at once
That he cares for a drink.
Bloody Mary, bloody Hans...

THE AUGUST PUTSCH

Again. Once more. History is insatiable.
 And unimaginative: tanks, stupid mugs...
 Over and over again. Why do you mock this country?
 Why do you never grow tired
 Of your own mockery?

Why do you still create
 Ends without beginnings,
 Death without birth?

Why don't you choke with our blood?
 Drunk and filthy, you've staggered
 Around our land for centuries,
 Trampling our relics underfoot and mashing
 Our bones. Where did you learn
 The doctrine of eternal recurrence?
 Did Pythagoras whisper it in your ear?
 Was Nietzsche your tutor and professor?

History. Why didn't you study mercy
 In the City of God? Why
 Do tyrants and cretins live here
 And not in Hell? Why don't they write
 Their '*Mémoires d'outre tombe*'? Good-bye
 History. Devil rest your soul!

At least
 Give us a break!

TWO COATS AT THE LENIN MUSEUM

Clothes are stolid:
They live our lives and die,
Whenever taken off.

Lying on a couch,
Hanging on a hook,
My coat is neither a middle-aged grouch
Nor even a headless spook:
Just a coat,
Nothing more.

Our clothes
Don't remember us in closets,
At the cleaner's. They forget
Our warmth.

But you remember
His impertinence and coldness,
Stupidity and ruthlessness.
You do look like him.

Two coats beyond a panel of glass.
Two Lenins in one room.
A double doom.
Isn't one Lenin enough
For humankind,
For our history,
For all our histories to come?

THE TRUTH DRUG

How am I supposed to behave with the people
Who know the truth and nothing but the truth?
(They never burden themselves with doubts
Or scruples.)

Am I permitted to knit my brows
During our walks? For hours and hours
They pontificate upon Creation, occasionally
Looking around for a telephone booth
To call the Almighty. (They hang up on angels
And even archangels.)

A doubting Thomas or an ignorant child,
I wonder and falter. They stamp their feet
And wag their index-fingers. I continue to decipher
The alphabet of a tree, the code of a defeat.
(And the code of a victory.)

THE RIVER OF LOVE

(A declaration of love near the Novospassky monastery)

I never bathed in the Moscva River,
Nor did Heraclitus. Disgusted
And tired I stared at it from my window.
Now we are walking by it.

The river may not be the same.
Why shouldn't it grow older and wiser?
My words haven't changed: love is a miser.
I am a schoolboy, clumsy and tame.

My feelings are always at fever pitch—
The false currency of my heart
And head. Love is a river in which
We can bathe only once. And in part.

AN UNFINISHED LESSON

I sat down next to you. I saw your hands
Crossed on your knees.

Your hands sought to caress the room
Where we sat
And what was beyond the room—my friend
Living in Rome. He doesn't
Know you.

How did *you* know he was
Like a passenger in transit—lonely
And miserable?
I didn't know it.

I knew your hands had taught me love
Twenty-nine years ago.
I recalled sentimentality. I would have
Recalled immortality and the face
Of God
Had we sat together through the night.

HOMAGE TO DOSTOEVSKY

Does the moon reflect the sun
Coldly and blissfully?

Does it burst into flame
Of its own accord and reign
In the kingdom of fire alongside
Vesuvius and my heart?

Like an imbecile or Socrates
I don't know anything.

I don't know what
Goes around our earth
And what around the sun.

Because,
In your private universe,
Ptolemy tutors Copernicus
In astronomy and quantum mechanics.

I still don't understand
Whatever you've said and done
But you belong in this land.
So I am outside.

Out of Russia,
Out of the cosmos.
Where do I call you from,
My beloved?

From afar, from afar.

Love is a hyperbole of closeness,
A piping-hot samovar.

THE STRAY GOOSE

Eternal themes are not eternal,
Nor are they temporary. Your theme is
Space where
You caught a wild goose dancing on a Moscow
Boulevard
As it tried to elude
Motorcars.

You carried it to where it might recover,
Swimming in a pond. And then
You took it to a zoo where they might protect it
From other ducks resolved
To defend their territory, their fatherland.

Why didn't you take me
To a lunatic asylum
Where I'd have lived in my cell,
Protected from lunatics?

ANOTHER POEM

I was not born when this poem was written. Was it
Written? One doesn't have
To write poems: they've already been written
Somewhere,
By someone.
This poem has been written by
Someone.

A MARRIAGE

Light is not mine. Where
Does it come from? Heaven's far away and even
Light can't cross this space. Nothing can cross
This space or any other
Space. The light must come
From the earth, from its surface. A cigarette butt dropped
On the grass. Let it light the grass. Let no one walk on the grass. Let
The fire
Replenish the earth. Let it reach
The stars. Let's celebrate the marriage of Heaven and
Hell. Why should we celebrate it? I'll just
Drink a glass of beer.

PERCEPTION

Am I sitting by my window? My window is
Alone. So am I. Nothing meets either
Outside or inside. Neither my eyes nor my ears
Unify what they touch.
A number of disparate objects. Nothing can
Unify them. Nor do they bother about
Unity or anything else. I'm unique. I don't need unity
To be unique. Why should I bother
To *think* of whatever I see, hear and touch? Let them remain
Here and there, whatever they are. Let them penetrate
My ears. Beethoven's quartets,
Bruckner's symphonies. Let them stay where
They are. Why unify them? Why should they make up
A world?

A FAX

Everything grows upside down—not only
Cosmic trees.

The world is upside down; it's better
This way.

Are we supposed
To build the world? Do we need
Building blocks or inspiration?

We aren't inspired today. Nor will anyone
Be inspired tomorrow or the day after. Today
The sky is grey.

'I am writing first time. Let me introduce
Myself. My name is Mizuki Itahashi.
I am 27-year-old female. I would like you answer
The following question:
Can you see these birds high up in the sky?'

'Dear Mrs Itahashi,
Thank you for your fax.
Here's my answer:
The sky is so clear tonight
I can see lots of stars.'

A PASSANGER

A smile doesn't mean anything: people smile
Whenever they see a face. You might have thought of something
Unrelated to my persona.
What's related to it?
Social class, job, culture, nationality. What's my
Nationality? What about my job and
Culture? What was your smile related to?
My beauty?
My aura?
My personality?
'I'm neither handsome nor young,' I said to a taxi driver.
'You've got a wonderful personality,' he answered. Why did that woman
Smile at me? He was younger. She was
Crossing the street, unaware of my job, culture and
Nationality. Is it enough
To sit in a taxi? On the back seat.

A STILL LIFE

My vision will not haunt the future: there's no vision
To speak of. Only a snapshot, a series
Of snapshots. A series of moods. Antonioni
Also shows some objects on which one can meditate and
Find the world. What objects should I
Write about?
A plate, a glass.
A still life. Better than my thoughts. One can
Throw it out of the window. Didn't we use
To throw dirty dishes out
Of the window?

'Happy birthday! We're still alive.'
A message I heard before going to bed.
I can throw it out of the window.

MY SIGNATURE

Earlier or later. Time is there,
Everywhere. The 'now' is probably
Here.

I put my hand on a chest of drawers. Is it
Time or Space? It might be just a
Capital letter: T or S.

Can I put my hand somewhere
Without *speaking* of letters,
Of language?

Everything is language—a sign, as they say
Nowadays.

Is this a sign? I've no idea what I'm
Speaking of, but
It's a sign. Everything is
A sign. Or signature. My name is also
Everything.

Why not put my signature
At the bottom of the world?

A LIFTQUAKE

I know the future; yet no one is able
To make a prediction about
When the next earthquake will happen. Once
I experienced the feeling of being shaken
And not taken. (At least I know I'm not a medicine.) I was
In Japan,
In a hotel room,
On the twenty-fourth floor. I left
My room, took the lift and went downstairs. I might have wished
To make love to the earth. I don't remember. Anyway
My love wasn't reciprocated: even
The lift didn't quake.

THE GREAT PYRAMID

You answered the phone last night. Our
Game. For a while
You don't answer the phone
And then you answer it. I write some verses about
Your answers, my questions. I ask if
You're alone. You are. Someone
Might kiss your neck as I talk to you—according to my
Friend. I walked
Out on him.

He was more explicit. One
Hand of yours holds the receiver; your mouth
Utters words
Now and then.
The rest is silence.

Acrobats often stand on each other's shoulders,
Forming a pyramid. So do lovers,
More discreetly,
More distantly.

WATCHING A SOVIET FILM

The past. An image. I'm crying.

A pleasure boat. Moscow,

The early sixties.

A 'river tram' we call it.

Now they're different.

Should I walk and think

Faster? Or slower?

I should slow my body rhythm,

My mind rhythm.

I should reverse the order—start with the Z

And work back towards

The A.

I'm sure to find you

In the T, in the N.

In the I.

WHAT DOES MY HOROSCOPE SAY?

A vicious circle is also a vicious
 Square. It becomes whatever you think about: a triangle,
 Love, a woman. A landscape
 Is a circle; you always come back to where you
 Started unless
 You get lost forever.

I always come back to my
 Childhood as if my life was a landscape or
 A vicious circle
 Or a page from Freud's *Œuvres*
Choisies.

Or a paragraph from Tolstoy's
Childhood,
Boyhood,
Youth.

Or *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.

MY STORY

No theme, no subject. Just a desire
To write a poem which
Questions everything. I don't.
I don't question this and that. I don't question
Creation. What else is there to question? This breakfast,
This croissant? Why question the croissant? What
Can it say to me? 'You're a human being.
You'll eat me. So what?' So what? I'll eat you. I'm eating myself.

'Myself' is eating 'myself'—
A breakfast indeed!

A few crumbs remain.
They'll tell my story.

THE FUTURE

A light somewhere. At the beginning,
At the end.

Not the end of a tunnel,
Nor the beginning of anything:
Beginnings are in the past,
So are endings.

What remains in the future is
The future. A book in a shop,
A woman in the streets, the one
I've never seen before.
Haven't I seen them all?

There aren't many women
In the world. Two or three. Walking
Up and down my street,
Across my screen;
Dragging me from pillar to post.

HOMAGE TO KIERKEGAARD

Those who think they're
Mad are not: they spy
On themselves
From the outside,
From afar. Madness is short-
Sighted.

A woman I met
Thirty years ago
Thought
Every artist was mad.

She was right:
An artist is King Lear,
The knight of faith,
Abraham.

Killing
Your child would be
Sheer madness.

I'll kill this poem.

(It's not my child.)

MY DIARY

This is not my diary.

Nothing is my diary. These moods
Aren't worthy of being recorded either for
Posterity or even for myself,
For my own posterity,
For the years to come: I don't wish to
Remember them.

Anyway

I wouldn't remember them even if
They *were* noted down. I would read them as
Someone else's confession.

A few moments only. Some of them lasted for hours,
Days. I need not write them down.

They've been recorded on CD's.
I can find them in Plato's works,
In every book I've got in my library.

A beautiful / sunny / wet morning.

A SERIAL KILLER

Everything is virtual nowadays.

The Apocalypse is virtual;
So is life.

How to assert
My existence
Or that of the world?
By killing many people,
By killing myself?

Baudrillard is right: wars don't happen.
Nor do self-slaughters come off.

We are immortal. Our immortality
Is virtual. What does it matter?
Let us enjoy the word 'immortality'.

'IT IS THE DISEASE OF NOT LISTENING'

This moment is not in the past.

Nothing is in the past, the future or
The present. Nothing belongs anywhere.
You sit in the woods,
Listening to whatever happens.

Whatever happens can be heard.
You can't see the invisible man; you can
Hear him. You can't see Time;
You can hear it.

You can hear Love, provided you
Listen to it.

Why touch or smell it?

You should listen to 'It'.

THE EARTH

Let me describe a straight line—
Any of them radiating from my
Body and soul.

Shall I describe
All of them? I am the centre
Of the world, otherwise I wouldn't be
Here; I wouldn't be a poet.

I am a poet: a number of lines seem to emerge
From my being.

From my being or my
Non-being. Should that be hyphenated? Is there
Anything to hyphenate?

There are two words or
Three words. Or just
My *being*: one word. Everything
And everybody turn around it—around
Meadows and men,
Women and wines.

Copernicus
Turns around it.

THE TRAMWAY

Where are English words?
They used to keep me company. My
Travelling companions. Am I
Alone now? Sitting
In a tramway, in Gumilev's tramway
That lost its way.

No one knows Gumilev except
The Russians, a few
Russians.

I know him.

I also know
A few Russian curses.

I curse the world.
In Russian.

YOUR CLOTHES

An old Don Juan. Time
Bears with me yet.

Why do angels smile
When a cynic talks of love
And frailty?

My silence is the clothes
You might have worn
In Murasaki's novel.

ANOTHER LOVE

I'm not sure it is love
I'm thinking of. A phone call—
A woman who wants
To spend three days in Paris.

I'm not a woman and I live
In Paris—in Versailles. My address
Doesn't count. What counts is the words I heard
On the phone the other night.

Other words,
Another night.

The same love, the same non-
Appearance
Of what might have turned up somewhere.

Give me your hand,
Whoever you are! I'll neither
Shake nor kiss it.

THE ERA OF INFORMATION

All it comes down to is
A few verses that don't add anything
To my life
Or anybody's. My knowledge,
My experience. They're all
In a few lines;
And these lines say
The weather is horrible.

It's too cold, alas: I can't sit in the woods.
But the weather is fine;
It just doesn't care for temperature.

The film I'm watching on TV
Has its moments,
But is generally pretty dull.

 This morning
I made a quick freehand sketch
Of the woods
As seen from my window.
I read some of my poems.

I didn't enjoy the first poem
And I felt in the second
I was going over the same ground.

I spent this afternoon clearing out
My room. I nicked my finger.

ANOTHER DOLL

To Tatiana

Thirty-one hours to live. I don't care about
Nora's life: my own is at
Stake. Nothing happens elsewhere,
At other moments, other minutes. So many hours,
Years.
Nothing
Happens within them; every-
Thing happened eleven years ago. One
Instant, one destiny,
One death.
Everything happened,
Everything. I'm weary of
Everything. And
Everything is weary of
Me. But Nora is dancing her taran-
Tella.
Stella.
Who is she?
It doesn't matter.

SOMEWHERE

A word, a word. Something in
Between or something
Between. A wo-rd. That's right, that's
Wrong. You're in between, between 'o' and
'R'. You're nowhere. I'm nowhere
Either. There's something
Somewhere.

LUCY

Your voice is not your voice. Something
Else. What? A word. A voice is not
A word. An object. I can't hold it. A bottom
Where something can be found.

Something's in the sky. Not Lucy, not
Lucy. You're not in the sky
Either. There's nothing in the sky. These clouds are
Not in the sky. They're on earth or
Underground. The underground clouds. They might live
At the centre of the earth. Something must live at
The centre. Lucy's in the clouds,
Isn't she? An old song. I still remember it. Do I?
My youth. Does it remember me? It
Does.

HOMAGE TO VERLAINE

So many harmonies. Why betray them?
Your photographs. Yourself.
I keep wondering what's become
Of my life. What have you done with your
Youth? Nothing. I might have done a lot
With my life, but it's not an object.
I'm your object. I'm not. I'm a subject, a super-
Subject. What have I done with this subject?

THE NYMPHS

She was one of Diana's warriors, wearing her tunic
Pinned together with brooch, her tresses
Carelessly caught back by a white ribbon, and carrying
A light javelin.

She was another nymph as well: the echo of my thoughts
And desires. (My tuning fork.) Now all sounds
Die down before they can reverberate in my room,
In the woods.

So many nymphs.
What would I have done with this lass?

It's better this way: I don't need
To hear myself or others.

I'll just feel myself now and then:
My hands, my heart. I'll just look at
Constellations.

TIRED

Tired, tired. The wine I'm drinking
Is also tired—*fatigué*. You're my girlfriend,
My boyfriend. I'm drinking whatever
I can drink: your soul, legs.
They're not tired.

MOZART'S *REQUIEM*

Music has grown as distant as the people
Who talk about politics: there are
No cities, no states.

What does music have to do with that?
Why has it forsaken us?

I used to cry
When listening to Mozart's *Requiem*:
The bell tolling for everyone
And everything.

There are no bells anymore; only
Alarm clocks ring now and then to remind us
We are alive.

Music resounds everywhere, but I can't
Hear it; no one can.

Never mind—music doesn't need us.
Nor does it need
Performers, concert halls.

TO VLADIMIR MARTYNOV

One word,
Two words,
Three words.

No language should
Speak of itself. A vicious
Circle.

No one
Treats these subjects any more:
Communication, language.

The twenty-first century.
Other occupations—situations,
As Vladimir puts it.

Sitting in the woods, thinking of
Death. My situation. My
Commedia.

A requiem in C Major,
In D Major.

One chord.

SOUNDS

Last, lost. No
Meaning. Two
Sounds.

Should I
Count these sounds?

Let them
Count themselves.

Lost,
Less,
Last.

WHAT

‘What?’ The last question. There’s a
‘What’ and I don’t know what
It is. My mind, my body, the world.

A subject, an object; something,
Someone. Or nothing. I live
Inside or outside.

Experience, God, Nature?
I wish I could be
Just ‘be’ or ‘eb’.

THE TRIAL

I'm not your son,
Nor anybody's.

I'm here. No idea
How I was born.
Of a woman,
Of a man,
Out of wedlock.

Whoever I am,
I'm not your son.

I wasn't born
Of this wind.

Yes, in a river,
Near the future.

AN

Should I destroy her poems?

They're mine. Written for a woman
I know. Now I *know* her. I could have written
About an insect. Or about 'an',
Not about an 'ant'.

I've written a score of poems about
'An'. Not about Ann.

About poetry. But poetry
Is no more.

LANDSCAPES

Kyoto grows out of
Landscapes.
Spinoza's God.

Kyoto is a man,
A woman.

Kyoto is not.

THE REVELATION

A revelation is pernicious.
So is a rhyme, a comparison.
There's nothing beyond. Only
A woman talking to you.
Her voice, her glance. A tree
Somewhere. Zeami's flower.
A long night. A desire
Longer than the night. Yet
Nothing can be longer.

LET ME

Let it be. Or rather: let me, let me,
Let me. Let me what? Let me do what
I want. Of course I want
Everything. 'Everything' is 'of course' today. Even
'Nothing' is 'of course'. Determinism.
Let me get rid of these notions. Are they
Notions? Perhaps. Even 'perhaps' is
'Of course'. Or a notion. Or a
Motion. Or an emotion.

How to express this emotion?
Let me, let me, let me.

Of course,
Off course.

THE STREETS

Yes, I walked along these streets. But I don't
Recognise them any more. I just know
I walked along these streets. Are they
'Streets' or 'boulevards' or 'avenues'? You
Walk along names and you don't always
Recognise them. You continue to walk along them,
Around them, in them. What's the use of
Walking amidst names? You don't ask these
Questions. And if you do, you don't
Answer them. The streets will answer
All questions. Or boulevards. Or doormats.

DEAD

The truth is not in the wine
I'm drinking. Nor in my hand, in my
Mouth. Elsewhere, nowhere.
I don't look for the truth.

I look for a stone I might put
On my tomb.

A POSTCARD

How to say farewell to a woman
Who leaves a postcard on your writing desk? Not a simple
Postcard. No greetings, no love from Russia.
A painting—*Danae* by Klimt. With love from your
Bedroom. She's Danae, I'm Danae.
She's Dina: her name should resound
Everywhere. Danae, Dina, Valery. My 'e'
Infiltrates into your substance. Didn't I call you
'My substance' during our farewell night?
A substance, a thing, a being, a biological
Chaos or harmony. Your cells,
Your genes. How do you move or speak or breathe? My
Doppelgänger, myself. How do I move? Do I
Breathe? 'You—I.' 'V=D.' Your words,
My words. I'm stroking my breast.

THE MESSIAH

Birds are not flying, not yet. Neither is
The superman. This night is an
Ordinary night. Everyone's asleep,
Even I'm asleep. My dreams are so ordinary
I can't remember them. Actually I do
Remember them. I wish I wouldn't. What's the point in
Analysing such dreams?

They might be something else:
Visions, revelations.

An event of no importance.
An incident, rather.
An accident.
A short sentence is an incident or
An accident: no inspiration, no time. Why dwell on
It?

The Messiah may be IT.

NEGATIVE THEOLOGY

I've already written a poem about
The One. Another try,
A second try. How can one write two poems
About the One?
I destroyed the first one.
What did I say in it? I can't
Remember: my memory is deficient when
It comes to poetry; it remembers only
Erotic images and
Situations. The One is not among *them*. What
Is it?
God, I presume. (Not
A multitude of girls.) Don't I
Presume too much?
Isn't God too big for my poems, for my
Inspiration?
Doesn't my inspiration come from
God? Why do I need
So many inspirations, so many
Poems?
The One is enough. Or just
'One'.

AN IMAGE

Death is an image. A cat climbing into
Her basket, her home, one of her paws wounded
In a clinic where they did their best
To save her.

Then she crawls
Out of her home to die somewhere
Else.

Death is
Elsewhere. An image.

The woods where I sit
Through the summer.

The song of a bird.

THE WRONG MOMENT

Wrong moments, wrong decisions.

It was just a moment—neither wrong nor right

Nor evil nor good. Time *is* neutral, morally

Neutral like Spinoza's *Ethics*.

Is Time ethical? Is it aesthetic? It is, I suppose. I mean, it is.

It just exists like everything else—like Spinoza's

Ethics, like you. You don't exist.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

I might have died three days ago,
A book on my lap.

Sitting in the woods, I realised
I couldn't sit there nor
Anywhere else.

Nor could I walk down the path
Leading to my flat,
To my house.

Someone
Might have led me
To the house of God.

You don't say the 'flat of God',
Do you?

Was it better
To die outdoors? Someone
Would have found me.

I will be found.

THE TALE

What is here is not here. Nothing
 Can be found on the spot, wherever this spot
 Is located. Nothing is located anywhere.
 Only the wind tells its story. Its story
 Is tedious. No story is so tedious as the one told
 By the wind. But nothing else
 Tells stories; nobody else. Storytellers are
 Dead. Goodbye to them. I can live without
 Stories, without the wind. I can't live
 Without you, but that
 Does not matter. If I was unable
 To live without you I would die tomorrow or the day
 After. I'll die neither tomorrow nor
 The day after; at least I won't die because of you.
 I might die because of the wind, because
 Of the rain, because of my mood:
 I might choose to die. Or, as they say,
 Death might choose me. Why should he?
 Am I so eminent? Why single me out from a number of my
 Fellow-creatures? Do I deserve such an honour?

I'm not sitting in an armchair. It's a simple chair
 I'm sitting on, an uncomfortable
 Chair. Sitting on this chair has given me
 A dreadful backache.

What does it matter

Where I'm sitting? The tale will be
 Told.

POSTSCRIPT

A moment of synthesis. A transfer that reveals
 A unity called 'oneness' in essays
 And diaries of those who believe in Plotinus. The totality
 Of the one
 Consists of a perfect complementarity.

This is probably the last poem
 I'm writing. Do I find any coherence in my
 Complete Works? Coherence—complete. This is
 The only unity I find in them. Is it assonance,
 Dissonance,
 Alliteration? Euphony.

*Lass deine Hand am Hang der Himmel ruhn
 Und dulde stumm, was wir dir dunkel tun.*

Let your right hand on heaven's slope repose
 And mutely bear—

I've done many translations
 In my life. This one isn't mine: I found it in
 Paul de Man's *Allegories of Reading*.

—What darkly we impose.

What *do* we impose?
 I don't impose anything
 On anybody.

*In die alten
 Abgründe ohne
 Ende fällt...* These chasms. Let me
 Take leave of them.

Everything
 Might have fallen through: languages and their
 Games. I can't unite this part and that part,
 Whatever they are. They might be parties, for all I know:

A conservative party,
A communist party. They're not life
And death. If one allows oneself to be guided
By the rigorous representational logic of the metaphors...

Metaphor—metafiction. This poem might contain
Several complex metafictional elements.

And also a jug of milk I concentrate upon
As I look at a picture bought in Zagreb ten years
Ago.

A woman sits in front of a jug.
I don't look at her; nor
Does she look at me. She looks out
Of the window.

THE BIRDS

(JULY 2001)

CHRISTMASTIDE

'Christmas is on Monday, this year.
Just a few days off. I'm reading Pliny'—
I wrote in my diary four days ago.

It's Christmas Eve today,
But nothing reminds me of Christmas.
I've received no Christmas cards
And written none myself.
The centrepiece is not a plum pudding
But a bottle of champagne that
Doesn't remind me of Christmas:
I drink champagne every other day.

Nothing reminds me of Christmas
Except my diary, my calendar,
A Christmas tree in the house opposite
And a few children dancing around it.
What sort of music are they dancing to?
A silent dance, a Christmas dance.

Even music is often *de trop*.
Only dancing seems to match
Both Time and Eternity:
Dante and Botticelli
Have proven that beyond doubt.

Do I need any proof tonight?

I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF DEATH

Since the crash he has been on a life-support system.

He might call it a 'death-support system'

If he regained consciousness.

How long does death last?

'Death is but a moment.'

'Death is Eternity.'

Two points of view.

His death has already lasted

For three months.

His death is neither Eternity

Nor a momentary hesitation

Between two worlds,

Between two words:

Here and the Hereafter.

(A hyphen between here

And after. A kind of caesura.)

'Death is Time.'

A third point of view—

The one he would adopt

If he regained consciousness.

(Not a hyphen, not a caesura,

But a book without words.)

'Death is life.'

The same point of view.

THE LOST ONES

There are many boxes in my flat,
And they contain lots of objects:
Souvenirs, keepsakes and suchlike.
Or just small unnameable objects
That seem to have been picked up
By somebody, somewhere.

Who picked them up? And why?
Why did they find shelter
In my flat which is not
A lost property office,
For all I know? Or is it?
Why do I call it *my* flat?

I'm writing a novel.
I ask myself now and then,
'How far along are you in your novel?'
And I wonder if it's *I* who ask this question.
Thus I keep myself busy.
What for?

I might also have been picked up
Somewhere, by somebody—
In no-man's land, in a ditch.
That person, whoever he was,
Ought to have said instead:
'Oh go away, get lost!'

I *would* have got lost—in no time!
But where can you get lost?
Somebody is sure to find you:
God or a detective or UNICEF
Or just a human being
In search of a soul mate.
Or Samuel Beckett.

LOVE TRANSMISSION

We never walked in the woods,
Pointing at flowers
Or a butterfly.

How easy it is to stare at a butterfly
Or to follow the flight of a swallow.
Or to swallow a morsel of fish
Without munching it.

You could munch one apple for hours
As if it was forbidden fruit.
That's how we lived during those months.

Taking nothing for granted,
We studied our love and how it grew.
Wasn't our love the flight of a swallow,
As natural as the flight of a swallow?

We never walked in the woods,
But, nonetheless, exotic plants
Flourished around us—
On the streets of Moscow.

A butterfly would alight on those plants
Now and then.

A DROP IN THE OCEAN

I often re-read Dickens' novels.
Yet I scarcely recall
Their characters and plots,
Their Oliver Twists and turns.

I do recall his sentences—
Their twists and turns;
Some twigs in his woods
And a murderer's grin.

Our life is not a novel,
Not even a long story—
Just a few parables
And fleeting images.

A flash in the pan,
A fish in a saucepan,
A build-up of suspense,
An ineffective ending,

A pointless beginning,
A few suspension points,
A suspension bridge—
The Golden Gate bridge,

Understandably enough—
And a long, long sadness.
But this sadness is not
A novel, nor a story.

Just a few tear drops,
A few dots in a book.
And a few stars in a lake.
And a few sleeping pills.

A RUSSIAN POEM

Immortality is a threat—
 Borges said that.
 I don't think it's a threat,
 For there's no such thing
 As immortality.

The gods are immortal.
 But who are they?
 Some of them are dead,
 Many of them are dead.
 And God Himself is dead—
 At least Nietzsche thought so.

Just an aphorism: God is dead.
 He may be alive, for all I know.
 But whether He's alive or not
 He's not immortal—that's for sure.
 What if He *is* immortal?

What if *I* am immortal?
 What if I am God?
 What if I control
 The destiny of the world?
 Do I need the world?

I'm fifty-three—in the prime of life.
 Suppose I *am* immortal
 And the present state of affairs
 Is the future state of affairs.

Even in a thousand years
 I'll be fifty-three.
 Fifty-three years old,
 Fifty-three years young.

I'm bored to death.
 How do I tackle the problem?
 I open a bottle of champagne

And re-read Pushkin's poems.
 Pushkin might help me
 In a thousand years,
 In ten thousand years.

What if he doesn't?
 What if Pushkin grows old
 In ten thousand years?
 I'll re-read something else.
 Or I'll drink myself to sleep
 And awake many years later,
 A thousand years later.
 And if the new world turns out
 As boring as the old one,
 I'll keep drinking and drinking:
 Immortals do not fear
 Cirrhosis of the liver.
 I feel I must say *en passant*
 I'm never bored
 After drinking a bottle of vodka.

I'm not taking notice
 Of immortality's threats—
 It can't kill me!

Immortality says I'll grow apathetic
 But it's just an empty threat.
 Eternity is a funfair.

Just let me live forever!
 I'll show you
 What a young man can do
 In his spare time.

In the prime of life.
 At least *I* think so.
 What is God's opinion
 On the subject?

Sometimes I'm under the impression
He runs His fingers gently
Down my cheek,
Feeling the softness of my skin.
Does He care about my skin?
Does He care about my sins?

And what if I do get bored
After drinking for a thousand years?

There are several answers
To all these questions:
A bullet, a noose, a monastery.

INSURANCE POLICIES

We must have died already,
But we benefit from the inertia
That leaves insurance policies
With the same individuals
Year after year.

We are insured against death.
We are insured against fire.
We are insured against water.
We are insured against humans.
We are insured against God.

Nothing can happen to us.

We are insured against dead leaves:
They might remind us of death.

STARRY NIGHT

The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars.

Anne Sexton, *The Starry Night*

Gazing at the stars.

Some people always look upward

At night.

I never do.

Once in Switzerland

I did look up

And saw the stars

As if for the first time.

I wasn't impressed.

I just said to myself,

'I haven't looked at the stars

For many years.'

That's all. Why should I bother

About the stars?

I never looked through a telescope.

I never saw the rings of Saturn.

I never even saw a ring on my finger.

But many, many times

I heard and saw

Der Ring des Nibelungen.

There are many stars

In music and poetry.

Too many perhaps.

Too many nocturnal skies.

A GODDESS

I saw a goddess the other day.
Walking in the streets,
Looking at no one.
What was she doing
In Paris?

Was Paris in our city,
Sitting in a hotel lobby,
Waiting for the apple of discord?

A goddess.
Not just a beautiful woman.
Athena.

Was she looking for Odysseus?
She didn't speak to *me*:
I've got no son
And Troy is far away,
For all Schliemann's labours.

Penelope is far away.

The women I know
Weave no shrouds.

And they wouldn't unravel them
By night, choosing instead
To get things over and done with.

What could the gods tell us?
Have they become stockbrokers?
Do we still need their help?

Anyway no one will ever
Return to Ithaca.

So they just walk around,
Looking at no one.

POETRY

A delightful image:
 Doctor Zhivago writing poetry
 In a snow house.
 (A snowman in a snow house.
 A showman on screens.)

Can poetry be written
 In a summer house?
 Of course.
 But why should you write it?
 Why write poetry at all?

You *can* write it in a snow house,
 In Siberia: there's nothing else to do
 In Siberia, apart from
 Digging for gold and oil.
 Suppose you're not good at digging...

But everyone is good at digging
 Nowadays.

There are other occupations—
 Even in Siberia.
 And any occupation is better
 Than writing poetry.

Why should you write anything
 In a summer house?
 There are no wolves around:
 You're not in Siberia.

Why should you write poems
 In your country house?
 You're happily ensconced
 In the corner by the fire,
 And you've just emptied

A glass of Cognac.

Why should you think

In terms of rhymes?

House—mouse.

Your house would be invaded by mice

If you thought in terms of rhymes.

A crime is better than a rhyme—

Much more efficient.

A rhyme is Time.

And why should you

Waste your time

On rhymes?

A NURSERY RHYME

The game we played was dull and stodgy.
Games are supposed to be gay,
Yet we continued to play.
Some pawns and knights were eating porridge.

Some rooks had found a tree to roost in
For the night—beside the chessboard.
A king was standing at the threshold.
The share prices had been boosted

By someone's victory, by the score.
And we continued to play.
'Out of my sight, you little whore!'
A bishop cried. A queen went away.

I know our life is but a game.
And any game's a slice of life.
And everything's a nursery rhyme:
Love, hate, ambitions, hope, fame.

THE AIR-CURTAINS

I've passed through so many doors
I see them in the open air:
In fields, in the woods.

Every tree is a door and I know
There's something beyond every tree.
But I can't open trees, so I stay outside,
Ignorant of what's going on
A few paces away.

Even the air consists of doors. A tiny key
Can open them all—the whole world.

People and politics are too crass.
Their keys open material doors—
Doors of wood and iron. And they opened
The Iron Curtain, twelve years ago.
I'm only interested in air-curtains.

Sometimes I see curtains in the air,
Curtains instead of doors,
Curtains instead of castles.
Flapping in the wind, rustling like silk.

What's beyond them?
The Statue of Freedom
Or the Statue of Fate?
The Fountain of Youth
Or the Fountain of Death?
Or a mirror in which
Everything is reflected?

They might hide a mirror
Where nothing is reflected.

HE TREATED HER WITH OLD-FASHIONED GENTLEMANLY COURTESY

'I don't want him to see my ugliness,' she said.
The doctor nodded in agreement. 'It's common
For patients undergoing chemotherapy
To lose their hair,' he said with a frown.
'Is he still waiting to see me?' she asked.
'He's been waiting since this morning.'
'I don't want him to see my ugliness,' she repeated.
'I think you're right,' said the doctor. 'Don't you worry!
I'll speak to your bridegroom. I'll tell him
How beautiful you are—as beautiful as before.
I'll tell him you don't look your age.
Your illness has impaired
Neither your mind nor your body.
I'll tell him you move around the ward
With a smooth, effortless grace.
It's through divine grace
That you've recovered from your illness.
I'll tell him you bring a smile
To your doctor's face.
I won't tell him I cry
As soon as I'm out of your sight.
I won't tell him you'll die
One of these days—
Most probably tomorrow.'

THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE

A man is sitting in a rocking chair.
He's dead.
I've killed him.
The rocking chair continues to rock
Backwards and forwards.
No one touches it.
And he's dead, the man's dead.
He cannot rock himself backwards and forwards.
He's dead. The rocking chair's alive.
Moving backwards and forwards.
And it wounds me as if a few razor blades
Jutted out of it.

There are no razor blades jutting out of it.
It's just a normal chair,
An ordinary rocking chair,
Except there's a corpse in it.

I hear her voice,
The voice of my guilty conscience.
My wounds are her voice.
And she speaks to me about him,
About this man.
She says she has loved him—
Always, always.

A conscience can't love anybody,
Anybody or anything.
A consciousness can love somebody
But not a conscience, a guilty conscience.
A guilty conscience wounds you.
A guilty conscience kills you.

My consciousness loved this man.
My body loved him too.
My whole being loved him
Except my guilty conscience.
She was born when I killed him—

As soon as my knife
Ran through his heart.
She's lying when she says
She loved him.
She's lying through her teeth.
Her lie bites me.
So does her truth.

Wounds, wounds, wounds.
How many wounds have I got?
I've killed only one man,
An unfaithful, dishonest man,
A deceitful, double-dealing man.
A triple-dealing man.

There's no room for so many wounds
In my conscience, in my mind,
In my soul.
On my body.

A HAPPY AFTERNOON

Beautiful weather, a beautiful day,
 A wonderful lunch, a gorgeous bottle of wine.
 At last I've found happiness and peace of mind—
 For a few hours.

The forecast says it's going to rain later today,
 And I won't drink any more:
 My taste buds are already tired.
 My happiness is bound to evaporate
 Around 8 p.m.

This afternoon is not really perfect:
 No afternoon can be perfect,
 No afternoon, no evening,
 Whatever you drink.
 But I *am* happy right now—
 At 4.35 p.m.

This afternoon is imperfect
 Despite the weather and the fact
 That the members of all the different
 Ethnic groups in the area
 Are living together in peaceful co-existence—
 For a few hours.

This afternoon is gruesome.
 An unprejudiced observer
 Would be horrified and appalled:
 So many wryly devastating incidents
 Crop up every second.

But I'm a prejudiced observer—
 This afternoon.

NIJINSKY

Human memories are like butterflies.
 And butterflies are often caught and murdered
 By children, by Nabokov's colleagues.
 And how can our memory speak
 If its butterflies are pinned in a box?

But the human brain might adopt special measures
 To protect rare species of butterfly.

You must remember the woman
 Who looks after you.
 She tends to mother you, doesn't she?
 Necessity is the mother of invention
 So you invented a mother.
 (You felt terribly alone,
 Very much orphaned.)
 And she invented a son.

She comes twice a week,
 Bringing food.
 She washes, tidies and dusts;
 Or so you think.
 But she never clears up the mess in your room.

She is neither a cleaning woman
 Nor a servant—
 A mother of sorts.
 Why do you never talk about her?
 Why did you write in your diary:
 'I've got a servant, a male'?
 Are you ashamed of her?
 Don't you remember she's your wife?

She does her best
 To make you feel at home.
 The nurses aren't allowed

To come to your room.
There are several peepholes
Through which they scrutinise your behaviour
Day and night.

Anyway you're fairly harmless.
You jump once in a while—
A rare species of butterfly—
And you keep a diary.
Your diary hurts no one
Except yourself.
And your jumping doesn't even hurt
The floor.

OLD WOMEN

Pity is a beautiful sentiment;
 So is love.
 And what about indifference, oblivion and boredom?
 Are they beautiful sentiments?
 Are they ugly?
 Does boredom look like a Byronic hero—
 A so-called superfluous man
 Whose shadow stalked the Russian novelists
 Of the nineteenth century?
 Eugene Onegin, Pechorin...
 They always speak with the world-weariness of heroes
 Who have been under public scrutiny for too long.

I visualise boredom
 In the shape of an old woman
 Knitting in a rocking chair
 Or playing patience on a dinner table.
 She was a beauty once.
 She won a beauty contest
 Fifty-five years ago.

Is oblivion just a hole?
 Not even a living substance?
 Is it a hole in a piece of clothing?
 'You'd better mend this hole
 Before the sweater begins to unravel,'
 Says an old man to his elder sister.
 And she begins to mend the hole.
 As she does so, she recalls a few episodes
 From her childhood, from her youth.

Carried away by the sweet talk of memories,
 She mends all the holes she can find.
 And she makes a few additional holes
 So she can mend them afterwards.

Is there a direct link
Between indifference and old women?
Indifference *is* an old woman,
A piteous old woman.
She was a beauty once.
And she was in love.

A COMMENTARY:

But old women are often in love,
And they love more violently than young women.
They're ready to kill for the sake of their love.

And some old women are very beautiful.

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

I should like to know where I stand.
Do I stand here or there?
At least I know I'm standing here.
But where's here?
Not there, obviously.
Neither there nor over there.
But is it over here?

These are stupid questions:
I know I stand in my room.
And my room is part of my flat;
And my flat is part of this building.
And the address of this building
Can be found on my luggage labels
And on the bills I get by post.

Even sailors know where they stand:
'Our current position is
Longitude 20 degrees east,
Latitude 30 degrees north.'

But sometimes I'm under the impression
I stand on top of Mount Everest.
Yet I know that the top of Mount Everest
Is 8848m above sea level.
And I'm just sitting in my room—
Slightly above sea level.

Sometimes I get the feeling
I am below sea level,
Below earth level,
Below universe level.

EXPRESSIONS AND FORMULAS

The circumstances of her death
Can be depicted by a mathematical equation:
She had a crash in her car
When she was driving to the shops,
And a car crash is a mixture of points and numbers.
And a mixture of humans and cars.

Death is a mathematical formula
Or a page from a medical encyclopaedia.
Or just a dot somewhere,
Not necessarily on earth.

Death can be depicted by the expression
'A top-down approach/strategy'.

ODYSSEUS

In the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*
Odysseus' soul goes around the Hereafter
In search of its next incarnation.
And it chooses the life of a private individual
Who does his own work—
The life of an ordinary man.

Today Odysseus works in an office
From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
And in the evenings
He puts on an apron
And does the washing up.
'In our family, we share the housework
Between us,' says Penelope.

And he spends every weekend
Tinkering about with his car.

Today he wields a kitchen knife
Instead of a sword.
And he chops onions
Instead of bodies.

But he's still fond of wooden horses:
Telemachus' room is cluttered with them.

A SURVIVAL KIT

My grandmother likes storing food,
Just in case something awful happens.
She thinks the Third World War
Is still on the agenda. And we're using
The fifth bedroom as a store room
For all the junk that she refuses
To throw out.

I think it's better
To memorise the world: this book,
This chest of drawers, this chandelier,
Those birch trees, the Adriatic Sea,
The roar of the surf, a sandy beach.

No point in memorising the stars:
They'll outlive their usefulness.

Should I memorise myself?

AN ECHO

An echo, a conflagration,
An anonymous face,
A perfume, eternity...

Only these words remain,
But that's enough.

An echo means
There was a sound—
Many sounds,
Many harmonies.
Bach, Gesualdo, Brahms.

A conflagration means
There was something to burn.
There was a world to burn.

An anonymous face means
There was someone in the world.
That person had a mother
And a father.
And a sister perhaps.
And a brother.

A perfume means
There was a woman.
And roses.

'The perfume of the roses
Filled the room.'

Only this sentence remains
But that's enough.

There was a room, a house.

There were some women
In the house which was filled
With exquisitely-perfumed women.

And eternity means
We are dancing a waltz.

'BETRINK DICH UND NENN SIE PARIS'

'Get drunk and call it Paris'—
An excerpt from Celan's poem.

I seldom get drunk. Anyway
I never call anything Paris,
For everything is Paris.
(Not only when I'm drunk.)

I'm either in Paris
Or I think about her.
All my amorous adventures
Take place in Paris,
Even if I'm in Moscow.

All my poems are in Paris.

And my bottles of wine
Are stored in Paris—
Even the ones
I've already drunk.

AFTER A TRIP

Once again I've come back to France,
To my flat, to my library,
After spending a month in Moscow
And a week in Tokyo.
I thought I might die in Russia
Or in a plane crash.
But I'm still alive,
And my flat hasn't been robbed.

So nothing has changed
Except a few thoughts.
But what are a few thoughts
In one's life?
Thoughts come and go,
Dying in the air.
Why count them?
Why count on them?

Perhaps human life is just a thought—
Not necessarily in God's mind.

I might have died somewhere:
In the Pacific, in the Atlantic.
Or in the air,
In the polluted air of Moscow.
What does it matter?

Human life is so unimportant
It can be dealt with *en passant*.

WHEN THE GRIM REAPER COMES FOR YOU

Pictures of the happy life:

Movie stars, international jet-setters

Photographed in glittering company.

The hoi polloi look at the pictures

And nod their heads.

'Fate has been smiling on them,' they murmur.

But Fate doesn't smile.

Fate has no face—

Only legs and arms.

A BODY ODYSSEY

Man has the stars inside himself.

Paracelsus, *Liber Paramirum*

I never felt any star

Inside myself.

It can take millions of years

For light from a distant star

To reach the Earth.

How long does it take

For light from an inner star

To reach the mind,

The soul?

A PARTING

Things shouldn't unite abruptly,
Otherwise death might part them.

Our love was abrupt,
Our laws were ruthless.

Can laws be otherwise?
A soft law, a sensitive law,
A law which melts in one's mouth.

In your lifetime you liked
To take centre stage
In whatever you did.

In my last dream
You stood in the middle of the stage
And looked out at the audience.
I was sitting in the seventh row.

We were stamping our feet
And clapping our hands
And screaming for an encore.
But you just bowed to us,
Resignedly, despondently.

THE IVORY TOWER

Is it easy to die
If you know
That the future
Is futureless,
That the future is
Timeless?
There'll be no time
In the future.
No time, no sense.
Just the future—
A word signifying nothing.
I'm not interested in it.
I don't want to know
What will happen next.
So I can die today.
Nor do I want to know
What will happen
In the distant future.
So I can die tomorrow.
Time is not space,
As far as the future goes.
The near future
And the distant future
Are identical:
Both make no sense.
Or their sense is
Nonsensical.
Short-sighted prophets
And long-sighted ones
Are identical too:
Both see nothing.
I see a broad expanse of snow.
(I have a clear-sighted
Vision of the future.)
'The snow without a wrinkle,'
As Mandelstam says.
And I prefer the snow
With lots of wrinkles.

I prefer Time
With lots of wrinkles.
(And my Time wrinkles its nose
At the strange smell
Coming from the future.)
'Will you help me
To fold up Time?'
(A declaration of love.)
Time is '*vallonné*',
To use the French word.
Up hill and down dale.
And I've built a house
On the top of a hill
Overlooking the Earth.

MINUTES

I'm not at my best in the morning.
I'm not at my best in the evening.
But evenings and mornings
Are at their best—always.
At least they make the best
Of a bad job.
And Time *is* a bad job,
The worst job one can get.

How beautiful they are!
Every minute is beautiful.
What a pity
I can't enjoy these minutes
To the utmost.
I can't enjoy them at all.

Mr Smith said he deplored
Television's tendency
To be directed towards
The lowest common denominator.
Like television, Time is directed
Towards the lowest common
Denominator,
But its particles are not.

Minutes are a bliss
And I listen to them
With an expression of pure
Rapture on my face.
What a pity I can't hear them.

THE ORIGIN OF JET LAG

According to legend,
God asked our forefathers:
'Can you use this world as a makeshift
Until I get you something better?'
And our forefathers answered: 'Yes.'
They didn't know it was a test.
Besides, they were too timid
And easily frightened by lightning.

EQUALITY

Another sleepless night.
Through the slits in the blinds
I could see it was getting light.

I used to dislike light.
Now I'm indifferent to it.
Darkness is no better.
Darkness is another form of light
And vice versa.

A withered poplar puts forth flowers.
Darkness is just withered light
Putting forth flowers. And they're as evil
As any flowers you may chance upon
In broad daylight.

Light claims the moral high ground.
Yet so many crimes are committed
In broad daylight.
And sarcastic laughter
Doesn't resound louder in the dark.

Nights and days are identical;
So are the dead and the living.
The dead still outnumber the living
But soon they'll be equal in volume.

WHO NEEDS THEM?

I'm not sure we form an equation.

Our relationship might be expressed thus:

$6 \times 4 = 10 \times 2$.

And that is incorrect.

So we don't love each other.

We are incompatible.

Our lifestyles are incompatible.

Our characters are incompatible.

Our bodies are incompatible.

But our relationship needs

Neither mathematics nor compatibility.

Nor does it need love.

Our caresses need neither hands nor lips.

Our caresses don't need our bodies.

UNDERSTANDING

Last night I saw a film
About teenagers and love.
An old Soviet film,
As old as I am.
No, slightly younger.
I saw it for the first time
In my youth.
I was as young
As those schoolboys.
Like them I was in love—
With two girls at once. Actually
The boys in the film were
More faithful than I,
More faithful,
More concentrated.
One of them, a poet,
Could look at his beloved
For hours on end.
'Happiness is when you're understood,'
He wrote in his exercise book.
A six-word composition.
Looking at her ear,
At her hair.
Only once she looked at him.
She understood his telltale glance.
She understood his tale
And the telling of it.
He understood
One curl of her hair
And her ear.
He *fully* understood them.

Now I am older
Than their teachers.
And I love only one woman.
When I'm alone
I often utter her name.
Uttering her name,

Listening to its echo.

THE *MONA LISA* SPORTING A MOUSTACHE

There's always the other side
 To whatever you come across.
 You look at one side and think
 There's nothing else in the universe:
 Just one side of the thing
 You're looking at.

Love.
 How beautiful is the side
 You're looking at.
 There's nothing more beautiful
 Than one side of love—
 The sunny side.
 But walk around and see
 What's hidden behind.
 Love is a monument—
 A monument to itself.
 Well, walk around
 And see what's on the other side.

Take a few steps.
 What do you see?
 Dove-droppings only?
 A shadow?
 No, another monument.
 Not just hate which is so often
 Hand in glove with love.
 (Hate in love, as it were.)
 Another monument.

A horse and a horseman,
 Both headless. The horseman
 Holds a hat, his hand
 Raised in salutation. Or
 Duchamp's *objet trouvé*:
 A urinal which, on the other side,
 Looks like a fountain.
 Or another *objet*: a bicycle wheel

Set to spin on a chair.
And you can neither sit on the chair
Nor use the bicycle, its wheel.
That wheel won't get you anywhere.

So just stand there
And look at the monument,
At the other side of love.

IN THE LAND OF NOD

There are laws designed to protect
Vanishing American species,
But no laws protect my words. On the contrary,
There are laws designed to destroy them—
A superfluous measure.

Tsvetaeva hoped that,
With the passing of the years, her poems would mature
Like precious wines—in the reader's mind.

Nowadays
Wines mature very quickly,
And words don't mature at all.
And when they do, this happens
Outside the reader's mind:
In no-man's land,
In a waste land,
In the land that space forgot.

In our land of milk and honey
Words remain teenagers—
Drinking milk and eating honey.

THE DESTINY OF MANUSCRIPTS

Only great artists burn their own manuscripts.

The words remain—in the air.

And you can't burn it.

'The air is the biggest library in the world,'

I wrote in one of my poems.

What's more, it's indestructible.

Sooner or later

The void will replace the air—

After the Big Crunch.

The void is utterly indestructible.

Physicists say the void is not empty:

There's always something in it.

Silence is not empty either.

THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

*Reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released
into the air by burning fossil fuels would help to
limit global warming.*

From a newspaper

Forward-looking people

Look at the nearest wall.

And backward-looking people

Look as far as the Big Bang.

And even beyond.

What was before the Big Bang?

A series of small bangs.

A series of big crunches.

Since the first Big Crunch

The universe has been

On a life-support system

And has never regained

Consciousness.

After the first Big Crunch

The first god said about the fifth god:

'Jim is in charge and I don't want

To hear any ifs and buts.'

Jim was just a blue-eyed boy.

He couldn't rule over the universe

And there has never been

A round-table discussion

On Olympus.

After the second Big Crunch

The first god told Jim in private:

'You didn't play the piece too badly this time,

So we should be able to bring it up to scratch

Before the next concert.'

The first god

Thought about the universe

In terms of music.

IT IS WRITTEN

Why should I always read
Between the lines?
It's much more important
To read what is written.
Let's take the sentence:
'Just talking about blood
Makes him go weak at the knees.'
What can I read between these lines?
Water. The blood disappears.

Let's take another sentence:
'Fears of his death
Bulked large in her thoughts.'
But there's life between the lines,
A glimmer of hope.

Should the Bible be read
Between the lines?
God is within the lines,
Not between them.

Between the lines
There are men
And supermen.

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Do I often feel what I believe in?
Do our feelings
Have anything in common
With knowledge?

I really felt my age last night.
I was in a night-club
Where almost everybody
Was under twenty.
I both felt my age
And knew I was old.

But even during those moments
I believed in my eternal youth.

When the feeling of loneliness
Overwhelms me,
I know I'm lonely.
But I also know
I'm loved by dozens of women.
I believe in love and in my own charm.
Even as a young boy
I knew how to turn on the charm
When I wanted something.
And I always wanted something.

I believe in the fundamental goodness
Of human nature.
I've never felt it.

THE SEVENTH SENSE

What's the difference
Between the sixth sense
And other senses?
None whatsoever.
All senses deceive us.
They also tell us the truth,
The varnished truth.
The sixth sense is no exception
To this rule. I often
Have a sixth sense that
The plane I'm on
Is going to crash.
I'm still alive.
Perhaps I've never
Taken a flight in my life.
I might have been sitting at home
Over last seven centuries.

Am I dead? One of those planes
Might have crashed after all.

My three senses say
I'm writing a poem:
My eyes see it
On the computer screen;
My fingers feel the keys
And I hear these keys.
But what kind of keyboard is it?
Am I playing a Chopin mazurka?
Is it really a keyboard?
Or is it a human body?

My seventh sense says
I'm caressing a maiden,
Her breasts, her legs.
I'm in love with her.
(A key body,
Not a keyboard.)

My eighth sense says

Poetry is a caress.

(The eighth sense

Is a poetic sense

Or poetic license

Or poetic nonsense.)

And vice versa:

A caress is poetry,

A caress is a text.

THE GRITTY DOCUMENTARIES

In Muslim countries, in films,
Only shadows are shown
Whenever a love scene
Reaches a delicate point.
Actors aren't even allowed
To touch each other.

Only their shadows touch and kiss.
Only their shadows make love.

Censorship is the mother of realism:
Only our shadows touch and kiss;
Only our shadows make love.

And our real selves are in the wings,
In backstage rooms, in back streets.

Our real selves are left to rot
In the background. In solitude.

THE NIGHT OF THE MIND*Now comes the evening of the mind.*

Donald Justice

I've thought about this a lot:
The evening of the mind,
The midnight of the mind.

'We have heard the chimes of midnight.'
I knew I would hear those chimes
And feared that moment, that music.
A prelude to death. A brief interlude
Between hullabaloo and silence.

I heard the chimes of midnight,
But I discovered a bedside lamp—
Several bedside lamps, in fact.
They all stand by my bed now.
They all stand around my armchair.

Whenever I go outdoors
I'm flanked on both sides by these lamps.
I need not lampposts any more,
Lampposts, lighthouses.
The moon and the sun
Are of no use either.

And my stream of consciousness
Is an illuminated manuscript.

A BAD TRANSLATOR

So much gets lost in translation.
And what can we read in the original?

We don't read the stars in the original.
(The latest message of the stars contains
Some of their most impenetrable lyrics yet.)

A mummy's boy is a translation of his mother.
And his mother is not an original either:
Her original dates back to original sin.

There are several shades of meaning
In the previous stanza. Any of them
Is a translation. So is the stanza itself.

'I think it's on the cards,' says a woman.
But the cards are also a translation:
A second-rate translation of the future.

During my visit to Oxford University
I overheard the following dialogue:
'Is God a translation or an original?'
'At least He's a first-rate translation.'

A DOG'S LIFE

An injured dog lay in the middle of the road,
Howling with pain.

That's not a quotation—just an image.
George Trakle might have used it
In one of his poems.

Such images create
A one-sided view of life.

Trakle's presentation of the evidence
Was one-sided and told
Only part of the story.

There are other dogs in the world;
They wag their tails and caper in meadows.
They lick our hands and bark up the right trees.

There are other stories in the world:
The children squealed in delight
When they saw all the presents
Under the Christmas tree.
Why not write about these children?
And about these presents?

A car whizzed round the corner
And knocked the dog over.

Jackals howled among the ruins.

A COLOURLESS MOOD

I am in one of my moods today.
It's not a black mood, a black cat:
No black cat has crossed my path.
A colourless, transparent mood.

A black mood is opaque and therefore flat.
You can remove it like a sheet of paper.
There's no perspective beyond it.
And how remove a perspective?
The primitives are of no help:
They didn't abolish
The perspective of Golgotha.

Nothing has crossed my path.
Nothing has happened.
But my mood is so transparent
I can see what has not happened.

Colourless events,
Neither black nor red.
There's more blood in them
Than in a bloodbath.

A LIFELONG APPRENTICESHIP

Where does this joy come from?
 From the windows that are closed.
 From the ceiling, from the floor.
 From my middle-aged heart.
 From my neighbour's cat.
 From within, from without.
 As if I were listening
 To the Easter liturgy in Moscow.
 (In Paris our liturgy
 Is more ceremonious.
 In Moscow even thuribles
 Sound like bells.)

'My encyclopaedic knowledge of sadness—'
 Thus I began a new poem.
 I couldn't finish it.

Yet my apprenticeship of joy
 Goes on in fits and starts.

The president of our wine-lovers club
 Said in his inaugural speech:
 'Red wine is the Earth, white wine Heaven.'
 Sadness is the Earth, joy Heaven.

Just an afterthought:
 The Earth is also joyful.

THE RESURECTION

You live in Moscow.

I met you there

Many times.

Love at thirty-first sight.

I don't think about you.

I think about other loves:

Love at second sight,

Love at fifteenth sight.

I remember you.

For how long?

No one knows.

For a few seconds.

But during these seconds

I'll die and rise from the dead.

MOSCOW CHURCHES

Ah, these churches that come from nowhere!

All churches come from nowhere

Or from a word, from a prayer.

No one has ever built a church.

Why haven't I seen them before?

Moscow is full of churches.

At least I can see them now.

Standing here and there

Like the people who listen

To whatever is said

Without uttering a word.

Cherry trees in blossom

Are also beautiful,

But they never listen to you.

A COMEDY

Dante was speechless
So often, as if he had tried
To describe Moscow:
Hell, Purgatory, Paradise.

I thought I was living in Hell.
I thought the West was Paradise.
I'm living in Purgatory.

Moscow and poetry are the only means
Of communication with Paradise.
The only means of transport.

Moscow, Moscow, Moscow, Moscow.
Everybody tries to describe you.
Even Homer: Odysseus
Returns to Moscow, not to Ithaca.

And I don't return to you.
I spend my time going to you.

THE BIRDS

(Homage to Alfred Hitchcock)

Moscow. Why do I love you more and more?

My roots. They always talk about roots.

I don't see those roots; I don't hear them.

I do hear the birds singing on my branches.

THE SMALL WORLD**(2002)**

LINES

I can't paint.

I can't even draw something simple:

A house, a hut. What I draw

Doesn't look like a human dwelling.

It looks like a few lines. And you can't

Live within a few lines. I seem to have lived

Within a few lines for many years.

Does this influence my thinking? I still

Think along the same lines.

But I shouldn't play with words.

I might play with lines.

I don't know how.

PERCENTAGE

A transsexual.

A half-man, a half-woman.

I am a 100 percent man

And a 100 percent woman.

Every human being is a double

Or a triple—if you take into consideration

The androgynous aspect of their personality.

(Or a cripple.)

Personality, Persona.

According to Jung, the 'Persona' is

That part of consciousness

Which negotiates with the outer world

On the Ego's behalf.

I am 100 percent Persona; yet

I never negotiate with the world.

I am 100 percent Ego.

I'm supposed to be conditioned by social class,

Job, culture and nationality.

What's my nationality?

And my culture?

Do I attempt to answer these questions?

I do. But only

20 percent of my answers are correct.

SPORTS

I'm not taking part in any sport
That involves danger to life and limb.
I'm not taking part in life. Everybody knows
That life is a sport,
But there are no victors.
All this sounds like a moral maxim.
I'm not Chamfort. I'm just trying
To express my feelings.
And I get the feeling I'm not a victor.
I also get the feeling
Life is a sport: an indoor sport,
A team sport, a winter sport.
And living for sport
Rather than because of the need to live
Is something I think is wrong.

CONTINUATION

Life questions us continuously,
But we don't answer it.
We just go on living.

Birds don't answer life either.
And their heavenly Father
Feeds them.

Our heavenly Father
Feeds us too.
Sometimes we are too tired
To lift the spoon, so our heavenly Father
Takes it from us and feeds us
Mouthful by mouthful.

ONE PERSON

'All women look alike.'
A friend of mine said that:
He was disappointed in love
And thought he would find many women
To replace the one who'd jilted him.

I think everybody's alike.

Suppose everybody left you.
So what?
You might leave as well.
But there's one person you can't leave.
Unfortunately you don't know
Who this person is,
And you're not likely
To find out.

ILLITERACY

So many poems are awaiting me,
Unwritten poems. They can't be written
By someone else. Let them remain
Unwritten. Why should this space
Be filled with poems?
Let it be filled with love instead.

Love's not an unwritten poem: many people
Have written it.
The same poem.
I'm not capable of reading it.

DIGRESSIONS

'But I digress. To get back to what I was saying before—'

I never said anything before. Digression

Is a useful tactic:

You have to digress in order to survive.

This is not a poem—

Just a digression. A digression

From what?

From nothing. But nothing

Is also a digression.

Is nuclear winter a digression

From nuclear summer?

We talk too much about nuclear threats.

No digressions will happen:

Nothing has been said.

Yet something happens.

Always.

WILD STRAWBERRIES

Wild Strawberries.

An old film by Bergman.

I buy strawberries at markets

And eat them in my room.

I pick over them

And keep a few big ones to one side

For decoration.

What's there to decorate?

Everything!

The old age, disappointments,

Unrequited love.

HOLES

A poem I can write this afternoon. Is it worth
The sacrifice I made more than
Thirty years ago? Sacrifice is just a word
Unless you kill your son, your parents. I've killed
No one except my life that is some-
Thing—not an animal, nor a moth. It can't eat
Holes in clothes.

THE POEM

This poem reflects both the poet's love of nature
And his religious beliefs.

I am the poet. And I'm writing
A poem. And I say this poem
Reflects both my love of nature and my
Religious beliefs.

I don't love nature. And my religious beliefs
Are shaky. Besides,
I think I'm on very shaky ground
With this argument.

But there's no argument. There's a blank space
Filled with words. And these words say
I love nature and believe in God.

THE POEM II

Joy is a replica of joy: our habits are
Our joys. But what's a habit?
Many habits are sorrows in disguise
Or just sorrows.

I'm not in the habit of writing
Poems before turning in. There's a nightingale in our
Woods, but I don't know him or her. Nor
Does the creature know me.

This poem is
A habit, a joy, a sorrow.
Which one to choose?

I choose this poem.

ONE WORD

Sadness, sadness, sadness.

Is that all I have to say?

St Augustine repeats some words

Quite often, for instance:

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus.

What's repetition for?

Enough to say:

Sanctus

Or sadness.

Or both.

This history of mankind

Is well-researched,

But the exclusion of modern society

Presents a gaping chasm.

All right then:

Smugness.

One word isn't enough:

Nonsense.

Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense.

ATOMS

A worst-case scenario,

A best-case scenario.

Life goes on and the future

Doesn't depend on our scenarios.

And our scenarios

Don't depend on the future.

Nor do they depend on the past.

Nothing depends on anything. There are just

Myriads of atoms whirling in the void.

One atom whirls another atom round

Until the latter feels quite sick.

QUARTETS

In one of my poems I say
'I wish my life could sound
Like a Haydn quartet.'

Even the Holy Trinity
Is a quartet, given the doctrine
Of the Blessed Virgin's Assumption;
Her literal 'heavenly transportation'
And reunion with the Son
As the Celestial Bride.

There are four lines in this poem.
There's one line in this poem.

A JOURNEY

Another journey. I won't be at home
For a month. It's high time
I asked myself what my home is.
What is it? The apartment
I live in? My bodily envelope?
Or the woods where I walk
Almost every day?

I said once that even the earth
Wasn't my home. And my thoughts
Whirl outside myself. They don't know
Who they belong to. Neither do I:
I'm not presumptuous enough to think
God might have such thoughts.

A LAPSE OF MEMORY

I've written everything:
I said that many times.
I've also written this poem.
I can't remember it.

What does it sound like?
Is it long? Is it short?
What does it speak about?
Most of my poems speak
About my states of mind.
This poem might be an exception:
There are many exceptions to the rules
And the rules themselves
Are exceptions.

Why can't I write
A poem about someone else?
About whom?
I don't know anybody.

And objects are unknowable. Besides,
Everything has been written
About them.

Objects don't change.
A rose is always a rose.

COMING BACK

This moment may come back
But not the taste of the wine
I'm drinking. Nor its bouquet.

Many things come back to us—
Unwanted, unwarranted.
Others never come back.

Love often comes back,
The same love.
The taste is different.

THE WEB

'I've no influence over the future,'
Said a character in a novel.
Did he have any influence
Over the present?

'Influence' is the wrong word.
Nothing interacts in the world,
Neither humans nor Leibniz's monads.

Even stars don't influence other stars,
Turning somewhere, around something.

The force of gravity,
Non-local connections—
A load of old twaddle!
No one has seen God
Spin a web between
Humans, plants and minerals.
An apple falls because it
Wants to fall.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

Am I qualified to say what's what?
What's a tree? What's my desk?

Just a word, a few words.
Not even that, I suppose. Anyway
I don't know anything
About words.
Nobody does.

And words don't know
Anything either. Just shaking the air
Or covering sheets of paper.

The Tree of Knowledge is untouched:
Adam and Eve are eating kiwi fruit.

WITHIN RANGE

Why do we think all the time?
It's enough to think
Once in a while.

And when we do think,
Let us think about something—
That's enough. Why do we have
To think about something else,
Widening our discussions?
And what's something else?
Nothing. We don't have
The whole world in our brains.
Let us think about
What's within range
Or forget it.

The cathedral spire
Is within sight—
Just another few miles to go.
Spires are always within sight,
Within range.

THE SMALL WORLD

I wish I could adapt myself
To something.
But there's nothing I could
Adapt myself to. Nowadays
The world is so small
I can't cling to it.

I could hold it
Or put it on my head.
I could walk down the street,
The world balanced effortlessly
On my head.

What for? Anyway
The street is too small for my feet.

HARMONIES

There's nothing beyond
Harmonies. Perhaps
There's only one harmony.
Einstein didn't find it,
Neither did God.
Only an ordinary human
Can find harmonies
Here and there—
Ordinary harmonies.

But there's nothing
Beyond them except
A melody,
A rueful melody.

SOMEBODY ELSE

To be understood by one person only—
Is that enough?

One person represents humanity.
One person *is* humanity.
One person is God.
And God understands everybody—
Even those who shouldn't be understood:
Fools, lunatics.
Does He?

A lunatic told me last month,
'I sent my novel to God
And got a rejection slip.'

THE FLOWER

Discussions, discussions.

What do they lead to?

Other discussions.

And actions result in other actions.

There are a few flowers around.

You can admire them. And you can talk

Of springtime in England,

In the South of England—

In Devon, in Hampshire.

It's beautiful, isn't it?

English flowers don't blossom at once—

A time-panorama of spring.

But panoramas are tiresome

And superfluous.

One discussion, one action,

One flower—the one about which

Zeami talked so often.

One point in this flower.

DOUBLE MUSIC

That girl. She sounds so wonderful
On the phone.
She looks wonderful too!
So I talk to her and look at her.
'At', 'with'. Do they connect us?
What does 'wonderful' mean in the context?
Or out of it?

There's no context to speak of—only
A few phone calls and chance meetings.
But 'wonderful' sounds wonderful.
And I'm sensitive to sounds,
To the music of words that is double music:
Sense and sound,
Sense and sensibility.
Sensibility and sensitivity.

IMMORTALITY

Nice stories are nice,
But once they're told
You lose interest in them.

If you knew the story of your life
You'd commit suicide.
If you knew your metaphor
You'd live for ever.

Life is an endless succession
Of comparisons,
Of metaphors.
But these metaphors
Aren't yours.

Is your metaphor
Different from what you experience
In your lifetime?

Is immortality
Worth living? If I was immortal
I'd strip my life of comparisons
And metaphors.
Only my life would remain—
My only life,
My mortal life.

MEMENTO MORI

We are supposed to think about death
Once in a while—every day.

He should be put in our room
So we take care of him, bringing a breakfast tray
And telling stories lest he get bored
To death. Even a small talk will do: 'My hairdryer's
Stopped working—I think the fuse has blown.'

We should give him
Two spoonfuls of cough medicine whenever he
Coughs.

EQUALITY

Talking about something
That doesn't exist.
And what exists requires
No explanation:
It lives on its own.

Is existence important?
In a short while
The number of the quick
Will equal that of the dead.
And the number of the quick
Will probably equal
That of the unborn.

But the unborn don't know
What's in store for them.
They've no idea
What they're equal to.

KNOWING NOTHING

Nichts. Niènte. How to express
 Nothingness? Don't write anything!
 Just put an exclamation mark
 Or a question mark. Or a mark,
 Any mark: anything can express
 Nothingness. Why express it anyway?

Nothingness is old-fashioned. What
 Everyone looks for is
 'Everythingness'. My computer
 Doesn't know the word.
 My neighbours do.

They know all about words
 But being able to explain them
 To others
 Is a different kettle of fish.

BEING TOGETHER

Cupid has no arrows—just glue
And a clamp. He fastens
Two humans together
With a clamp
While the glue is drying.

So now we are together,
Saying the same words,
Going to concerts,
Clapping in time to the music.

And I'll never tell you
That music has no time.

A BUTTERFLY

At first the person you love
Seems larger than life.

Then they become
As large as life
And finally dwindle
To the point of a needle,
To its sharp point.

So you find yourself
Pinned to a wall—
Like a butterfly.

THE BEAUTY SPOTS

Well-timed, ill-timed.

We speak about Time

As if we knew what's good and bad

Within it, in its heart of hearts,

In its time of times.

We know only its beauty spots:

The estimated time of arrival,

The estimated time of departure.

TIME AND SPACE

Time tells us what is what
And brooks no reply.
We spend our time
Answering Time, contradicting it.
Those who fall foul of Time
Are never forgiven.

We can argue with Space,
Choosing point M instead of R.
Space will never tell us:
'You can argue the toss all you like
But the decision has been made.'

We often miss our trains,
Our planes, our dates.
We seldom arrive on time.

Sometimes it is better
Not to arrive on time.

THE KEY

How many doors have I closed
Over the last twenty years?
I told the woman I wished to forget:
'I closed the door, but I'm looking at you
Through the keyhole.'

Now the door is locked
And there's a key in the keyhole—
A rusty key that can't be removed.
I'm looking at the key.

ANOTHER STORY

'When I met her,
 I had a strange feeling
 Of déjà vu.' How often
 Did I hear that? How often
 Did I say that myself—
 To myself? Just a feeling,
 A déjà *senti*.

When I met *her*
 I had the same feeling:
 Hopes, illusions and disillusion.
 I was tempted again
 And yielded to the temptation.

A hate-to-love story of a misanthrope
 Cooped up in his flat and becoming
 A family man. (Three children,
 Four children.)

How often
 Did I tell myself this story?
 Only three times.

Let me tell it forty-three times.
 (Any number would do.)
 Let me just *tell* it.

MEANINGS

Why don't meanings leave us alone?

They obtrude upon our privacy,
Turning every gesture of ours
Into a meaningful statement.

A meaningless gesture is meaningful.

Even life is meaningful.

If life were a woman—and life *is* a woman—
She'd give us a meaningful look
Now and then. But we don't have
To look at life, do we?

A BEAUTIFUL BLOCK OF ICE

Whenever anything reaches out towards me,
I retreat. Love is frozen.
Why should it melt into something it is not?
(Ice is not water.)

Let it remain love, a rigid, distant love.
At least it has a beautiful form.
And this form is better
Than formless passions,
Flesh-and-blood mixtures.

AN AURA

What do I mean by 'aura'
When I say she seems to have
A strange aura?
Does anything surround her
Like a halo?

No, she's just a woman
And there's no space around her—
Nothing except the chair she sits on.

But this chair is more mysterious
Than death and birth.

STRAIGHT LINES

A poem is the place
Where the word is most debased.

Something else comes to the fore.
What is it?
Not a feeling, not an idea,
Not an oblique approach to life.

It's a straight line leading nowhere.
And we reproach words for their inability
To get us somewhere.

A DUSTY PERSPECTIVE

A perspective of dusty corridors.

I often have this dream.

Even Nietzsche aspired to become

A 'pure adjustment'.

But how adjust to a corridor?

One can't even sit in it.

Only my statue would adjust to the world—

My statue in a whitewashed hall.

CONTRADICTIONS

The pleasure of contradicting myself
Is unknown to me.

I can't make a statement:
My words are isolated
And desert islands
Don't coalesce into a continent.
(Even if you read
The *Divina commedia*
On one of them.)

And there's no one to contradict:
I'm not myself.
Nor am I somebody else:
I wouldn't change places with him or her
For the world.

POEMS AND APHORISMS

What's the difference between
A poem and an aphorism?

'The French language doesn't exist
Because the world speaks English.'

That's an aphorism.
A poem would be written
In English, in French or in Russian—
Something along the lines of:
'By late summer,
Rampant ivy had crowded out
The climbing roses.'

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

My first declaration of love.

Did I make it in Russian?

Did I use another language?

Perhaps I just waved my hand,

Bidding farewell to the woman I loved.

DREAMS AND LIFE

What's the point in telling your dreams
To others?

What else to talk about?

Life is not a dream:
You can't tell it to others.
It just happens. And whatever happens
Can't be told.

SOLUTIONS

Our senses prune the amount of information
On offer. And our brain
Prunes our senses. What remains is
A number of tidy solutions
To the problems we know nothing about.
Their number increases every day.

We are trying to recycle our solutions:
We can't find other ways
Of disposing of them.
But there's no point in recycling solutions
If it does more harm than good.

NEOPLATONISM

We don't remember the sun:
Only shadows dwell in our memory. We are
Putting these shadows together
To create night.

Night isn't a museum of shadows:
Our nights are fake.

We have no way of knowing
If our dreams are fake or real.

PUNCTUATION MARKS

'I won't write about love
For some time,' I said.
But the only way to experience
The sentiment of love
Is to write about it.

When writing a poem,
You experience love from the inside:
Words love each other,
So do letters. Only punctuation marks
Remind us of farewells
And indifference.

THE PICTURE

Life is as static as a picture. What does it
Tell us? Two people quarrelling. A woman saying
Over and over again, 'I need
To get out of the house and branch out
Socially.' A woman kissing a man.
The same woman? A man murdering a woman.
A love story,
A death story.
A picture, nothing else.
It hangs in a museum.
An attendant is walking around.

CONTRADICTIONS

I can't describe anything.
All these objects—
Or whatever you may call them—
Exist on their own. But they're neither
Things in themselves nor in myself. Only I am
A thing in myself.

Someone
Sings beyond my windows. A few women
Dance like nymphs. They might be
Dancers in themselves
And in myself.

Contradictions
Are also things in myself:
Women in myself,
Men in myself.

THE THEMES I

I can't write a poem today:
Everything has happened already.

A familiar thought—that's why
Everything has happened.

The themes running throughout my works are
Love, betrayal, regret and suicide.

You can't top your first love.
(That's what Dante thought.)
How many times have I betrayed it?

You can't top your death.

I can't top my first poem;
Yet it's imperfect.
I regret having written it.

THE THEMES II

What theme to choose?

Themes are the same:

Murder, love, incest and death.

'*Bricolage*', as Lévi-Strauss puts it.

The Thames is the same;

Westminster Bridge

Still recalls Wordsworth.

So do I.

But I don't recall

Westminster Bridge.

Nor do I recall

Murder, love and incest

So I couldn't re-write

The Oedipus myth.

Could I re-write

My own myth?

THE CLOUDS

'Too long, too long.'
A woman told me that. She thought
She wasted too much time
In my company.

Shortness is more common
To human destiny, but something
Grows too long, now and then:
A sentence, agony, a poem.

The clouds depicted by Lermontov
(Or Hamlet) vanished into thin air
A long time ago.

THE EMPTY CUP

You can't describe silence
By being silent:
Only sounds are the perfect foil
For silence.

You can demonstrate emptiness
By drinking a glass of wine:
An empty cup is full to the brim.

DREAMS AND LIFE II

Waking in the dark. Somehow
I know where I am and waste no time
On coming to terms with reality.

I know exactly who I am.
I know some moron
Smashed into the back of my car
Yesterday.

I know
Beauty is only skin deep.
But the skin is so deep
My life has drowned in it.

AGNOSTICISM

You hold an object in your hand.
Your hand must know something
About the object, but your eyes
Are too far from it.

If you hold it up to your eyes
You won't be any the wiser:
Your eyes can't *feel* the object.

And your hand won't share its feelings.

ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Her perfume, the aroma of her
Skin. She's always walking
On the edge of the world so her aroma is
A mixture of this and that. And 'that'
Often gains the upper hand. And her voice
Sounds like a melody
Bruckner had no time to write.

THE BIRTH

Everything can be explained:
Hate, genocide, torture.

But explanations neither justify
Nor prevent anything.

A physicist told me once,
'We can know everything
Except what took place
Right after the Big Bang—
During the three seconds
Which followed it.'

Human nature was born
During those seconds.

And something died
During those seconds.

THE SALVATION

Music could save the world if people knew how to listen to it. But there is nothing to listen to now. Great conductors, pianists and violinists of the past. These Martians. Now there are only the earthlings around, humans and the attractive noise they produce in concert halls—'a good show,' as the Americans say. A war of the worlds *could* save us. But the Martians might be daunted by the size of the task. Let us not forget, however, that the Gospel message is one of personal salvation. And there are still Furtwängler's recordings on the market.

A STAR-WAR REPORT

The earthlings are powerful and wealthy. Everything belongs to them, to their Internet and virtual worlds. Their virtual worlds contain within themselves enough space and power to encompass everything that lies between Heaven and Earth. And also what is hidden *underneath*—between Earth and Hell. Even invisible substances can be found and destroyed within the prison walls of their worlds.

FAREWELL TO LOVE

I pressed my foot down on the accelerator and the castle (Neuschwanstein) came into view.

For all its kinship with an exclamation mark, I could not help seeing it in the shape of a dot—*un point final*—which, at the end of a never-to-be-continued story, takes on the significance of a question mark. Why did the story end? It is so pleasant to keep going, once you are under way, which accounts for the importance of old habits. Why copy death by interrupting what is to last forever: love, honeymoon, the joys of family life?

We got out of the car and revelled for a while in the panoramic view of the area. The castle with its turrets, watch towers, draw-bridges and ramparts was partly draped with foliage, and to unveil my intentions, if only allusively, I compared it to the iceberg, 'the one of Titanic fame,' I added.

She adjusted her step to mine: obviously she was not making an issue of every tiny detail.

I shilly-shallied, I hemmed and hawed, I shambled up the slope like a gout-stricken octogenarian; when we finally reached the gates of the castle everything was bolted, as if we were the members of that historic delegation commissioned by the Bavarian ministers to kidnap the King and confine him to a mental hospital. 'I'll try to find another entrance, a hole or something,' I said, heading for the nearest tree. 'Wait for me here.'

I tottered along the wall; I stumbled several times and my body, contorted into unnatural, Hoffmannesque shapes, seemed to reflect the zigzag fluster of my heart. Never once did I retrace my steps or even look back in the direction of her voice I heard as long as I remained within calling distance.

SYMMETRY

We are always in a state
Of alternate panic and bravado.
Disappointments are followed by hopes
And vice versa.

Symmetry is a symbol of human beauty,
But deceptions and hopes are not symmetrical.
Only a hope and a hope are beautiful:
A hope and a hope, a joy and a joy.

Bravado is superfluous:
Why do we have to show these youngsters
There's life in the old dog yet?

DEAD BODIES

It takes a long time
To undress a dead body.

We wear the clothes of the dead.
We have to undress them.

What does it matter if their clothes
Fit us or not?

THE TRAVELLERS

A lot of travellers
Return from the Hereafter.
We listen to their stories
But life goes on.

A lot of travellers return from the future.
Their stories are all the more edifying
Since we don't know what they're talking about.

What's the point in trying to head off the future
By running towards it?

ANSWERS

You can ask whatever you like

And the world will answer your question.

The answer will be inappropriate

So you'll question your own question.

The only means of survival is getting used to the discrepancy

Between questions and answers. The fittest

Forget their questions and maintain

There are only answers in the universe.

THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING A MORTAL

'God is in the making,' said Bernard Shaw.

So is the Hereafter, I presume.

Or was the funding withdrawn

After we'd botched the Old Stone Age?

In the *Aeneid* Virgil mentions

The 'eternal wound of Juno'.

At least our wounds are not eternal.

THE PREMONITION

I never have premonitions:
I don't care about the future.
And the future responds in kind.

Nothing can be restored
Without considerable expenditure.

Nothing will be restored.

But the Nile will always flow into the sea
Near Alexandria.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

The Creation gave us a house
Where we can live and die.

But creators themselves
Live within their bodies
Which tell them their tales
And write them down.

A TALE RETOLD

(Homage to W. Szyborska)

Punishments are followed by rewards.
Sometimes rewards are greater than punishments:
we regain our former possessions, all increased twofold.
Then we are punished again. We vindicate ourselves
and are rewarded. Our riches
pile up against the sky, consequently
there's no room for another Tower of Babel.
Yet we are punished again. There's no choice
but to wade through the muddy water.

Somewhere
wild dogs scavenge
through rotting piles of rubbish.

Then we are rewarded for our patience.

IMAGINATION

We must prefer real hell to an imaginary paradise.

Simone Weil

Do a global search for 'hell'
And replace it with 'paradise'.
No imagination is needed.

The twilight has obliterated
One-third of the landscape,
But the word is still there:
Paradise, Paradise, Paradise.

Paradise is also available in Braille
And in sign languages of the deaf.

THE UPDATED VERSION OF *DUINO ELEGIES*

Angels look and sound like Spielberg's ET.
We shouldn't be afraid of them: every angel is cute.
(*Jeder Engel ist freundlich.*) Their main aim is
To knock our economy into shape.

Yet Rilke was right:
Angels *are* terrifying.

They don't look like humans with wings,
Nor do they sound like our voices,
Like our music. I thought
Such sounds could not exist.

DECREATION

In one of my books
I chanced upon the term 'decreation'.

How to contribute to this trend?
(It's a general trend, isn't it?)
How could I tear a page
Out of Schubert's *Quintet for Two Cellos*?

Why spill this glass of wine?
Or does the word mean
Getting away from the world,
Withdrawing into oneself?
I would then suggest another term:
'*Decrescendo*'.

THE MEETING

How communicate beauty?
Just tell your friend,
'This painting is beautiful.'
If you're persuasive enough,
Your friend will believe you—
Even if the painting is ugly.
And all paintings are ugly
When you're in an ugly mood.

All paintings are beautiful,
Whatever your mood.
The effort itself is beautiful—
The meeting of brush and canvas.

POINTS

The fewer words the better.

A false maxim:

Sometimes one needs

An 'oblique approach', a 'detour'.

Why should I always keep to the point?

There are so many points;

The more of them I encompass

The better.

The point is there's only one point.

I've already said that in one of my poems.

Well, there are two points now.

A LINE

A poem, a new life.
Unskilful, insipid,
Useless.
A few years to live,
A few minutes.
Why write poems?
To fill in gaps?
There are no gaps
But a line that
Leads to a poem
No one will write.

THE *DIVINA COMMEDIA*

Hector appeared to Aeneas
With all the wounds he'd received
Around the walls of Troy.
Is that what eternity means? One's entire life
Within the same everlasting moment:
All wounds, all joys, all loves, all thoughts.
Had I died four months ago
My love for you would have obliterated
The rest of my eternity. Now
I love only Beatrice: Dante has never
Disappointed me. Besides,
The *Commedia* leaves no room
For anything else.

A RECEPTACLE

I never re-visit my childhood
In my dreams, in my thoughts.
Let my childhood take care of itself!
Yet it's waiting for me somewhere—
In the future. Time
Smooths out the effects
Of rises and falls,
Of pleasures and animosities.
It doesn't always break fresh ground.
The future is a receptacle
Of all sorts of useless knowledge.

ANTI-SPINOZA

Even in my childhood I was aware
Of a few fundamental things. Galileo thought
The human intellect
Understood some propositions *perfectly*.
Our intuition understands
The nature of life and in this respect
Its knowledge 'equals the Divine in objective certainty'.
Or should I say '*subjective* certainty'?
Is love a subjective feeling?
A child understands love
As much as an adult,
As much as God.
The same goes for pain.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Twilight is an actor
Who is famous for roles
Full of sentimental melancholy.

This minute is lost for ever:
I haven't described it.

Why should this minute
Last for ever?
Whatever lasts too long
Contradicts Time.
But it doesn't contradict Space.

This twilight contradicts
Nothing.

REASON

I'm expecting a telephone call.
So much depends on something
That'll never happen.
Generalisation is usually unwise
And I don't think you can generalise
About a telephone call.
Don't say, 'This kind of thing
Never happens.'
Anything can happen—
Within reason.
I hope the gods will refuse
To listen to reason.

A COURTYARD IN MOSCOW

Walking around the building

I used to live in.

I hardly recognise

The courtyard where

I read so many books.

I do recognise my native soil

Where vines can never grow.

THE MEASURE OF POETRY

An arbitrary image lasts a second;
A succession of arbitrary images
Lasts a score of seconds.
Unconnected images.
(They're connected only
In the mind of their creator.)

Poetry is a collection
Of inescapable,
Predestined images.

An arbitrary image
Is bent on escape.

I need a second that can last
For ever.

THE LECTURE ON HAPPINESS

Days succeed each other
Faster than nights.
Nights linger on.
What have I done
During these nights,
These countless nights?
Nothing except talk.
What do other people say
During sleepless nights?
'I want my death to be
Quick and sudden.
I don't want to be
Lingering on for ages
With everyone waiting for me to die.'

I just talk to myself—
About nothing.
And then a dog's breakfast.
And Rimbaud's descent to Hell.

PRAYERS AND OFFERINGS

'Whatever we say is a prayer.'

Somebody said that,

And that *was* a prayer.

'How much rice should I cook?'

'Oh, a couple of handfuls should be enough.'

Every dish is a religious offering.

And what about the hot dog I ate

At Newark airport?

(The sausage must have spent

Two hours in boiling water.)

Was it just a sign of an offering?

A sign of our times?

Those hot dogs Rita Hayworth dreamt of,

When away from her native land.

Was her dream a prayer?

A sign of a prayer?

A sign's sign?

ST PETERSBURG

At this time of year
I used to go to St Petersburg.
White nights. Now
My nights are sleepless.
I go somewhere else.
In those cities nights are black.
This night my guardian angel
Sleeps in St Petersburg.
'Oh, no, I've spilt red wine on my jacket.'
'Don't worry, it doesn't show.'
A sample of our dialogues.
In St Petersburg
I used to spill white nights on my jacket.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES

The world is too close, too actual.

No monastery, no prison cell

Will estrange me from the world.

Even strangers were born in my room,

And they'll die in it, on this sofa bed.

I can't go back on my word:

All my words resound everywhere,

The words which are not mine.

THE SPELLING

I'd like to spell my life.

L-I-F-E.

Shakespeare didn't always

Spell his own name the same way.

Why should I spell my life

The same way?

Let it be T-A-O.

Let it be R-E-T-T-U-N-G.

Let it be.

BEHIND A MIRROR

(2002)

STYLE

I could talk to somebody,
But there's a difference
Between an utterance and *écriture*.
What's *écriture*?
Handwriting. My handwriting
Is impossible to read.
(That's why I'm using a computer.)
I'd better hide my handwriting.
Why should I hide my thoughts,
My *open* thoughts?
I can neither hide nor express them.
The result is this poem.
There has been a glut of poems
About *Nichts*.
Écriture also means style.
A stylist doesn't mention himself,
As Walter Benjamin put it.
Someone else has something to say,
Something to write home about.

GRAMMAR

The order of molecules
Seems to mirror language,
Its structure.

How to escape
Our molecules?

I can't mend myself—
I'm going to give it up
As a bad job.

What's grammar?
This poem is
Ungrammatical.

This is not a poem.

MELODIES

Things have gone from bad
To worse. Things might go
From worse to bad
Now and then. But usually
They go from bad to worse. Meanwhile
Children are born—into the realm
Of melodies. And melodies
Are motionless.

CONTRA MARCEL DUCHAMP

Art is not natural. The opposites
Should be reconciled. You're supposed
To twist your neck in order
To look at a wall behind you. A work of art
Is never before you. And there are
So many things behind
You can't know which of them
Is a work of art.

THE INVENTION OF ETERNITY

This discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves.

Plato, *Phaedrus*

A statement is just a statement.

What can it prove?

Birds refuse to let others speak

And dominate every dawn.

Their songs sound neither like statements

Nor proofs. Their civilisation

Remains oral, ignoring

The complexity of everlasting signs.

They don't recall their songs.

Nor do I.

A letter on a chest of drawers

Is not a statement, nor a proof.

A memory, just a memory—

An everlasting memory.

I won't lose my memory

When reading this letter.

NOMINALISM

Nominalists say love is a word,
Only a word. But something
Grows inside me. A tree,
A flower? Anyway
Love doesn't look like a flower.

And I'm not allowed
To look at the woman
Who walks behind me.

A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM

A poem should not sound
Like a philosophical treatise.

Should it? Perhaps.

On its way to the truth,
A thought may lead to another thought,
Not to a raindrop—
Part of a blurred landscape.

Rain and landscapes
Do not thirst for thoughts.

WATCHING TV

Why do I feel something
When watching TV?
Elsewhere history is over.
Death makes no sense
Except when Caesar dies
Either in Shakespeare's play
Or in a Hollywood movie.
Blood doesn't stain.
It flows without flowing.
B=B.

Even Time is over:
I can step into the same river—
As often as necessary—
Without leaving my armchair.
R=R.

Naked bodies, porn movies.
The history of my body
Is not over.
I=I.

MY FACE

1

What to write about the face
 I saw yesterday
 In a mirror?

Robert Graves wrote a poem
 About *his* face.
 An elegant poem.

My face deserves only
 A few words
 Which can be repeated
Ad infinitum.

Unfortunately
 They *can't* be repeated
Ad infinitum.

2

Like everything else,
 Words grow old.

I suppose
 That the words 'my face'
 Will *not* grow old.

'My' might be written differently
 In the twenty-fourth century
 But the meaning will remain—
 The general meaning.

And I think that 'face'
 Will remain 'face',
 Though no longer mine.

The mirror too might remain.

'I' might be written differently

In the twenty-fourth century.

MY VOCABULARY

I wouldn't mind
Adding a few words
To my vocabulary.

What words?
I can't invent them.
And if I do, they'll have no meaning
For others.

Nietzsche, Heidegger.
They spoke about others
When speaking about 'I'.
They thought that 'I'
Was determined by others,
Described by them.

I'm determined by myself
And my vocabulary
Is made up of words
Which can reach out to others
Sometimes.

It's not the words
That reach them.

WRITING POEMS

Writing poems. *Ad infinitum*.

Life need not write poems,

Does it?

The sky is not a poem.

Even a flower is not a poem,

Yet flowers are a stock-in-trade

Of poets. Why should *I*

Write poems?

What's the difference between the sky

And my state of mind?

Why can't I hang over the earth?

HOMAGE TO FERNANDO PESSOA

There are many people
Inside me.
They work as a group—
No one person
Is allowed to dominate.

I've brought in some fresh blood
In an effort to revive my fortunes.

On the other hand
I am myself. No one
Usurps my personality.

What about those 'body people'?
'No monkey business, I promise,'
They say all the time.
'We're not right for each other,'
I answer.

It is pointless
To talk about doppelgängers.

Let them think whatever they think.
Let them feel whatever they feel.

What does it matter
How many people
Live in my body
So long as my room is
Empty?

THE MEANS OF SURVIVAL

I don't love you any more,
But your smile still tells me
Life is worth living.

Life isn't worth living.
Is it?

It depends on the way
You express yourself.

Rhetoric is a device
One uses to make one's point,
To make one's living.

Perhaps your smile
Is just a figure of speech:
Smiles often are.
(Mona Lisa is not alone.)
So are tears and love.

GREGARIOUSNESS

If you walk along the streets
Someone's bound to stop you
And ask some silly question.

Let them ask any question.
I'll give the same answer—
Always, always.

Let them just look at me
Without saying a word.

I might remember other eyes
While looking at them.
I might remember better eyes.

I might recall a better answer,
Other words.

AN AFTERNOON

Everything is real, 100% real.

Illusory worlds might exist somewhere,
But we know nothing about them.
Whatever we do know is real.

Time is real too, whether we kill it
Or let it live for a few hours.

This afternoon is real:
I've just tried a dressing gown on,
A 100% silk dressing gown.

ONE NIGHT

One's life ends in a harmony.
No matter how one lives—
A harmony awaits everyone.
Do we really need it?

We need whatever comes *before*.
Even a dissonance is welcome,
Provided it comes before.

But nothing comes either after
Or before: everything is now.

What I hear right now is one
Night. A dissonance,
A consonance? Whatever it is,
It resounds within me
And everywhere else.

A LETTER

Why do I feel only this or that?
Why can't I feel the whole of Creation?
'This' represents the world.
Or 'that'. Or just 'it'.
The world is 'it'.
And I am
'It' of 'it'.
Or 't'.

This poem is made up of letters
And I could type the whole alphabet
On this page. The world is
An alphabet, part of it.

This evening is one letter,
A huge letter.

Which one?
'L' perhaps.

A MORTAL WOMAN

This fashion model in the catalogue looks like you.

Every beautiful woman

Looks like you. Every goddess

Looks like you.

You're not a goddess—

Just a capricious woman. Goddesses are capricious

Sometimes,

But they're goddesses. You're a woman,

A mortal woman. You will die

Like me, after me. You're as mortal

As I am.

There are several affinities

Between us.

You're vulnerable.

DANCING

A flight of fantasy,
A dance of fantasy.
What is a dance?
What sort of music
Do I like dancing to?

I cannot dance, but my life
Is suspended in the air.
Everything moves
In the air: planets,
Sputniks, souls.

My life dances.
What sort of music
Does it dance to?
No idea!

Love is not a dance.
It is a stare,
A contemplation,
A paralysis.

From afar
It looks like a dance.

It sounds like a dance—
Everywhere.

HOMAGE TO BRUCKNER

Melodies aren't everywhere.

Bruckner wrote a few melodies;
They're otherworldly.

Reality isn't melodious.

There are a few harmonies
Here and there.
What can we do with them?

Music is useless:
It doesn't help us survive.

Only melodies survive
But we don't hear them.

Bruckner's symphonies
Might have been composed
By angels.

SUPERPOWERS

Whatever you want to do
Will be done by you or by others:
It's in the air. Or in the earth.

It's somewhere—in a virtual world.
All worlds are equal nowadays
And they don't struggle for their existence:
They exist already.
Nor do they struggle for power:
They *are* powerful.

Only a few words
Remain outside these superpowers and I am
Looking for them.

OVER THE WATERS

We should have met
Before I was born.

Now it's too late.
Life has ascertained itself:
Too many obstacles, too much pride.

I should have married you
Before the Big Bang
Which was an act of pride.

We might have been happy...
Hovering over the waters...

A JOKE

'The little figure you can just see
In the background of the photograph
Is God.'

A joke made by a museum guide.

What does it remind us of?
French poetry,
René Char...

It reminds us of God.

But poetry is not
One figure in the carpet.
It's the carpet itself.

And the carpet
Doesn't *remind* us of anything.

THE BACKGROUND NOISE

Out of joint, out of tune.
The harmony is not
What it used to be. There are
Lots of harmonies
And they're out of tune.
The tune itself is out of tune.
Only the background noise
Is the same. So one
Has to be attuned
To the background noise:
It will not change.

THE CONTROL

In former times many humans
Were the victims of diabolic mind control.
We are the victims of something else—
Not of other minds, not of the Mind,
Nor of technology either.
And our body has no say in the matter.

History's caught up with us.
We used to disregard it.

Time's caught up with us.

Time control is more dangerous
Than history control.

But something else was on my mind
When I began to write this poem.
Anything timeless?
Your last dress.

THE BIRD

So many birds flap away
To their well-deserved oblivion.

I seem very tensed up.
Am I still waiting
For that phone call?

Still waiting for it.
I am a man at last,
Not just a poet.
(And Time is Time.)

Why didn't I turn you into a bird
Two months ago?
A caged bird.

IMPORTANCE

A smile, a phone call,
A bottle of champagne
(A *blanc de noirs*)
On a hot afternoon,
A kiss near a fireplace—
Such things are more important
Than what we cannot have.

I wish life were just a slick production
With well-rehearsed,
Competent performances
Without any depth or promise.

THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE

Just a sensation,
A number of sensations.
No love among them.

Is love a sensation?
Eternal problems are not
Sensations.
And love is an eternal problem,
Though made up of
Temporary statements:
'You wounded me to the heart!'
'An unwritten understanding between us'.

Nothing is written anyway
Except this poem.
(Nothing has ever been written.)
But you won't read it:
You've no English. And my love
Can be expressed
Only in English.
My eyes are mute.

'THE ONE'

One can live without others.
Human touch is useless. A cat's paw
Is more touching.

One can live alone
In the world that need not humans.
Even *Sein* exists without them,
Let alone *Zeit*. (Anyway
We should leave Time alone.)

One can become
One at last. When speaking about 'the One',
Parmenides meant a lonely man—
Himself, in all probability.
And Plato had one idea in mind.
This idea is embedded in my mind and
In my body.

My bed is part of it.

THE LIMELIGHT

Others talk all the time.

They may influence our thoughts
Despite our protectionism: something in our body
Listens to them. Not our ears,
Not our mind,
Nor our unconscious.
Something else. And sooner or later
We put *their* words into action.

Sometimes

We can't hear what others say.
We hear them all the same. They steal the limelight,
Whoever they are.

Luckily for us, the limelight is just an oil lamp
Standing in some cubbyhole.

A LOST THOUGHT

I'm completely stumped: I can't work out
How that thought escaped.
I saw it enter my mind, settle down.
What's more, I heard its monologue.
I even repeated some parts of it.

The thought disappeared;
I'm writing something else
In order to replace it.

Nothing can replace it
Except silence.

Silence can replace
Everything.

THE PREDICAMENT

She tripped and fell,
Picked herself up and looked round
To see who was watching.

She might have been drunk.
I'll never forget her predicament.

I've forgotten so many people.
I admired some of them;
I loved some of them.
Why do I remember *her*?
(She wasn't beautiful.)

I forget myself sometimes.
Is it more important
To remember her predicament? (How often
Have I forgotten Montaigne?)

Perhaps I should fall and pick myself up.
Should I pick myself up?

AN IDEAL WOMAN

My friends make mockery of my hope
To meet an ideal woman.

I met one recently.
Beautiful, gracious, intelligent.
Her inability to admit she was sometimes wrong
Was a flaw in her character.

Was she ever wrong?
I don't think one can always be right
Unless one keeps silent.

Silent and motionless—that's how she was.
She might have been a picture,
For all I know.
Her eyes and lips were always right.

As she stood there, in the middle of the room,
The changes came upon her so slowly
They were imperceptible.

LISTENING

The rain must have a meaning,
Otherwise I wouldn't hear it.

Whatever I hear has a meaning—even the sounds
Which are neither a melody nor a harmony,
Nor a hullabaloo. And when I hear myself talk—
Montaigne recommended talking to oneself
As a cure for loneliness—I understand what I mean.

Even meaningless words sound as significant
As a piece of music. After all,
Music is akin to talking to oneself.
And it's an unparalleled cure for loneliness.

Somebody said that music was
A single dark and numinous power
Ruling the world,
But I don't want to get involved
In the seamier side of it.

I just lie on my bed listening all day
To whatever there's to hear.

HOMAGE TO HEIDEGGER

1

*Schmerz versteinerte die Schwelle.*G. Trakl, *Ein Winterabend*

The threshold of night is so immobile
 You can stand on it for years
 Without ever stepping inside.

No use switching off the lights:
 The dark is just one of night's features.
 Besides, some days are pitch-black.

Very few people are holding candles,
 Some of them have been lighted.
 But not all candles engender night.

2

To write something on the spur of the moment!
 But the moment disappears and you start
Thinking of your moods. You *create* them.
 And original moods depart from you. What remains is
 A thought which is neither here nor there—
 Somewhere in between. What's in between?
 Love's not in between, nor is death. Why
 Should you always speak of love and death?
 There's *something* in between: smoking a cigarette,
 Drinking a glass of wine. A thought
 Can capture *them*.

Whenever it does,
 The cigarette goes out
 And the glass drops and breaks.

What *am* I feeling right now?
 Never mind: my feelings
 Are likely to be riddled
 With inaccuracies, mistakes

And falsehoods. What's more,
They're idle and pointless speculations.

3

For a Samurai, it's not difficult
To choose death
When it comes to either/or.
But it never comes to that unless
One commits suicide.
It's always 'or'. In the course of our lives
We seek to decipher what it is.
Some think it means 'gold' in French;
Others maintain it is 'God'.
Those who are born
With a silver spoon in their mouths
Don't decipher anything
So long as 'or' is just silhouetted
On the horizon. Sometimes
'Or' rises slowly above the horizon
Whereupon discussions turn
From golf to acid rain
And the hole in the ozone layer.
But the main topic is always 'either'.

4

Life goes on without my thinking of it.
Life stops sometimes; I take no advantage
Of these pauses. Why should I?
Life stops whenever it likes.
So do I.
We stop at different moments.
Would I learn Truth at last
If we stopped together? A gravedigger
Can dig up Truth which also hangs
On the branch of a tree. But we don't look for Truth
In the woods. And our houses
Are too small for it. The heavens are too huge.
A star contains a particle of Truth:
It twinkles.

COUCH POTATOES

An old man who still listens
To what teenagers say to each other.

He must have heard
His own words
In the course of his life.
A lot of them. He may have memorised
Some of them. Why does he listen
To the teenagers? Of course they talk
Nonsense. It can't be otherwise.

Still he listens to them. And he memorises
Their words as if they were
An old poem.
Yet these teenagers
Are glued to the television watching
Some action-packed film.

THE REFUTATION OF SPACE

I don't like stories:

My life doesn't happen

Once upon a time.

My life is a girl

Walking around Tokyo.

I wish I could read *her* story.

I would learn it by heart.

I met her last month

After a concert.

Someone might be reading

Our story. What if they

Misread it?

A ROUNDABOUT WAY

The roseate buds of the apple blossom
Swayed in the breeze.

I can write about you only
In a roundabout way:
Cherry blossom would be too explicit.

What else could I say about you?
Anything except that you live in Tokyo
And work for a television company.

I could also talk about Helen of Troy.
They say beauty is
In the eye of the beholder.
How many eyes
Beheld the wife of Menelaus?
How many people worshipped her?

Her beauty was in the eye of God.

TRANSCENDENTALISM

They say reality never lives up
To our hopes. Either you hope or you
Don't. And if you do,
You shouldn't expect reality
To live up to your hopes. If you don't,
Reality will live up to your melancholy which
Transcends life, death
And whatever philosophers say
About things, impulses, will and everyday life.

Melancholy transcends even itself.
What remains is love for a distant woman
And this love is not melancholy.

The only quality
These two feelings share
Is transcendentalism.
Is Kant to blame?

THE REALM OF THE SOUL

The realm of the Soul is difficult to conceive
But is usually understood
In terms of 'feeling'.

The Soul has no relations; it is not to be thought of
In opposition to the Body. It is like
The beginning of a melody
Or a taste of something half-forgotten.

We might have eaten the thing
That haunts us, but we have never
Heard the melody, the whole of it. And yet
Our life builds up round that simple
Surging melody.

CONTEMPLATION

I haven't seen you for twenty days.
What are you now? An image, a thought?
An 'image' is not enough:
You're far more than an image.
And a 'thought' would deprive you of your beauty.
An idea untrammelled by meditation.

Let me just *contemplate* you,
If only from afar,
Without a word,
Without a sigh.
An agony of hopeless grief.
The grief one hears in Bruckner's *Ninth*
Is not hopeless: this symphony
Is neither an idea
Nor a piece of music.

HORIZONTALITY

Crawling on all fours.
The human condition.
I don't care about humanity. Why am I subjected
To its condition? Because I was born,
Thrown into the world.
I might have been thrown somewhere
By someone. Now I'm free—
Retrospectively.

I cancel my birth,
Not my life.
I'll live in accordance with *my* principles.
But my patience is wearing thin,
And my friends' manners
Are remote and cool. And marriage
Isn't something to be entered into
On a whim. And recently
I tore a hole in the knee of my trousers.

A BLEND

To get on a boat
And sail slowly out of the harbour—
To the end of the world!

But the world never ends.
It's not a question
Of karma or metempsychosis—
Just a mathematical problem. In this pattern
The numbers continue
To infinity.

Joys and sorrows. At first
They come in succession. After a while they merge
Into a homogenous mass: you can no longer
Tell them apart. Why
Should you? The music of a flute
Blends sweetly with a woman's voice.
Which is joy?

THE VOCABULARY

My destiny is already completed:
 It's waiting in my brain,
 Ready to be spoken.
 What if I keep silent?
 Silence is a denial of one's destiny—
 Of one's genetic programme,
 In modern parlance.

A man
 Dipping into the mind
 For the thing called 'destiny'
 Will find a dictionary, but he shouldn't
 Open it. Thus he'll become
 Immortal.

Language is
 Destiny. One's life changes
 By the acquisition of new items of vocabulary.

I'm alive and kicking. And head over heels
 In love with a young girl.

A new love
 Can use old words.

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

When I remember something sad,
I am sad. Is it the same sadness I experience
On subsequent occasions?
Not exactly—a watered-down version
Of the original sadness,
A translation. Our memory
Is a poor translator.

But I don't tell myself, 'All this happened
A long time ago.' Nor do I rejoice
That such a thing isn't likely
To happen again.

I never make New Year's resolutions.

I just work on the translations.

Do I recognise in my work
What I eternally am
And can no longer alter?
Sometimes. But I do know
I can remove a few adjectives—
In case of emergency.

A RAINY MORNING

Human freedom depends on many laws,
But we can choose to break them.

So many laws have been smashed to pieces
Over the centuries;
And every piece is both a law and an opportunity
To exercise one's free will. Unfortunately
We often choose the right piece
At the wrong moment.

The sunshine
Might be a welcome respite
From this morning's rain.
But I've chosen the rain.

This morning
I must have dropped my freedom
In your summerhouse.

THE MUSIC OF BEAUTY

A judgement of taste is always
Individual. Yet
Beauty isn't meant for one individual only.
It's meant for everybody and
Everything:
Stones worshipped Helen of Troy.

They had no understanding of her beauty
Or rather
Their understanding was spontaneous: they didn't reflect
On her qualities. Their reason, if any,
Went beyond sensibility and whatever it provides.

The Russians 'hear' smells.
Whoever's sensitive to beauty
Can hear it.

A ZERO LOVE

Why should I judge you?
You stand alone, somewhere:
On floorboards, not on a pedestal.

Your hair doesn't float among the stars,
And I love the women whose hair
Covers the stars—completely.

You're just someone I don't remember.
Let me build you a monument,
An intangible,
Zero monument:
The Indian zero stood for emptiness or absence,
But also space, the firmament,
The celestial vault,
The atmosphere and ether.

SUNRISE BOULEVARDS

For all its inward and outward beauty,
The world does not justify
Our existence. Why should it
Justify anything? 'There's no justice
In the world
When people can be made to suffer like that.'

Why should there be justice anywhere? Why do we think
In terms of justice? These and other such ideas
Have been planted in our minds as a placebo to stop us
Appraising clinical data
More systematically. There might be
A small amount of justice in some back street,
But we walk along Sunrise Boulevards,
Thinking of Paradise. Actually
Even that back-street justice wouldn't justify anything
(Except the existence of back streets).
Neither would Paradise.

MY NOTES

I've got a cupboard full of discarded toys.

The cupboard is the world
And the toys are
Whatever we come across in our life.

No, it's not as simple as that.
The toys are the things
I played with in my childhood. And the cupboard
Stands in the lumber room. The world is
Elsewhere. In that world
There are no toys,
No cupboards; everything
Floats in the air. It's as simple as utopia,
A sweet dream
And Meister Eckehart's notes.

I'm lying in my bed,
Playing with an alarm clock.

GENERAL TERMS

Hideous forms, beautiful forms.

What's the difference?

All forms are alike.

Only contents are different.

It's the other way round:

All contents are alike.

There's only one theme

And lots of variations.

Such ingrained prejudices

Can't be corrected easily.

How could we correct them?

There's no first-hand data.

If you're not sure of your facts,

Then only talk in general terms:

Contents, forms, themes, life,

Death, resurrection, betrayals.

THE SEA AND THE SPADE

THE POET. In the free play of art and poetry
The source of the whole man is actualised.

THE CRITIC. If the reins of constraint are relaxed,
Anything can happen. Every work of art
Must be cut to shape and polished.

THE POET. Whatever is polished can't be real
Unless it's been polished by sea waves.
I was born on this seashore. I don't need
To polish my works—the sea does it.
How do *you* work on your articles?

THE CRITIC. As you know, literary analysis means
Getting at the root causes of trouble
And helping to reduce stylistic damage.
A common spade is my favourite tool.
Is the sea clean enough to swim in here?

THE POET. In my youth I wrote many river-poems,
But in my thirties I left the river estuary
And was heading towards the open sea.

THE FORM

The appropriate object of the understanding
Is inorganic matter. Kant said that.
I wish you were inorganic. Or organised.
You're organic chaos. Whenever
I picture you to myself I see
Ill-fated forms
Or rather something that
Strives to become a form. I wish
It might never materialise.

St Augustine

Tried to work out
What the world had been like
Before the Creation. He saw some forms—
'All out of order'. Yet
They were forms.

You're like that.

A form without a form. Are you
A world in the making?
The world.

PRIMROSES

A thought that is a thought. A woman
That doesn't look like a cat
Or any other domestic animal.
Or like a savage animal.
A woman that looks like a woman.

When we consider the course of the world
And enumerate the evils,
We easily find fault with Providence.
So we dream and embroider on our dreams.
Is a flirtatious, kittenish woman an evil?

Let the world be flirtatious, kittenish, dogged.
Let it be degraded, unworthy of itself.
The ultimate purpose will always leave us
Unsatisfied. But there are
Other purposes—
Primary purposes.

There are primroses.

THE GROWTH OF THE PAST

The past is transformed by present reflection
And action. And if we neither
Think nor act the past
Is transformed all the same, unable
To remain within the walls
Of its own cemetery.

Even cemeteries
Live their lives. And only death dies
When somebody dies. And the past
Grows on our terraces like pot plants.

Only the future is nowhere to be found: even the stars
Live only in the past.

And often a gravedigger drags into the daylight something
We'd rather forget.

HOMAGE TO VISCONTI

I might have been asleep for many years,
Assuming that loneliness is a sleep.

My loneliness is neither a nightmare
Nor a sweet dream—something in between.

I don't think I should awaken from my sleep.
My alarm clock has been kaput for some time.

Suppose a few young people hire a flat
Right above my head, on the third floor.

That life wouldn't wake me despite
Its freshness, eccentricity and liveliness.

Anyway a few words are enough
To express whatever one thinks of.

Even one word is enough, one noun:
Adjectives are a superfluous luxury.

A noun on which everything depends.

READING CONFUCIUS

'A man cannot live with the birds and beasts.

If I do not live with men, with whom shall I live?'

A man can live with a Chinese painting or vase.

A man can live with himself, with a cat.

What does it matter what we live with?

Life flows in many directions and often

We deviate from our own course.

Often we follow three routes at once.

Which of them is the right one or real?

Only heaven knows the answer

But heaven does not speak or rather

It speaks to itself, to clouds, to flowers.

What one hears is the waves

That gently lap the shore.

A man can also

Live with water.

THERE WAS AN OVERTONE OF DESPAIR IN HER VOICE

'She didn't commit suicide—that would be tacky,'
Said a woman about Maria Callas.
According to this woman,
Callas willed herself to death.

I think that willing is on death's side. No one
Can will themselves either to life
Or to death. No one can will themselves
To will. Death sings and writes and paints and suffers
Massive heart attacks.
We look at ourselves in mirrors
And listen to our recordings
From various deathbeds. Is that
Tacky?

A NEW POEM

'We just loved each other...and danced...'

I don't know how to dance. Nobody does

For that matter. Yet many people

Go through the motions. And I am

Motionless.

Only letters dance:

Letters, words, lines, sentences.

Even daffodils are still.

Nature is waiting for a new poem.

And then a breeze blows up

And fills the sails.

The old style. The breeze is different;

So are the sails. A stream of coffee

Splashes over the counter. Nature

Can't do it to her own standards

Any more.

HOMAGE TO TARKOVSKY

I don't manage to live
In rhythm with my poems.
My life is slow, my poems are fast.
When in the morning I get up
I don't care whether my life has caught up
With my poetic inspiration which is much longer
Than any life. So I write about anything—
About something that crosses my mind.

Many things cross my mind,
But they've nothing in common
With my life or anybody else's. What *do* they
Reflect? Nothing at all. My mind is
Not a mirror. But Tarkovsky's *Mirror*
Is my mind, a part of it.

A part of my body.
As slow as my life,
As rainy as my life,
As windy as my life.
I often look back at a woman
I won't meet again.
And forests, white forests.
Bach's music, the soundtrack.
The counterpoint.

THE MOONLIGHT

I used to be long-winded. Talking
About this and that, even when there was neither
This nor that. The world is our one and only
Field of knowledge. I mostly talked
About other fields, about the Elysian Fields. And now
I talk about my room which is also a field:
A field of knowledge, a field of ecstasy.
And the mellow sunlight sleeps
On my windowsill. My reason grasps
The sunlight—only half of it,
A third of it. The rest
Can be touched or felt. I neither
Touch nor feel it.

I feel
Someone's presence in my room.
But what's the difference
Between a presence and an absence?
It's just a question of moonlight,
Of a Japanese poem,
Of a Japanese woman I saw in Tokyo
Last summer.

A GIFT

One can't learn how to forgive and forget
By reading the New Testament:
One needs a gift for forgiveness.
(There might be genes allotted to it.)

I thought you'd never forgive me.
I'd never forgiven myself
Had I inflicted this pain on my heart.

NEW LIVES

A lifelong passion can end
In a minute. Not a small crunch,
Nor a whimper. Our farewell
Reminded me of Russian history—
As described in our history books—
Of the Tartars who vanished as they saw
Russian soldiers in battle array
On the opposite bank of a river.
They withdrew peacefully—the end
Of the *tatarskoe igo*.

Our love
Ended in silence: the *igo*
Of your ego. Did it end?

I may start
A new life with another Beatrice,
But there'll never be anybody else
In this life, in other lives.

I told you once
I'd like to die with you. What does it matter
Who I live with?

DRAGONS

Another dream. Neither the past
Nor the future can be found in it.
Just an uncertain present.
And the present is always certain.

I don't believe in archetypes.
If a dragon shows up in my dream,
This dragon is mine.
But what to do with it?

Humanity has no memory.
I still recall my childhood,
Some parts of it.
What to do with *them*?

Even dragons are more useful:
They can be killed by St George.

THE WINGS

The immeasurable beatitude of the Hereafter
Must be preceded by an earthly life
Of toil and tribulation. Besides,
The unpleasant memories are to be effaced
By Lethe.

I think there are memories
Which will dwell inside us—always.
Incinerated bodies remember a lot.

Guinea pigs squeal in the Hereafter.

And angels bury their faces
In their wings
That remember everything.

UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

It might be useful to live for a while
On another planet. One should experience
Nostalgia not for one's fatherland
But for men and women,
For domestic animals.

What if Universal Grammar
Is truly universal, providing the common ground
For close ties between the representatives
Of different galaxies?

Is it really impossible to get away
From one's fellow creatures?

Human genes might have been scattered
To the four winds and sown
On Mars and Venus,
All over
The Andromeda Nebula.

Is there a spot
In the universe from which
One could survey the human race
As a detached observer?

CONFESSIONS

(Homage to St Augustine)

1

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes. I've often
Yielded to temptations. They still visit me
In spite of my age. I still feast my eyes on beauty
And my body can't help quivering
When a young woman begins to unbutton
Either her dress or skirt. Sometimes
She undoes one button only, but I feel re-born,
As Violetta sings
Before dying in Alfred's arms.
But night is drawing nigh and I die more often now
Than I used to in my forties.
So the number of my births is much inferior
To that of my deaths.
And nights are always nights.
And days are seldom days.

2

Five years ago Time was as flexible
As a dancer. Now
One minute is one minute; it never becomes
Two minutes, two seconds,
Punctually following the minute that precedes it.
These minutes never skip over
Hours or nights. They neither take me on a romp
Through my rudest fantasies
Nor bring me down to the sea where
A group of *filles en fleurs*
Frolic on the beach. These minutes walk in file
Like prisoners, going in circles. They belong
Neither to the past nor the future
Nor the present. And no time comes
Into existence;
These minutes will last
A lifetime.

THIS MORNING

To write about this morning, about
The evening to come, knowing
It might not come. To scribble something
On a sheet of paper: any doodle can be deciphered
By somebody, by an extra-terrestrial.

And this morning
Is the greatest event in my life; yet
Nothing will happen, I'm sure. I won't even recall
Anything in particular. Not your hair,
Not the way you walked through the woods
The other day. And the stories you used
To tell me. Where are they now?

Not in my memory. Probably
In the woods, on my terrace.
I'll welcome the sun in a minute or two.
And I'll try to decipher it.

HER LIFE

Nothing will ever end. The love you don't feel any more
Is somewhere—in the cloud you're looking at.

I'll never empty this glass of wine. The same woman
Sits in my armchairs, walks around my flat
And tells me her stories.

I don't recall her death. On a cloudless night
You can see a thousand stars.

RUNNING IN THE GARDEN

The night we spent together
On the outskirts of Brussels.

You ran in my garden
At four in the morning.
Were you happy?

Or was it a ritual,
Your morning ritual?

My rituals are different;
So is my life. That's why
We've never met again.

What painter could
Remind me of your joy?
Matisse, Degas?

What god could
Remind me of you?

Running in my garden.
I wish I were a painter.

I'm just a man who
Remembers something.

THE LIBRARY

The world is a metaphor for something
Or somebody. Or it is not. Anyway
Metaphors lead us nowhere
Or everywhere. And life is probably
A comparison. But you'll come this time
And your presence is not a metaphor: I feel it
Every day, every night.

Even in my sleep
Your presence is tangible. A few words
Can describe you, but these words are eternal.

How often you told me you'd come.
Your promises are in my library.

OTHER WORDS

Words are scapegoats. We blame them
For our inability to express our thoughts, our
Lack of confidence. We can't really
Blame them for not wanting to communicate
Whatever happens inside us: they've got
No will of their own. So we just say they're sluggish,
Inexact, imperfect; too long or too short.

And the sounds they produce are not attuned
To the melodies we hear in our minds, in our souls,
In our hearts, in our fingers.

But what we actually hear
Are other words, not melodies. These words are neither
Too long nor too short. They can't be misspelt.

BEHIND A MIRROR

In my bathroom I found a feather
Tucked behind the mirror. A hidden
Feather, the tip peeping out. Why
Hadn't I spotted it before?

I look at *myself* in this mirror and see
Nothing else, nobody else.

You must have stood in front of it
For almost a minute: the feather
Was both visible and invisible,
And such delicate patterns
Require an effort and time.

Your territory, your kingdom.

The weather is expected to settle
Towards next Thursday.

Why look *behind* mirrors?

ANOTHER SILENCE**(2003)**

THE LAST POEM

I can escape
Neither from peace
Nor from war.

Why escape from peace?
For the sake of angst?

I call you again and again.
You don't answer. Are you
A demon?

The nexus
Between women and demons
Is purely psychological.

Isn't it always the way?
It isn't. Love is Schubert
And Mozart.

We are puppets,
But they're important,
Aren't they?

The puppets.

YES

Perhaps I don't know
What life is. I hope
Life knows what I am,
Provided I am something.

All these thinkers and poets
Who wonder about their identities,
About their origins!

Do they have identities at all?
As to their origins, what does it matter
Where non-identities come from?

They may come from another non-identity,
From a non-world. They'll never belong
To the realm of Yes. No point
In angling for an invitation.

And others are born on the nod.

A FULL STOP

You've been my life,
But I'm not immortal.

My life is a stretch of Time
And any stretch of Time is limited,
However far you may stretch it.

Time itself is limited.

THE CLOTHES

Why finish this essay tonight?

Why finish anything tonight?

What is tonight?

Do I have to finish it?

I can hear the butter

Splattering in the pan.

That's all I can hear.

The world is my kitchen.

The world is my essay in which

I speak about harmony and melody.

The world is neither a harmony

Nor a melody.

The world is a nondescript building

On the outskirts of a city.

The world is a dressing room

Where clothes look so tawdry.

They look so beautiful

On stage.

HOMAGE TO IBSEN

Let us go
Up into the high mountains,
As high as we can.
Are you going up there?

I *am* going up there. I promised
To take you with me up a high mountain
And show you the glory of the world.

The mountain is different.
Is it a hill I'm climbing?
Is it a walk in the woods?

To write novels and poems
I've turned my back on life.
I don't regret it: there's nothing
Except the mountain.
(And the woods.)

One can see it
Anywhere, provided
One is a seer.

MY TIME

Why do they say so often,
'Your time's running out'?

Time stands still as it does
In 17th century Dutch still lives.
Time smiles at me
And its smile is not ironic.

Time dances Kylián's ballet—
The one in which he used
Two slow movements
From Mozart's piano concertos.
'Two antique busts
That have been mutilated.'
In spite of everything
Time goes on dancing.

Time recites my poems—
Slowly, slowly, bringing out
Every caesura and distant rhyme.
And every distant rhyme is
Eternal recurrence.

MUSHROOMS, FLOWERS AND DANCES

To lose a hope
One must find it first. But where
To find it? Suppose
You've never lost a hope in your life.
Now you're looking for it.
No one else will put a hope in your path:
Time has grown too old for hopes.
So you pick mushrooms and flowers.

A bunch of flowers in a vase
Is your only hope. The mushrooms
Are not poisonous: they're unpalatable.
But you continue to pick them;
You go on eating them. Why not just lie down
On the road, doing nothing?
Some crowd or other might trample you to death;
Someone might walk over your dead body
Or dance on it.

SILENCE, SILENCE

I let the whole of my youth slip away.
Is that how the phrase goes?
Is that how I go?
Keep going, keep going.
I've come somewhere.
There are a few things around me
And that is enough.

How do I know what is enough
And what is not?
Do I know the measure of things?
Do I know the measure of Time?
When I said I loved you,
I meant it from the bottom of my heart.
Did I?

I don't even remember who you are.
And any bottom is a top.
I can shout something at the top of my voice,
But I'll forget it very soon.
I'll forget the words I shouted;
I'll forget I ever shouted.

Mostly I keep silent
And silence is easy to remember.
You just stop talking for a while
And the memory of silence comes to the fore.
It may not come, for all I know.
But you *hear* it; you hear silence and your memory.
Your memory is silent too.

READING A BOOK

I've got so many books. And if I read one of them
I'm sure to come across a sentence
That will remind me of something—of everything.
Why should I be reminded of anything?

A bird is flying somewhere; I cannot
See it. Nor can I hear it.
How do I know it is flying somewhere?
Why speak about it?

Poets always speak about birds
Which are the symbols of something.
A lot of symbols must be flying
Above me, around me. I am myself
A symbol of something. At least
I am a symbol of myself. I might be
Flying around myself. What for?
Is it better to fly than to sit in an armchair?

ANOTHER SILENCE

Listen, listen, listen to this silence.

Is it different from what I heard

Yesterday?

I'm sure it is different.

Any silence sounds different

On account of what you heard *before* it.

Did I hear anything

Yesterday?

I talk all the time.

I talk and cry out.

Even now.

So what?

You can talk and hear silence:

Your words and silence

Do not contradict each other.

AN DIE MUSIK

It is not written,
Nor is it played.
It just happens.
Let it happen.

ERRORS

Why does no one speak of
 SQ? Or FQ? Sentiments and feelings are relegated
 To bedrooms where
 They might flourish for a while.

IQ is still a dominant issue. I recall
 Your laugh and the way
 You talk about your own errors.
 Even light commits errors, otherwise
 I wouldn't draw my curtains so often. Even
 Darkness commits errors.

You are

Radiant, and yet
 You have a lot in common with darkness,
 Its errors.

I adore your errors.

I adore them even more
 Than your qualities. Your errors
Are your qualities. I draw my curtains
 And listen to Schubert's quartets; they're also
 An error—the error of life.

THE GREGORIAN CHANT

Why can't you be the flat
I used to live in?
Why can't you be the river
I walked alongside yesterday?
Why can't I live with you in the music
I've listened to over forty years?
Why aren't you Mozart?
Or Palestrina?
Or a Gregorian chant?

A DAWN

'We shall prevail.'

They all say that,

War or no war.

They think they'll prevail

Whatever happens.

And nothing happens;

Everybody prevails.

But there's something beyond

What happens or doesn't happen;

There's something between

Action and non-action,

Thought and non-thought.

I don't know what it is;

At least I know it is.

I've never seen a dawn as beautiful

As the one this morning. Did it

Happen? Will it prevail?

Writing about it is

Non-action.

SOAPBOXES

Why go to Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park
And watch people making speeches
On their soapboxes?

Soapboxes are everywhere
And people make speeches on them
Or heap up their money in front of other people
Or play the piano. They do *something*
On their soapboxes.

No music can be heard:
Neither audible music
Nor inaudible music
Nor unheard-of music.

The mass of mortal bodies
Are insensitive to music.
And the mass of immortal souls
Cringe back in terror.

THE VOICE OF A FOUNTAIN

Let us leave words alone. Can sounds
Express anything? Nothing can express
Anything. Why should we try
To express our feelings and whatever
Happens? Let us leave our lives
Alone; they may come to us,
If left alone. We may hear something.

What's there to be heard?
'Nothing,' said a bird.
There's a cascade in a Japanese garden
A fountain in a French garden.
Can we hear them? We hear water,
Nothing but water.

What does water say? It talks
About the fluidity of Time.

Time is stiff sometimes
And pompous.

Something else
Can be heard in the voice of a fountain.

Fire can be heard in it.

A FAITHFUL COMPANION

In a former live I was skilful
With my pen and my sword.
In this life of mine I'm skilful
With my pen; my sword is
Rusting in some backyard.
In my future lives I'll wield
A lot of power. I'd rather
Have a faithful companion
For the remainder of this life.

YESTERDAY I FINISHED MY COMMENTARY ON THE *COMMEDIA*

One world is too much for us.

For several months I had to deal
With two worlds. There's
A half-world left or no world at all. Just a window
And a few people walking beyond it:
A world which is neither
Poetical nor prosaic.

Just a world. I'm used to the *Commedia*.
Am I? There must be
Yards and yards of material in this piece of clothing.

It's too long: I can't wear it.
I can't wear Dante's suit
Or Beatrice's dress.

I open the *Paradiso* but can't read it. Only
Pages remain.

I've reached for the stars.
Now I'll wait until they reach for me.

FLEECY CLOUDS

If you travel from night to day
You encounter a lot of shades, a lot of
Nuances. But what are nuances
In comparison with one's life? Just a colour,
A word. And life goes on. It stops somewhere
And you've no idea
Where it stops. You go
From darkness to light and realise
They are identical. Our ascent
Is illusory. So is our descent to darkness.

Birds talk about something
That doesn't exist.

And I talk
About something that does exist.
Today the sky is full of fleecy clouds.
The sky is empty.

THE BEHAVIOUR OF WATER

Water flows downwards. Another
Eternal truth. It gets us
Nowhere except to the bottom of this
And that. What's the result?

Knowledge, humility. We need neither: knowledge
Doesn't stand the test of time and only saints
Understand what humility is about.

Water understands nothing;
It just flows from a mountain into a valley.
What's the point in meeting
By the Trevi Fountain?

GIFT OF INVENTION

Reality is our invention.
It is not. Only our inventions are
Our inventions. What
To do with them? Should we put them
On our writing desks,
Our chests of drawers,
Our beds?
Should we eat, caress them?
Breathing techniques
Induce states of profound
Revelation. We have created
A great many elixirs of immortality:
Our masterpieces, our children,
Metempsychosis, eternal recurrence.
We walk on clouds.
What for?
The Earth is a cloud.

CLAY FIGURES

Lao-tzu looked upon men as
Clay figures.
When a man was killed
He felt no pity for him.
When a man was left in peace
He felt no pity for him either.
He was moved neither by peace nor war.
His heart remained cold.
So did his body;
So did his brain.

Do I know
The temperature of my brain?
My heart is burning with love;
Its temperature remains low.
And I feel no pity for myself.

PILLOWS AND BLANKETS

I know that something and nothing
Are one and the same thing. Yet
I can't write about nothing.
I write only about solid things:
About wine, about love, about death.

Death is a monument in the distance
And a statuette on a chest of drawers.
Death is a toy we offer to a child.
Death is our pillow and our blanket.
We pull this blanket over our body
In order not to freeze to death.

THE NEW ROAD

Progression and regression,
Love and hate.
You love the world and embrace it.
You hate the world and withdraw into yourself.
But the centre is in the centre
So you meet yourself and the world
In the centre.

But the centre is not immobile.
Sometimes you don't meet anybody,
Not even yourself.
The world withdraws into itself
And the centre is nowhere.
So is the circumference.

OUTER CONDITIONS

I'm supposed to adjust my life

To outer conditions.

Let *them* adjust to my life,

My feelings, my thoughts.

I'll lie down and wait for the world

To embrace me.

But the world is too big.

Just let a bird fly in

And perch on my hand.

YOUR UMBRELLA

I know what'll happen in a few years;
Yet I'm no prophet.

Everyone's a prophet, provided
The future repeats the past.

The future repeats the past
And the present. And the past repeats
The future. I am on a mountain,
In a valley, in a chasm.
They all look alike. And your umbrella
Looks like the sun
From which it protects your head.

You seem to wear something
Different every day. But you're a woman
Known to every man
From time immemorial.

WALKING AWAY

In my commentary on the *Commedia*
I said my trip to Moscow would be
A turning point in my life.

It was.
Now I'm back.
An old face.

Where do hopes dwell?
In one's eyes?
Perhaps in a mirror.

I saw this mirror once,
In a lavatory.
And many years ago,
In Nymphenburg,
I realised I was thin on top—
In a room covered with mirrors.

What a pity I can't *always*
Look at the crown of my head, at my back,
At my figure walking away.

A COIN

Why not cull a sentence
From a book, from any book,
And live in accordance with it?
Every sentence is the Scriptures;
Every sentence is my sadness
And also my joy.

But there are many moods
In between, many mixtures. Actually
I don't indulge in mixtures: my joy is just a joy.

There are no clouds
In the sky. There's nothing in the sky:
No clouds, no moons, no stars.
And the sun is just a coin
On the palm of my hand,
An ancient coin. My profile is
Engraved on it.

COINCIDENTIA OPPOSITORUM

Silence is not enough.

What I need is

The silence of silence:

Malevich's *Black Square*.

What I need is

The square of a square,

The blackness of blackness.

But I also need

The richness of the world:

A white square, a blue square,

A red square, Red Square,

Russian churches,

French chateaux.

And a stupid film on Proust.

FOLLOWERS

Whatever happens does not
Happen at all. Our life is altered.
So what? We just drink another cup of
Coffee. And grasshoppers
Continue to enjoy themselves
Under our feet. And our feet
Continue to leave their tracks
Wherever we go.

Leaving tracks
Is useless: no one sees them.

Only dogs follow us,
Our faithful dogs.
But fidelity is *conscious*.

Only our thoughts follow us,
And we follow our thoughts.

And our dogs bark at us—
Inaudibly.

THE DRAWING

You're neither a harmony
Nor a melody—just a note.
I can't sing it.

You're just a point.
I wish I could find a line,
Botticelli's drawings.
(I'm fed up with Pointillism.)

Your gait is so bizarre,
So awkward; your grimaces
Let down the beauty of your face.
You're not worthy of it.

The fingers picking up a fork
In a Georgian restaurant
Are not your fingers.

But any wine is
Your wine.

IN THE CENTRE

To stay in Notre-Dame
Until the world becomes a cathedral.

I'm walking alongside the Seine
And Notre-Dame is either on the right
Or on the left—not in the centre.

At least there's a river
By which I can walk at night,
Listening to the water.

Something *has* been left
And I can hear it.

ESTRANGEMENT

Cityscapes exist solely
For the sake of tourists.

I can't see myself
Even when holding a mirror
Which is part of myself.

It is dangerous to break a mirror.

So many mirrors have been broken
Over the last thirty years.
I walk on them barefoot, feeling
No pain which is also
Part of myself.

But I saw and felt Moscow
Two weeks ago.

THE ART OF CONVERSATION

A chance encounter on a train.
 She asked me
 If I could keep an eye on her things
 As she went to the lavatory.
'Puis-je vous confier mes affaires?'
 (May I entrust my things to you?)

The art of conversation. We devoted to it
 The rest of our journey. I talked about
'Tâches irréalisables'
 And *'défaites majestueuses'*.
 Unrealisable tasks.
 Sounds awkward in English which shuns
 Impracticable, unworkable projects.
 (Majestic failures
 Are nurtured by all languages.)

As the train pulled into the Gare du Nord
 I asked her if we could go on practising
 The art of conversation. She said,
'Hélas, la vie nous rattrape.' (Her husband
 Must have been waiting for her
 On the platform.)

Life
 Caught up with us. During the journey
 We had been outside life
 And ourselves, otherwise words
 Wouldn't have come into their own.

THE STORMS OF LIFE

I wish I could speak of you
As a Romantic poet, 'It will take years
To clear up the deprecations of the storm
You caused in my heart.' I wish
I could tell you, 'We suit
Each other.'

The storm you caused in my soul
Has subsided already.
It was a storm, not a gentle breeze.
I used to see you everywhere,
But managed to break the habit.

Now I see some people walking along
The streets of Paris.

The weather forecast
Warned of winds of up to 90 miles an hour today.

I stood still for a moment
And let the gentle breeze cool my face.

This breeze will cool my face
Forever.

THE MUSIC OF WAVES

At times I felt you were
Within my reach,
But you evaded me. Then I would stop
Searching for you; in despair
I obliterated you. More and more,
Though I was unwilling and shunned it, your image
Forced itself upon me.

My love had more in common
With waves than
With thoughts.

Now I'm *thinking*
Of you. The waves I hear
Crash against the Black Sea shore
Where I'll spend next summer.
And one can walk for miles
Along that shore.

REFLECTED LIGHT

An illumination from above. An idea
Coming to a thinker as a gift.

A thing of the past. But
'Light reflects off the surface of the water,'
As a Chinese philosopher put it.

Parmenides built a temple to his god.

An illumination can come from the earth.

NATURE UNVEILED

Your name was more than a name:
I loved you dearly.

How often did it reveal
Its demonic undertow?

Your name is what it is;
Names are self-sufficient.

It has grown thin of late:
I cut across it so easily.

Nature often forgets its name,
Lying around me unveiled.

Near here, there are some lakes,
Some extinct volcanoes.

SATURDAYS

How to protect yourself
From the seamier side of the world?

There are places
Where you can neither gain
Nor lose anything. On a desert island
You'll lose neither the air
Nor the earth,
Nor sunsets, nor stars.
And you can decorate your hut
With chichi gold ornament.
And you're always in the limelight,
Following a successful hunt
Or the invention of fire.
And you can change
The structure of your government
As often as necessary—
To fit into the scheme of things:
Even on a desert island
There are structures and schemes.
And if you can't control your dog,
No need to put it on a lead.

But there are no dogs on desert islands.
There are only Fridays. And you may prefer
Saturdays.

THE EARLY OCEAN LINERS

The past is mostly musical:
We sing the songs of our youth
And dance. Occasionally
We quarrel with the friends who let us down
Twenty years ago, thirty years ago.

Music doesn't listen to us. Music knows
That everything is in the past,
Even the future. The same music
Will be heard in the future: the same harmony,
The same dissonance. And our friends
Will come to us and share our meal.

One of them will say, 'Modern luxury ships
Are a pale imitation of the glamour and style
Of the early ocean liners.' And yet
The early ocean liners are still afloat—
Somewhere.

FLYING BOATS

There's no sky any more.

No one
Talks about stars. Astronomers
Just point up to them.

Her boat
Is fastened by a chain
To a stake in the ground. Yet

The force of gravity is a mere suggestion.

If mankind were free from inhibitions,
The earth would die of solitude.

THE STORIES

To go and get hold of something
That should be kept forever.
To keep it forever.

A hope, a vain hope. I've no idea
Where to go and what to look for
And how to keep the thing I may find.

It's better to live in the present
Than in some imaginary elsewhere.
But what can I find in the present?

When I switch the TV off,
I find my furniture, my books—
The story of a man
Who lives in my flat;
The story of a man
Who goes nowhere.

The story of the rain
That gets in and rots
His books, his clothes.

OUR HANDS

I know my words won't touch anything—
Not even your hand. I might have touched it
So many times. I did not. Now
My hands attempt to do something
Unnatural: typing this poem.

Why didn't I touch you during
Our last dinner?

I might have told you the only truth
I can utter in my lifetime.

But one's lifetime is too short
For any truth.

And hands touch only
Keyboards.

DYING AT THE RIGHT MOMENT

The night before the assassination
Caesar supped with Marcus Lepidus.
Exceptionally death was under discussion.
To the question what death he preferred
Caesar answered, 'A sudden one.'

I don't share his opinion: one must be given time
To put one's things and thoughts in order.
I wouldn't have left my house
On the day of the assassination, taking notice
Of my wife's entreaties. (Calpurnia dreamt that a pinnacle,
Which the senate had ordered to be raised on Caesar's house,
Was tumbling down.) Here's *my* story:

I stay at home and my wife grows bitter, disappointed
About my conduct. 'Caesar would have gone
To the Capitol,' she says. In the long run,
She shames me into leaving the house. Too late. The conspirators
Have changed their minds. I implore them
To murder me. They categorically refuse to comply
With my belated wish.

TRUTHFULLNESS

Said my Moscow friend,
'Only first and last screams
Are truthful.' Are they?

Newborn babies are made
Of their ancestors' genes
Which never keep silent.

And the music of agony
Is too dulcet, compared
With pain and death.

TWO BLOOD TESTS

I'm still alive. I know my imagination
Isn't so fertile as to create
My life.

It can create a malady, though.

That blood test might have sealed my fate which is
Far from imaginary. I thought I'd leave this world
At the end of three years but was granted
A last-minute reprieve. (A second blood test.)
'I've got some sort of blood disorder—I don't know
The exact details,' I told you. 'Just a cancer.'

My account was highly entertaining
But full of inaccuracies.
Life aims to both educate
And entertain at the same time.

THE SORROWS OF DON JUAN

I shouldn't have talked
To that archangel.

'You didn't say one word,' he said.
'What word?'
'Love.'
'I said "I love you" many times.'

'Three words,' he sighed. 'And love is
Just one word.
One word, one life.
One woman should have shared
Your bed. One woman.
One bed.'

He flew away
Without waiting for an answer.

The demons
May have been enrolled
As the unwitting agents
Of a superior justice.

THE PRESENCE

How to forget you? Should I disarrange
My thoughts and feelings
Or put the world in alphabetical order, excluding
Some letters from it:
Our idioms, streets, knick-knacks?
Your letters, my Kabbalah.

Should I listen to those women
Who say, 'See you tomorrow,' instead of
Pursuing their lips? Should I
Move to a country where
Rain is unknown and the black sun
Shines on fortunate lovers?

THE VICTORY OF POMPEY'S ARMY

Pompey was defeated, but in his camp
Caesar's soldiers found
Embroidered carpets and hangings,
And tables adorned with goblets.
The tents and pavilions were richly set out
With garlands of myrtle to celebrate
The forthcoming victory.

The victory didn't come. Anyway
Victories are illusory or short-lived. Defeats
Follow them closely. What counts is
Our celebrations, our feelings,
Those goblets which may remain empty
Forever.

MANUSCRIPTS

Everyone knows that Demosthenes overcame
His stammering pronunciation
By speaking with pebbles in his mouth.

When speaking, I don't stammer. Whatever I write
Sounds like a stammer. Shall I put pebbles
In my manuscripts?

Some of Magritte's paintings
Look like monuments:
Birds and humans seem to be made
Of stone.

Souvenir de voyage.
Even a journey is made of stone:
A lion, a candle, a man holding
A hat.

My works ought to sound
Like stones.

THE PRESENCE II

I watch a flock of birds
Wheeling and turning over the sea.

I hear, 'He seems to want
To slough off all his old acquaintances.'

A bird is sitting on the phone book.
This bird cannot fly.

I'm sure this dream is about you;
Yet you're not in it.

There are lots of small yachts
Sailing on the sea.

I will never see you again.
How to banish you from my dreams?

HOMAGE TO CICERO

Cicero laughed at loud speakers, saying
They shouted because they couldn't
Speak. 'A lame man gets on horseback
Because he cannot walk.'

Some words are loud, others are not.
The former should be whispered,
The latter shouted.

There are inaudible words. No point
In uttering them.

No point in writing them down.

The words that are always heard—
No matter how you utter them—
Are a slavish translation of life.
So are Schubert's last quartets.

'I exercised my eloquence in declaiming
Upon a bad subject,' said Cicero.

TAUTOLOGIES

Happiness is happiness:

Only a tautology describes it fully.

Misery is many things—even something

That can't be pointed at or foreseen.

It can be experienced, though.

And happiness is happiness. How did Lermontov

Put it? 'Heaven and stars

Are heaven and stars. And I am

A man.' Am I?

I may be an intriguing androgyny or

Nothing at all. Well,

A man is only a man, but heaven

Is heaven. And happiness is

Up above

Or down below,

On earth.

But the earth is far away.

THE SURF

Nature is no enigma: she tells us whatever
We need and wish to know. She may brood darkly
Over our indifference or cruelty.
But sunsets are beautiful
And I'm almost deafened by the roar
Of the surf.

What does it say?
'It's not safe to surf today.'
This piece of information is wasted on me.

Some throw off their clothes
And run into the surf.

I'm almost deafened by its roar.
To me it's neither music nor poetry.

THE COUTURIER

In those drawings Leonardo captured
Every fold of the dresses
No one had ever worn,
Not even in a drawing.

A few folds. Sometimes
A pair of legs hidden by them.
Angels are naked. So are humans
Who flounder around in the deep water,
Trying desperately to reach the bank.

Clothes are shown
During fashion parades, on television.
They exist on their own: no one
Wears them.

AN UNFINISHED WORK

We stubbornly attempt
To deconstruct the world. Yet
Our heavens are walled.

And Dante reached beyond
The stars and Ptolemy.

Starting from the end,
Leonardo moved back...

HOMAGE TO TYUTCHEV

Birds and humans oscillate between
The North and the South.

(At least birds don't oscillate
Between desperation and hope.)

The North Sea. The Adriatic.
The same water, the same ships,
The same people in the water.
Colours are different. So what?

What colour is her hair? Dark brown.
She is away; the colour of her hair
Is of no importance:
My memories are colourless.

And the North Sea is as far from my flat
As the Adriatic.

In Russia
One grows allergic to Space.

ON A FLOWER PEDESTAL

One word *might* express everything.

It does.

What word?

Love, creation, law?

What does it express?

Everything.

What's everything?

It's not nothing—don't leap to any

Hasty conclusions!

But there's such a thing as

A Kierkegaardian leap. (Or just a leap

Of the imagination.) Thanks to it

You could reach the word

Which is everything—

Everything.

But at that point

You'd no longer need words.

The word would remain alone

On a flower pedestal.

SCHUBERT'S JUVENILIA

My words, my middle-aged words.
Why can't they express
What Schubert's sonatinas for violin and piano
Say so plainly?

He wrote them
At the age of eighteen.
A young man.
How could he know
Life was neither the sand
Trickling through one's fingers nor a castle
Built on a rock?

How could he know I wouldn't
Understand him at the age of fifty-five?

A young man, a teenager.
How did he manage to express
My astonishment, my tears?
I can't express them.

Even Rimbaud couldn't.
A young man,
A teenager.

A KISS

Thou liftest up, to cast down again.

Aeschylus

Prince Bolkonsky dances in a *salle de bal*
Which is level with my room. The top
Of my cherry tree is level
With my window. (It has been
Level with my window
For twenty-three years.) My life is
Level with my memory
Which might be going down,
For all I know.
But I lift it up to my lips rather often—
The only way to kiss you.

THE PLOT

As the plot of my life unfolds
I gradually realise that all my initial assumptions
Were wrong. I thought I'd write poetry
To my dying day; I thought
I'd love many women. What I've written tonight
Is but a postscript to the last verse I wrote
Many days ago. The woman I'll meet next Saturday
Is a postscript to your voice. You're also
A postscript to yourself,
Your former self. But life doesn't write
Postscripts.

SOLON AND THALES

Upon meeting a stranger from Athens
Solon asked him about the news.
'A young man died,' said the stranger,
'The son of an honourable man
Who travels a lot.' Presently
Solon learnt it was his son's funeral
The stranger had attended.

The report was fictitious, but Solon realised
What price he might pay for a few
Moments of happiness,
For the feeling he experienced
When playing with his son. 'These things, Solon,
Keep me from marriage,' said Thales
Who had thought up the whole stratagem:
The stranger, the false report.

Those moments. Don't they outweigh
Any risk, any stress and distress?

Broken toys.

Or a photograph—
On a chest of drawers,
On a writing desk,
On a tombstone.

DIVISION

Numbers lead us astray. Actually
We don't need them: Space and Time
Are not divisible.

That's to say,
They're divisible only by themselves
And 1—like prime numbers.

'A bar is the worst enemy
Of musicians,' said my professor.

When divided, Space becomes
A menace to society.

'A bar is the worst enemy...'

How should I know if I am
On the right or
Wrong side of 50?

'A bar is the worst enemy...'

My memory
Doesn't divide Time either.

Death doesn't divide Time.

THE TOP OF THE WORLD

I'm too old to learn languages.
So I'll never learn Hebrew
And Greek. I'll never know
The foundations of the world.

I move about, sleep and often
Don't get out of bed
Till lunchtime. I eat and drink
And think and write and go
Out. I thought last night,
'As far as I'm concerned,
The relationship is over—finito—
And I can start living again.'

I thought it in Greek.

I'm writing in Hebrew.

A JAPANESE GARDEN

Somewhere my ancestor dropped
His sword.

There was a stream
Nearby; a series of cascades
Sounded like a Japanese garden.

Anyway I will not fight.

Nothing
Sounds like a Japanese
Garden.

I neither
Listen to the world nor
Look at it.

Now
I look at myself,
Listen to myself.

I might have been left behind
Somewhere. In Sambo-in.

HOMAGE TO WITTGENSTEIN

Those language games! You say
A word and the answer you get
Is a word. Words, words. They do not
Play with each other;
They *talk*. What's the use of
Talking? One, two, three words;
A quotation from Shakespeare. Yet
A Schubert quartet is performed
In the house opposite. Someone
Looks at you
From behind a Doric column.

TO DINA ZIKEEVA

I heard your voice and realised
No other voice is
A voice. Other people
Communicate. Your voice doesn't
Say anything—it sounds.

A piece of music says
Nothing. Your voice is your
Voice, but a lot depends on it:
My mood, my schedule,
Rousseau's *The General Will* (or
The General Urge), Napoleon's
Invasion of Russia;
The Moscow fire.

INSPIRATION

Even last year I could write a poem
On the spur of the moment. One sentence
Was enough to kindle my imagination. A tear,
A non-committal remark,
A timeworn expression,
A nod of recognition.

Now
My whole life isn't enough.

Seven years ago
I'd have written a novel about your indifference,
Your silence. Now
I touch upon it in a poem that
Speaks of something else.

THE WAY

It's a long way to go. On the way to your
Final destination
You may turn back as often
As you like,
And every time you see
Boundless space: cities, country roads,
Lakes, horizons. Many people
Walk along those roads, talk
In those houses.

But once you've reached
The end,
You realise everything is near,
Within your reach;
Everyone's where you
Stand.

THE SENSE OF TOUCH

How to describe the world?
I see only images: animals, humans,
Landscapes. How
To listen to the world? I hear only
Sounds. I smell only
Smells. How to hear them?

How to see
A Schubert quartet?
Der Tod und das Mädchen.
When listening to it I see
Neither death nor the maiden.
Nor any colours: black,
White, livid, rose.
I touch both death and the maiden.

ICARUS

Immobility is movement and vice
Versa. Japanese poetry speaks of birds
That do not fly. Nothing flies:
There are only fixed stars, fixed animals,
Fixed gods, fixed humans. Projects
Are held in abeyance. Icarus
Crawls on all fours towards the nearest death;
He knows that only a few inches
Separate heaven from earth.

A JUG OF MILK

If you talk of emptiness, your talk is not
Empty.

If you feel emptiness,
Your feelings overflow any vase,
Any receptacle.

Love overflows the receptacle of hate.
But hate is a word, so is love.
Both are empty.

You walk along a road flanked by houses
Where no love or hate awaits you—
Just a few people: a man
Raising a glass of wine,
A teenager with a knife or gun,
A woman with a jug of milk.

THE AUBERGINE DIP

No depletion, no repletion.

A piece of meat kept at a constant

Temperature. The universe is

A deep freezer.

No depletion,

No repletion. Yet I experience pleasure.

The middle life; a middle course between

Gods and brutes.

In a deep freezer

There's no difference between gods

And brutes, a tin of caviar and

Caviar d'aubergine.

DAS LIED VON DER ERDE

To those waiting for his sermon
The Buddha showed a flower.

I picked that flower
In Switzerland, in the Nile valley,
In Death Valley where mesquite flourishes
And spring rains bring out
A great variety of desert wildflowers.

The flower is alive
And the Nile flows northward
Through the East African lake region—
Majestically.

A SHADOW ON MY FACE

The wine I tasted
 Last night. The nineteenth
 Century—1870. History. My
 Ancestors and your voice
 That's longer than any history.

You're on the phone. Your voice
 Is longer than the future.

I wish I could be longer
 Than the future, higher than
 Heaven. You *are*
 Higher than heaven.

The flowers you sent
 To Kyoto. I wish
 We could look at them together.

I've written everything. I've even written
 The Bible. What's there to write?
 The sun, the rain? They've been published
 Already: their poems are on the market.

What else can I write about? Your face, your
 Grief? They're to be looked at.

I don't look at them. You don't allow me
 To look at them. So I write the Bible
 Over and over again.

I always speak of
 One note.

There are two notes
 At least.

Three notes—

A chord.

But a chord is just

A piece of music,

Not life. Not my

Life anyway.

Any piece of music

Is my life.

If I don't write anything

Tomorrow or next week you can

Tell them I wrote about you

Tonight.

You said you were in love

With an old man whose teeth

Left a lot to be desired.

I am an old man. I eat at home

And in restaurants. That's all

I know of my teeth.

I also know you're *en fleur*.

As long as you abuse me

I'll hear *you* instead of hearing

My own voice.

Do read these poems! They're not included

In my books. They exist. My thoughts,

My body, my past. All dark ladies

Are here.

Let us forget whatever we can forget:

This glass of wine, this sunset, the novel
I purchased last night.

I've forgotten you.

Why should I talk about
The world? Why should the world talk
About me? It doesn't. So much
The better.

Only cats
Talk about me. Let them
Keep me alive as long
As I want to live.

Not, not, not. I don't know
What it means. A negative answer.
A negative question. Not, not,
Not. There are other
Languages. 'Not' means something else
In German.

You don't understand
My 'not'. My 'yot'.
You don't understand my
'Yes'.

Something will remain. Not my
Body which is already
Dead. Not my soul:
It is material. Something
Else will remain. Not you,
Not this poem, not this sunset.

Something else will remain.

1

Struggle for life. Call it
 What you wish. I don't struggle, but
 I live. Perhaps I struggle un-
 Consciously. I also may struggle
 Somewhere else, in a parallel world, in a
 Minus world, assuming this inanity is
 A plus world.

2

Is this a world at all?

The eyes of a child.

What colour are they?

His mother is barren.

A language, a woman.
 Two worlds, one world. No
 World at all.

A grasshopper.

There's no light. No darkness.

Something in between. Not even
 'That'. There's no 'between'.

Even cathedrals are
 In between, somewhere.

'Somewhere' is not a word.

No last time. You come

And go. A stone is not last,
 Is it? You're a stone.
 Somebody kicks you
 Or holds you.

Ça tourne. It turns. What? You're being
 Shot or filmed. The Earth turns,
 Doesn't it? Galileo said so. Everything turns
 Except this poem. Yet

Words are always in motion;
 Even in a book,
 Even on a tombstone.

My words don't move. They're
 Silent.

They are not.

A vision. A Japanese woman
 I met in Tokyo, in a restaurant where
 We talked. We kissed in my
 Hotel room.

The floor
 May recall it. A drop may
 Recall it.

A drop of rain.

I'm not writing about the woman
 I fell in love with last year.

This poem would be different
 If I was writing about her.

She would be different.

She *is* different.

Love is outside itself. Is it
Above or below itself?
No idea. But I do know it is
Outside itself, not inside.

A man should outgrow
Himself. One's old self is just
A pair of trousers, a jacket.

I'm a jacket I wore thirty
Years ago; or someone's coat.

What a pity one can't write a word
In which the whole world can be
Found.

This is the word in which
The whole world is
Found.

Read it; read it out loud.
Pass it on to your offspring.
Found.

'Ineluctable' is a keyword tonight. Yet
I know I might have bought
Another bottle of wine. The wine I'm drinking
Isn't up to my standards. I might have
Drunk
A different wine; I might have drunk something utterly
Different. A tomato juice. I'm drinking this
Wine. Why didn't I go down to my wine cellar

In search of an opulent bottle of
Burgundy?

Listen, listen, listen to the music
Of this bottle: it sounds like a piano trio.
Listen to this music, to whatever surrounds
You. Listen to one of your
Lamps,
Your halogen lamp killing another
Moth. Listen to the star oratorio; it is not
Different from the music of your
Lamp and that of your
Wine.

A woman, a cat. Both are beautiful. I don't
Have to choose between them. Why should I choose
Between a woman and a cat, between life and
Death? There are neither questions
Nor answers. Life is not a sentence one can read
In a newspaper, in the Bible.

Let me comment on another
Sleepless night: I'm a commentator
After all. This night is
A sacred text. I'm called upon
To comment on it. Well, I can't sleep.
I read the Scriptures; and
The Scriptures read this poem. We comment
Upon each other. What else can be done?

Comments, comments, comments.

We had heavy rain all night.

We got caught in pouring rain.

We got caught in torrential rain without
Either raincoats or umbrellas.

My time will never come.

What's time?

I wish I could become
A part of myself,
A time of myself.

An actor kills himself
As he listens to the *Zauberflöte*—
End of story, *point final*.

A verse is a statement and vice
Versa. An *enjambement* is a crumb
One throws to a dog.

The end of my tether.
No story to tell.
I was such a tease.

SONGS OF SIMPLICITY

1

A stupid movie. I'll watch it.
 I'll read all the bestsellers.
 I'll enjoy life to the utmost.
 What else can I do today?
 I'll go one better. I can enjoy
 Myself, not only bestsellers
 Or a movie or a tub of popcorn.
 I'll enjoy myself. To do that,
 I have to know who I am—
 Who is 'myself' I'm talking
 About. So I won't talk about
 Anybody, not even about
Myself. I'll just enjoy myself,
 Whoever I am; whoever he
 Or she is. I'll enjoy myself
 To the utmost. How? I don't
 Know, but I'll do my best
 To enjoy *myself*. I'm already
 Doing my best to enjoy
 Myself. How am I doing it?
 I'm asking too many questions.
 No questions, no my selves.
 I'll *just* enjoy myself or
 Somebody else for that matter.
 I'll enjoy somebody else.
 No, I shouldn't enjoy
 Somebody else. Of course
 I love my neighbour as dearly
 As I love myself, but I want
 To enjoy *myself*. My neighbour
 Can enjoy *himself*, his or her
 Self—if he or she feels like it.
 They do feel like it, all of them.
 Let them do it. but why should I
 Take part in it? I mean, I can take

Part in it, but they should bring
 Vodka and beer. I'll join in.
 And if they don't bring vodka
 And beer I won't come. I'll stay
 At home and watch TV.
 A stupid film. No, it's not as
 Stupid as that. It's exciting,
 Overwhelming and staggering.

2

To fall in love once again. Where?
 How? Anywhere. No matter
 How it happens. To fall in love with an old
 Hag. To fall in love at all costs.
 To fall in love, to fall in love. My girlfriend says
 One must believe in one's dream. So I
 Believe in it. No one else does, but I do
 Believe in it.

I'll fall in love. I'll fall in love.
 I'll fall in love.

I'm falling in love.

I've fallen in love.

3

I'm a human being. I could
 Take part in a programme devoted to
 My life. I'm the man
 Next door. I've no idea where
 This door is located. Nevertheless
 I'm the man next door. Please
 Find the door behind which I'm hiding. I'm not
 Hiding behind it, I can assure you. I just
 Stand behind this door. I've been standing
 Behind this door for many years. So
 I ask you to open this door in order to
 Find me behind it. I'm waiting.

4

To express myself. No, just one
 Thought. To formulate my
 Plan. What plan? One thought, just
 One thought, this thought. I'm holding it
 In the palm of my hand,
 Of my right hand. I'll hand it to
 You. Do you feel it, in the palm of your
 Hand? In your brain? You don't?
 Tell me what you feel or
 Give it to me. I want to communicate
 With you. But if you don't give me
 Anything I won't be able to
 Understand you or whatever you
 Stand for. So give me something and
 I'll understand you at once,
 On the spot. I'm concentrating
 On the here and now, you know.

5

A rolling stone. I've never seen one.
 I know that stones can roll,
 But this knowledge is abstract.
 An abstract painting. On the canvas
 There's a splodge. Is it a stone? Is it
 Rolling? Everything rolls. Perhaps this splodge
 Is rolling as well. I don't think
 Anything rolls. Everything is motionless.
 Everything is motionless, everything is motionless.
 I'm immortal, am I not?

6

I don't love this woman. I do
 Love her. What's the difference?
 I love everybody. Yes, I love every-
 Body. Who is 'every'? What is
 'Body'? There are many bodies
 Around me. I love some

Of them. *What* do I love?
 I love this eighteenth-century
 Artefact. I love my cat.

A bridge, a river. Something reminds me
 Of this river. Of this pond, rather.

I used to walk around it. Now it's frozen. Winter-
 Time. No time at all. Just the winter. What
 Can I do with this winter? Nothing. So
 I'll do nothing with this winter. And time
 Is beyond my powers.

I have to do *something*.
 I'll cross the bridge.

Some images. I have to play
 A Schubert sonata in Salzburg.

Haunted by images, I've forgotten
 Music and sounds in general.

Can a pianist forget music?
 Can anyone forget it?

I did. I was so happy
 Last weekend.

Looking at the world.
 Trees, madonnas.

IN MEMORY OF ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

I must have played this concert
 In your memory. Unconsciously: I didn't know
 You'd died twenty hours before, in
 Russia.

A recital,
A Schubert sonata. Its second movement
Is a requiem, a cry, a lament.

I'll play it again for you—consciously,
This time. A conscious prayer.

Unconscious prayers are more powerful.

ANOTHER DRUNKARD'S SONG

Airports. People. Again
Flights, flies. Whatever they are,
I don't care about them.

Wine doesn't fly—it flows. From
One receptacle into another, from one
Body into another.

It's neither a plane nor a train nor
A river. It just flows
From one mouth into another,

One soul into another.
There aren't many souls
Under the sun.

My other lives.

Writing about them. I wish
I could live them instead. The life
Of an orthodox Jew;
The life of a collector. What
Would I collect? Birch trees, unhappy
Endings.

No difference. The same
Moment.

I don't recollect it.
I do recollect it.

The same love, the same
Impatience.

A number of stars. I'll scatter them
Over the sky—another sky
Lying down below; under a stone
No one can find and pick up.

Palace of Beauty. Palace of Silence.
Palace of Thought. Palace of Death.

A beautiful place where
Silence is *de rigueur*. But someone

Keeps going upstairs, downstairs.
Someone is snoring in a corner.

I neither walk around this palace
Nor sleep there. I name it.

I know there was a pillar
I could lean against. I called it
'My cradle', 'my
Tombstone'.

Now

I don't even have a coffin
At my disposal.

Just a few
Flowers.

I can hear the inaudible. For instance,
The Milky Way, the Aurora Borealis.

I listen to whatever is inaudible.
There's nothing else to listen to.

This tune is audible. I listen
To it. I've no idea where

It comes from. I don't even know
Whether it's a tune or not.

One letter. I know this letter; I don't
Know it. All my life
I've done my best to understand
This letter. I don't understand it. If it were
A or E, I would
Understand it. No, even
A and E are obscure. Even D
Is obscure. So I look for other
Letters. They don't make up words.
They're on their own.

A flower I haven't seen yet. So many things
Escape me. I can live without them,
Without my life. No guilty conscience.

A blank sheet of paper on which
I write 'nothing', 'nonsense'.

I don't write anything.

I speak to souls. They've got no eyes,
No faces. They neither
Look at you nor smile. They talk,
Listen and do their utmost
To answer your questions appropriately.

Even souls can't answer
Questions.

What's a tree? Just a tree, nothing
Else. It's a flower: at least
You can call it a 'flower'. Or a 'man', or
A 'woman'.

You can call it 'knowledge' or
'Eve'. You can call it
The 'axis of the world'. You can call it
A 'serpent'.

You can call it 'life', 'death'
'The cosmos'.

Or 'our ancestor'.

Or 'the Cross'.

A man
Who hangs himself on a tree
Becomes a tree; or Christ.

A window. No,
It's not a window:
You can't see anything.

You *can* look out of your
Windows—that's what
They're for. You can *see*

Something.

A pane of glass;
There's nothing beyond.

Just a colour: grey, black
Or blue.

A glass of wine.

I spill the wine onto
A tablecloth.
A red spot. Either
Wine or blood.

A *Vita Nuova*;
A birth.

I bless it.

I talk to someone. I don't know
Who.

What have I done
Over the thirty years,
Forty years? Numbers do not
Count. What count are
My actions.

I don't act. I speak sometimes.
What do I say? No matter.

I'm lying on a beach.

So many stars, so many
Heavens, so many gods.

The canopy of the heavens
Or a canopy of leaves.

How to experience joy? All my life
I've done my best to describe it, hoping I might eventually
Get this feeling instead of
Describing it for the sake of posterity. Without
Knowing it, I *must* have supplied
A few descriptions of joy, which may reveal
My kinship with happy people, with those who *act*
And don't write anything except letters of
Gratitude.

Everything sounds like
A letter of gratitude addressed to God or to one's destiny
On condition that one's really happy and doesn't
Live in a fool's paradise.

I *must* have described joy more or less accurately,
Otherwise I would already have destroyed
All my works.

Joy is the only subject
Worthy of being enlarged upon: life's a gift
That should be enjoyed every moment, not only
During holidays in the Canaries.

I must have described joy, yet I would be hard-pressed
To pinpoint a pertinent paragraph, let alone
A word—the word radiating a tiny beam of light.

I'm a sheet of paper. Whatever
I think or feel can be found
On it.

I wish I were
A blank page, a blank space,

A landscape.

Nothing, nothing, nothing.

There are other words
But I've forgotten them.

I haven't. I haven't forgotten
'There' and 'are' and 'other'
And 'words'. I haven't forgotten
'Forgotten' and 'them' and
'But'.

I haven't forgotten 'I'.

This language slips through my fingers.
I held it a month ago. Now
The palms of my hands are staring at me as if
I could answer them. Nothing will
Answer them.

Is it a question?

The palms of my hands. My skin, my
Fingers.

Stay there and don't move!
Hands up! Hands up!

My hands are touching the stars,
And birds will fall from them
Tomorrow at midnight.

All birds have been killed.
What else is there to do?

The rain ends this month.

A pack of cards. My destiny. A ceiling
And once again a sound
I don't recognise. I don't know
Where it comes from. A human voice
Or a note played on a flute.

It's not a sound.

Straight lines; neither are they straight
Nor otherwise. Straight smiles.

Even the rays of your eyes
Diffuse a faint glow of light, not

Romantic knowledge—the bedrock
Of our forefathers' daily routine.

Holes in the walls and roof
Of the house where I live.

Staccato or *tenuto*—the way you play
The violin or the piano. You don't
Play; you listen to what's being played.

No point in listening; no point in
Standing where you stand. You walk round
And round. There are squares
On the floor. There's a triangle and a face you'll never
Know.

No floor, no earth: only walls, here and there.
 Eight walls. I'll count out loud from one to ten.
 I'll count to a hundred and I'll go and hide.

The foothills of the Himalayas
 Are sharply etched against the pale blue sky.

To hide in a foothill, in the sky.

Landscapes. A *bambino*
 Cries in Italian.

I boarded a train in
 Florence.

Sixpence, sixpence. My keys
 Jingle in my pocket.

Another eternal truth.
 Another pain.

Another vein
 I'll never cut open.

A courtyard. I was born
 Nearby. A flower
 I must have seen in my
 Childhood.

A candle, overhead,
Under my feet.

The city lights
In the distance.

Growing, growing.
Death is better.

A few stunted trees
Are the only vegetation
I can see from my room.

There are trees on my chair,
On my windowsill,
Over my roof.

Lights are so rare.

We all just woke up one morning
And saw a light. The people
With whom I saw it disappeared.

So did the lights.

It could be read as allegory.
It wasn't.

A dream, another dream.
Reality.
An ordinary woman.
Not a goddess. An ordinary
Woman. I don't
Want you. I'm not Michel, nor
Yesterday, nor Sergeant Pepper, nor
Friday.

An old man who listens to
Himself.

I have a lot to say: Helen of Troy,
Berenice, the Sleeping Beauty —
Beauty *tout court*, *tout* short. Just *Beauty*,
Nothing else in plain English.

Sleep on. What am I doing
Here, at this ungodly hour?
This hour was striking six as I went
Into the church. *Another* hour: *this* hour was
Over. *What* hour was striking? No
Idea. An hour was striking, a minute,
A second. Something *was*
Striking, I don't know what. But
I listened to the sound.

Another hour. I'm studying it.
It's round, it's square.
It's not triangular, though.

I like chocolates with soft centres but
This hour isn't like them.

It seems to harden as it cools.

I recognise this rain,
The drop I feel on my finger.

The drop has recognised
My eyes. We've known each other
For centuries.

The melody's different.

Through this and that—there are
No walls.

The eye of a needle,
An eye, two eyes.

A brain through which I'll go
As far as a brick wall.

It's my faith that keeps me going.

There are horizons, lots of them.

I've reached them, I'm here.

A flight of stone steps.

My schedule's quite flexible.
I'm flexible, so is Time and Space
And all cradles are rocked by nurses:
They're made of rubber.

Hours are made of rubber. So is
My mood. I'm angry,
I'm in an amiable mood.

The moon goes up and down.
My mood, my crescent.

The books I'm looking at. Caesar
Does what he does. So many
Teachers: Jesus, Socrates. We learn
Our lesson. Rain is
Forecast for tomorrow.

So that's what it is. Not a feeling
 But bric-a-brac. What else can be done? Go
 To the window and open it, if it's closed.

Close it, close it, close it once again.
 Only a closed window talks to you in the dead
 Of night, by day. Overall,
 It has been a good year, a good minute.

Silence isn't silent. There's another
 Silence. I see it somewhere, I don't know
 Where. I can see this silence;
 I can't hear it. Nor can I touch it.

The White Forest in the distance.

Suddenly. That's how it happens. My light
 Disappears; it doesn't fade. It's no
 More. Only a domino: two, three, six.
 The game's over. The light's on
 Again. A game of light, of colours. *Prometheus*.
 Or just another website.

The letter of the soul. You can't
 Write it down. It's there: in your mind,
 In your throat. You mumble,
 You stumble. The letter remains un-
 Written, un-
 Uttered. The whole of life's devoted
 To it.

TO TATIANA

Gliding high above

The mountains. Not a bird, just a
Shadow. What do you need?
Why don't you sleep in your tomb,
In your cradle?

The sun
Shone through the leaves.

A shadow on my face.

You lived in it.

AN IRON SPOON

Patience. Why not wait till
 Doomsday? Even flowers are
 Waiting: they don't
 Wither. Humans die too slowly, too
 Slowly. Their lives are shown
 On a screen that suffers abdominal
 Pains.

I'm not back. I'm still
 Outdoors. The autumn. Where's
 The autumn? A few dead
 Leaves. Poppies
 Fluttering in the wind. On arrival
 I found my path barred. Another hymn
 To life. And life's always written in
 Capitals.

Three or four. One has to choose
 Between them: a choice between pain
 Now or pain later. Mostly
 The latter is chosen.

I will not
 Choose anything. I'll drive
 Through chocolate-box countryside until
 The roads are chock-a-block.

Outside, inside. All has been
 Said and done. A few moments
 Remain; they're empty.
 I'll talk to them until they become
 One sound.

Tomorrow is a sound.

Whatever happens
 Is beyond tomorrow and

Yesterday. I'll go to
Stockholm.

My train went at 2.23.

A hospital. I knew a man
Whose name was Postpichal
Or Prespichol.

I'll die
In your hospitool. I'll lie down
Somewhere.

I'll hear you say, 'I am
Postpichal and Prespichol.'

I'll hear your silence.

Not *now*. Why does everything
Happen *now*? I'll move this 'now'
To another century. I hope
My 'now' will fall asleep somewhere.

Not now, not now.

It poured down all evening
And most of the night as well.

Again. No cobwebs this time.
No time, this time; no eternity.

No immortality either—
Just another thought.

What has it done?

Nothing, as usual.

This zephyr's dulcet tones
Are really unbearable.

My body's no longer mine.
I don't care whose body it is.

Whose soul is it?
It's not a soul, just
A blood clot.

Or a chord.

I scraped away the dead leaves to reveal
The tiny shoot of a new plant.

Was it a new plant or an old one?

I know only a middle plant;
This plant grows best in the shade.

Look at my library. I won't
Look at it any more.

There's one book in it.
I've no idea what kind of book

It is. Is it a book? Perhaps
A steam iron or a travel iron

Or an antiseptic cream for
Minor skin irritations.

No images, no sounds.
What remains is
The smell of orange blossoms.

There are some oranges
In my dining room. They neither
Blossom nor smell.

They *are*. So we say,
'The marketplace was filled
With delightful smells.'

A glass of wine, a spot on my shirt;
I knew I'd forget you too.

This brie smells good and ripe;
I'll never forget it.

I've forgotten the Himalayas
And her cherry-red lips.

I know light has good intonation
And a wonderful pure tone.

But music just gets distorted
When you play it too loud.

So don't play it. Just listen
To light, darkness and smells.

I scraped away the dead leaves to reveal
The tiny shoot of a new plant.

Was it a new plant or an old one?

I know only a middle plant;
This plant grows best in the shade.

This night. I wish it was
Another night, another
Day, another minute.

Water's leaking from a pipe.

Many images. None is
Faithful to the original.

This is neither a pipe
Nor water, nor a minute,
Nor a day, nor love.

'Name' is a keyword in any language,
 Even in a language that has no names, only
 Verbs: 'to build', 'to destroy'.

You call your cat; he doesn't come.
 His name's everywhere.

You name a woman. She's no longer
 In your room. She's coming round on
 Wednesday afternoon. She isn't.

A bunch of keys, of flowers.
'Il nome' in I Pagliacci.

Just a name.

An old woman, my former mother.
 'I can't speak to you.' Don't.

No longer my mother:
 An old woman doesn't have to lend
 A sympathetic ear
 If an old man has problems.

I'll talk to my fingers.

A song I don't remember.

Tra-la-la, tra-deri-deri, tra-la-la.
 Any song, any word, any bird.

A tree cannot sing.
 Why should it grow?

TELEPHONE

Your voice. The rest is
Christ on the Cross.

You die every day,
Your phantom does.

Your death is the fire
Destroying my library.

Your life is my wine,
My wine cellar.

I'll bend over this life
To find out where it stops.

I'm not innocent. I drink
Three glasses of wine, but I can't forget
Anything: tears, screams, the void.

I stood at the edge of a chasm
And stared into the void. Water
And ashes. A face.

I lost you once more. A woman
Must vanish. The church bells rang out
To welcome in the New Year.

I haven't done it. The world is
On its own: you can neither
Help nor destroy it. You can
Look at it. Dark clouds
Massed on the horizon.
A pretty garden, a tea party.
The crowd is baying for blood;
There's no blood anywhere.
Strawberries and cream.

One, two. I can count. I can't.
 What's lost is lost. Why count it?
 The years I spent in Russia.

I look up at the black, velvety sky
 Studded with tiny, twinkling stars.

Cats are supposed to have nine lives.

A hand is a hand. I try to decipher
 My destiny. Nothing. It is in my foot,
 In my spine. I'll live whatever
 Happens. Nothing will happen. I'll live
 Until something drops from the sky:
 A blue moon, a silver spoon.

A corridor, a window.
 Walking, looking.

I won't forget your face:
 Angels can't be forgotten. They're
 Our memory.

My ceiling is just a ceiling, not a dark
 Sky. Not a lark singing in the sky or elsewhere.

Where can it sing? Stormy weather,
 Dry weather. It can sing in a concert hall,
 On a balcony, in a bathroom. Weather permitting, the lark
 Will sing on Jupiter. But Jupiter is weary – much more
 So than other planets. It goes around the sun.
 Does it? No questions, only ellipses – a harmony
 Without a melody.

Anxiety is unruly,
A flower too peaceful.

Why don't flowers offend us?
They can prick us, but
That's not enough. I wish a bunch of roses
Could make me suffer for ten years, for
Twenty years.

After years of suffering
My death would be a mercy.

MACBETH

An image, a momentous image. What's done
Is done on the spur of the moment.

There are other moments, but you can't do anything.
You just say, 'An image, a murder.' Your
Chest of drawers begins to talk. Heavy curtains
Are blocking out the sunlight.

The Black Forest, the White Forest.

A letter you write, the sky you look at.

A cloud is looking at you.

There will be showers of rain in the west.

Non. I deny myself, the walls
I'm facing.

The voice of my cat.

A game of chess I played fifty
Years ago; I lost.

I lost the queen, the king.

A pawn survived.

Another accident or incident. You're in a state of
Shock for weeks. But all depends on how
Everything happens. Some things happen, others do not:
They're there. Nothing doing; not a shock but
An unconditional surrender, resignation.

So many gifts: horses, chocolate. You accept life. You deny it,
You curse it. Life rocks your cradle; just a lullaby.

I smile and laugh. The Earth doesn't say: 'This should be
Done.' The Earth isn't a Jewish mother.
The Earth lets us live; we don't live.

We walk around it, looking at monuments,
At the crowds of people and animals, at dirt.

You can see the purity of the water here.

I bent down and picked up the coins
Lying on the road. Some Roman coins or Greek
Coins. I'm Greek or Roman.
I'm a Jew.

I'm on the Cross, in a temple. I sell, I buy,
I preach, I die, I resurrect, I die
Again.

I'm in a pit: they dug a shallow pit
And left the bodies in it.

You're not a dream. I know I met you
 In my youth. I didn't meet you. Someone else
 Took your place, my Aphrodite,
 My Sarah, my Natalia.

A glass of wine is precious. So is
 A sheet of paper on the floor – a phone
 Number. I won't call anyone.

No landscapes, no cityscapes. A few
 Light rays, three or four.

Another mistake, another loss;
 Your caress. I hear your hymn, my serenade, my aria,
 My *Traviata*, my *Rigoletto*. They'll kill me;
 You'll die. We are in the tomb where there are battles and
 Gods. Let us sleep. Eternity is an alarm clock.

Days and months. I hear a sound;
 It's not a sound. The ancient Egyptians
 Stored information on scrolls.

Not a sound; I wonder what it is. I'm sitting
 At the end of the world. I don't know
 The pyramids. You ditched me
 Three years ago. Isis, Osiris.

We'll find a tomb for our love
 In the Cairo Museum, in the British Museum.

I was young. This poem was engraved
 On a tablet of stone. I loved you.

I'm lying face downwards on the pavement.
 I'll never get up.

I was woken in the night

By the wail of ambulance sirens.

The snow came down during the night.
I came down with the snow.

The night I don't recall. I was
Happy. The night was young and cheerful.
These youngsters don't know what
I felt many years ago in Moscow,
At the Black Sea.

I felt the Black Sea. I felt colours, water. Now
I feel myself – my skin, my intestines.

There are no feelings anywhere. Just another
String on which no one will ever play.

I know what light means and what it
Looks like. Another light of course. But there are
No other lights. I know that too. Only
Sounds are faithful companions. They speak
About my days, about the days I call mine. They're not as
Capricious as light.

I hear a chord and I don't try to
Analyse it. Let it sound for an hour. I'm patient;
I'll listen to the chord and do my best to
Identify with it.

How to identify with the autumn?
It's slippery. I see it; I can't hold it. Another day that
Isn't mine. A gold mine for sure; it's not within shouting
Distance. A gap between the curtains will admit
The faint glimmer of a street lamp.

The past tense is here. No past, no future. A table,
 A book. I'll pick up the book and read it.
 Here are my hand and my brain. I can touch my
 Hand. I can touch Virgil; I touch him.

Suddenly the lights went out, and the house was left in pitch
 Darkness. I can touch this darkness too. My fingers are
 Very long. I play Schubert and Mozart. My fingers are long enough
 To touch the eighteenth century,
 The nineteenth century. They don't touch
 This morning, this afternoon. They touch a loaf of white
 Bread I won't eat.

A pain. I'm looking at my books. They'll speak to me
 About life, about what I'm supposed to do.

I won't do anything. The books are a pack of lies. A row of camels
 Silhouetted on the horizon doesn't exist.

Nothing exists except the pain
 I don't feel. I know I'll feel it sooner or later.

Tonight

I'm lying on my back in a sarcophagus.
 I can see hundreds of stars in the clear desert sky.

Beauty is not. What we're looking at is not
 Beautiful. It's just something we touch
 In case of emergency.

There's no moon tonight. I remember when I was a child
 Being very impressed with how many toys my neighbour had.
 He didn't have the moon.

My legs are covered in scratches and bruises
 After my walk through the forest.
 I touch my walk.

I touch another millennium; Caesar and Brutus.
 Your face is far away. I touch one hair.
 This hair is Bruckner's *Ninth*.

This day is not a day: a number of hours. This hour
 Is incomplete. This hour was based on incomplete or inaccurate
 Information. Why go through it?

I was going through it on foot.
 I left the midday sun for the cool of the shade.
 The shade was incomplete.

In the harbour, the boats bob gently up
 And down on the water. On a clear day I see
 A temple in the distance, a stone column.

I will come. I don't know where
 You are. You might be in my chest of
 Drawers; a sheet of paper.

You might be a glass of water.
 I'm a grain of salt. I slept fitfully
 Through the night and arose before dawn.

This hour is strutting around
 Like a peacock.

I say what I wish to say. There are many
 Exclamation marks, question marks. There are
 Birds singing beyond my window.
 Every word of theirs is an exclamation mark.

Their dictionary's in the grass. A dog will pick it up
 And give it as a present to his master. Everything
 Is lost – even this dictionary, its commas, semicolons.

I don't need it: I'll never speak to birds.

Either they know Jesus Christ or they don't.

Why should I teach them anything?

Nature has taught them how to behave

In the presence of trees and humans.

I was always getting in trouble

For misbehaving at school. I'm not a bird.

I read the grass and the treetops I see

From where I'm sitting at my writing desk.

I can't read the sky. I can't see it:

The sky's too far away. I understand

One cloud, one weasel floating

In the sky, over my roof.

I'll count backwards:

'Ten, nine, eight ...'

I'll count backwards

Until nothing remains:

Not even minus eleven,

Minus thirteen.

Five minus five is zero;

Four minus four.

Zero is spacious:

So many camels

Can go through it.

Lying naked in the grass,

Among the trees and birds,

I felt I had communed with nature.

For a while I must have lived

In close communion with nature.

Tell me what's wrong! I know
 I've lied many, many times.
 Trees have lied too, but their lies
 Are different. So are the lies of birds.

They're just the other side
 Of the coin. The coin's the same.
 I hold it, I fling it up, I catch it.

The same coin, the same life.
 I'll always catch it, whatever
 Happens. Nothing happens.
 I catch a coin, a stone.

A door. Flung open by the wind.
 I'll stand in the doorway
 Until the wind shuts the door.

Meanwhile I'll sing a lullaby.
 How does it go? It doesn't go.

A table of sorts. A bottle, a candle.
 I'm in the middle of a room and
 The room is actually triangular.

Last night I drew a perpendicular
 From the vertex of the triangle to its base.
 The town-hall clock says nine o'clock.

Love is on the opposite wall.

I hung it on the wall last week.
 I look at it. Love. I know it,
 I recognise it. The wall,

The sea. I spent a lovely week

By the sea this year. Did I?

That last conversation we had
Is engraved on my memory forever.

This tune really brings back memories.

Job is blameless; so is the sky I'm looking at.

I put my hand on the bed and left a splodge
Of blood on the bedspread; another sky.

One sky isn't enough; nor is one pond, one plant.

No, no. My 'brain' is a negative form of 'brain'.
Effluents from local factories are finding their way
Into the river: the river of life, of happiness. Death
Is another river. I swim in it every Saturday, every
Sunday. I row as long as I can row and then I take
My plunge: I swim and dive as long as I can swim
And dive and die. I'm sailing slowly down the river.

A pack of cards. I pick up a card. My
Destiny. There's no destiny, just
A few events. Everything happens;
There's nothing. What happens is outside –
In the woods. A squirrel. A hymn book;
A word I don't know. I utter it.

Another trip. And suddenly there's
Nothing. It happens so often, and then you say,
'Everything.' A grain of sand is not
The world; not even a microcosm.

A drop of paint on the kitchen floor
Is not *Mona Lisa*. Yet *Mona Lisa* is a drop

Of paint, a few drops – on a landscape,
On a saucepan. A sauce, a deity.

A heap of twisted metal. A former car,
A sculpture. There are only
Paintings and sculptures. No cars, no animals,
No tears. Metal, wood, canvas – a studio
Where everything's done. Two bottles of whisky,
A sandwich. A voice, an interval.

What am I talking about?

One day, out of the blue,
I said I would talk.

The birds I hear don't talk;
Nor do they sing.

Songs of Middle Age,
Knights, *Nachtstücke*.

Anything could happen
In the next half hour.

I'm listening to this second,
To this third, to this forth.

What can I do with a spider?

I'm looking at it, at the web
It has spun. I'm looking at my
Spleen. Even Pushkin wrote
About spleen. You can hear it
Or look at it. You can take it.

I'm holding my spleen. No
Blood, for once. No brain.

I can't see anything. Once upon a time
I saw a tree – not a Christmas tree,
Just a tree. I thought life was inside it.
It wasn't: neither inside nor
Outside.

One note, two centuries. There's a link
Between them. A rabbit is a leopard
And vice versa.

I'm staring at a photograph. There's
No link between us. Yet I'm staring at it.

My stare has already provided the missing link.

I'll find what can't be found.

There's nothing in the bottom drawer
Of my desk: I took everything out.

I'll take my house out and
Enjoy emptiness, nothingness.

Already? Time is a fidgety child.
I'm also a child: a second child, a third.
I'll mature.

Humans take longer to mature
Than most other animals.

I'll mature for centuries, for millennia.

'Look, I've got a wobbly tooth,'

I'll say to God, proudly.

All I could hear was the drip of the rain
From the roof. At last
The rain began to ease off.

Today is yesterday.

I thought I'd go out for a walk
While the sun was shining.

I didn't. Instead, I let the air
Out of the balloon
I bought twenty years ago.

There was quite a lot of traffic today
But yesterday was even busier.

Today is yesterday.

No longer do I wish to hear
The inaudible. I hear a part of what
I can hear. Yet this minute has
Come. Another minute will come.

Can I hear a strange clicking noise?
I can't. But there's a mouse
That scurries along the floor:
I just like making music.

There are words like 'terror'
In the Koran. I know words and
What they mean. A brook.
I'll sit by this brook, even if
The heavens are no longer.
And I'll stare up, trying to spot
My sign of the Zodiac.

Warum? Woran? For God's sake
Tell me if the world is *what* or
A man, a woman. Are the stars italicised?

In hindsight, it would have been
Better to wait: the light was so bright
I had to cover my eyes.

I thought I was on the other side:
I was waiting on the other side of the street.

The street was waiting on one of my
Sides, I don't know which.

Sides, lives, leaves; one aria.
Lucia di Lammermoor: '*Il dolce suono* –'

The end of a thought is not death:
 Something else is birth and resurrection –

All this nonsense. You wade
 Through the water to reach your boat.

You might have boarded a ship
 That was sailing the next day.

I dropped my signet ring
 Down a drain in the road.

I dropped something else;
 My life may depend on it.

Nothing depends on my life
 Save the life of a mosquito.

I'll let it live for centuries:
 Life won't live without it.

A word is more than a word.
 It is the word. I cannot
 Utter it. Everyone says
 This and that. The word is
 Outside; nobody utters it,
 Not even Adam. I say 'mu'.

I've lived in this valley since
 Ancient times. Nothing.
 I'll live forever in this valley, on the top
 Of this mountain. I'll go boating
 On some lake or other.
 I'll screw this piece of wood
 To my wall, to my past.

I'll tell you: 'It gets cold at night.'
You know what it is.

I know nothing. I'll greet
Tomorrow with a friendly 'Hello!'

I'll greet anything.
I'll rock my cradle.

I did something else. Whatever you do,
You realise it's not what should
Be done. I stood on the shore and let the water
Wash over my tired feet. I wish I could wash my past,
My future. My past was lying at my feet;
So was my future. But the water didn't touch
Them.

I'll stay away from them, from it.
I'll say to myself:
'Just go away and leave me alone!'
I'll leave myself alone.

I'll hit the road. After a while
The narrow track
Merged with a rocky path.

Over the course of time
Holes have formed in my brain
And elsewhere; I don't know
Where. I'm made to dig holes
And fill them in again.

Have I noticed a difference in myself
Since last year? I haven't noticed anything.

I could dye my hair to hide my grey streaks—
For all the difference it will make.

A large mirror in a room
Creates the illusion of space;
I don't need this space.

I dug a hole and planted my body.
This region is too dry for plants to grow.

I've forgotten to say this and that.
'This' and 'that' do not exist.
What lives is beyond 'this' and 'that':
It's beyond everything.

But I need neither 'everything' nor
'A thing': they can carry on with their work.
I don't care. I was plucked from my ship
Just seconds before it sank.

I'm picking my way down the broken steps.
Here and there the rusted hulk of an abandoned car
Dots the landscape.

A blast of cold air hit me
As I opened the window.

The air is different
From what it was in my youth.

The rest is the same: water,
My moods, my beginnings.

I always begin on the same spot,
On the same grass, on the same sea.

Several seagulls bobbed on the waves.
 I wasn't looking at them. I just knew
 They were quite near. Why look
 At seagulls? They live their lives;
 I live mine. Our lives don't overlap.

My middle age is not in the middle:
 It's miles from anywhere.

I wish I were forty: I was already mature
 And knew what to do and how to survive.

Now I don't know how to survive; yet
 I do survive. Perhaps one shouldn't think.

I felt unaccountably happy this morning
 As I left my house forever.

TO RIMBAUD

'Farewell' is not a word. It's an object:
 A handkerchief or a hand.

I was waving my hand madly;
 She never once looked in my direction.

Well, a farewell. Many stars
 Are there to tell me I have to leave.

I left the house by the back door.

Soon I'd left the river estuary
 And was heading towards the open sea.

TO TATIANA

There's little doubt that poor medical treatment
Hastened her death.

Why should I doubt it? She's dead.

I saw a glimmer of light in the distance.

Light was streaming in through an open door.

My doors and windows are always open,
Just in case. *Libera me, Domine.*

This one, that one. I always have to choose,
But I don't choose; and things disappear.

So do people and time. I've got only two or three
Seconds at my disposal. I stretch them out
Over a long glacial period. The peaks of the Himalayas.

I've heard nothing for several days.
How many days? Why should I count?

I began counting backwards: 'Ten, nine, eight...'
And then I heard a melody, a lied.

Where did it come from? This lied can trace
Its origins back to Roman times.

Grains of wheat, grains of rice.

Few plants grow in the tundra regions.
What a pity I don't live in a tundra region.

I might become a plant or
 Its absence. I might become
 Absence itself.

An explanation itself stands
 In need of explanation.

You explain the rain,
 Every drop of it, and you notice
 Drops of water
 Popping onto the carpet.

You explain them; you place
 Saucepans on the floor
 To catch the drops of water
 Coming through the roof.

There's a lake above your roof.
 You dive into the still water of the lake.

No image is true. A branch is hungry:
 It wants to become a real branch
 Or a twig. The Sun is the Moon or a coin
 I'm playing with. To toss it up into
 The air. Let's toss a coin to see who'll go first.

I'm going somewhere; a lot of coins
 Are flying overhead. I won, I lost.

I'll just get a sponge
 And wipe the crumbs off the table.

There was a body – several bodies perhaps.

The mind is what it is. And there's something
 Outside the mind. It's not the body,
 Nor the soul. It's just outside and I've no idea what's

Inside, what's outside.

I'm inside myself; and outside.

Why do they take notice of me? If they didn't

I would be inside, in my pool of genes.

I dressed myself up as a Roman

Emperor for a fancy-dress party.

Shimmering with all the colours of the rainbow.

I'm walking across a room

Full of unfamiliar faces.

This man sounded very much

Like someone I knew,

But his face was unfamiliar.

Sounds are nearer to my soul.

I know all of them, even the sound

One hears in Hell. I know

The sound that breaks the sound barrier.

My house doesn't make any sound at all;

I've left it forever.

I'm living with my own face.

The image I see in the mirror

Will never be reversed.

This night is so slippery

It falls from my hands when

I pick up the song of a bird,

A comet. A falling star

Falls into my hands and then

Continues its fall: it has

Nothing else to do.

What do *I* have to do?

Nothing, nothing at all.

I managed to catch my glass

Before it hit the ground.

This night is like a slippery bar of soap.

When I first fell foul of the laws of nature

I thought I was free – a straight line

That becomes a zigzag.

There are many circles around.

Are they former straight lines or zigzags?

Have they always run in circles?

A drop of rain was a rainbow once

Or the shimmering wings of a tropical butterfly.

There are a few stray spots of paint on the window pane.

Whenever I start to count my fingers

I realise I don't count them. I just look and

Look. What do I see? Fingers, thoughts?

Plumes of smoke billow from my chimney.

I count the smoke for a while

To make sure it's all there.

There's no fire to speak of. I'll feel cold

If I don't wear a coat. A neatly folded

Handkerchief in my jacket pocket.

I know that every creature will ultimately

Experience happiness and well-being,

Although the path thereto may be rocky.

I count happiness and well-being; I count

Creatures, rocks, asteroids, meteors.

25, 300 and a billion are all numbers.

To think till one becomes
 One's thoughts, one's hands
 Holding a thing
 One can't describe because it's not
 A thing. A smell no doubt.
 The smell of orange blossom.

There are modes and toads. Something else
 Speaks to me. 'Speak, oh speak!' I say. Nothing comes,
 Nothing answers the phone. What's the right answer
 To the phone, to rings, to Wagner's *Ring*?

The only answer's another ring – akin to the question;
 A tautology, a repetition. 'Yes' is the translation
 Of 'Yes'. No comment, no 'noes'.

The ring rolled off the edge of the table and smashed.
 Another ring appeared; another Notung.

Tenderness. You're here, my dear.
 I can't feel you, but you're here and nothing else
 Is here as if the world was empty.

Emptiness is the world. It's not in a class
 Of its own; it's just the world.
 We'll have to get used to it, to whatever is not here.

You're not here; I'm not here. Let's pretend
 We're dinosaurs. It's easier to be
 Dinosaurs than whatever we are or have been.

I'm ready. I know I'll have to cry for joy
Or to cry. So many tears have been shed ever since
These mountains saw the light of day.

There was no light. The day was there, but
The mountains paid no attention to it. They just
Emerged from the Earth to tell us
That God was right.

He is right; we are right. Only the clouds
Flying overhead are wrong, otherwise
I wouldn't walk and think and dance in the rain.

Another number; today's tomorrow. Again
The Messiah will come. He'll say
Nothing. He'll raise his head, his hands,
His voice, his sword.

His voice is as hollow as the centuries
I've lived. These centuries have been wilting
In the heat for centuries. Yet
There are no suns, no moons, no men.

Only plants are walking through my garden:
Plants, flowers and a gardener.

He's watering the Earth, my eyes and my ears.

That's not the night I've been hoping for.
Another night, another hole.
The door I see is a hole or a hell of sorts, a paradise
Of sorts. Don't say 'light' or 'door': they are
So small you can't walk through them,
On them, in them, under them.

You walk elsewhere. Go on walking!

You'll come to where a letter is written,
A word. No, just a letter.

I wouldn't say how it is. Not
Because it is not. Silence. A fragile truce
Between two words. So many women.
I'm not sure this will last.

A second is coming and going.
I'll taste this second. I'll spit it out
In disgust. Every second is a wine I don't want
To drink. I'll drink an hour, three
Hours.

I was one or two or three. I was one of those twigs
Which don't belong to a tree. I was a tree
Without leaves, a pine tree perhaps. Let's spend another
Christmas under my tree. There's no Christmas.

Let us sit under my tree – calmly, calmly.
There are birds above my tree. Let us listen to them.

You hear someone who doesn't speak.
No one speaks. And yet there are trumpets,
Mahler's symphonies.

There are sounds that don't speak. They
Sing and we listen to them.

They sing many arias, many trios,
Trios, quintets, oratorios. They say nothing
Or just A or B. Don't wait for E. F is
Right here.

A shoulder is a member. There are members and
 Numbers. They're called 'bodies'
 And 'souls'. They fly and fall whenever
 They can fall. Sometimes they fly for hours;
 You can neither stop nor catch them. Why should you?

Let them fly overhead, over
 Stars, over sins and joys. They'll reach another
 Truth or just Other or another. Another
 Soul, body, shoulder, shoulder blade.

There's beauty in my room. I go beyond, elsewhere.
 There are no worlds elsewhere, only beauty.

Your legs are beautiful; so are your eyes. And yet you're not
 Beautiful. Your hands are covered in dust
 And you have a black smudge on your nose. And your
 Minutes are black. Let us dance with them here
 And now. And everywhere, Clementine.

Several people. Or nobody. Nobody has doubles. And every
 Double is a triple Olympic champion. I can't run;
 I walk here and there. I take my time and my time takes
 Me and all my neighbours. You take and give. You
 Take away. There's a way; there are other
 Ways. And nothing hangs over you or just on the left-hand side.
 Nothing or everything. I'll pray for my victims.

You and I. And I, and I. There are walls and moles. A mole
 On your cheek; a mole on my chin. There are supermen and super-
 Women. There are just men and animals in the streets.

There are streets, boulevards and circuses. There are clowns in
 The air. There's the air in which there are clowns.
 I'm walking beneath them all day long, saying to myself,
 'I'm walking beneath the clouds and angels.'

Again a writing desk. And so many chests of
 Drawers. I search for my letters. A melody flies
 Over my head, my heart; over everything.
 This melody knows me perfectly. I can sing it
 Once in a while. I don't know it. There are intervals and
 Notes. No notes, no intervals. One
 Sound; the letter I'm writing to myself. E flat Major.

Night is light. No darkness will ever
 Darken the world. We are pure and purity
 Is as innocent as the most
 Innocent child. There are no children.
 There remain only innocence and purity
 So we have to bring them up and
 The sun will become brighter. So will
 The moon. An old man will say
 A wise saying. A nightingale will sing its song,
 His song, her song. So will her son.

A star is not triangular. It is like a thought: now
 It is formless, now a square appears. What
 Can I do with this square? I can't walk around it and
 There are no benches. I'll sit on the ground
 And think about life. I'll say life is moist and uneven; and hard.
 I'll attribute a lack of judgement to it.
 And then I'll look at some twilight or other, at some sun,
 At the lack of colours and sounds. I'll look at
 Every sound I'll be able to find. I'll scrutinise all
 Tones and overtones. My skin will become an oratorio.

On Wednesday there will be a total eclipse
 Of the sun. I made a mistake, yesterday. The weather
 Is expected to remain clear for the next few days.

I won't be clear; I'll be dark. My flame
Will flare up into the sky. I'll grope my way up
The dark stairs.

What counts most is a leaf I'm looking at,
A drop of wine, an image I don't remember.

I remember a glass of lemonade;
It no longer looks at me. What else?

Navel-gazing. The sun is too loud.
I take the sun and break it into my bowl.

This day isn't over yet. I think
It's endless. I repeat what I've said
Many times. And many times are
The same day. They shed tears, blood and
Light.

She tucked a loose strand of hair
Behind her ears. Many times, many
Times.

Nature is not what it is. It's a woman.
Her hair's jet-black, her lips ruby-red and
Her skin as white as snow. God
Isn't nature.

The house was nowhere
Near the sea.

We went swimming in the sea.

Don't tell me Creation is not.

When I lifted the log, there were

Lots of beetles skittering about under it.

I'm at Gatwick Airport: no flights,
Lots of companions in misfortune.

I'm alone on Venus. I survive in the world
Full to the brim with arsenic.

Yet a glass of wine is always at hand;
My arms are always at hand.
They carry my body elsewhere.

I'll always sit on my shelf at home,
Gathering dust.

The sky is wobbly: no one
Holds it. Only clouds
Are in safe hands.

She came gliding with poise
Into the ballroom in a flowing gown.
A wire had come loose at her ample bosom.
She was singing a little song to herself.

The stars are moving unpredictably:
There must be a loose connection.

This part of the coast has pebble beaches.
What can one read between the pebbles?

A square read a square into a circle.
Both, like so many before them,
Died the death after a week.

The road was covered with fragments of glass

From a shattered window. Miles from
Nowhere, in the middle of the countryside.

(The window was as huge as the heavens.)
The only road to Paradise, to Life,
To the Loire chateaux, to my books.

Farewell, my beloved, my Cat Woman,
Madame Butterfly, Nabokov's butterflies,
The wine I haven't drunk down to the dregs.

An old mind-numbing film. So many stars.
Why don't they come up with a new universe?

Another world's at hand. Not on a screen –
On a tablecloth. A plate is a new dimension.

Not this plate, not this fork, not these folk.
Paradise is near where the road forks.

A dot. On the ceiling there are
Birds that cannot fly. On the snow
There are shoes that will not
Walk. A curtain. All of a sudden a duo,
A trio. You fly; you listen, listen,
Listen, listen, listen.

You see your face for the first time.

A closely guarded secret, an open door.
You go out and open a letter;
You open a raindrop. You say,
'I'm alone.' The raindrop
Flows into the sea. There are lots of
Raindrops on your window,
On your face. This little stream
Can become a deluge when it rains heavily.

Ghosts are here and now. A light
At the end of a play. A chest infection.
Don't concentrate on the here and now.

Sign your name on the dotted line.
Your name's like a long, lingering kiss.
When was it born? Tomorrow?

You can stain the sky
In different colours.

The teacher drew a diagram showing
How the blood flows through the sky.

Down, up and down. There's the sun
And its rays. Each ray is a thing in itself.

There are half things. They're inside us
And elsewhere: in the grass, in a sheaf of corn,
In grains of corn.

A week tomorrow.

You get more choice if you live
A la carte. A sunny, beautiful morning.

Your neighbours don't know you. Your own door
Doesn't know you. A sliding door. In Japan,
At the crack of dawn, people leave their houses
And go somewhere. Here you are woken in the night
By the wail of ambulance sirens, by the wail
Of the women gathered around a coffin.
The flowers you've got in your garden
Are brightly coloured to attract butterflies.

A hand, another hand. A body, nothing
Else. So many hands, legs and eyes.
A drop of ten metres from the window
To the ground. One metre, one eternity.

The road weakens. The road weakens daily
As the disease spreads through its body. A trip
Is just a drop of paint on the kitchen floor.
We heard bells calling the faithful to prayer:
Some sounds *can* be detected by the human ear.

On a wing and a prayer. God's dead; a wing.
The wing weakens on a regular basis.
We won't fly south at the approach of winter.

A thin layer of oil on the surface of the water.
An image, lots of images. Life goes
On. You can grow dwarf conifers in pots
On the patio. Grow the bulbs in a transparent plastic
Box, so the children can see the roots growing.

Life, life, another sky, another last-minute reprieve,
Another damsel or lad on a screen. The city:
Alexandria of the old school.

Can the right to live ever be denied to any human?

Shapes are elsewhere. There are only
Colours. Adam painted the world in bold colours:
Crimson, purple and blue. A grey sky. Rain is
Forecast for tomorrow, for today, for the last
Century. Dying in la-la land.

This can't be understood: joy, suffering.

Which would you choose? Solomon might have
 Said something to this effect. You choose
 A delicate floral pattern for your bedroom curtains.
 You peer through a chink in the curtains and
 See a miracle. Nothing has been said or
 Done. You're free. Go dancing at a nightclub or
 Go to Hell. Good going, bad going.
 The bells are pealing out from the tower.

Palestine or Palestrina. There are two gods
 Or no gods. A large area of arid, featureless desert.
 There are other areas and arias. It's too early to
 Predict the outcome of the aria I listened to several months
 Ago. I had tea and afterwards I sat in the garden
 For a while. You're my death; you're
 A butterfly. There are two poems, two destinies. And
 Suddenly the sea becomes another incarnation.

Another garden. The time no one knows by heart.
 Some people look this time up in their books,
 But they don't find its meaning. It might mean nothing.
 And nothing's also a time, another time,
 Another day and hour. A terraced street. All mirrors
 Lie. You study minutes carefully, trying to work out which is lying.
 No one lies: there are only truths around us.
 Take one of them and wrap it up. A birthday gift,
 A wedding gift, a Christmas card with the star on it.

Life goes on. Sometimes it stops for a moment and
 Looks out of the window. A vase of dried
 Flowers and grasses. A happy ending.

You don't know what you say. Your breath
 Doesn't know its symbols. Its symbols are

Life and death and birth. The symbols are so old
 They died last night. You live because
 You live your life; the rest's been left in the margin
 Where rhododendron bushes grow.

To write a letter. The letter writes about
 Your destiny. Let's read the letter. It says, 'I'm higher
 Than any skyscraper.' This machine measures
 Your heart rate, your height, your depth,
 Your love. How deep is
 Your love? Your love's only ankle-deep,
 So you'll be able to get across it easily. Go to
 Another love, another planet. A thick layer of clay lies over
 Your body.

Indifference isn't different from other things. It's not
 Different from the table on which there are
 Several dishes. Many people celebrate someone's
 Birthday. On a hot day it's lovely to hear the chink of ice
 In a glass. They spread the picnic rug out on the ground
 And sat down to eat. Eating the stars and ether.
 Eating years and *fatum*. A bunch of grapes.

'Weary' isn't the right word. The right word is
 'Eerie'. The wind howling through the trees. The notes
 Don't change: BACH. Music doesn't change:
 Play on, play on. The art of the fugue, of the prelude,
 Of the interlude. The art of the gesture. Sit down
 And drink this wine, that wine.

'Did you hear what I said?'
 'Eh? Say it again – I wasn't listening.'
The Art of the Fugue.

An Italian place I know;
 A German place.

The sky's blue with white dots,
Blue dots, orange dots.

The full stop at the end of a
Sentence. The half stop
At the end of the universe.

The road ahead's flat and smooth.

So many hands, a huge surprise: a night
You can write home about. You write about it and
No one answers: no one's received your epistle. You're
St Paul. You write about God and shut your
Eyes tightly. You see one God,
Two Gods. Your life's scattered in various heaps
Around the room. You pick up one heap
And enjoy it. Your childhood, your marriage;
A heap of clothes, a heap of rubbish.
The Sun's scattered in various heaps around your
Garden; so is the Moon. And water awaits you
Along the seashore, in a rock pool.

Peace. A black-and-white photo.
You're tall, old and fat. Your life isn't here;
It's there, somewhere. No one's seen it.

Let's take it and break it. You talk
About your life. You say you're
Living in London. For years you've lived with
Four other people in a shared house.

Share your life with others – with two hundred people.
Your life isn't lonely; your life's multiple.
A polar bear says, 'You're mine.'

You say what you don't say. No one
Will understand you. No wonder.

Wonders are elsewhere: in your neighbourhood,
In your glass, in your glass of water, in
A window where so many people live and
Die.

You don't live; nor
Will you die. There's a spot in the universe
Where nothing happens except yourself.

There's a point, a dot, a sigh. I don't sigh; nor
Do I sign anything. The pond was alive
With frogs. Perhaps it was; I didn't see it. I
Wasn't alive; I wasn't in the pond.
Neither in the pond nor in the pound.
I was in a lake. I'm a plant. You can find me
In freshwater lakes and rivers.

You're fresh. You're as organic as farms
And farmers. You're rivers. You're skies –
Many skies. I'm a pit where you see what
You'll find, whatever you do, whatever
You're looking for. A shallow pit, a body.

That's it. No it. There are two lives: one's here,
The other there. I'll walk from one life
To the other. I see the other life. I tell it, 'You're it.'
It doesn't answer. I go back and tell the first
Life, 'You're nothing.' It says, 'I'm nothing at all.' And
I hear a sound I don't hear. The sound
Hears me and the city I've never looked at.

ANOTHER BIRTHDAY

The walls and furniture are a uniform grey. There are
 Uniforms and forms. I strip off the forms
 And hear my childhood and the brook I heard last night, sixty years
 Ago. I hear one drop that's as round as destiny, life and death.

I'll come again. I'll walk around my drop – the only drop of my flood,
 Of my sky, of my morning, cold and jubilant.
 Will you rewind the tape so we can hear it again?

A vision, a woman. Another vision? I'm the prophet
 Of my own happiness. A woman is walking somewhere.
 I saw her yesterday. I won't see her tomorrow.

What's tomorrow? A few hours of light I won't see.
 The light will walk elsewhere – not in my woods,
 On my flowers. A goddess will walk on my river one day,
 On my time, on my sadness and joy.

Another desire. My object isn't everywhere. Again
 I see a river and I don't know where to stop. Should I
 Stop myself or the river? I'm not moving.
 Nothing is moving around me, inside me, except the river I can't
 Talk about: I know nothing about it. I know it's a river or
 A brook. It's neither time nor space. It's water
 Or it isn't. You play one note and listen to it. Is it
 A river, a lake, a sleeping pill, a landscape where two
 Animals play a game I know nothing of?

Days are not. There are only minutes
 And slaves who bring you these minutes every night.

Nights are full of minutes, notes and trees I can't see
 Because they're far away. I'll embrace a tree
 Or a twig. I'll embrace the crown of a hill, of a king, of a queen, of a head.
 I'll see what lies under my feet and flies over Mount Fuji
 And Hokusai.

There's a cloud that flies over God.

This is it. I hold it. It is green, blue,
White. It is everywhere. Yet
I hold it. It doesn't smile; it doesn't speak.

I know you hum in the background.

Patience and love.
What else do we need?
A book is everything
And nothing.
Just patience and love. A few
Words.

I thought it was important. It is
Somewhere. If it is, it is important.
There are dots, drops and nods. You nod
When you see a face, an angel. And
Many angels answer you.
You have many answers. What to do
With them? You nod your head sagely.
You don't nod. 'Not' is better.
Or nothing at all. A note is better; D Minor.

I like what I like and what I don't like
I don't. There are leaves. If I look around,
I see. My eyes answer me. I don't ask
Anything. Why do they answer?
I don't need answers and planets. They go on the screen
Of my eyes. And I answer their questions, their
Answers, their nonsense. And my answers tell me
What they want to say, not my thoughts.

They don't tell me my thoughts. So I have
To have my own thoughts. I have them.

The snow came down during the night.
So did my body and the rest. And silence.

'Yes' isn't a word. You don't say
Anything. You walk; the universe walks.
Can you see any difference?

My difference is here, on this wall.
I'll hang my picture on this wall, on this
Star and scar. Everything's beautiful.

Play for me, my dear. What can you play for
Me and anybody else? An old tune,
An old lullaby. I won't sleep. I won't.

My tongue. I say: 'A European Declaration
Of Independence.' I say that and I listen
To what I say, to what I don't say. I'm independent;
So are they. So are the clouds I don't see. But
There are always some clouds, somewhere and
Nowhere. So I say there are some clouds.

I am right; so are they. So is a glass of wine
I'll never drink. So are they; so is it. It.

Don't tell us the truth, not all of it.
A part, a part. You're my truth, the whole
Of it. I tell you what you are. Just listen
To what you are. I'm not. Don't listen to me, to
What I move as I move. I move; I'm still
Capable of moving. All right, I'll move as long as
I can move. I'll move. My movement
Will move. I'm the first mover, the second.
How many movers are there? I need one.

Let us move towards you and them. I'd like to
Move in *their* direction. Yours truly.

It is not right. Right and left. Don't play.
Plays are out of places. And places are out
Of words. So we'll work together
Until we die. We die. So what? We die and work.
There are many places in Paradise where
You can work while sitting on your
Bench. Sit on your bench and work. Sit, walk,
Jog and sing. That's your job.

Sing your baby to sleep every night.

You too. You're not Brutus. You kill
Another Caesar, another Brutus, another
Cassius. The whole world is
At your disposal. I am this world.
Kill my melody. Not my harmony, not my
E flat Major; not my G Minor.

You don't like; nor do I.
What's there to like? A picture,
Another Madonna. I like her, him,
It, yet. I kneel down.

Two hours; two hearts.
I've got two hearts, two souls.
One name.

You say, they say; so do I.
Heaven isn't down yet. It is up,
Sideways.

So many gods hang
In our wardrobes.

You choose one god,
Two women. They're on
Your floor.

So many floors. All of them are
Full of gods and goddesses.

An empty floor; an empty god.

You know me. They all know
Bodies and names. They know what
Happens elsewhere. There are
Happenings. You're ready;
You're asleep. Your arms are soft;
They're liquid. You pour the dark brown
Liquid down the sink, your brain,
Your soul. The transition from liquid to vapour.
The transition from vapour to liquid.
Another transition. Another.

I happen elsewhere. I see my eyes. I don't
Recognise myself. What's there to recognise?
Three features; two thoughts. I recognise one thought.
Here it is. This is a thought, nothing else.
Here it is. I stroke it, strike it.

My thought is just a word and I write this word
Down, up. I write other words; I write myself. I read my-
Self and translate this self, another self.
I'll always translate. Forever.

I've written about you and you.
You're made of multiple copies.
I hold one of your copies. Just

A copy, a copy. A note, a chord.
 I play this chord, this note, this
 Name. I'll play it, it, them, Thou.

Three, three. I say, 'Four.'
 I am wrong and right. All numbers
 Are right. I'll count them for
 Years and years; for numbers and
 Numbers. You're a number, a digit;
 So am I.

So are people. They're words –
 Words, numbers. Both.
 I am one. Both. Three.
 Nine.

I don't need your worlds. One
 Corner. I stand up and sit down.
 My body does something else.

We all lie on a beach,
 On a bench,
 In front of the fire.

I hear. What's inside? Outside?
 Drops, sounds, nothing.
 I hear your heart. Beating. A non-stop
 Flight to eternity. Stop, stop. Listen
 To my time, to my sonata,
 To my wicked, narrow soul.

A speck. Some dust, some poems.
 Where are they? I see, hear and stretch out
 My hand. My hand listens to the world,

To what I call the world. No haikus,
 No nature. Another man listens to the sound
 Of a rushing stream. Another cat was
 Stretching in front of the fire.

I love one woman.

I'll go to other worlds.

She is a sea.

A boat, a bird
 Flying under us.

Singing, singing.

A line. I'll go, I'll go.
 You're my goal.

I know this object. I describe
 Everything, the world.

If I know my hand, I know
 Everything – the anti-world.

My description of the worlds:
 My, my, my, my, my.

I was, I am. My landscape is sheathed
 In ice. I put this ice in glasses, in glaciers,
 In nature. You should see my garden in
 Summertime. Ice, ice, ice.

A glass. My ice, my face. My truth.

Black. No room for blackness. The sky is white;

So is the Earth. My angst is white. The rest
 Is what you like and as you like. Do you like it?
 Do you like my Venice, my merchants?
 Do you like my blood?

It sings a song.
 I can't sing it.
 I'm listening.

Here is there. A handkerchief, a neck.
 I am you and you are him and her.
 The sky is a smile, a tear, two angels.
 They're crying, smiling and laughing.

What's in my hand? A gift. Near my
 Heart. I'll unwrap my heart to receive it.

It's in my heart. Do I feel it? I feel
 A gift, a poison, a life I'll never live.

I'll die in *my* life. But my
 Life won't die: it's not mine.

Empty. One atom, two. I see two eyes,
 A glance, a thought. I see a thought.
 This thought is very simple, 'Two.'

There are two thoughts, three thoughts.
 There are three landscapes and cities.
 I choose one city. I'll live there forever.

Don't say, 'This is the City of God.'
 This isn't even a city of men. Just
 A city, a square, a street where I live.

We fly downstairs. The stairs are long,
Wide and narrow. They're our stairs, stages,
Mummies. We're flying down our own
Corpses. Or up. I can't stand up
So I can't fly up my own corpse. Or down.
I can only glide over it. Now and then.

My armband isn't black. There are funerals
But I don't take part in them. I let them
Go in all directions – to Hell and Paradise.

People go; so do coffins, muffins
And the rest. What remains of it?
My armband and high blood pressure.

Many other pressures: from governments,
From wives and husbands, from their wives.
And there are many pressures under them.

I watch TV. My TV set watches my life.
I go to a black wood – not to the Black Forest.
I whistle as I walk. The air listens and whistles.

What is open will be closed, shut. It's already
Shut: a big eye, a box of chocolates, a gate.
What's beyond these shutters? Other shutters,
Boxes, houses where no one has ever lived.

What are they doing today? Waiting, talking
To passers-by. These don't talk; they pass me
On some stairs and piers. I look and see their
Clothes, not their faces. They've got no faces.

Three times, four times. There are times where
You repeat one time, one gesture, one thought.
Let me repeat this thought. Which one? Do I have

Many thoughts? Just one. I can't express it,

Nor can I describe its contents. Just a laser beam.
 What's this beam about? About itself, about light,
 About night. So I write these words and lie down.
 I listen to my beam, nights and the rustle of papers.

I'm thinking about Brahms' *Third Symphony*.
 Should I think about music? When it appears,
 I need only my body and soul, not my thoughts.

So I don't think about it any more. What I
 Feel is the absence of this *Symphony*,
 Of my life in it. Of its existence anywhere.

My body is falling apart. At last I see
 What I can't feel. I *see* this *Symphony*,
 Its melodies and harmonies. Its body.

I'm getting up the ladder that reaches
 This *Symphony* – Brahms himself.
 One of the steps on the ladder is broken.

At last what should be done is done.
 What's done is undone. Again silence,
 Two silences, three of them.
 If you hear four silences, you die.
 I'm alive so I can hear only one silence, two
 Absences, two bodies that are no more.

I hear their breaths. Their hands rummage
 Around my house. They might be
 Looking for me, for my face. Where
 Are my face, eyes and mouth? They're shut,
 Aren't they? Three and a half silences.

A barren landscape. Just a ball.

A kitten curls itself into a ball.

I want this book. It's not on my shelf;
Nor is it in any library. It's in heaven and yet
It's not a book of God. And it
Can't be found in the City of God.

There are other cities and some of them
Belong to God. And many of those books were
Written by God Himself: you recognise His
Handwriting, His majestic style.

I'm looking for a badly written book
In which one word is true.

A blur. Not a blur – a clear image.
I can see, admire and touch it.
I know the image I am
Talking about is so clear I can
Touch, kiss and worship it, singing
An oratorio in its presence.

It's anywhere, anyway.
I'll sing and hear myself.
If I don't, I won't be
Able to perfect my art
And that of the Almighty.

Water. Music. Some music. Where does it
Come from? From water. Everything
Comes from water or fire. Everything comes
From nowhere. This nowhere is fire and
Water and air. There are other nowheres. They
Come from nothing or from everything.

Everything comes from everything or

From nothing or the middle ground.
 Everything occupies the middle ground or
 Nothing. And nothing is my breath.

A tune, a colour. This sound is
 Transparent: I can hear its bones,
 Sinews, nerves, capillaries, blood.

I'll leave at the break of dawn.
 I'll hear whatever there's to hear:
 The sun, the sky, a loaf of bread.

I am thin and sick. My body doesn't
 Answer questions. Your questions
 Travel and don't stop. There are cities
 Where questions can be answered.
 I don't know these cities. There are
 Landscapes where there's only one
 Question. I am a tree in this landscape.

Where does this come from? There are
 Sundays and Mondays. And time is up and
 Down. There are horizontal times;
 There are flutes and clarinets. They all
 Play the melody of time. It is short:
 Just one note that lasts. I can't play it.

I am here. It is a room, a house, a tree.
 I live in this tree. I know a lot
 About my winds, my gods, my secrets. I know
 All of them. There are secrets that are more
 Secret than others. I know them too.

I don't know what happens under my fingers. Something

Happens in the air where my fingers feel at ease.

A lot happens in the air, after the death
Of the air.

You're not what you are: a constellation,
A woman. I don't know you. I know
A few constellations, a restaurant where we
Dined together, drank together.

A star, a bed, our love. I was mad.
I'm still mad; you're far away. You're
A constellation I don't see in the sky.

You're a constellation the gods hide
In the ocean, in a brook. You're water,
Air and my dinner, my breakfast.
You grip my finger with your tiny hand.

The ceiling is downstairs; so is the sky.
The sky is not and there's nothing
Above my feet. I walk on water, air and ether.
I walk over other dimensions. They're not:
No dimensions, no directions. A rosebud, a bunch of
Roses. I'll give them to you, to your brothers and sisters.
There are roses in other gardens. I know
Those gardens. They look at me, saying, 'There are
Flowers we know nothing about.'

I'm not free. There's freedom in other
Mountains. People dance and sing. There are
Other nymphs, other triangles.

I know one square. This square is small;
I can hear its music, its madrigals.
Music comes out, goes down, up, left, right.

Music doesn't go; nor does it come.

My element. Life is one or nothing;
 An atom, love. An atom can love.
 A worm loves the Earth; the Earth loves
 Worms. Love is a hymn, a song, a melody.
 A melody's the Earth. I wish I could be
 Your harmony – the only animal
 On your surface. I'll eat your grass,
 Roots and seeds; I'll drink your blood.

There are several strings. A guitar, a violin?
 Time is not a string; I can't hear it. I can hear
 A sound and I know it is not time.

This sound doesn't stop. I look at my watch.
 It is not time; it is a sound. This sound is my destiny,
 My thoughts. I can't measure my thoughts.
 My destiny is very short – as long as my fingers.

I look at a book I'll never read. I'll read only
 My life, my moment. This moment is mine;
 I'm reading it. There are several letters. I don't understand
 Two of them. The word is elsewhere;
 I'll go and look for it. I'm looking around and find
 A lot of words. They aren't mine. They're mine.

A forest of symbols. One symbol explains my life.

Yesterday is no enigma; my bed is an object. I live outside
 This and that. No symbols, only objects and subjects:
 Life, death, Peter, Paul, Mary, Perry, a chest of drawers.

There are many chests of drawers, many

Lives. You open them and find many letters,
 Many photographs. Your life is in your hands. Your hands
 Are looking for your life: in your pockets, in your
 Cupboards. You find a glass and pour some wine in it.

You drink to your health, your death, to the women and men
 You've never loved or met; to the next desire.
 What is it? Another letter, a word; a glass of water.

A book is on another shelf; a library, a sea.
 So many drops and words. I'm imprisoned in the light
 And darkness. There are only shades: a shade
 Of light, a shade of men and women who mill around
 The town square.

One shade will encompass the world if you
 Think in terms of shades and shadows, leaving aside
 Bodies, minds, souls, sinews, nerves
 And the unconscious.

Only shades and shadows – and a river flowing
 Down into the ocean, down the hillside,
 Up the hillside.

I give my word and it goes where it wishes.
 Who can hold a word? An itinerary, a route
 No one will ever follow to the bitter end.

Another time, another route. A wheel comes
 And goes. It is the dial of my wristwatch.
 Can you read what it says on the dial?

The mixture of life and no-go areas.
 Another birth, another town I don't know.
 Another throne on which I'll never sit.

You separate light from darkness. You always do

What cannot be undone. As if there was only
 Light in the world; or darkness. What about your face
 I'll never see? I see the sun, your god,
 My god, the Almighty. There are no puppets, no strings
 You can pluck. Sing the end of the world.
 Find your guitar and sing about love, about ends
 And beginnings. A beginning
 Never shows signs of recovery if there are no
 Beginnings in the offing.

I begin your face and the wall on which
 Nothing is written. I'll hang my love on it.

There are objects, nerves, skins. They survive
 Because they have nothing to do. Why not
 Devote one's life to life instead of gutters and ditches?

There are lots of lives in ditches, but I stroll
 Along my avenue and look at those who don't hear
 My rhythm, the beat of my drum.

I dance to the beat of my drums and my violins
 Speak about my anguish and the tears I shed
 Twenty years ago, thirty years ago.

A dot.

I'll always look at it
 To see how it becomes
 A word, a sentence,
 A book, a sunbeam,
 The Milky Way,
 A car zooming off.

Signs, signs, signs. They show your life,

An improvement. The worst is over. There's a sign
That says it's over. You believe in God, in this
Sign. You live happily ever after.

After what? After an earthquake, after the love
You feel in your heart after departures and
Whatever can happen in the wake of yesterday's bomb attacks.

You feel the spring, the summer, the winter
And all the apples you peel.
You'll take a bite out of an apple.

There are landscapes; I can't hear them. What are
Trees? They're just trees, not sounds.
Their branches fall on me as I walk among
Leaves and falls and grassy knolls.

I'm looking at you. We disengage from
The chaos of life. We don't look any more. Only
An insect goes between us: a go-between,
A sunbeam, my son, a zero-sum game.

So many tomorrows. Yesterday gathers blackberries
From the hedgerow and nothing comes. Only
Birds come, fly or sing. They don't know what they sing
About. A few songs; they don't mean
Anything. The sun will rise; it's rising already.

The sun is a god; I'll walk around it.

I go towards a wall. So pure is the air.

The air is nothing: a few atoms, a few Adams
Who want to live and eat forbidden fruit.
They float out to sea: Adams, fruit, fates, mothers,
Helens of Troy. There are love
And hate, toil and oil. Another month

Of May.

What didn't I know? My brain, my arms.
 My body knew me but I lost my body, my sinews.
 There are skies overhead and they talk about
 My soul. They know my soul better
 Than I do. I do, I do. I'll become another
 Insect. I'll crawl as far as Saturn where there are
 Rings and yins and yangs. I'll live with them;
 I'll cry in their presence. And joy
 Will tell me what it doesn't speak about
 On Earth, in the middle of the night,
 In the middle of hearts, round the clock.

My memory doesn't call me any more.
 No calls, no balls I can kick. I don't kick anything.
 What shall I do? I'll sit down and watch a film
 About myself. In the film I raise my arm
 And pick up a statuette. I drop it and die. A film, another fiction,
 Another tragedy I'm not involved in. I'll leave all
 Tragedies behind; they're in the middle of nowhere.

Where's nowhere? In the middle of myself.

But I'll go out and see what happens hereafter
 In freshwater lakes and rivers, on marble columns and scrolls.
 Sing me a song about letters and rhymes.

They're far away. I don't know who they are.
 What, what, what. Places, lands,
 Some women. They're all far away and I
 Can't do anything about it.

The coastline recedes into the distance
 Until finally it becomes invisible, inaudible.

What can I do about it? Another
Drop of water; other oceans and islands.

Not a map, just a sheet of paper.

There are songs I don't hear. They're in the air,
In the Earth. I kneel down and listen to my own prayers.

How eloquent they are! A blade of grass
Listens to it; one blade. Shall I eat it? Shall I eat the clouds
I look at as I pray? Everything's inside me: clouds,
Gods, blades of grass. I sing a hymn
And silence answers my question. My question,
My answer, my nothing, the pebble I pick up.

People, things and others. There are always
Others, even if everything is here, everybody, every
Bush. Others. I touch them. They're mine.
They're my love and my raison d'être.

Raisons. I touch them too. Life isn't far away:
I touch what's inside it. I'm outside as usual and
People think what they think. And lakes look at us
Saying: 'You're not humans. You're lakes.'

I split two seconds into three groups.

One second is not what it seems to be, whenever
I think about one second. It is time, the whole
Of it. Within one second you see your
Death and birth – the birds flying over your
Cradle, your tombstones. Many birds, one tomb,
One song. This song resounds everywhere.

One note, one pyramid.

You're not your own thoughts. They wander around
The old part of the city, the old part of history.

They wander and never stop. They stop and see
Themselves. You're Caesar and Brutus.
What can't you play? You play the piano and any part
Our history offers you. You're not Hamlet.
You are yourself. Play your part, die and come
To my room where there are many Caesars and scissors,
Where there are many suicides and births.

Come, come. Let me see your face.

YOUR BETRAYAL

You're my partner. Not a goddess, just a partner.
You hold my hand and I listen to the rain that never leaves
My window pane in peace. What's 'peace'? Another
Window pane, another rain – the rain I can't
Hear. Raindrops fall on me but I walk around my
Garden, my Eden.

Let the drops fall till
Doomsday. I'll say, 'Not guilty.' A drop will fall
On the sheet of paper where my paradise is
Written. Another drop, another paradise, another woman,
Another escape route. Another Haydn quartet.

You're not here. You were, you were.

Another stretch of sand.
How could I tell these molehills
Apart? Sand, water. I live on these
Elements. I'm an element myself. I breathe
An element and atoms come and go.

Let us go to Andromeda. I'll find you, my love,
 My knowledge. You're nothing. I'll find your
 Nothing, your Notung, your eyes.

A damaging split within my brain.
 Rain is getting in through it. It's better to have one arm
 Where everything happens. You pluck a chord
 And your soul comes out and salutes
 The universe. One hand, no splits, no Greeks
 With their Trojan horses. You listen to the sound
 That gives you respite from
 Life and love and neighbours. Listen, listen. A word will come too;
 You have to wait for a while. Wait, wait.

A plain, no rain, no Spain. Just a stretch of coast.

Some very rare birds inhabit
 Our stretch of the river.

Rivers, coasts, insects. What is not will always
 Talk about its absence. And I'll talk to you
 About my love. Do you know I don't love
 Anybody, not even myself? Love's labours.

My stretch of the river; I cannot see it from where I stand.

Tell me what you cannot tell. What's in your brain, in your mouth?

A few words I know already. I've known them for many
 Years. But the years go by and I don't remember anything, any word,
 Any smile, any tear. Why don't you cry? You used to cry as often
 As I wanted you to cry. All is over and images have been removed from
 My dictionaries, my memories, my notebooks. No more images;
 Only you and I, again and again. What do you want?

My love isn't available. I'll go to you and put my hand on your face.
 You love others – him and her and it. My hand is on your eyes.

What can you find in a city? You'll find your child,
Your music, your tragedy and comedy.

Your door is locked and barred. There are no other doors.
You stay within yourself. You open your memory, your senses.
What do they say to you? They don't say anything.
They're within your body. You call it what you wish: the body, the soul,
The mind that knows something is wrong. You call it 'myself'.

And you dissolve a spoon of yourself in warm water.

Several times. And every time is another time,
Another earth, another volcano. You live within fire and water;
They paint you. There are nothing but paintings, sculptures
And drawings. Which drawing to choose? You're in
Black and white. Today you're black; so are the sun and
The stars. You go towards yourself; you see a white mirror and look
Beyond it. You catch a tantalizing glimpse of the sparkling
Blue sea through the trees. A faded blue shirt.

Fingers, fingers. Something slips through my fingers.
I'm asleep. I won't see either my death or anything you know.
You know; you're not God. You're just you, the other.
I take hold of your fingers; they stroke my face, my fate.

What else do you need? You need nothing; you're a god after all.
It's so easy to live with the gods. They don't say
Anything; they give no orders, no gifts. They're grains of sand,
Of rice – mayhem, mayonnaise, May Days, mayflies.

How to tell you apart? You're wonderful – a sculpture, a way.
You stretch in front of me. I go and see only myself, my feet, my shoes.
There are your parts. Are they you? Everything is you.

There come a red sea and a red comet. I catch them, walk through them.

Life's one and two and three. There are rays and sunbeams.

How to choose between them? What's there to choose? Only atoms,

Molecules, particles. One love, two loves. A new idea.

These plants are found in freshwater lakes and rivers.

Lost and found. I found my happiness, my unhappiness.

You look and don't look. Another spring, another winter.

They're faithful to me, to my house. I welcome them;

They drink to my health. Another look, another pair of eyes.

You go away. A pack of cards. You shuffle the cards

Before you deal them out. The cards shuffle you.

Fair play, fair trade chocolate. Another slice of cake.

Tomorrow morning. I am free, I go in circles.

My circles go as far as Saturn. One word will

Save my soul. My soul is one word, one letter.

So many souls will come tomorrow.

I'll live through days and moons and dooms.

I'll become your own self, your hair.

No one. One, one, two. What's the catchword?

You swim in one of the lakes I haven't seen.
I've lost you – your mountain, your absence
I can't forget. So what? There are brooks. They'll
Bring me to another landscape, another pair of sheets.

There are landscapes and clowns. I'll listen to them;
I'll watch their games. I'll utter their names.

I'll collect my joys. It was clear and frosty.
Once again I lost my keys. Yesterday, yesterday.
So many things took place last night.
A dark, starlit heaven. I'll light another heaven, another
Childhood. I'll collect my toys. Here's a smile.
There was the faintest trace of a smile on my lips.

Death is a door, a cave, a cellar, a stalactite.
It is the end; many ends await you.

Your twilight is generous. Look at its hands.

I haven't had champagne for a long time.

Chekhov

Ulysses. Does he go back? He does; so do I.

My motherland, the country where I was born. I am born
In this country every day. Today is my birthday.

Where are the sirens? I'll die in your arms, in your song.
Even my sailors sing a song. I'll sing it
Too. I'll die and sing a song, two songs. Penelope will listen
To my agony, my Monteverdi, my glass of champagne.

A dawn, a twilight. Another day, an hour. What shall I do
With one hour? I know what to do with one minute.
I'll write two words and look at them. An hour is too long for
Two words. It is too long for a woman I love, I don't
Love. A bird will come and say what is long and short.
My life is short and long. One hour, ten minutes, eight seconds.
Two women, three beds, a pair of legs I don't recognise.

Beauty. Too much. I don't know what I mean.
What's the meaning of the letter 'm'? What about 'a'?
A, a, a. I hear the sound. Is it a sound?
A letter, an echo, a call. You call me, you
Call someone else. And someone else answers
The call. I listen to your calls and
Answers. Your harmonies get lost in my hemispheres.
Only I, my heart, my hand that grasps all heavens.

No roads. A sign, a road sign. Somewhere.
You say it is somewhere. It is nowhere; you know
It is nowhere. So many signs. You pick them up
And hold them until they disappear.
Your ways are mysterious; you're God.

You're just an angel. So you go to one of your doors

And open it. The Sun is the *Missa Solemnis*.

I forget the law. And the law
Goes to the lawn and takes more exercise.

I go nowhere. Don't pray for me.
There are prayers in the garden where
Nothing has been said.

There are gardens where you say
What can't be said. The spring.

I said. A star fell down. Just a drop. Many
Drops, many thoughts. Only the profile of a deity
Can be seen. I'll go out. I'll see you
And a mountain I'll never see. What's the use?
You say I'm young. Yes, I'm young. I'm twenty-one.
And one goes behind me. Only one, only
One.

You're not a landscape. The Dark Ages come
And say you are not. I don't love you. Yet
Your melody is *Don Carlos*, La Callas.

Nothing's new. The sun rises every morning,
Every evening. Only the crescent moon.

The here and now. What's now is everywhere – not only
Yesterday and tomorrow. Tomorrow's under my pillow. I look at
The future and find one note, not a chord. One note is what
Has been done. The whole history is within half-a-note. A tree is Napoleon's invasion
Of Russia. I'll look at one leaf. I'll wait for the autumn to come.
It comes and goes. I'm sweeping up leaves in my garden.

What is far? A farewell, another meeting with destiny.
Even destiny is far away.

A spot of ink is near; so is a butterfly.
So many hands are somewhere in the middle,
In the middle of nowhere.

These woods look familiar. I touch them
As I go from one time to another, from p's to q's.

Exit, entrance. There are flowers and nothing.
You choose the middle way that's not exactly in the middle.
You look for it before you pull over onto the hard shoulder.

You find a few flowers, indifference and some future or
Other. You choose the other future and
Go on driving along a ravine where you'll never lie.

You'll only die in this ravine. What else to do?
You can live of course. You live in a meadow, in a five-star hotel
Where there are no personnel, only statues. Never mind –
They'll bring you coffee, champagne and a bathrobe.

You'll go to your bathroom and drown in the sea
Adorned with rose petals, childhood, youth and eternity.

That's too long perhaps. Not long, just boring. My lights
Will go out, my fairy lights. What's not is right here.
Greenery will swallow birds, desires and whatever's exposed to the sun.

The sun is on the brink of a disastrous famine. Flames
Go out and in. I'll sit on a stump and look at the nearest leaf, life, loaf of bread.
There are loaves of bread in the sky and I'll take them down as if
There were no sky, no moon, no heights and dizziness – only caverns
And animals painted everywhere.

They painted you, only you.

You go, I go, the sky moves. A cloud stays somewhere –
In a room I'm supposed to sleep in. I sleep
With the cloud, with a clown who tells me all about his colleagues
And Fellini. Where are my circuses? I'll look at a screen all my
Life. I'll find my rails, my trains, my stationmasters.
We'll leave forever; we'll stay. A puppet will tell us what
To do. And I'll put my skirt on the wrong way round. My shirt, my requiem.
I'll sing my woman, my yin and yang, my yawn and violin. What do I
Play? Myself and other cheeks, love, hatred, gods and precepts
That float on the Dead Sea, the Left Sea, the Right Air.

The end of a thread. That thread is not finished. It's just
Over. The end is not death. Any thread goes
Beyond as if Penelope were still among us, not far
From the sea where Odysseus looks for adventures. Any thread
Is a threat and the life I lived last year. I can see it above my
Bed. It is life, isn't it? A thread I'll bless as I go on and on.

Look at your hands; take them to your heart.
Embrace yourself heartily, warmly, tenderly.

A young day will grow old in the future. Not today,
 Not tomorrow. Our horizon won't go away either tomorrow
 Or next year. They all stand together and I say, 'A, B, C.'
 Something comes and heaven goes up and down;
 So does a goddess. She's on the swings and nothing will ever be called the Earth.

Your blue skirt is in the sky. A blue skirt in the sky with
 Pearls. Sing this song! Sing it until you grow weary of yourself.

You say what I don't hear. The notes of your music
 Go outside, but there's nothing outside, not even
 A sound I could hold. Where could I hold it? Not in my hands,
 In my heart. I'll hold it in between myself
 And whatever's inside: a dragonfly, the Tristan chord.

Again, again. And drops follow their itinerary, only one
 Itinerary. There are herbs and waters. They talk
 About my fingers and souls. What do my souls have to do? Only
 Talk about other souls. They feel nothing else. They
 Fumble around in the dark. My fingers don't stroke anything.
 There's an insect whose wings I'll neither see nor hear.

An empty hand. All is full except hands.
 They're raised and the air can't hold them. Nothing
 Can hold them. What's on the right-hand side?
 No clouds, no flowers. Even swans don't float towards
 The open air. The air isn't closed; and yet
 You don't say what you want to say. And many
 Days don't celebrate our birthdays.

No floors, only underground caves and bridges
 I can cross in search of other bridges, passages, roads.

They lead to moles that live underground;
 So do cherries. I shake a cherry tree and the snow

Begins to fall. A blanket of snow. I can sleep and dream.

My tomorrow has come already. I've found
Eternal youth, eternal death, mothers and fathers.

Go on. The sky continues to fall and you're greeting it
With open arms. You don't have a drop of water.
You thought you felt a drop of rain – yesterday, at twilight.

Go away! You're too slow for this world.
You're a drop that can't fall and feed the Earth. You're not her son;
The Earth isn't your mother. She might have been your nurse.

A child was born. There are papers and signatures.

There are no clouds, only stars here and there. Where
Was he born, our son? His leaves of grass died
A long time ago. What's alive apart from him,
From time and its signatures? 'Bang! Bang! You're dead!'

You're alive and you feel your way
Along the wall to the door.

Nature is black; green salad is an exception
To the rule. Our new era will begin with this colour.
Then it'll outgrow itself. Even green tea
Might be a beginning, the middle way,
The Middle Ages, middle finger, end product.

We're surrounded by a tall, wooden fence.
A cat is walking along the top of it.
Tops and bottoms. And blue-green algae.

A beautiful face. What to do with it?

Cherry blossom's also beautiful. Beauty shows
What it can't do: it can't become our life.

What's outside will ever be outside. We say:
'It was a lovely day outside.' We look
In a mirror and see what can be seen only
In a mirror. We take an image and kiss it.
Nothing doing. A wing, an angel.

Some wine. A journey to the moon. An old song
I learnt by heart in my childhood. But my childhood no longer
Knows anything. It is a thing, not a body.

The body's here or there. The body was washed up
On the beach last week. I'll look for the body on the beach,
On trees, on Saturn. And a wedding ring will look at me
And say: 'You're not in the church
Where my priest has been waiting for you since Saturday.
Come, come.' I'll come and sing whatever I can sing.
Only half-a-note. Two songs by Schubert.

You split a second and the second bows to you.
There are two seconds now instead of one.
Time is born; so is a star and a black hole.
A black stocking is born but it is dead already.
Where are blue stockings, white stockings,
The stoker I read about in my youth? A tram
Is flying towards eternity. Light overtakes itself.

I am as flat as the Earth. And I don't turn even
When I do turn. Something else turns and goes out,
Looking at the cosmos that always hides itself.

What doesn't hide itself? A rock covered with moss,
An orange lying on my table. I'll hear a smooth
Surface, a dangerous undercurrent, a mirror above
The washbasin, a flat shoe. I'll touch my fingers.

A hail of bullets. Nature is quiet again unless
I confuse peace with nature. This peace
Was found on a pavement two months ago.

This peace is in a shop and the shop is beyond
Airbuses flying under clouds and above rain.
The rain doesn't fly; it goes down and up
As if nothing had happened. It goes right and
No one looks at it. Everyone forgets snow
And water. And water forgets its birthday,
Its wedding ceremony, its baptism of fire.

End, end. Again the right-hand side.
The left-hand side is lost. What is found
Will be lost again. Why can't you
Keep anything? You always lose
This and that. You find yourself and lose
Yourself and others, others.

You've lost so many skies
No one will find them. No one
Will lose them any more.

A THREAD

My night listens to myself; so does
My day. What's the difference? Myself.

I'm different from another time,
Another bottle of wine. I am this drop I'll taste
In a few minutes. Where will it drop?

I know the table around which there are
Knights and kings and wolves. I look at them
From my window sealed for centuries.
I'll look at them from myself, from my blood.

A thread doesn't go anywhere. It's not a narrative: it doesn't
Say anything related to time. Time goes where it wants;
The thread remains where it is. You can weave a shroud or just stare.

You stare at the stars and think they lead somewhere. They
Tell you the story of your life. And your life tells you
Another story. There are no stories, only a paralysis.

You put your hand on yourself and feel the throbbing pain
In your heart. You join your heart out of compassion.

A fissure. Two halves doesn't make a whole. A twig falls
To the ground. The Earth will recognise it
Sooner or later. You recognise your arm, your
Tendons. You stroke them as you think about the Hereafter,
About fires and flutes. And butterflies flutter about
In the sunshine you don't see. You see and touch
Your own soul that adopts you forever.

A window, no light, no night. All nights are shut
And don't speak. You have your language, your tongue, your
Mother. Why don't you speak? I'm used to your silence,
To your nonsense. A hole is more talkative than any hour,

Any colour. Why don't *they* speak? I sit
 In my armchair and look at colours and lines.
 Time hides its secrets on a plate of oysters.

A tune, a few notes. Music again. I can't hear it:
 There's no music in the snow that will not fall.

The snow's falling today. It's not the aria I'd like
 To hear. What's this aria? Rain, clouds, puddles,
 The *Monat* May? My aria, my aurora borealis.

Let them fly away. What's there amounts
 To nothing. My hand is lying on the universe.

A broken tree is a flower that cannot grow.
 They don't grow and cannot die. They're frozen like
 Frozen food. You cannot eat them; nor can you
 Heat them up. They live in a life that has no heat,
 No cold, no warmth. This life has no heart.
 So what? You can live in a life that has no heart, no soul,
 No stomach, no liver, no intestines. You can breathe.

Stones don't know our rules; and our rules
 Govern them. We break the rules and the sun rises
 On the other side of the road. The road
 Is right: we're on the other side too. Where are
 Our wild strawberries? I'll meet you
 And we'll part, a basket full of strawberries, of dreams.

It takes great skill to weave
 A basket from rushes.

Carry me as far as your home.

Stars are red. This is not a colour; it's a vision.
 And vision takes in whatever it can. What?

The world, two worlds, one word. No one has ever
 Seen this so-called vision. Is it a word, a star,
 A chariot, a wound, a ladder, a letter, the Moon?

Three points, dots, figures. I know
 What they mean; so do they, whatever they are.
 They are, they think. I'm sailing
 Down the river. The river does not think.

This is out. You can be out and in. The left bank
 Is on the right-hand side. And neither side
 Has an unfair advantage. They strike a balance between
 A and B. A flying carpet becomes a crawling carpet.

The middle way is right in the middle –
 In between A and B, heaven and earth, soul and body.
 Nostalgia is also in the middle somewhere:
 Life and death are watching it closely, fraternally.

The wind doesn't talk. Others do the talking,
 If need be. There are words and sounds that say: 'Mother,
 Father.' They're born and go out.

They don't die: Brahman, the Brahmins,
 Brahms. His music is eternal; so is his body
 Sitting on a bench. You take a photograph;
 It is eternal too. A dewdrop hasn't dried
 In the sun. One dewdrop, one piece of clothing.

Going up. A lift, a wing. An angel spreads
 His wings. A tree falls down. Up and
 Down, sideways. There are a lot of ways, of roads,
 Of modes. You should switch your body
 To audio mode. Listen, listen, listen. Not only
 Trees are talking tonight. Moles fall in love;

They're rising gently into the air. And toads talk
About the Holy Trinity and unholy trinities.

An army, a man, a woman. You go and
Meet them. You bow to the army, you kiss
The woman's hand. You make a speech.
Someone hears you: an eagle, a sparrow.

You scan the horizon for any sign of the boat.
The boat comes at last; so do the boat people.

A rainbow, a promise. Sing to us, Colonel.
We'll die tomorrow morning, at 10.25.

To split a sunbeam. You get two sunbeams,
Two faces. These faces look at you; so do
The sunbeams. Your response? You say:
'My dear sunbeams and faces, I love you.'

A mirror with its reflection. What can you
Do with it? You break it. It is *your* mirror,
Your bones, your psalm, the song you sang
When Leonardo da Vinci died at Cloux.

You're yourself and a measure
That will never measure anything.

Here's an ocean. You lie down on it.
Can you measure it, its heart rate?
You can only hear your own heart.

You lie down on your life. A sound
Can be heard. You hear it. What else?
Another sound, another body?

Just the summer you can turn like
A door handle. You'll open yourself.

Another light. You just add it to the light
 You know. You learnt it in your childhood.
 Don't forget it.

Why don't you forget anything
 That reminds you of lampposts and
 Rainbows? Lie down. You've left your keys
 In your room; you'll never come back.

Whatever comes back isn't you. It's a ghost or
 A woman who's never loved you. You count
 Your fingers. Count your corpses:
 You've enough fingers for them, for life.

One out of ten; you can say 'eleven'.
 Even twelve makes no difference.

There's no difference between this number
 And that. And *that* was a long time ago –
 In your room, in your brain. Your brain was
 A long time ago. Some crusaders heard it.

You're neither least nor last. You wear
 This evening, that summer, that snow.
 Birds know neither you nor your garments.

Water doesn't know itself. It knows our legs
 And bodies. It doesn't know drops and currents.

Where does this current go? Another traveller.
 What will it bring us? News, old news and stories?

There are stories in our letterboxes and computers.
 One story speaks of death, all others sing a song.

I can translate this song into Russian, into
 Kolobussian. There are languages between lines.
 They speak to each other; they keep our roses.

The myth is over there; I see its outlines.
 Hector and Hercules. They do what they can.
 Women hold jugs of milk. Hercules drinks;
 Others drink as well. The new world was
 Born yesterday. A lot of milk and dinosaurs.
 No one will ever go away. They stay;
 They live among the ruins of God's castles.
 And prophets say they're right and wrong.

Our horizon doesn't hide anything. You can see
 Beyond it, beyond the air, beyond the void.

One tree is outside and you can't find it. You don't look
 For it. You can live without it, without its fruit and branches.

Another earth flies around it. There's a cross on this earth.
 Someone strokes the cross; someone else carries it.

A star doesn't fly. You can't fly all the time.
 You can hang for a while, peacefully, smilingly.

The Sun will stop sooner or later; its fire will stop.
 You can't burn the Earth for 1,000 millennia.

You can burn yourself for several years.
 A blast of cold air will hit you again.

A glass of wine. Your life's attuned to a melody
 You hear beyond music. Sounds lie or stand
 Beyond symphonies and notes. Notes lie down, fall asleep.

You can't hear the sound of life: it's beyond any life,

Even if life is eternal and infinite, immortal.

There's a corner where you'll always find
A poem you don't know by heart. This poem
Doesn't know you either: neither by heart nor
By hearsay.

You're a letter written
Outside sounds and mountains: a gully, a gull,
The sea where one finds a sunken treasure.

A broken tune or flute. The episode's over.
War-time blackouts; peace-time blackouts.

A blackout covers a lawn. Will you mow
The lawn? The blackout speaks to you.

Letters fall at your feet. You go through
Letters and mornings that keep you awake.

What's going on? A morning's going on
And out and up and back. The morning's
Become last night and your place of birth.

Light and colours are off. You switch on
Colours, cameras, TV sets; they function.
You switch them off. A coastal plain doesn't
Know what to do. What does nature tell you?

She tells you everything's green or yellow
Or white; so are you. You adjust to the dry
And monsoon seasons. They leave you alone.
You're alone amidst weathers and feathers.

Look through the bodies flying away.

They fly and say how they've become
Great, insignificant and nobodies.

They're planets that don't know what to do.

They enter black and white holes. They
Go out and become wolves, fairies and diaries.
They write, 'Tomorrow I killed myself.'

I go back. Bach's music: a toccata, a passacaglia.
I listen to the end, to the middle. They say
There's nothing else. They say that in English, in German,
In Russian, in Italian. A cradle opens up and you see
The beginning, the end, the truth and a point
You'll never see nor hear. You hear
What you'll hear again: C Minor, high mountains
Rising above the plain. The plain rises above angels,
Above their beatific smiles, lyres and songs.

You're in another cube or tube. I explore
The lines that may not form a square, a rectangle,
A hole where my word might say a few words.

A symphony goes down. I'll meet you in the second
Chord. You'll sound like Venus or Brutus
And I'll say: 'I've known you for sixty years.'

Warum tomorrow? Let's speak another language:
This one is full or engaged or lost. If you find the loss,
You say the world has been saved. Safe and sound.

A cross-section of the human heart; a bird is looking at it.
The bird will fly away; the heart will stay. Let it stay
Until it breaks or drops or drowns. The sea is hospitable.

Crossroads. How often have I spoken of crossroads?

I haven't met Oedipus: I'm neither his father nor mother.
 I'm no sphinx either. I cross crossroads and go further.
 I don't say, 'I can't go any further, I can't, I can.'

A miracle; I cross it. What do I find inside?
 Another miracle, God. And you're dead, my dear.

Only God, miracles, the tears shed by the Virgin,
 By an icon. Only miracles, flowers and tombstones.

Colours don't show anything. They just say a few words
 Here and there. These words are colourful, as they say. They say
 What colours are about. They talk about symbols.

And symbols get together and make up another life, another
 Grief or happiness that no one can describe in minute detail, in minor
 Keys. A wonder, another god. Let's hold out till next Tuesday.

A series of no-man's lands. There are no lands
 Beyond them – only hills and dales. But there are no
 Lands or clouds. Why do you look up?

Another star, another angel about whom Rilke spoke at length.
 Lands, lands. They're inhabited by angels. These pay you
 Visits and get a lot of messages across.

Everything comes true. What are you waiting for? Keep the truth
 In your pocket, in your wallet. Love is under a bush.

This song is in the key of C. This key is in that song.

Birds don't know anything. Don't listen to them, to their dreams.

Once again. Okay: I'm used to 'once', to 'again'
 And to 'nevermore'. More and never.

Soon the beginning will talk about another middle,
 Another nettle soup. No star falls
 At the right moment, *on* the right moment.

The right moment is there and the star
 Falls over there; so does any meteorite.

The universe sings: 'Black holes, passionate
 And beautiful holes! I used to love and fear you.
 I must have seen you at the wrong moment.'

Two hands, three hands. This second is over.
 Now it's under time or above it. Time's always
 In the middle. You keep it whenever you can.

You didn't take a couple of steps. You stare
 And see a step and a couple. And you talk
 About flights and mornings. They're hidden
 Among twilights. Go away, go west and east.

There will be rain showers in the north
 And a hand will cover you from head to foot.

You're sideways; so am I. Many lines: straight lines,
 Curves. Water doesn't sink. Mountains grow
 And the sky repulses them. Physical attractions are
 Pointless. You come closer and closer;
 Love is further off – as far as another mountain.

You go and climb over a ten-foot wall to get
 Into the garden. What do you need it for?
 A large back garden and a small front garden. You grow
 And outgrow your space. You borrow another space
 And live in space. The Earth is waiting for you.

Roses, Moses. They sound alike. Others, too, sound alike.

So does my lake. My lake doesn't sound of anything.
 Only drops sound somewhere. They're on poles,
 On trees. Let them sound alike; they might be different.

What's different from what I hear and feel?
 Harmony's over there. I'll walk towards it, carrying a few
 Drops of blood, a bloodstream. I've got rivers, lakes.

Truth and falsehood, Sunday and mourning. Why not
 Sunday morning? Other sides are the same sides. Coins
 Have no other dimensions. You look at Caesar
 And there's nothing else: no other sides of the Moon,
 No other Tsars. You go down and clouds forget you.

Don't turn back on yourself. Only your chest, your groin.
 They don't speak about the meadows where
 You lie with your eyes wide shut. Salute your mystery.

Going and flying, cubes and squares. My country, my city,
 My house, the garden where I realised I was somewhere.

You're here. Try not to wake me. I'll sleep until
 Tomorrow, yesterday, next month. I'll fly as far as
 Another morning or evening. This hour knows no one
 Except myself and the squares I've brought to my room:
 Red squares, time squares, out-of-the-blue triangles.

Whatever grows has no roots, no tunes, no statues.

You know colours and sounds; they don't know you.
 They live as if you were away, on another surface where there are
 No sounds, no men, no music. You sing your song. It's not
Your song. You've borrowed it from a frog, from a comet you can't see
 From where you stand, from where you lie dead.

They saw it once upon a time; they waged wars on other
 Countries. Mantras. You pray to their gods. Only a game of bridge
 Can save you; or a prelude, an interlude. Another law or lawn.

‘Will you ever die, Mother?’ What time
 Does it get dark in the winter? I don’t know.

‘Are you my mother?’ There are mothers everywhere.
 This flower is neither a man nor a woman.
 I touch it and feel the softness of my daughter’s cheek, of my son’s
 Eyes. They’re soft; so is his voice. I hear his love and many
 Leaves. They don’t say farewell. Why should they?

I’m not this lake. Why do they doubt this water?
 It’s dark. What’s transparent? Only some plastic boxes
 Are. Even glass walls and bottles are not.

My soul isn’t transparent either; I’ll give it to you.
 What will you do with it? It’ll tell you
 About my loves and moves; I’ll move my king and die outdoors.

I’ll find the snow I forgot in my cradle,
 In my own womb. Shall I curse my body?

What’s nowhere? Neither nothing nor the cloud
 You see overhead and elsewhere. Nowhere’s right here,
 In the neighbourhood, in a detachable hood.

You come and you know where you are. You recognise not only
 Yourself but your neighbours, your coats, your coat of arms.

Your ancestors came over with the Conqueror.
 What have *you* conquered? Not even a will-o’-the-wisp.

Your memory is on the seashore – in a pebble, in a puddle.

Don’t knock on your gate; no one has ever been

Murdered. A drum, a drum, am-stram.

You spoke once; a half of what could have been done.

You do it. You stop and split your mind open.

It's so easy to be here, asking yourself, 'Why am I there?'

You're reality, part of it. Which part?

The one that's nearer to your heart or your hat.

A sparse audience. You play either Beethoven's sonatas or
Shakespeare's tragedies. They all sound alike.

There's only one sound that sounds like itself.

These languages do not speak. What are they for?

They're languages; they fill up gulfs and golf links.

They go mountain-climbing. They go, come, fly and

Disappear. One player uses one language;

Another looks up. What else? What else could be done?

You could look down or spring into action. You spring and cut;

You do and lie down. A bed accepts your body and thoughts.

You don't know the bed; it accepts you. A short-term

Happiness, joy, torture, eternity. Sleep at night with all these worries

On your mind! Sleep and dream, sleep and dream.

You've found the object. Others' objects aren't looking at you.

They don't know you and have no idea

Of what you are. What belongs to you is here –

In front of you. You pick it up and go away. Go away,

Go away! Anyway, you won't find anything, not even a shadow of

This shadow, of that shadow. You'll spend your life counting king's money.

Let him count his wives, his sons and mistresses.

You count calories and a melody drops into your still life

From the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

They don't want. Where and how? You take a loaf of bread.
No symbols, only loaves of bread and *bred* – delirium in Russian.

A young woman holds some bread, *bred* and everything.
You're welcome. You eat bread and drink water, wine, poisons.

Does heaven say anything? You were born in Moscow;
You'll die. Beethoven's dying words are said to have been
'I shall hear in heaven'. What does he hear?
A concerto in A Major and his mother, his daughter.

'I love you.' You play a cadenza. Nothing else.

I know the unknown, the unseen. I see
What can be seen and heard and touched. I smell it.
All my senses are attuned to what I can't destroy.

I murder my senses and feel only myself;
Nothing interferes. It's their problem, not mine, nor Thine.
It's not God's problem. I'm inside my body, my sinews.
I welcome them; they welcome me. We're at one on every
Issue. There isn't a grain of truth in anything we say.

We'll sing our anthem. I see Thy comet, Thy star,
Thy superstar, supernova. *Umeret' ne novo*.
Dying is increasingly commonplace in this life.

The Earth is not a poem. You step on it; you walk
On it, on whatever is called our Earth, our mother, our daughter.
You kiss her, as the Russians do when they come back at last.

I won't come back; I'll never kiss the Earth or anybody
Else. My lips aren't suited for it. I won't kiss the air, two angels, three
Gods, four demons, four horsemen. Where do they
Come from? From our stables; they're stable boys. You won't
Die, whatever you do. No one threatens you with a gun.

The world will end neither in December 2012, nor in
January, February. Eat your cake and have it.

Another cake. A beef tomato, some mozzarella.

A ray, the rain. My atoms know what to do;
They do what they can. They collide
With other atoms, molecules, bodies, souls.

Two souls collide and say: 'I love you.'
You believe them. You're also a soul
So you understand what other souls feel.

A stone knows the soul and the sky:
Both are immortal. What time
Does the Moon rise? Tomorrow morning.

Nothing comes of it, of them, whoever
They are. I don't know identities. Only one sphere
Governs the world. We are inside
This sphere, this ball of fire. And our wall is over there;
The Chinese have nothing to do with it.

This wall is also a sphere, an isosceles triangle.
We are lost and found. It's better not to touch
Space. We'd better not play with it, sleep with it.
Let us put up our tents and make a *small* fire.

Farewell is not a word; it's water. It flows
And doesn't flow: a river or a lake.

I'm a lake. I don't say farewell to my
Mistresses. They die by themselves; no one
Says they should die, go astray, far away.

The world is too large for love, friendship,

The Buddha. You can't preach to everyone.

You preach to yourself a piece of music.

I know what's done and no one says I'm wrong,
I'm right, I'm in the right. There are writers, scribblers
And God. There are dancers too. Where are they?

Tonight no one dances. There's a song I hear.
I hear many songs. They say I am what I am.
I am not. But any birth is my self, my shell.

Today is tomorrow, a cloud. I am time but
Nothing is as it should be: clouds aren't clouds
And there are Hamlets in our hamlets.

Churches play with themselves as if God
Were a toy. I'm losing my joy. It's beyond
My screen, my scream – beyond my reach.

I teach a few words: Don't eat beans,
Don't pick up whatever has dropped.

Don't pray to yourself.
There are other prayers.

Barriers and cherries. They drop; they all
Drop as if aware of what's going on.
They are not. We are staring
At the house opposite where no one lives or dies.

They say this is *the* house, the only one.
All other houses are *not*. We are staring at it.
We are weary; everything's weary.

The landscape suffers from fatigue
And a stress-related illness.

Let it suffer and enjoy itself.

A solar eclipse. There are suns and moons
Everywhere. They hide themselves;
They reappear. They're not the same but we do
Recognise them, for there's nothing else to recognise,
To worship, to consult, to say goodbye to.

And their children play in our gardens.
These gardens are blessed, but we don't live longer;
We don't live at all. And the years we don't spend on Earth
Must be floating somewhere. Are they flying?
Are they flying saucers or flying foxes?

Sounds talk and stop talking. They're not
Mute, though: they're never mute.
What are they talking about tonight? The air
Has withdrawn; so has the music of the spheres.

There are words everywhere, but they don't
Talk. I listen to myself. A sound at last –
My sound, my heart. A drop in the ocean.

There are no soundtracks: all sounds have come to the fore.
They're here; you can touch them. You touch them and
They answer. You write down their answers. You've got your sacred
Books. What will you do with them? You'll recite these books
To the younger generation. Your wisdom is a straight line, a curve, a square.

Your disciples are in this square now. They're listening
To God. Many gods speak to them from triangles,
From rivers. They swim in those rivers and light touches their hair,
Their thoughts. There's only one page; it is not luminous.

A mixture of new and old songs. What's there apart from songs?
 They're new and old; they're lives, hearts,
 Bodies and a vaulted room. I've no idea where I'm sitting –
 Perhaps in this room, in the hall where there are many statues.
 Many philosophers talk about other worlds, morals.

I know you're far away, in the past or future.
 You're a song I can't hear; I just sing it over and over again.
 I've got a neatly folded paradise in my jacket pocket.

Many bulbs bloom in the spring. Another childhood
 Springs into existence. All childhoods forget there's no such thing
 As existence. They think only about children who are born
 Every hour, every second. What do they do?
 They fly and every baby drops like a stone to Earth.

They can't fly as far as the Moon. They would be safe
 On the Moon or even on Venus. They can't fly as far as
 Mars. So they fly, die and many bulbs go on blooming:
 They don't know anything about death, about rebirth.

A flower, this flower. What does it say? You hold it
 In your hand, asking it to speak to you.
 No words come and songs are mute because they cannot
 Speak. They're no Buddha.

Flowers speak their own language. You learn it at school,
 In gardens, in parks. You say, 'They're mute.'

There are only humans to whom you may speak today and
 Tomorrow. There'll be no flowers tomorrow anyway;
 There'll be only humans.

They'll look at each other.

They're on the seashore; we know and fear them.
 Yet they're neither ETs nor bugs. Our fear is in our midst;
 We're mixed with our fear. What's the result?
 Another mixture, another cocktail
 We'll drink down to the dregs. We'll say it's our
 Misfortune, tragedy and ruin. Why blame the gods
 For our anxiety? Another prayer and glass
 Of wine. Another dimension and perspective.

Can you see those birds high up in the sky?

It's no island – only one minute. You'll sit down
 On it. You can spend your whole life on this minute,
 Above it, below it. Call it eternity. You saw it
 The other night; you'll see it tomorrow and the day after.

Look at it as long as you wish. Build your castle
 On its seconds. You'll fly at a height of 9,000 metres;
 You'll see another eternity, another angel.

Several boxes; each contains a dawn, a night,
 A beautiful woman, Plato and a tree.

The sun moves sideways and time stops
 Whenever it feels like it. I wonder whether it's moving
 Now, yesterday. I've forgotten your smile
 And whatever goes with it: love, Offenbach.

What remains is of no use: I can hold it
 Or break it or plant it in my garden.

Fire does not destroy. What it does has nothing to do
 With fire. It's rather water or air. They live
 Together, flying up and down. The Earth isn't rooted to the spot.

Which spot do they talk about? The solar system?

There are no systems overhead – only a number of luminescent
Objects. They fly because they can't do anything else.

What else is there to do? We can crawl or walk
From one tree to another, looking up. Then we turn into fire.

Come inside out of the rain. How can one come inside,
Go outside? What's inside is outside
And vice versa. And the rain knows roofs
And gardens. Why are gardens
Always *sous la pluie*? Debussy, Debussy. I played
This piece many years ago. The umbrella I'm holding isn't mine.
But the rain recognises my sound, my youth,
The Bechstein I had in Moscow. It always rains in Moscow.

Rainbows are treacherous. They show the way to God.
You can't walk along this path. You just admire their beauty
And the rain stops as if by magic. The sun doesn't
Mean anything. You can put a handful of stars in your pocket.
And colours are outside. You walk around
Meadows and shadows that lead you to bushes, to clouds, to birds.
Listen to them; they'll lead you
Somewhere, nowhere, hanging overhead like a rainbow.

A few splodges. I recognise the house where I was born:
A dot is enough to remind me of it. My fingerprints
Are Beethoven, Mozart, Bach and Chopin: a picture of my life.
One note says what's above and below it. So many feelings;
So few lives. Let me hold out until tomorrow.

A desert speaks; there are rivers inside it. I drink
From them; their water is dry.

Why can't I drink your soul?

A thing is neither in itself nor outside. A suicide, eternity.

You have to hold my hand when we cross the road.

Another road, another cross. Something has been done in my absence.

I look at my absence and find a symbol, a sign, despair, a cloud.

I've missed a lot of clouds, a lot of suns and moons.

They have been sitting in a warehouse for months, for years.

You're holding my hand. What for? There are no roads in sight, inside.

Just a thing or two: outdoors, near the lawn, at dawn.

A hand picks up a stone. The stone
Doesn't feel the hand; nor does it
Understand it. But there's a dialogue
And this dialogue should go on.

The stone must become the hand
And then it will pick itself up.

The hand will lie on the seashore.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Geometry doesn't teach space. Flowers are always
Outside; you can't measure them.

What *can* you measure apart from yourself?
You measure your legs and moods: a short mood, a long
Mood. After a long, awkward pause
You ask yourself a question. You answer it quickly. You measure
Falsehood, virtue, sin, the Fall and immortality.

And butterflies never utter your name.

Your name, a cross between heaven and hell,
Water and fire. Your sound isn't pure; yet it is the sound.

There are so few sounds and only one can be heard
Everywhere. I don't have to reach for it, to listen.

Do I really *listen* to music? Do I have to?
The sound is like a hand that holds itself tight.

Once you're inside, you don't listen to what's anywhere.

The red desert is nowhere. Only red stones are here
And they don't remind one of blood. Nothing reminds one
Of blood. Even blood doesn't remember itself.

Why should you remember what you've been all your life, through
Your childhood and mature years? They're immature again.
Send them to school! They'll let you down in the near future, tomorrow.

There's one future and one tomorrow. They're neither red
Nor blue. They're colourless: a colourless desert,
A soundless scream. Five minus five, eternity minus immortality.

A twig. I'll never leave myself, my tree,
My birth. I'll stay within my birth, even if it is
A sentence. No roots, only twigs.

You'll come and realise I'm ready.
I'll go through another root, another night.
So many nights have gone through me.

A tree. I've climbed this tree and found
I'm not alone. An idyllic thatched cottage,
With roses round the door.

A walk, a dog. I lead the way and the way
Has no idea who I am and what I want.
So many stairs. Where do they lead?

I'm weary of these questions. There are
Stairs; there's a state of affairs, of foreign
Affairs. I'll drink my water, my blood.

Blood, wine. What else? Life, Vienna?
Probably. I'll dance with you, with myself.
I'll sing with my Earth – my farewell.

A sensation. I don't feel it. Am I supposed to feel
Anything? My nerves, my skin. They feel other planets
On which there are no humans, no grass. Farmers
Graze cattle on those planets in the summer months.

There are only summers on those planets, on those nebulas.
I don't fly to them: my spirits are too heavy, too earthly.

I remain where I am, listening to my favourite
Operas, to the growth of love, to its disappearance,
To the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

With earth we see earth, with water water. What else?
A few clouds scud across the blue sky,
The dark air. With sky we see sky; we don't see angels.
Why do we always speak of angels? Are they beautiful?

There are beautiful men and women in our midst; some of them
Are the messengers of God. With God we see God.

You say you don't know anything; you see nothing, not even
Your shoes. You can't see your feet either. Nevertheless
You walk on this Earth, trying to get somewhere: to water, to reeds,
To boats, to sea anemones.

With sea anemones we see flowers.

What do we strive for? A hole where strife's forgotten;
A straw's forgotten too. There are no last straws,
No first straws. Everything and everybody goes on and on.

They woke before the Creation and have been on the road ever since: no
Roundabouts, no stops of any kind. All roads are free; they travel
As far as *another* solar system. They find it more beautiful than the one
They're acquainted with. They stay in a lunar system
That is just the opposite of any system. There's a horse in this system, in one
Of its stables. It's a white horse, a *cheval blanc*.

No screams. And joy is on the plain you can't pronounce: too much
Rain spoils it. You tame the rain and it becomes as obedient
As a puppet. So you say, 'The world is a puppet theatre.' It is perhaps – a theatre,
A show. You'll stay where you are; a meteor will fall on Earth,
Or another planet. All stars have an inborn tendency to fall on other stars.
One explosion follows another explosion, bombs, planets
And terrorists. You walk through one light, another light. And all these lights
Are as young and beautiful as Helen of Troy.

There are horizons and the seashore. You sit on the horizon and pick up
Pebbles. You count them and build a castle. A cosmic wave
Destroys it. There are waves and particles; you count them and build
The universe. You're the Almighty's favourite observer. You're a '*rastyapa*' –
A dunderhead, in Russian. The waves pay no attention to your
Mathematics; their seashore's far away. Your 'goodbye' lingers on your lips
Until all departures are dead and gone. Another dawn.

A serenade. No one has ever heard it. These sounds
Don't speak of love, of dawn, of beauty.

Their beauty's underground, not in heavenly
Spheres. They're triangles. Where could one live
Inside a triangle, a square, a circle?

Where's my geometry? A rectangle.
I'm walking along a triangular path.
My fate is perpendicular to my mood.

Sleep sound. You're a figure in a book,
In a carpet, in the sky, in the month of May.

A thin thread of light made its way through the curtains.

To leave everything, to return. To see light
And stars, thin stars, a hint, an allusion – the illusion
Of what have been, of what I've lived through.

This life is a piece of paper, a candle, the dark side of the moon,
Something else and someone I'll never meet. It is
Here, under my thumb. I feel this life, this love and the gods
Who don't take part in my existence.

Heavy curtains blocked out the sunlight.

The heart will break; it will not. Why should it?
Life's on the left-hand side. You pick this life up and
Use it. There's a life above you. So many
Sides, lives, children. They come and you choose one
Child, one life, many sides, shoes, umbrellas.

My tomatoes are flourishing this summer;
So are my cucumbers. Here's a rainbow
And an insect I'll never forget.

Many steps and a ladder I don't know.
I've never seen this top of the world.

It's not love, is it? Love's everything, but
 Strife hasn't died yet. And no one has squared
 The circle and vice versa. Circles
 And squares live side by side and you can't say whether
 You draw circles, vicious squares or ellipses.

And children play their games
 While their fathers get murdered.

What percentage was left? Thirteen bushes
 And one oak tree. Everything has been done.

You're waiting for a birth, but you see only
 Hospitals. People die and come back to life.

They speak of tunnels, lights, candles, torches
 And rainbows. They groan at the sight of
 All the dirty dishes piled everywhere. Life
 Welcomes them with a pat on the arm.

What percentage was left? Three thoughts,
 One leg, one arm, one cheek, no music.

A preordained path. A lot of music I don't know.
 Someone must have written it. Another Beethoven,
 Wagner? A chord I've heard many times.

I'm back again: no more tunnels, lights, ends.
 Just this room and the window I know by heart.
 I know every car, every passer-by.

My leaves begin to fall
 As if they didn't recall the spring.

Gestures and eyes. We listen to whatever

Can be heard – to the gestures that have no meaning,
 No meaning at all. And the image where we stand
 Says nothing, as if silence was de rigueur.

But silence is on the other side. There's a layer
 Just below silence. It's even more peaceful
 And graceful. Let's play with peace and unity.

Just as we got to the park, the heavens opened.
 And then the heavens closed all of a sudden.

I see. You tell me what I see
 And I'll recognise whatever I neither
 See nor hear.

You say what you are. I'm your servant,
 Your priest, your truth. You're not
 Mine. You're beyond myself and the walls
 I can't see. You're in the centre of my
 Room, of my doom.

You go. Say what you are
 And go, disappear – forever.

The woods. You know the truth
 And details, many details, many words
 I can't remember. Do I
 Remember a word? You sleep; you
 Don't see my body. Look at it;
 It's yours. And night is tomorrow.

You're myself. What do I hear?
 A note is nothing. And nothing is
 Nothing. Tell me what you
 Can't tell. I'll listen and see and know.

I touch you and my room becomes

A hole. I'll be with you in this hole
And you'll sing what I am.

I don't feel the body. Let us say
It's not downstairs or upstairs.
I'll say nothing.

I'll look at you, at myself.
And you say my soul is inside, outside,
Among the stars. I am among
The stars where there are no stars –
Just one. I am your soul.

A landscape where a bird says, 'I'm not a bird,
I'm not a bird.' What is not is everywhere,
As everybody knows. Leaves fall as if they were ready
To fall. They're not. There are lots of corpses
On the grass, but we fly without thinking
And drinking. Tomorrow a voice will tell us where
We are and what we should eat this millennium:
Baby food, cat food, plant food, water food, air food.

A point where a line is born:
A straight line, a dotted line.

A few lines are broken. We call them
'Love', 'hope', 'melody'.

Another melody's heard; it's not broken.
It doesn't know what happens to it.

Spots and dots. The path doesn't lead to the gate.
Tourists press their faces against the palace railings
And see some kings and queens, their children

And their deaths. What else could you hope for?
 Life and death exchange shirts after the game,
 But the game goes on and cops rob robbers.

TO MARLENE DIETRICH

I went outside: there was nothing inside or
 In my heart of hearts. There was nothing outside either:
 No rosebuds, no buds, no bids, no boats.

I drew a horizontal line across the bottom of this page and an angel
 Appeared. A blue angel, a dark angel.

A white angel.

Again a rainbow. Why can't nature leave the world
 Alone? Does it need nature? Doesn't it have
 Its own nature, its ego, its persona? So many people walk
 Across it to prove it is inhabited. So what? It is
 Full of people and animals that we cajole into believing
 We love them. What do we love? Our dinner parties, our masks,
 A cat purring in a doorway, looking forward to his dinner.

THE MYSTICAL LIFE

I see God and have no idea where He is. Let's say
 He is nowhere. And nowhere is here. Nowhere is my arm
 I feel, forget. Nowhere is the air I breathe because I
 Can't do otherwise. Nowhere is the air I don't
 Breathe. Nowhere is an aria I don't hear. What do I hear? An aria,
 An opera, the last symphony. A rose bush, holy bushes.

That's over. Another thing. An angel comes and says,
 'You should forget.' I forget and remember.
 I see one episode and wonder if it is my life or another life.

It is a life, an episode. There's a car in it, some flowers
 And notes. These notes sing and say they're not notes: they're also
 Life. So life's everywhere. I remove 'everywhere'
 And realise that life has disappeared. I remove another 'everywhere'.

There are no gardens, but I'm happy.
 You remove my shirt, my skin. I live and say,
 'When it gets dark we'll set off the fireworks.' We do.
 I don't say anything. I look and listen to the air.

'Never' isn't a word, a notion. A substance.
 You live with it. There are other substances, elements,
 Aspects. You live with an aspect; it looks at you.

It doesn't. It touches you instead.
 So you feel an aspect of something. You know
 An aspect, an object, your field of vision.

You see almost everything, but there's something
 You don't see. You don't care: your life doesn't depend
 On it, on anything else. Your life depends on
 Itself and you wonder what 'itself' means.

An ocean. It might overflow if I pour it
 Into a jug. I don't need this ocean or any other
 Ocean or sea or river. I can't hold
 A jug, a glass of milk, my eternity.

I pour Eternity into a jug and look at it: at the jug,
 At Eternity, at Time, at the sea.

I look at the only sea I can see out of the window.

Again it's a game, another game. There are games
 And players. I play. The stars come down.

I lose them, win them. A few stars remain by my side, on my bed.
 They're galaxies, nebulas and what not. They're not. Only
 The Earth between my sheets.

A pussy willow,
 A willow-pattern plate. I live on a plate, in a cup, in the palm of your hand.
 Your hand is not a hand. Yet I live in it.

From one spot to another.

A castle, a hut. You walk towards a star
 And nothing happens on the way.

There's no way and the star doesn't
 Look like a star. You walk, I walk, they walk.

So many people walk towards houses and
 Roads. And roads walk towards other roads.
 And there are stars and one place.

There's another place. What to do with
 All these places, houses? You
 Lie down; so do I. From one bed to another.

A castle, a hut, a grave, the seaside.
 We walked along the narrow mountain ridge.

This sound is everywhere. There are
 Lakes, sounds, beauty. What to do with them?
 Just listen to the beauty you neither hear nor
 See. You can't touch it. Yet you *could*
 Touch it. The world is far away. It gets closer and
 Goes away. Departures, arrivals. You touch
 And forget whatever you touch and cherish.

Objects and subjects swing to and fro.
 They don't forget your hands and yearnings.

What's there to forget? Nothing. You can't
Forget anything. You remember yourself.

A tiny instant, the Big Bang. What's there
And here and everywhere? It will last until
Tomorrow and the day after, but no days
Will come: they're too impatient to come
And say whatever they have to say.

There are instants and they say they can last
Forever. They last forever. So what?

There are loves and stars and what not.
We go up or down. Tomorrow is yesterday
And yesterday says, 'Love's labour's lost.'

Tomorrow is another day, another hour.

Hope is not where it is. It is late
And no bird enlivens the sky.

The heavens are dead: there are no comets,
No asteroids. One angel walks along
The Milky Way, but even the angel
Has no idea where the world is,
Whether the way leads us into the forest
Or into a small room.

There are three sticks, three fingers.
They show the way and the way doesn't answer them.
The way never answers; it may ask a question.
And a question may ask something else.

All questions pose questions and wait until

Someone comes along, saying the word and
The word. All words are the word.

They resound with cheers and applause. I listen
To both and realise I'm the word myself.

I pronounce myself and go until I come to you, to them, to stones,
To memorials. I'll listen to the memorials until I hear
Their voices, their quartets and trios; their nerves and tendons.
I'll hear *my* voice, *Don Carlos*, *Don Giovanni*, the real thing.
Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong.

There was a way, the way, a cup of tea,
An unfinished confession, a finished symphony,
A piano, *Inferno*.

There are horizons and you can
Count them. You count them only to find
There's one horizon, one stone,
One *precious* stone.

Long creepers hung down from the trees.
You could see them beyond the grave,
In your childhood.

You said; I lost. One loses colours and dreams.

They're here, in front of one, of you. I'm someone
Else; I don't dream. They come and go; yet
They're neither dreams nor reality. Small worlds, big ones.

I'll never see a big world where there's you or
Someone else. Only you: your profile, doppelgänger.

I'll speak to the seashore and see myself,
Oneself and your profile. You're a colour, a forest
Where I'll walk before my birth, before my

Dante, Beethoven, Bach.

Going to your end. A stalactite
Will hang from my roof, my innermost thought.

What you feel is you and nothing else: no pain,
No love. It is you and you're pains, Pushkin's poems
And something you look at. You do not feel
Your fate, for you're no seer, no doctor.

You know the jacket you bought last night
Hung loosely on your thin body. What does your body look like
Today? There's no body to speak of and you don't speak.
Nor do you look at yourself. As usual
You drink your mother's milk and think you're in your cradle.

You *are* in your cradle; you'll rock it until doomsday.

In the dark, in the light.

There are games and names. And darkness
Reveals a few secrets one hears, forgets,
Hears again as if there were no other
Secrets and revelations. And connotations.

Once upon a time everything was revealed.
One calls it Revelation; so does time.
Time calls everything 'one' or 'many' or 'everybody'.
Everybody goes to the cinema, to Newcastle.

There's such a thing as an old castle.
Everybody goes to the castle and the rain sets in
For the rest of the day. And nothing comes
Of it. Nothing comes, nothing goes.

In the night, in the right.

A look of reproach. No face.
The universe doesn't accept anything
And I leave myself
Behind. What else could I leave behind?

I am behind and I walk towards toys
And joys. I find them and toss them up into the air,
Or into the bin. The air accepts *them* and my
Sorrow. And I play until I reach the conclusion
That I am guilty. I leave my guilt behind,
Beyond, in the sky, on the Moon,
Under my tongue, under my pillow.

I'll sleep on it as long as I can.

I wish I could draw a square, a triangle. I live
And find squares, circles. I walk onto them to find
I'm outside, as if the world was elsewhere.

It is outside. I put it inside, but it resists
And so I can't put it either inside or outside.

This is where it lives. Lives go wherever they can:
To the Moon, to Venus, to the Earth where
One finds them outside one's room and its view.

What's left amounts to nothing and anything.
You must choose between A, B and V. A few trees of life
Grow in your garden and body. Your roots are
Their roots, shoots, moods. Nothing remains unless
You say out loud, 'Yes, I come, I come.'

Another slice of life or cake. You come; it is your
Third coming, fourth coming, fifth amendment.
You amend constitutions, laws; your life goes away.
You catch up with it and your life strokes your other cheek

With the tips of its fingers. Stroke, stroke.

Going back. I would do the same thing again
If I had the chance. I don't have the chance and I'll never
Come back, go forward. I'll go forward some day;
I'll trip up on a piece of loose carpet. Yet another trip.

And nothing, nothing. What am I about to say? This and that.
And that is far more important than this or tomorrow.
Tomorrow hangs itself. Does it just hang in thick folds like
A curtain? Hang your tomorrow and life on the rack over there.

I've lost one gene, one genius. Valleys do not talk.
Nature might offer a few words of consolation,
But it offers nothing except brooks, their murmurs.

A brook murmurs to itself, speaking the truth
Confidentially. A word is an undue burden
And a lie: a white lie, a black tie, May Day.

I don't see your shadows.
Are you love, death, birth?
A mask, a deathwatch beetle,

A half-assed idea, a still life, a stillborn baby.
I'm holding this baby. A requiem, a lullaby,
Matthäus Passion, Missa Solemnis. Solace.

Intuition doesn't know what it is. It feels and thinks
And plays. It is a sixth sense, other senses, beings.

What's the essence of my being, non-being?
I'll go to the nearest cemetery or a beach where

No one will ever die. How can you die under the sun?
 You'll never die; nor shall I. I'll never live.

What's the other side of your question? You question
 And give no answers. The other side is either
 A mystery or a brainteaser: all depends on what you're looking at.

Are you looking? A beady-eyed novelist, pianist.

Time tolerates both eyes and looks. And we go towards
 Some end or other as if there were many solutions
 Scattered over our garden, their birch trees.

So many gardens:

Hanging, celestial, otherworldly. A garden shed,
 A narrow band of grass, stars and meteors.

Being doesn't touch the void. It touches love, hate,
 Domestic animals. It feels and sneezes. What else
 Can it do? It doesn't do anything: it lives, exists, breathes,
 Teaches a lesson to those who do not live.

Pick up this lesson and put it on your writing desk!
 What else? You copy this lesson and
 Start reading. You exist, you exist, you exist.
 Nothing else will ever happen.

I find this and that: eternity, idols, women, many truths.
 Whatever I find is lost in a river that doesn't run its course
 In the North, in warm regions, in the heat of moments.

Here's a moment. I don't know whether it's hot
 Or cold or rough – a mountain road, full of stones
 And huge holes. There are a few Cinderellas
 Behind every stone, cold, truth, betrayal.

Those Cinderellas dance. Do they? They do not.

No one dances. Yet I saw a mass of bodies
Whirling round on the dance floor – forever.

An area of swamp, an area of vamp. There are
Areas and arias, and I'm at a loss to know
What's where and where's the harmony I'm longing for.

Am I? This aria can't be heard,
But I hear it. I hear a few sounds and say it is an aria, an opera,
A symphony I finish and publish. And God doesn't
Say anything.

God is neither finished nor unfinished.
He is in the making and this has been the undoing
Of many poets, lovers, scientists.

THE JEWISH MUSEUM BERLIN I

A face. I approach it
And see another face, other features,
Another future. What can be heard
Is far away, in the past, as if there was nothing
In the palm of my hand,
In the chest of drawers where I keep a number of faces.

The faces. I'm walking on them.
Why should I trample all over them in the night?
In the past, in the future. Jeremiah.

THE JEWISH MUSEUM BERLIN II

What's in the other corner is there,
Here. Our walls are sterile. They don't protect
Wood, lacquer, faces, memories, identities.
There are no-ones anywhere.

I walk through them, through souls and requiems.

Other echoes resound there but not here.
 There's no 'here' – only one thought, one line,
 One wine I drink and spill
 Over the world and over the past where
 I stand naked in the midst of others.

There are witnesses. They witness time
 And what never happens, for nothing really
 Happens. There are happenings;
 They do happen. Death is just a witness
 For the prosecution. And other things,
 Thoughts and ideas. Fraternity, friendship.
 We hug each other forever. And our 'forever'
 Is now at an end. This end is under my feet.

I caught a tantalizing glimpse
 Of the sparkling blue sea
 Through the trees, through my birth
 And my earth, my metamorphoses.

Again a river. It flows somewhere and touches
 Here a stone, there another earth, another
 Man and his woman. Or the sea which they call 'human life'
 Because it is as large as the sea, as impenetrable. You
 Penetrate both the sea and human life
 And see a housewife, algae, a child, a fireplace.

What can be switched on, extinguished, turned upside
 Down? This toy, that joy; this death, that mess.

Another one. There's one, there are two, as usual.
 Always there are groups one finds here
 And there. There are mobs, jobs and Don Quixotes
 Who don't know what they do. And their left
 Hands know nothing about their right hands, right legs,

Right lungs. Their left lungs know nothing about
 The air they inhale, for they exhale whatever happens to be
 Within their reach.

To be or not to be – that's what

They call everything: every monologue, every
 Question, every answer, every life. A life is 'not to be'.
 Is it a question? Well, they ask this question
 And everybody says: 'Yes, yes, yes, to be!'

To be. Your right leg walks up and down the street.
 Their right legs fall over and scrape their knees
 On many pavements, in many galaxies.

What are they? They're around the corner.
 And corners are around other corners that no one can touch.

You touch a corner and it becomes a circle, a spiral.
 You touch nothing – not even your body. You are not everywhere;
 You are not God. You are not one of the gods they speak about
 In half-forgotten myths. They forget both the myths and gods. They recall
 A shadow and this shadow is a puppet show, a television
 Show. And a desert island is just a dessert you can eat and drink.

'Don't drink this wine, Getrude,' as the Russians put it.
 And Getrude gulps down a glass of vodka.

Looking for an unborn child. There's a child in a corner:
 That's what Boris Godunov says and sings. A child in a corner; a knife
 In another corner. And death is in every
 Corner and once again they count corners and angles and circles
 And churches.

Whatever is not is 'yes'. You say 'yes'

Every two minutes, in every corner. Transparent things,
 Meanings, kings. Another queen and so on,

So forth. A moth, a mothball. They play with balls, with moths.
 You begin to play and find there are months, years
 And light years. You play with matches, candles, icons, babies, virgins.

'Adieu' isn't Hamlet's father. It's just a word or destiny.
 And destiny says 'Adieu' whenever one picks it up
 And holds it level with one's eyes, belly and lips.
 One swallows what one can swallow and calls it 'destiny' or 'fate'
 Or 'life' or 'murder'. And daily rounds go in circles as if
 They couldn't move outside them, it and one. One is two, three.
 One is one or nine. Nine circles, nine hells,
 Nine bells. Ringing out to welcome in the New Year.

The centre is *under* the circumference. No word
 Can be found above anything – not even above the horizon.
 And the horizon is in the middle,
 On the outskirts of a city where no one stays.

Everything's alive and we drag our feet,
 Trying to catch up with the dead and those nebulae
 That look at us and do not recognise their dust.

Do *we* recognise our ashes? There are ice creams,
 Shirts and skirts, a lot of skating rinks.

There's a woman who stands in the centre of Paradise.

To Vladimir Martynov

The meaning is open. One meaning, one door.
 They come in and do not know what to do
 Inside, on the roof, on treetops where hangmen await
 Messiahs, Isaiahs and others, dispensable soldiers.

Another cross, a mossy tree and rock.
 You wait for yourself and you come. What else
 Is there to do? You're not yourself. You bear

Your house, your children, your wives and indispensable
 Books. Their authors walk above you and you feel
 Their souls as if the soul was material, solid.

Touch your soul to find out if it is immortal.
 It is, it is. At least your soul is inside the room where
 You're cooped up, where someone cooked lunch
 For you, your children, your birds.

You're free. You come in and go.

You care and you know you *are* despite the weather
 And a feather flying like a kite. There isn't enough wind
 To fly a kite; yet the feather is in the sky
 And the sky is in the feather. Catch it and put it
 On your hat. You're a celestial body and you walk
 In the midst of comets. They do not
 Listen to you. What's the use of talking? There are women, men
 And other bodies: celestial bodies, earthly bodies and powers.

A gale-force wind blows you down. You're down.
 Bodies, powers and superwomen pinch your shoulder blades.
 Life goes on and nothing flies: not even the fly
 You can hear in the sky, above the gods and their dreams.

You do not do what is written. You write 'I am', but you are
 Not. You do not do what is permitted or forbidden.

You're forbidden to become what you are or have been.

You are a being, a creature of flesh and blood.
 But your blood flows down the hillside – into the sea
 Just south of here. You go south and find your blood. What
 Can you do with it? Put it back, put it back.

Collection, separation. What's over there?
 Many collections, much blood and soil, and many socks.
 Everybody wears them: souls, socks, trousers.

I don't look at myself: there's nothing to see anywhere.
 Even here there's a chest of drawers I don't look at.
 I open it a random and see photographs.

There's a photograph I can't decipher or see.
 I see only invisible men, women and Andromedas.
 There are many of them and I sing a lullaby.

What do you know about yourself? You know
 The universe, but the universe knows neither you nor
 Your hopes. So you grind your teeth in your sleep.

You're not myself. You're a dwarf who lives
 Within my fireplace and outside it – outside my path.
 And my path goes to the cliffs and myths.

Walls and voids. Nothing else, as usual.
 Eternal recurrence. It has taken about five years
 To restore it to full working order.

My parents, my mistresses; they are back.
 Nothing comes or goes – just a wall on which
 Many faces hang and talk to each other.

Another wall. It doesn't welcome me
 Or anybody: neither a black hole
 Nor a wedding dress. A birthday gift.

WINDMILLS

A phone number, other numbers. They cover
 Whatever belongs to Pythagoras. Who are the Greeks?
 They lived and died and their numbers are gone too.
 Their tombs cover hillsides, hills with windmills. They fly off

And flap their wings and the windmills assist them.

Any Don Quixote knows he can rely on windmills,
On their wings and winds, on their wits and whatnot.

The conversation began to flow and came to a standstill.
Words and sighs stood huddled together for warmth.
'I learnt to fly when I was in Australia.'
'Did you really?' He said, quote 'I did,' unquote.

No butterflies, no butter. Going towards the end,
The threshold. Void, space, someone's grace and the once azure
Skies of Athens, ruined by atmospheric
Pollution and human delusion. And black eyes, an old song.

Workmen stumble upon a mosaic
While digging up the foundations of a 16th-century castle
Set on a steep hill.

Death is inside; no thresholds, no ends. Only beginnings:
An arm spurting blood where the vein was severed.

A part, a whole. I keep the bedroom door open
In case the children call for me in the night.

They do call for me and I open doors and windows.
They come through openings and stand
In expectation of the answer. One answer; many questions.

One question, another question. Birds also come
Or fly, as the whim takes them in daytime, at dawn,
At morn. You accept a hollow, a hell, and go.
You come and go so as not to stay at home forever.

What if you stay in bed? What if you do not die?

A man, a beast, a woman. A dance,
 A *Totentanz*. And death has no idea what to do
 In the world where roses are in buttonholes, in holes –
 Like moles or molecules.

Again you say: 'A new leaf.'

Leaves turn and fly above the horizon
 As if there was a horizon to speak of.
 You speak of it, but it doesn't turn up.

You settle in a box of matches;
 They strike you. Burn and learn.

A fissure, an opening. They open the world and death
 Or another world comes in – it depends on where
 You and I stand. We watch comings and goings as we say 'yes'.

We say 'God'; light comes to us, for light
 And darkness love those who prey and pry. We live, die
 And lights are turned on to show what's going on.

Life goes on; so does the show. An angel makes
 A grimace of disgust, but we endure as if angels and their faces
 Couldn't stop technology and physiology.

We don't stop; we come, go and so does everybody. One,
 Two, multiplication table. Replenish, furnish, refurbish! Two and two,
 Three, three, three. A few stunted trees and extraterrestrial beings.

AS RARE AS LIFE

A whole host of reasons, of treasons. I betray, you betray.
 A series of aftershocks. And birds continue to fly. And the month of June
 Is still on the agenda as if time couldn't stop. It does stop and
 One can see it – a few steps leading to Doomsday and other
 Days and nights, to nightclubs. People dance, undress;
 There are dresses, dancers, dressing rooms, mums, dads and lads.
 Angels are also in the sky, in the room.

They hover in the sky like hawks, waiting to swoop down
 On their prey. They're guardians and judges.
 There's a reward for whoever finishes first, second and third.

A few images: a landscape, a garden. A Japanese cascade
 Felt it was its duty to tell the truth. I heard it.

Tether, end, leather. I heard it. What if I
 Didn't? I didn't do it; I heard nothing. No sounds, no mounts –
 Only screams that are not sounds. They're souls.

These souls leave their bodies and fly, screaming, eating
 The sky. Nothing's left of it.

A parcel, a morsel. They ate every last morsel. There was only one
 Last morsel. They ate it.

The last morsel is on the dinner table. A candlelit dinner.

A statue. Life is as new as *vita nuova* or a supernova.

A new glass of water; an old story. It speaks of love
 And death and black masses. Bodies swim and fly
 And find their mass. One says, 'It's nothing.' Another speaks of souls
 And immortality that listens to words, voices and tragedies.

Immortality says Hamlet was wrong; so was Othello.

You're wrong; I'm wrong. So is *vita nuova*, *vita oldua*.
 I'll drink my old life to the dregs. I'll drink Bloody Venus.

A supernova, a superolder. Yes, I thought it was super.

Taisez-vous. Silence holds your body, but you go on.

You go to other planets and they respond. Shut up, shut up!

You don't understand. You enter a word and begin

To explore it. And the word responds; everything responds as if

You were a prophet. You *are* a prophet.

You talk to us; birds talk to us; lords talk to us.

There are lords and talks and walks. So we take our walks

And go down, down, down – up the stairs.

What if you don't go and die?

You die on the sly and say the sky is blue. So it is.

Instincts are rosy. They go through life

And do what they're destined for. And their destiny

Coincides with other destinies and lives and skies.

There's nothing except an instinct, a nebula,

A body where there are no nebulae. Only negative answers:

I didn't, I wouldn't. I will not.

The future comes – an unwelcome visitor.

I also come and stay and salute whatever comes,

Goes, hangs overhead like a cloud.

There are probably words and deeds. They are.

What comes from them? Nothing. Why should anything

Come? In a lake there's a world and the lake keeps it

To itself. Neither the lake nor its world come or go or scream.

They stay where they must stay: there's no room for them

Elsewhere, elsewhere.

Elsewhere also stays. So do other 'wheres' and 'theres'.
 And nothing is as funny as fun fairs. They play
 And sing. They mean nothing. Their 'nothings' lie in wait for other
 'Nothings' and 'everything's'.

Only this melody counts and goes to other melodies
 And harmonies. To other mothers.

NINE

One will not become two.

What is can be done. Many children
 Will do the job. What else should be in there,
 Outside? Only desires, hopes.

They grow and ripen. They ripen nicely.
 Landscapes are beautiful; so are cityscapes
 And other landmarks, birthmarks.

They are, they will ever be.

Another birth, mark, spark.

Watching the fireworks. Oohing
 And aahing with everyone else.

Two will not become three.

Three, four, five, six, seven.

Even, heaven, leaven. Eight.

A wall and half of it.

Go through the half,
 And find what's left

Of it, of them, of her.

Leave yourself, leave it.

Leave them and theirs.

Keep the rest, your rest.

What's this? All this is ours.

Heaven is in our bed and our bed

Is in heaven. Interchangeable

Parts. I might be someone else:

This man, another woman.

Two twins and whims. And one

Cocktail. I'll drink myself and talk

To someone, to a sphinx.

I walk, I'm human. I've been

On crutches for 65 years.

No beans, said Pythagoras.

Confusion, dissolution. Again a ray

And a filter of sorts that the ray must use to come

To us – pure, distinguished.

A messenger, a pure spirit, a teacher to whom

We listen and pray. And lines cover faces.

They're lines and we follow these lines; we follow

Our own faces. They lead us to other

Lines, faces, bodies, limbs. One limb tells the truth; another

Says whatever comes into its head. And what comes must

Stay forever, otherwise it's pointless to come.

So we come and stay; lines are falling.

We bend over them and read

'Tomorrow' and 'the day after'. And the after

Comes, collapses, writhes in agony,

Wreathes in cloud. And our tree displays another branch –
The one we've never seen or heard or drawn.

We know what we say and the words know us. They recognise
Our thoughts that go down to the bottom, search for
Demons or peanuts and come back as if they belonged to us forever.

We let them go. What do we need them for?
They know what happens outdoors. They open doors
And ideas that can't defend their prerogatives.

Other ideas stay closed. The secret is revealed and the end
Announced. They announce the end, death and the birth of a nation.
The nation is born and so is a child – Satan, the Messiah.

Or a maiden. A flower grows above her head;
So does her purity, chastity, innocence. They kill
The innocent. The innocent kill the innocent.

Down. I'm not below, not here where
So many molecules live and socialise. They mix and fix
A meeting, a greeting. What's there
To greet? A day, a wedding, another tomb, not the one
I know by heart. Let me recite it. I recite
My tomb, the flowers I put on it last night. Last bride.
So many brides and tombstones.

Another smile. I know several poems and I forget them.
It's so easy to forget a poem. No A, no B. Only Y.

You are not in the window
Where so many branches live and survive.

They starve to death, survive. We are
Mortals and cannot live like birds.

Flying is immortality, eternity.

Why not fly around a light bulb, a tulip bulb?

NOSTALGIA

Another injection and resurrection. There are always
Resurrections, here and there – especially there.
They come and say, ‘I’m a new life.’ And there’s a new life,
A new woman, man. A child turns up and says, ‘Mammy.’
And mammy has won five Grammys and six grams.

And she sees rainbows that lead her upwards, to many trees of life,
Of *kaif*, as we used to say – bliss, myth. We still talk a lot
And every word is a comma, a glance, a verdict. You sign the verdict
And see the same rainbow, willow. Desdemona sings: ‘Willow,
Willow.’ A widow, a meadow. A word, a shadow.

Hearing wedding bells, wedding knells. BBC English, DDE English.
Willow, millow. *Miliy* – ‘dear’ in Russian. Millow, billow.
This end is a billow, a kilo, gallows. As usual, last mast. The boat
Strikes a rock and sinks almost immediately, on the spot. Where’s this spot?
On your cheek, your *mig* – an ‘instant’, in Russian. As far as the next second.

The soon is over; so are the whys, wherefores, hows. No skills,
No aims. A pair of hands that rummage in the past and find another
Pair of hands. Going in circles: hands, eclipses, moons and dooms.

Miracles are nobodies. They don’t look nice, even if one
Looks at them twice. What else is there? A miracle justifies life:
One can live because it’s not a humdrum existence.

Go and find a miracle: a lining, an understudy. A cell
Opens into a garden that is open-ended, open-sealed.

The Sun does what it can – no words, only energy
And food.

A hand, a slice of bread. A song that says
The world is what it is.

It is; you are. You are and you can't deny it.
Light will murmur you're wrong.

A bird, a bird. Flying forever
Because it has a broken wing.

Whatever was said yesterday must be done. It is not
In the air, on the Earth. Only clouds grow and don't disappear
When everything else does. A word doesn't say, 'I am love.'

Words tell the truth which crawls from one star
To another. It gathers a lot of moss. 'Will you come with me?'
Is not a question. It is a rock near the River of Life.

Both the rock and life flow through the heart, through many a year.
One too many, one too many. The rest is music.

A zigzag and no response. Only death responds, going straight,
Going right. And death is dead. There are directions, manipulations.
The right hand is on the right and *in* the right. So is the left hand.

A thought turns left at the traffic lights and sees a hospital straight ahead.
There's a second thought; no third thoughts. A tree
Doesn't wait for an axe. Trees have no patience and fall well before
They're felled. The left hand continues to write its gospel.

A morsel of cheese awaits its crow.
A raven comes and Aurora, Horora.

Nothing comes in – not even the stars
That always talk about love as if they knew
What they're talking about. And their dust
Doesn't settle because there's no room for it.

We look at their dust, at our furniture.
 What's there to look at apart from
 Regrets, loves, hates, failure rates, wars?
 The laws we don't know. We look at them.

The East and the West. I've touched roads, mountains,
 Countries, cultures, women, men, animals: a touchy-feely
 Approach. No approach, just flying back and left –
 Wide of the mark. A wild duck, Ibsen's favourite bird.

They look at the duck and shoot to kill.

I've been dead for more than a century. I'm still alive.

Eternity is embedded in a wild duck, in an egg.
 A hard-boiled egg, a soft-boiled egg? Fried, boiled?

The air stops where nothing can stop
 And breathe for a while. The air doesn't breathe.
 It stops and so does light. It forgets its own
 Velocity, its warmth and humanity. What's humane? Night,
 Light, one's bride? Even ice is warm if it has a heart.

Every plant has a heart, every leaf of grass.
 Genes, hearts. The world is alive and it doesn't
 Hide its movements. So Andromeda comes and salutes
 A lonely pedestrian who has no idea
 What to do with a lamppost, with ponds and rivers.
 These have no idea what to do with water.

Moral support is in the centre, otherwise the Earth would hang
 Sideways in the sky and in museums. Anything that goes awry is blamed
 On centres, on pillars. They tumble and crumble. Birds are singing
 And the snow tells its tale. It's better to listen to its tale

Than to look at one's heart of hearts where there's a heart and nothing else –
 Not even a Christmas tree with its coloured balls and many a gift:
 A hobby horse, the Trans-Siberian railway, Aleph, *Paradiso*, Odysseus.

I'm told this is nonsense. There's no nonsense and no one talks about it.
 I go and come; they go and come and I don't know who they are
 Because they are *they* and that's quite enough
 To identify them. They have no other identities. Their teeth
 Are identical and even when they're dead, you can't identify them
 By looking at their teeth. So no one looks at their teeth or
 Brains. I look at my portrait and wonder who painted it.
 Perhaps no one. Why should anyone paint my face?
 Yet my portrait stands in a museum. And someone drips paint on a carpet.

Our farewells do not sound as they should sound or look.
 How do they look? Their looks improve as they grow older. All farewells
 Are old enough to look beautiful. A young farewell is just a goodbye.

The air is prepared for this ritual. You say 'goodbye', 'farewell'.
 The air accepts you and your words. What else can it do?
 The air accepts everything except the void. Goodbye, see you soon.

If there's a cloud, there must be the cloud. I see only
 Splodges, here and there. The sky is beyond them. A song
 Resounds in this sky, another sky, another head or end.

This is the beginning where I find myself, a birth
 I know nothing about; and death. I'm another god; your angels
 Are not mine. What would I do with eternity?

I'll tell you I know a door, but this door doesn't know me.

If this plain doesn't hurt, there are landscapes where
 One can feel at home. Yet one's home is far away as if there were
 No home, no bed, no table with a bottle of wine.

There's wine in heaven, but that wine is different:
One doesn't drink it. One becomes what it is.

Again a bomb explodes in a flash of yellow light.
Another flash, another light. It is yellow, green, grey.
This wine is black. Somebody comes and removes
Whatever there is on the table: the decanter, the Cross.

Another time, another line, square. Sounds disappear
Before they come. Only colours stay as if they knew
How to live underwater, after the Flood. What to do? as they say.

They know what to do and they do it; life goes on.

Another life comes and goes on too. So many lives come and go as if
There was a museum of lives, a picture gallery.

Abstract paintings. You can't tell whether they're upside down or not.

It was even worse. Last night shouldn't be compared
To next week. Tomorrow will live its own life and die when
It grows weary of itself. And death counts seconds better
Than any hope, any art. A work survives its creator, but what remains of it?
Lines, words, colours, sounds. And their creator stands beyond them –
Always on the brink of death, at the core of life.
And tomorrow dies; so does the day after tomorrow.

They died a natural death, as they would have wanted.

There's no end and the road has no source, no movers.
You move, he moves, but the road is infinite
And it starts nowhere, not even in the heart of hearts. Nor does
The heart start and end. Its love is cosmic, but the cosmos
Has no idea where the heart is and should be. Should it be somewhere?
On the left-hand side. Another universal truth, local truth.

And the soul is nowhere, not even on the road.

What can be understood is not outside. It is in the middle
 And a fountain tells its story – in the middle, at the core of sounds.
 They always say it is unfinished; it *is* unfinished, unbroken.
 An unbroken chain of associations leading nowhere. A garden, a piece of fruit,
 A wound at the core of the heart. The fountain of blood
 And nothing says when everything will be over: songs, complaints
 And the sound in between two harmonies, two notes.

Beauty is only at the end. And what's behind, beyond?
 Only beauty, another beauty. What else is there? The great Beyond.

A picture is not infinite. A picture frame often has
 Bevelled edges. And love is beyond them. What's anywhere else?

Love, hate, human feelings. Inhuman feelings, thoughts, noughts.

And a path, a garden path, many mistakes, illusions. Another love.

One's memory says nothing is lost. Love is still inside this or that.
 Or beyond. Feelings are over; so are loves, hates and soul mates.

Over and done with. You're the same. Same old, same old.
 One's bride and wife. Wife and bride. Time doesn't say anything.

Throwing away. Forever. What's left amounts to nothing.
 And nothing is a wall one can't get close to. Yet one climbs
 Over it to get into a garden where there are no flowers,
 No songs, no butterflies. How can one speak about an object of desire?
 An invisible garden, an inaudible song, nothing, a wall, a mountain.
 It would be crazy to try to climb the mountain in this weather.

To sleep, one, two, three. Precious stones do not speak,
 Nor do they believe in God. And they know
 They don't believe in anything except their dreams.

Stones are symbols and they don't know they are trees,
 Lives, a lot of accidents, a rainbow and somebody
 Who says, 'I'm a prophet.' He is a prophet; so is she.

They launch rockets and split atoms, symbols:
 A half of knowledge, a quarter of love.
 But every half speaks about salvation and eternity.

The lost ones. Another time will come sooner
 Or later. They'll all come later on, which doesn't mean 'too late'.

They're not too late; nor are the others. They come on time
 And go whenever cocks crow and birds sing the last song
 Or the one before last.

Lost. No one knows it by heart.
 Incertitude is another symbol. And symbols say whatever they like:
 They're at a loss to know how they can help.

So they don't help, ever.

Three roads, two roads. Why count roads, exits, solutions?
 An unknown path, an enigma. Nothing counts except
 Blood. Three, five, ten. The rest goes right,
 Gets stuck. Two soul mates, walking, on top of the world.

A glance changes one's life; a song, a guitar.
 Nothing will ever happen except the blood that has already
 Happened. A happening. Why look at it from afar?
 Love is under the Cross, above the Cross. Crossroads.

A child, a mature man, an old man. A young man
 Murders an old man. A myth starts afresh, speaking about
 Mothers, wives, our love. Life, life. A murder,
 A song, blood, our blood. A fire exit, a fire entrance.

And flowers, lots of flowers. A tomb, a jubilee?
 The sign of the cross over dead children.
 What's ours? The love in the sky, down here:
 Our rocks covered with moss, near the sea.

A decision, a hesitation. And nothing is on the palm
 Of my hand that holds the whole world. Your
 Shadow is not what it used to be: you must have
 Died a long time ago. Death also dies
 And poets say what their muses whisper. You come and say
 What you don't have to say. But you can't
 Keep silent and the truth goes out, comes in. Hymns. One has one's gods
 And the gods open doors, fly upwards as if nothing could happen.

Nothing's open. Only the heavens become as transparent
 As a glasshouse. Say 'goodbye' and go as far as another farewell.

Light is light and heavy – as heavy as the atoms you can't split.

And tourists look at you, at them and sign their books, your lives.

Yes and no. And some days can't bear what happens
 As if they were inside. And other days do the same, although
 They can't do anything. Rivers flow and know what they
 Can know: there's a kingdom of rivers. Within this kingdom you know
 Everything and then you realise you know only
 One river. But this river is yours. You can drown in it and set foot
 On the surface of the Moon saying, 'I am this river,
 This ocean, this puddle and poodle, Mephistopheles, Faust.
 Souls are sold. You and I are on the border of you
 And I.'

There are other borders and bodies.

ON THE DEATH OF DASHEN'KA

Once more. There are stones on the other side
Where rivers no longer flow: they're as dry
As the origin of rivers, tears and funeral parlours.

As dry as a river. What's the origin of this saying?
A land perhaps, a bush with letters instead of leaves.
A fairy tale. A dog. No tales, no water sprites.

As dry as a dead dog. Whose face to stroke?
A dead face, a mask. A pair of eyes that continue to look
And take in whatever happens indoors, outdoors

And in dreams. What does she hear or touch?
Dashen'ka. The same eternal thoughts,
The spring she will smell. The self-same spring.

Wine doesn't begin. Its life isn't on a map,
On a piece of land, in a book. Wine isn't blood,
For blood is as rare as life and real death.

Humans and leaves pass away, live underground.
And the Earth lives under another earth,
Above the Earth, above physics and mystics.

Another moon rose slowly above the horizon.
A helical structure, Jacob's ladder. Yet another widow.
Burning herself alive on her husband's funeral pyre.

The only story and life is not a story, not
A thousandth's tale. One heart attack,
One shoe, a pair of laces; they're undone
And nothing can be done. Days of yore are gone,
Days and nights, of yore, of you.

Love can be heard in words:
 Yore and you are in love, not you and
 Thou. Thou art love, not you, not I.

What is I or me or you? The Tree of Love,
 Of Agony, of Identity. Many layers: you, He, ego,
 Self, underego, underself, superunderground.

Your love perhaps. Hope. One reality.

You must think about transparent holes.

Every hole is transparent and whatever you
 Put into it is also eternal, ceaseless.

I am transparent. What I say is one letter
 And this letter says, 'You are, you are.'

Aleph. My only lover, my bread and water.

What disappears is on the palm of your hand.

You hold it. You're allowed to hold it.

You hold it and nothing happens.
 Nothing should happen, never, never.

Whatever you hold begins to turn
 Into something else. It turns, it turns.
 It turns into itself. So do You.

This and that. There are mountains,
 Lots of mountains; only one wing. Let us fly.

We fly. We are *them*. They fly too. They fly to the end.

They reach it. They reach everything. They have, do

Not. And only the 'not' is theirs. Some-
 Thing, anything. This is you and the very outset.

And also a sunset. Leave it alone.

The beginning is over there. Why not touch it?

What is lost if a finger touches a sandwich or anything
 Else? The finger is allowed to touch a slice of life,

And the slice responds to the finger's caress: it touches the finger.

They love each other: all slices love other slices
 And there's nothing else. A slice of bread reaches for another
 Slice. Is it bread or butter?

They kiss and a flower covers the Earth.

Rivers are in the North. Flowing, saying what must be said.

It is said and done. What is in between this moment
 And that eternity? Other moments, other eternities.

One destiny perhaps, another destiny. They flow too
 And have no idea where they're going or flowing or flying.

They follow other destinies and all these destinies
 Sing, 'Hosanna.' Or 'Donna Anna.' A blanket of snow.

Each snowflake is a letter: the first, the last. The first.

ON THE DEATH OF BEREZOVSKY

A death is not one death, two.

The only death.

Lives everywhere: one life, another,
Another toy. Not broken.

Death is you. You are not.

You are you.

What is you, not and dot?

You say, 'I am.' You say what you
Want. You don't want anything.
You say this and that.
Your truth can't fly. A broken wing.

No wings. Knots, knots, knots.

You don't know me. Why should you?
You have your life; I no longer have mine.

Those trees of life and death. They grow
Everywhere. Do they? What do they do on Earth,
In the universe, in so-called rosy holes?

Trees always grow. They're felled to provide space
For grazing. A few cows are grazing.

Nothing happens. And so on and so forth.

TO TATIANA

In the North, in the South. The memory of a woman
Who walks and dances. Only swans can sing.

Only you haunt me every day as if there were no
Other days. They are and they are near me – within reach.

I reach neither you nor them. What's the use of living?
 There are swans about whom no one can write like W. B. Yeats.

Do swans need our poems?

Do you need my Requiem?

No stars, no notes. A score is full of wrong
 Notes, words and they go towards light, darkness,
 A luminous point, an everlasting point.

Point, dot. A comma which can't be seen
 On the horizon. The sky is not a sentence, a figure
 Of speech. It is a figure, a number, a letter –
 The letter to an unknown god, angel. To Giselle.

A ballet, a tombstone. A dance is darkness
 And vice versa. A number will dance and become
 The sun where I'll plant the right note.

Death is neither in the midst of stones
 Nor in the centre of our lands and their deadlocks.

Death is neither inside the body
 Nor outside it. A lavender bush is death
 And a star another birth – the song that no one
 Hears or sings, sings or hears.

Stones say to each other what can't be said.

The summer just says it is the summer.
 These warm summer nights, winter afternoons.

Looking for no one. No one comes and so many things

Happen as if they could happen on the spur of the moment.
The moment is over there and no one listens to it.

There's a song; it sings itself. Words are inside a sword.
No one looks for this sword that cuts through the world every day, every
Other day. What's so ineluctable? The word, the deed, midday,
The midday sun, the last sunbeam, a faint, almost imperceptible cry.

And the seashore where so many people stand as if
Waiting for someone, something – a pebble with another colour.

THE TEXT

No other remnants. What remains is not
Within reach and nothing can be done to recover it:
Youth, former lives, a text one has never read.

The text will recover: it withstands earthquakes,
Hurricanes. It owns itself. Outside it there are some lives,
Some worlds, the sea where ships do what they can.

Walking along the darkened street. No street answers
Footsteps. They're always far away as if no street and no feet
Could lead to happiness. Disasters happen; so does
Happiness. They happen and the sky reflects them: every
Star is a sign of happiness and a symbol of many disasters to come.

They come and another star appears: one star can't contain
All disasters. And happiness wanders from one country to another,
Staying in a motel, a pub, flying around a light bulb.

It is never 'plus'. And 'minus' is on Venus, on other planets.
What counts is a series of numbers that count neither forwards
Nor backwards: 'Ten, nine...' Backward numbers.
They count in the middle; they count the Middle Way.

The Middle Way is leaning sideways. But nightingales sing

And nothing stays or departs. They're gone, all of them.
 Departures are cancelled; so are hands, lands, lakes and orchestras.
 One note, as usual – an all-inclusive middle note.

Who is done for? An echo says nothing: it just repeats
 What has never been said. Even 'never' has a life of its own
 Or someone else's life, dying beside 'ever', 'clever'.

The autumn speaks about sickles, hammers.
 'Is' is 'not'. Only a blade of grass knows
 A number of poems by heart. So does a leaf, not a leaflet.

And leaves just stay wherever they can die
 Without fearing death and the Hereafter
 Where they are to become trees and crosses.

And whatever was said might have been true. But even
 Truth becomes another truth, and whatever
 Light sees as it travels faster than light doesn't say anything.

Silence is made of gold, of silver, of gods, of modes.
 Even if it flies over fields, it doesn't utter a word, the word, the image.
 And the image is as silent as lives that always talk at cross purposes.

So many lives, former and future.
 Just small talk, as small as the world.

A deep narrow crack in rock. Wide cracks, rocks.
 The past shows fine wrinkles around the eyes.

The past doesn't talk, but it listens to what happens:
 Wrinkles, eyes, the lights that can be seen
 Over centuries, histories, stories, triumphs and sorrow.

Only one unrecognisable face. And faith, faith.

This is what is and should ever be done – the past.

No colours, no nuances, no contours. Only light.

No one hears it – one can't hear light. Yet

It is audible. The dead and their voices don't say anything.

They light a candle, strike a match. And voices

Are heard again. Whose voices are they? No identities,

Just voices, nothing else. Even the candle is a voice, two voices.

They don't know what they're saying

To them, whoever they are. Perhaps they're not.

Why should a voice die down? It neither dies nor goes

To the centre of the Earth. What would it do

Down there? Voice-activated fawns and nymphs.

Let us remain here forever.

To sing, to talk. Babble, the Bible,

Lullabies, interior monologues.

A lot of lives as if there were

Nothing else in the whole world.

A horizontal tower. Going from one end of the world

To the other. Heaven is elsewhere, up there,

Down there. Where's heaven, the heavens, the sky?

Only clouds. And demons fly through them, beyond them.

Peter the Great is dying in a film. He is not

The only victim of death, of life, of the Middle Way,

Of the Third Way, of the Second Way.

Ways and no paths. Where to go? Up the world,

Down the world. They climb the world

And fall down. The world is a ladder, a matter,

Prima materia. And heaven is one star, one nebula.

The end of the world, another end.

The Dawn of the Gods.

There's something else. This is a dot, a comma.
 What else? A letter, a word, a god, God? They're in a tunnel,
 In a castle; and this castle is someone's home, fireplace.
 To keep them warm: hands, thoughts, hopes. All hopes are cold.

Waiting for hours on the freezing cold station platform.
 A train, a plane, a spaceship. Too late. But roses do what they can
 To delay the onset of the disease by several months.

They're lost and no one cares about them.

They're thoughts and an old bridge
 That spans the river just outside the town and any thought.

A thought is a bridge, but it's too old
 And doesn't span anything. Ideas disappear: they're too
 Simple – like drops, grains, rains, veins, blood.

Torrential rain (or blood) is a multitude of drops.
 The blood comes down in torrents. Nothing happens.

A drop does happen. It drops from the sky; so does
 The world where a hero lives. He lives and dies in a drop
 And people talk about a torrential downpour.

Simple eye, compound eye. What these eyes see
 Can be seen by another eye, another glance, another
 Creature. And this creature is *beyond* the corner.

It sees a drop in a torrential storm. It sees a tiny life
 Which is bigger than any Big Bang. *Another* creation.

Neither outside nor inside. What remains can be described,
 Depicted. An image, the end of the world. The world

Weeps and creeps towards another beginning. But no beginning comes
 And goes so the world goes out, away, to another planet and
 Dimension. Only begging comes, but life survives and another
 Night says to many teenagers they can love each other.

They do and a river begins its eternal recurrence.
 It goes round and round; and water feels it can't live
 Without a human being who never swims in the same
 River, ocean, notion, magic potion. In a swimming pool.

Atoms, molecules, spades and diamonds.
 Creation goes into detail and nothing eludes
 A pair of eyes and other pairs. They
 Don't know the world; no one does. But rivers say
 A few words to their banks as if their banks
 Could answer them. No one answers; nothing
 Speaks. There's a glade that speaks from time to time;
 Not now, not now. Nor does its phantom utter
 A word of truth, falsehood, brotherhood.

No words, only riverbanks, rivers and boats.
 These boats go as far as the nearest afterlife.

It's so often like that. No choice. A path
 And a life await one – alias a youngster – round
 The corner, round the clock.

The Earth is round; so is the sun.
 And spheres are harmonies. They're perfect;
 So are many suns and humans.

Everybody's perfect. But a voice sings
 A song no one will ever know. It's neither perfect
 Nor round. A sign of life in the old man's body.

And nothing is so strong as this and that.
 Strength leaves and nothing comes. And nothing is another

Life or fissure, a narrow crack. What is it? A tunnel,
A hope? It is nothing and nothing comes in due course.

And nothing departs. What is left is more than
Nothing, nonsense or anything – the whole world.

A fountain – the meeting point.

Atoms meet atoms and vice versa.

One is said; two are uttered. Both are outside,
In the middle of a garden path.

They're in the mind and the mind is everywhere
As if the world was here, on this bed.

The here and now are in the darkest corner of the room.

Light is in George de La Tour's paintings.

It is not where you are. Only memories,
No regrets, no dates of any kind. Where was it?
Who? What? And love is beside the point.

A monument to love. You say, 'It was yesterday.'
It was. Creation is better than night.
Waking up and doing what should be done.

Nothing is nothing. Everyone will be buried
Here and there. The Earth welcomes everyone
And only birds sing, 'Tomorrow, last month.'

A crab scuttled away under a rock as they passed.
A sign of life? Hardly. They pass, go, come,
Open many doors. And crabs know many rocks.

Life is elsewhere where there are no rocks,
 No crabs, no people, no walks on beaches.
 And no spirits: they neither fly nor crawl.

To Fiona Taylor-Brown

It is cold, a thing is cold. Any straight line is too
 Straight. Anything that goes awry is blamed
 On the weather, on the end of someone's tether.

There are two ends, three ends, only one beginning,
 And that beginning is endless. The fountainhead.
 Roots grow and reach the sky. A bend in the road.

To Fiona Taylor-Brown

Sliding on a polished floor. Sliding, sliding.
 That's what should be done on the spur of the moment
 Anywhere, everywhere. It is done.

There are moments and minutes, and the polished floor.
 And mirrors say what they're used to saying
 When happiness looks at them; when anything

Looks at them, stares at them. No happiness, no mirrors.
 Just anything. Is it bigger than the thing in itself?
 Nothing is bigger or smaller. Just a mirror and happiness.

To Fiona Taylor-Brown

And what is not. Isn't it a thing of the past?
 The past is the future, but everything goes and nothing
 Comes as if nothing could be done about this, that
 And whatever comes and goes. Everything goes. Whatever goes
 Does not go: nothing can go, leaving whatever
 Can be forsaken.

A hand holds a skull and the Word doesn't say if it is
 Yorick or Christ.

To Fiona Taylor-Brown

An opening doesn't know anything; nor does
Closeness. Going through vistas of whatever lies ahead
Or behind. Doors, closed and open; so are ceilings,
The sky. And nothing counts except one, three, four.

There are four ceilings, four hands, four flowers.
They do what they can. And time has run out
Of milk, money, ideas, patience. Of time.
'No' is not 'no': a symbol, a sign, five minutes.

You are not. Nothing can become.
You're truncated; so are they.
A slice of everything.

Mice, cats. They play; so do you.

To Monique Chatenet

No rivers. Only banks, infinite banks.

No finitude. Immortality, eternity.

Love everywhere. I love.

Everywhere is somewhere.

Speech doesn't say what it is or was –
In the days of Plato and Cicero. What was it?
Another speech, other times?

Other minds, other specks of dust,
Other roads and stars. What did they see
When looking up? Other words.

And even the Word was different.

It was the Sound rather. Not a harmony –
Just one sound. No point in saying ‘The Sound.’
There’s nothing else, nowhere. Everywhere.

Where’s your beauty?
Saying, doing nothing.

I say, ‘Nothing’ and a face appears.
Not your face: it is the Face.

Not the Face of God.
The Face, nothing else.

Nothing, none, everything.
A drop of water.

Another side and nothing except
Another mind, body, riverbank, bank.

A grain of sand is not the universe –
Just a grain, nothing more or less.

Grains and plains. Nothing is greater
Than a field, a magnetic mountain.

The truth is not in every speck of dust,
In ashes. Just dust. An echo of another truth.

Hope is not in a corner,
In the middle of everywhere.
Not in the air either.

An underground cave,
A wine cellar,
A bottle of wine.

Not a ray of sunshine:
 Infra-red rays,
 Days. No one will come.

The tumour showed up
 On the X-ray, in the sunbeam.

Nothing is once in a while, again.
 Whatever happens goes away, does not
 Come back. Yet it comes and hymns resound
 In the air, under vaults, in a bolt of
 Lightning – in any bolt, any bush, any push.

Minouche, Minouche. A name no one
 Remembers. No names – only nicknames
 And strokes of luck, a caress
 No one will ever take notice of.

A caress, a hand, an event, a memory.

Not every woman, man. And animals feel
 Too much. They do, but whatever they feel does not
 Feel our feelings.

Are we always alone? Not quite.
 We'd better be alone. A cage, a stage.

And we don't know where you are, if you are at all, somewhere.
 You are somewhere, not on Earth, not in our cemeteries.
 Are cemeteries as alone as we are, you are? You are nearby.

At once, tomorrow. They're in the clouds, under angels,
 Above them. Tomorrow flaps its wings furiously
 And flies upwards, but the future is under the Christmas tree:

A present, not the present. Today, four o'clock.

Yesteryear's in the sky. The month of May.

Everything's in the sky, above the gods,
Above the afterlife, under it, by its side.

Not inside, inside out. On the dark side.

Just a cup of tea or coffee. Breakfast.
Always leaving at the break of dawn.

A few seconds are beyond a wall. So are time,
The wall itself and a room where
One will never sleep, not even the dead.

What is out there, beyond everything?
A wall, a chest of drawers. There's nothing beyond,
Behind, elsewhere – just this chest of drawers,
The drawers where many letters will remain until
They're read, deciphered, analysed, taken into consideration.

They *are* taken into a consideration.
A flower appears. No one can read this flower.

No keys, no harmonies. Harmonies go
Right and left; they don't stay where they are
As if nothing could graft them onto
The Face, the Grail. (Can the Grail live on its own?)

They live on their own and even music
Can't dig them out. They sink to the bottom and say
Whatever can be said. And only
The melody stays on the surface of the heart.

Another field of vision. A castle, a herd of cattle. An hour
Strikes. It looks like rain; it sounds like rain.

Music doesn't know what to do. It does nothing – it doesn't even
 Sound. Yet another hour strikes and no one walks on the grass,
 On the Earth. It is forbidden to walk around the Earth,

To swim in the nearest lake. Swans and ballerinas. Another
 Hope you don't hear because hopes are inaudible. Only misery finds
 Its way into the natural fabric of people's doom.

Rainbows do not sing; nor do they whisper.
 Nor do they keep silent. They are.

A moment. Another bow, another pain.

New and old. Where do they come from? From the new world,
 Whatever that is or is not. A straight path leads to progress,
 To regress, to love where only dubious individuals meet and do not love
 Anyone, not even themselves, let alone cats and dogs.

A new wave, an old one.
 They come together so they're neither new
 Nor old. And love is old, crazy,
 Shattered into a thousand tiny pieces.

Every piece is love, hate and friendship.

A tiny little second – less than a second, an instant. The present.
 The rest is the past, the future, hope and whatever lies beyond one second,
 One breath, one twinkling of an eye. What is there?

Another question, eternal or temporary. Go, go, go. No end, no middle.
 No middle way – only the Way. And there's a path somewhere, a tiny little path.
 A looking glass. Another point of no return, of eternal recurrence.

The same love in two years, another homecoming.
 The same breakfast, another breakfast, two different cups

Of coffee, a toffee. A smile I will not forget.

The sea is outside. And what is inside
Looks like a puddle, two puddles. A clown shows
What life is about, but life doesn't show anything. It is
Not about this or that. And only puddles speak
About a man who came from nowhere –
Not from the sky. He came from the sleeve of a fur coat and said a word
No one understood. A revelation?

This sunrise goes right and left; so does time.

This play goes too far. It's no longer a play.
No point in asking what it is or was: nothing like that will
Happen in the future that is near. The future
Is behind a tree, behind a bar. The past doesn't go through it:
Only the future pays visits to the future. No lessons
Can be learnt from the past and disasters. No lessons, no means
To ward off evil spirits and colds.

The future is ill and haunted. It always raises doubts and hands.
But doubts are weak – as weak as certitudes. So are hands and feet.
The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages and vice versa.

A moment doesn't speak to another moment,
Another eternity, another 'I'.

This should be done. A journey, another tree of life,
Of afterlife. There's nothing after this tree, that bush, that
Fountain. Not even youth, not even a song.

The soul sings no longer; nor does it look at the road.
It doesn't reinvent the wheel, speed, light, day
And night. The body rises slowly above the horizon.

To forgive and not to forget. To forget what can be

Forgotten, forgiven, discarded, taken to pieces.

Only one voice and this voice doesn't say anything; nor does it
Sing. Is it a sign? The voice is mute; so are signs, minds,
Rights, wrongs, nonce words, nuns and ding-dongs.

Nothing is there or here except the here, the there
And the thereafter. And voices say what they usually say:

Happiness, brotherhood, drain, down, up, beauty, truth.

A bit of rhyme and reason.
A bit of anyone's soul.

This day is full of books, of tears,
Of nothing. The sun talks about
Sunbeams; these talk about joy and
Holidays, the sea, the yachts
One can see everywhere, even
In the sky. The word stays alone.

Nothing is everywhere. Not even tomorrow,
Sunrise; not even yesterday. Your smile is over there
And I don't know where is the there and
The over. I don't have them; someone else does.

You're the only one; and two, and three,
Women, cats, the plants I know nothing about.
Not my family life – just a travelling
Companion, my evermore. My nevermore.

Again and again. This doesn't count; nor does that
Have any influence over the world council. That is not
This and vice versa. The Earth goes round;
So does the Sun. It goes round the universe and

No one seems to mind this circumference and centre, this God
 And the angels who fly and protect everyone
 Against cancer, the common cold and from the harmful effects
 Of the Sun, the Moon, the stars. Comets, meteors, stardust.

Anymore, anyhow. This goes on; not a show.
 Nor is it time, for time neither goes nor stands: it is time
 And nothing moves it, not even the Prime Mover.

It moves and stops and does whatever it likes or dislikes,
 Beating out a jazz rhythm on the drums, on the body.

They say it is night or day. Otherwise nothing happens,
 Not even breakfast or wintertime when everyone
 Looks at the snow that falls forever.

No odds, only bits and pieces. And these pieces
 Can't be put together. They're not brothers,
 Sisters, husbands, wives, children, cats. They're just
 A piece of cloth torn from God's coat.

One star is enough, another star. And nothing doing,
 Nothing willing, no power, no hard feelings,
 No feelings at all. A small cat/house/car/country.

It is not. So many loves and hates. They end around
 This corner, and another square comes into existence, into
 Non-existence. So there are nons and lives.
 They live as if there were no alternatives, no choices, no Joyces
 Who cut languages, Ireland and Stephen.

Birds don't do anything; they don't even fly.
 They might sing a hymn to nonsense,
 Nons, senses, non-existence, in-between.

Shortly thereafter.
 Shortly hereafter.

'No' is not 'yes' or '*das*' or 'this' or 'sad' or 'dead'.

The dead are elsewhere; they're sad, gay
 And they say they're neither you nor anybody:
 They're everybody, every cloud, political clout.

Nothing counts except this weather forecast,
 The supporting cast: rein, another vein you open

And look at. A complete and utter rout.

A bus route.

Near the ground, near the pond where there are a few
 Goldfish. They're gold and nothing distracts them
 From their studies of water, of the sun. There are two suns, three
 Suns; they all go through us to say life is
 Beautiful and beauty depends on light. Love, light, love.

Spending the night in torment, trying to decide what's the best thing
 To do. Another thought about light that filters
 Through the branches, through a chink in the curtains, in the brain.

Again a slice of life. To live through light
 In the dead of night, in the dead of the future,
 In the dread where everyone loves forever.

In the palm of one's hand lie the sky, that sky,
 A falling star, a falling black hole, a falling house.

One describes a falling house, one's own fate.
 One describes oneself and whatever came into view.

The world came into view; so did time and
 Whatever was outside or inside, in the middle.

One describes one, four – an endless list of things to do.

Only the last number, the last time, the house.

Not the only solution. There are others, a railway,
 A train that takes anyone to anything, any paradise, however
 Small. Just a tree, a flower, a bumblebee.

The sun shone through the leaves, casting shadows on
 The lawn. To rest, to forget, a shadow, a jug of milk.
 Her hair was so soft it was like silk. Was it? Wasn't it?

Twists and turns. Not the only life, the only doomsday.
 A bumblebee, a flower. One's childhood,
 Youth and a word that means neither papa nor mama.

Hosanna! Hurray! A door opens out into the garden.
 No end, another leaf, grief or whatever
 Happens in the world, in a word, in a crystal ball.

THE DEATH OF POETRY, THE DEATH OF MUSIC
(Richard Wagner Year 2013)

To Jan Fabre

It's not what it should be. *This* should be:
 Elsewhere there's nothing. The hand doesn't take what
 It should treasure. Hands are useless; so are
 Arms and the air where no breath can survive. Even the air
 Forsakes the mind.

Dropping Wagner's *Ring* down a drain
 In the road. Into a fountain.

Into the Rhine. Into Lethe.

Another story is down there: no stories
 In the sky where so many wings are flapping.

What do they do? They flap
 Furiously, flying upward, downward.

There's less to them than meets
 The eye. One wing, one thing.

Is this a thing or just itself: it, another self,
 Death, a dacha, a bush, the grass
 Where everything happens and lives forever?

Not a destiny, another day. No suffering –
 Surfing, swimming and water-skiing.

No pain – this story is set
 In an imaginary world. No worlds, only one
 Idea. One line. A clothes line,

A souls line. Neither here, nor there.

ETERNITY

Right, wrong. A quality, no quantity,
No measure. Beyond yards and courtyards.

What is it? Good, an evil dictator?
Love, life, void? A palace, candlelit dinners,
Songs, *sang*. A ghost sitting

By someone's side. But no wood will ever
March towards him, whatever he does.

What anyone can hear is a square or whatever
Doesn't exist. What's in the world or
Out if it, out of today, tomorrow? Only a tree that talks
Nonsense about life, knowledge and immortality:
Evergreen, evergreen. Everred, everdead.

A square says what it wants; so does a triangle – anything, any-
Body. Even a body deprived of a soul speaks like this,
Saying what cannot be found in sacred books.

Everything is sacred or blessed. Nothing's on its own, even
If everything's on its own, alone, forsaken, godforsaken.

A string can express what they think, do or scent.

They feel the world and nothing's outside.
What's inside amounts to very little indeed. Sometimes
One hears 'indeed' and is satisfied on the whole.
One hears the whole or part of it.

There are no parts. Two halves make a whole, six
Halves make a whole. The whole makes itself.

An infinite melody. Wagner, God, former lives,
Future agonies in castles. Muscle spasms.

They might bend over a corpse whose eyes are wide open.

A direction chooses itself. It goes here and there
 As if called upon to do something, to lead a nation or
 An individual to a goal, a clump of grass,
 Daffodils.

A piece of music was played
 A long time ago. What's left is next to nothing:
 Twelve sounds that do not match.

And loneliness never counts as if someone
 Forgot to count it: zero plus zero plus zero plus zero.

Any zero beyond these zeroes? A plus zero?

A landscape will say much more than it knows.

A breath is not in the body. It goes upward,
 Downward; it hides and comes to the fore so someone says,
 'I'm breathing,' '*Je respire.*' No one does.

The breath

Does whatever it feels like doing.
 It lives on its own and doesn't find death because
 It doesn't look for it.

What does it look for?
 Another body or soul?

The soul doesn't need the air –
 Just a strawberry that reminds it
 Of its country house.
 A wild strawberry perhaps.

And nothing else. What must be is, otherwise
 Nothing can be where it is or will be
 In the near future. And this future recedes
 Into the distance, into the instance that
 Sticks out a mile whenever instants are spoken of.

When they are not, a spoon hangs in between
 A mouth and a plate. And people look at the sky.
 Nothing counts. Nothing more will ever
 Happen except mishaps and old recordings.

'Not' is not 'not' – in terms of mathematics,
 Friendship. Other terms, other nots. Only this night
 Is the same: the same twilight, the same dinner,
 Supper, bed. '*Mnogo let*,' as the Russians say or think.

A lot of years. Where are they? In the near future,
 In the distant past. A lot of years and not
 A shadow of what must have been, might have been.

This afternoon is not even a shadow,
 Not a Shakespearian shadow or meadow:
 Just a samovar, a cup of tea, a cake, five minutes –
 A part of eternity that knows everyone by heart.

You say – not everyone, everything.
 Everyone has their own room, doom and forest
 Where everyone gets lost forever.

A suit of armour will be found, a knight
 And King Arthur, a sword.

The evidence against history is all hearsay;
 So is the evidence against myths.
 You, yours, no one, not even Lancelot –
 Someone's lot and lance, dance. Another name.

The name lies on the heart.

Light is again or not. And 'not' is light, provided
 No one looks carefully at it. Not looking, not thinking –
 That's light, the only solution. An object.
 Neither an object nor a subject. And love leaves and goes
 To other countries, loves and hates.

A bit of love remains on the bed,
 Inside the Met where they sing and stage another
 Opera, the same drama. They sing, die
 And their mamas cry on stage
 As long as firemen allow them to cry, sing and listen
 To the applause.

Not in the way, nor under it. The way goes on
 And nothing can stop it, not even a thought,
 A catastrophe. The end is near, far away, end, middle.

What's under your fingers? Not the middle, no hope,
 Just a syllable that means a lot – the world, the afterlife.

They'll be reunited in the afterlife. Others will not.
 The afterlife doesn't lie in wait for anyone,
 Lurking in the shadows. It's neither after nor before.

It is content to watch from the sidelines
 As we build up a successful empire and die.

Life remains neutral. It goes and stops; it doesn't look
At the stars or the mud or a fruit tree in bud.

Taking no sides. What else can be taken? A human, not an object,
Not a stone where instincts lie hidden: death, life, survival.

What for? To survive? There are enough
Lullabies to put the universe to sleep;
No more injections, actions. Perchance to dream.

Doesn't the universe know anything else?
What *does* it know? Destiny, stars. Any star knows
Itself and Socrates. Nothing has been done;
Everything just happens, moves. Where to?

The proverbial river moves; so does the man
Who steps down, out, up. Men and women go there or
Anywhere. They're happy and die
As everyone does or must do. What else?
They live to see their grandchildren.

Dawn, ding-dong. Something comes to the fore
And goes out, away. Life is there. What
To do with it? Take it, press it down firmly.
Or up.

The gods and God will help someone and not
Everyone concerned. They stand
Against the wall while Someone decides where to hang them.

They'll know nothing else, just Someone,
Baby food, cat food, plant food. They'll feed the kids first
And have their dinner after.

Doesn't it? Whatever happens is welcome. Drops,
Pods. Objects go or stand where they are.

They're objects and everyone knows what they look like.
 Yet they've got something inside and their insides are
 Unknown. Their internal organs, their souls,
 Their hearts of hearts, their sinews, their tendons.

There's snow on the hilltops but not in the valley.
 What's inside this snow, that valley? What's outside?

MY LAST FLAT

I'm not where I am. I'm behind, beyond, on the other
 Side, in the other, in another. Yet I'm here, in this flat, house,
 Garden. These flowers are mine: I've lived with them for
 Many years. They know me. They're different; yet
 They know me by heart. I walk through my corridor.
 This is my corridor. I'll never have another tunnel, another light,
 Another death. All has been said and done. The same corridor.

If you carry on whining like that.

I won't carry on.
 I won't carry anything.

I just say what I have to say or not.

My departure, my end,
 The end of the world where
 I live, die, do not die;

Where I've loved everyone;

Where music talks like a mad woman –
 Always, always.

EWIG-WEIBLICHE

There was, once upon a time, upon a space. Here they

Stand, fall – a doll that stands, falls, speaks. What does it
 Say? It, he, she? Nothing at all. She opens her
 Mouth, his mouth, and nothing comes out of it, of she, of what.
 And he says something no one understands. And something
 Opens some mouth and whatever comes out of it
 Should be recorded for the sake of eternity. Eternity.
 Its mouth is always wide open. Her mouth.

Figures, figures. One face among dishes,
 Figures, perspectives. The face sees itself elsewhere,
 At the end of this road, that road, at the end
 Of this end. What is 'that'? What is the dish, the supper?
 Just a supper, fork and pork. One glass,
 Two champagnes, two everything. Or nothings.
 It depends on what the universe thinks and feels whenever
 It feels like feeling. Now it does not feel
 Anything. Let it sleep.

Let it talk in its sleep.

A few fairy tales that speak
 About us, and the window where
 The street and feet kill their time,
 My time, the other world.

The street walks along itself to find out
 What lies beyond it. Another pair of feet,
 Another pair of binoculars. Another pair
 Of worlds. Another, other, this, that.
 And *that* is lying under someone's feet
 Or flying overhead. Over the dead.

A COMEDY OF MARITAL FIDELITY

A woman will drive you slowly
 To many woods that have only one tree,
 One bush, one blade of grass – as if
 The world was one tomorrow, forever.

A talk, a nod. They happen, whatever
They are. They're inside, in spite of. And their
Schedule is not different from whatever
Happens on this moon of ours.

Come, come! Light your candles
And depart from Platform 2
As if you'd never come. Next week.

No voice for singing, no word. No lord, another
Lord, this lord, their food parcel and morsel.

They're fragile: morsels, parcels, Morse code, another
Mode. Do what you can. You do a lot and the stars
Do not fall on you. They sleep in your
Bed: your stars, stoves, groves. They're a cradle
Where there sleeps another Antichrist. Another immortality.

Not to yield. To what, to whom?

No yielding, just doing this and not that.
Not what has been done,
Said, murdered with a spot of ink,
With a beauty spot.

So many murders around
As if there were enough lives
To cope with them.

One life, two at most.

They always speak about former lives and parallels,
And worlds, and hells, and fountains of youth.

We need two dice to play the game, the Devil and I.
The Fountain of Death, Helen of Troy, Rita.

No sad news – only good, good, well, see you
Tomorrow, have a nice night. The night comes and
No one sees it. Nor does tomorrow
See itself or anything else, anybody. They live within
A hundred morrows and yesteryears.
And life doesn't talk about time because
It is life, not time. A drop drops where it should
Find its eternal rest. It finds it, but eternity
Thinks otherwise. They think otherwise and the clock turns
As often as it can. And the snow falls on them:
On hands, on figures, ciphers. Yesterday is
Tomorrow, whatever it can say to other clocks,
To other gods who do not know today.

A shadow is split into three groups:
Three meadows, shadows.

They mean a lot and their meaning goes
As far as another mountain,
Another earth and death.

Go, go, go – as far as *another* death.
That death has other mountains, lakes, another
Alcove where a man can crouch
Beside her, another Beatrice.

This noise is elsewhere – a brook, a tune,
Not life, not life. Another L, other I, F.

What about E? What about life itself? It is in here,
In there, in and out. A hand can grasp what is
Not on the surface – inside, inside.

And that escapes whatever it can escape,
For what holds the thing is the thing itself,
Not an outsider. And a hymn one hears resounds
In the Valley of Death, whatever that is.

What is it? The Valley of Death, the Garden
Of Rot. The Path of Bach.

A desert where only stars
Sleep on the sand, behind it.

You shine overhead
As if nothing had ever happened:
No downs, no ups,
No lessons where one hears
Caesar's name.

There was your name
Once upon a time,
Above time.

Crying is not an instrument. What's heard is
A disaster, a sound of morning, evening, today
And several months before.

The winter

Comes and utters the word one knows by heart,
By a half of one's heart. The other half is in the North,
In the East. And the West is another half

Or not at all. One third at the door. What's the use
 Of crying, laughing, saying again and again,
 'What's the use?'

The point *is*. Just a point, nothing
 Else. Not even a point, a heart, a month, a dance.
 Not even a dance. Stay, stay, stay. Sing your song.

If nothing, so it is. It is. A hand lies
 On it, even if it is not 'it'.

It may be 'does' or 'a mass of rubble'. What else?

Destiny, fate, mate.
 A brain lies on it.
 A hand relies on
 Another hand.

The dawn should come;
 So does the next dawn,
 The day to come, a few
 Hours, minutes. They all
 Go through a door, a second.

This tree will not die. The Tree of Life. Every tree
 Or bush is nothing unless it is eternal life.

Dreadful sorry, Clementine. You're also
 A clump of daffodils. As usual there are only
 Daffodils, grass and roses. They all bloom and wither.

Whither, o whither? we say and lie
 On whatever is put within our reach.

Take away. Nothing doing. A dream about
 Life and knife. Nothing puts an end to it:
 Death is a still life, a vase of dried flowers.

What is here lasts and there's no denying
That whatever stops does not end – not the end
Of anything. Tethers, feathers.

Nothing ends. Fly, fly, my Ariel. Prospero
Will not drown his books. Only books,
Nothing else. We're all above heaven, above
Time. Whatever comes with it goes away
At once, forever.'

We shall fly
And the stars will not talk.
Why should they?

And there was this which doesn't mean anything
Today, tomorrow. Yesterday it was love because nothing else
Counts for a human being. Now it is a straight line,
A cube, a dishwasher. And this washer washes not only
Dishes but also thoughts and noughts.

If you wash a nought, it becomes 'not'. Not this,
Not that. So is God: He is neither this nor that. And the world is this,
That, not, what, ought, seven wonders, nine wonders.
Every wonder is a world where there are homes and castles.

This dirty minute, that crooked smile. Their Grails, emails.
One 'yes' could alter the universe. It will not.
One 'no' could mend this hole in my pinstripe suit.

It stands mute, dumb, in a corner,
In the middle of the street.
And the street stands nowhere,
Not even in the middle of the universe.

This middle is empty.

All middles and centres and corners
 Are empty or full –
 Cluttered with stones and moans.
 The difference?

Just a handshake, faith, another god, absence,
 Summer. Another autumn perhaps, before the end.

They are. Their woods stand everywhere. Their woods?
 Their nods shake their heads and every movement is a sign,
 A sigh – slight (or sly) change in the universe.

A butterfly's wings. A lot of things and just one absolute evil, good,
 Mood. A hole in a marble statue. Walk, walk, walk –
 Don't stand on your pedestal. The only living creature, the only
 World, man, woman, insect, sect. Let's pray to one god,
 Two gods, three gods. Our Trinity, our last embrace, our last
 Face – the one that'll never die, not even
 On the Cross, on a moss-covered wall, rock, sky.

Freedom boils down to running from here
 To the nearest town. Legs
 Run as if they had nothing else to do.

Hamlet turns up and talks nonsense;
 So does Agamemnon. They don't
 Know what they do; and if they do know
 The whys and wherefores,
 They don't know what they're talking about.

And they talk for hours and hours –
 About the snow that will not fall.
 And death is a minute, a snowflake.

Let us live more or less on an opera
 That comes with an aria, on a melody
 That goes and says it's beyond harmonies.

And you are you. Say what's both inside and up –
 Out of milks and ways, of yours truly, of every hill and dale,
 Of what's forever in; out of ins and inns. Out of souls.

The body will tell what's the C Minor Sonata
 And whistle a childhood – on the Moscva river.

Not even happiness. Just a few bars, a pause
 And a thunderclap. The Buddha smiles
 And shows a map where there's only one path, one mass
 Of nothingness.

Not even a path, only a promise
 Of no-feeling, no-pain. A Dane speaks of 'to be' and
 'No-be'. And bees speak of honey. And 'Hi, honey' speaks of
 Money. *Warum, warum?* That's why. Just a speech, a beach on which
 Several bodies lie and analyse the Sun. To die or not to live,
 To give and not to take. To yield, to yield forever.

Lost, lost. Losses count fingers. What are fingers for?
 Losses, one, two. A gain. Again a hope against another hope,
 The same hope, lure and cure. A real carnival atmosphere
 Somewhere, where there are no streets, only carnivals that go from here
 To there, for life is Zarathustra, a dance. A cat in hell's chance.

Cry, cry. Desdemona does. Desdemona has her Othello,
 Her death and prayers. She'll pray for everyone.

She'll pick up many sins and put them on her back to carry them
 As far as the Throne. The Sin will say to the Throne,
 'I am the Tree, the only Life and the Fruit.' The King will eat the Fruit
 And become his own slave. Repeat, repeat this poem, this
 Eternal recurrence, this eternal currency. This wonderful misery.

I will not. And my 'I' will go, if only to stop in the middle,
 In the anywhere, where a field of ripening wheat awaits reapers,
 Tolstoy. In the middle, in the middle. Another nursery song,
 A noise from the street, from the sky that talks about
 Fine weather, lousy angels and the birds that no longer know their
 Nests, their children, our future.

Children, say something about my childhood, my first word,
 My eternal solitude. Children scream and smile.

Whatever is done, is done for time and poetry. Rub it out,
 My children, my last hope. Rub my incertitude out,
 You, my only daughter, never-ever son, my Sunwalk.

You say I'm not. There are no yous and Is. Is, is.
 So many representations. You and I see, touch –
 Them, theirs. Bodies? Perhaps. Another perhaps,
 Sex. Grow weary and wary. I'm growing. I've already
 Outgrown myself, others, trousers, shirts, skirts.

Tell me I'm a woman. You tell me I'm a worm,
 A form without contents and some contents
 That crawl from one eternity to another, to a vase
 Where one puts flowers. Put me in this vase and say
 I'm a flower, a bunch of roses, a bowl of nettle soup.

You go, I go. Vanish, varnish. Say another word,
 You, God, Trinity, Quintenity, Fraternity.
 Let me embrace Your feet, Your feat, Your manna.

THANK YOUR HOST

This doesn't disappear. It is time, it is time.
When there's no time, there's time to reap and weep.

Piangi, piangi, my Violetta, the only woman
I would love if I were alive. I am alive in this river
That keeps me inside: I neither float
Nor play with fish.

I am under you and above the angel who says
I'll always be a human, even in *Paradiso*:
Soul, legs, hands. I'll touch you, all of you.

Come closer, come closer. Reach my utmost frontiers,
My circumference. You're my circle,
You understand. I'm a fishing net held in position by floats.

And disappear again. What matters is not matter,
A prima materia. The immaterial world
Where ideas prosper, this idea, that one. Not a horse,
A real horse – a hyper-real horse.

A glass of wine. Just a moment that touches
This wall, saying nothing. Neither the wall nor the moment
Say anything to anybody; nor does the body speak.

What's another chance? Light doesn't come. Does it
Fly? Does it have wings or a soul? Flee, fly, die.

Again a light, the dark. So it is, a must-see.

Another moment. What is it called? Cold, cold.
A word grows; so do men, women, pictures, mixtures.
They grow. Give me a break. Us, her.

There's a break. There are many breaks:
Loss of memory, property. A hymn drowns out
This rheumatic pain and that – whatever it is,
Was. There's always that, whether

The body is aware of it or not.

Calm down, calm down. Just one life,
Not two, not three. We'll manage, I promise.

Sitting down by the window. Not the universe, just a verse:
Everything's on this side. A few calls, duty calls.

It stops calling. Only silence calls another silence by its first name,
Whether it has any name or not. Name everything, right down to
Obscure carcasses! They're called life as if life was boundless, innocuous,

Harmless – as harmless as a fly that leaves
A lump of sugar in peace, forever.

Another Virgin pulls the duvet over her head to try to shut out the light.
No more blood. A glass of water, harmless, quickly forgotten.

Virgil is here. Let us run from Greece, Rome, from tombs,
Mummies. A stone is enshrined in a childhood
Or anywhere else, for the anywhere is also a childhood
And many manhoods. Many, many.

They talk, exchange gifts, cultures, customs, dollars –
A vending machine or a brain where waterways
Look like pieces of silver. Bodies rub shoulders with minds,
Legs. A song ascends the throne of heaven
As if either heaven or any throne were listening to songs,
Words, modes, Harolds and Maudes.

Go away, go until anything
Grinds to a halt. A holy halt.

Go and sing your song – eternal moan where only
Eternity takes refuge from persecution, pollution.

Thank your host, daimonion. No absolutes,
No Absolut – a Swedish vodka. Give thanks.

Love – on a wall. A picture, a photograph.
Mammas, nature, stars. The world circles around
Them. A dance has begun already.

They dance, these men, stars, months
And years. They return and dance again.
Eternal, momentary. They coincide,
Mate. Mating a moment with an hour produces
Half-an-hour. They produce hours, minutes,
Time, another Beethoven.

Let them sleep: Beethovens, times, minds,
Human rights and wrongs. Sing a lullaby
Instead of writing constitutions. Cushions,
Cushions. They take their burden and sing,
Whatever they can sing tonight, in an hour.

And nothing is beyond the curtains except
One minute, one crucial moment. The Birth.

They break, so does the body, the sword no one holds.

What to hold? Thoughts are the wood where
One happens and dies. What dies will come again.

One comes, two come. They come and talk for an hour
Or twenty minutes. What do they do here or
Elsewhere? They're elsewhere and they do what's written
In the Book, on the Page, on the Sage, on his clothes,
Body, eyes. They write, read, follow in every footstep, on
Every map. Followers are to follow.

To follow a hollow. Don't call it nirvana.

Just a hole where there's enough room

For a top model's legs.

Only in fragments. Well and good. This is good –
A drop of wine as if the heavens were open.

They drop and have no idea where they drop, why.
The final destination. The chosen few? A saviour of
Humanity? Prophets upbraid those in authority
Who overstep their and other limits, voices on mountains.

Walls open as well, as if there were no walls.

Other walls come into being; and wallpapers. Their birds
Sing and fly from one branch to another. And night comes. Why?
Why does anything come? A rosebud, just a nose –
Cleopatra's, Cyrano's. All's well, nothing comes. Silk screens.

A lot of noise. Where does all this come from? Does it
Come? It, it. Things talk about it; so do others.
And they don't know what they talk about. Do they talk to each
Other? They talk and space doesn't listen to them. Space
Has other things to do when it does something.

It does a lot. It shows what no representation
Will ever show in spite of the a prioris and sorrys one hears
And sees from time to time. And time flies from
One point to whatever can be defined in one word, gesture,
Mixture of life and death, of no-men's heads.

One event, another event. In between?
Wien, Bruckner, his last symphony. The last space-time,
The last side of the coin. The last corner of one room.

Doesn't fall. That's not clear. Whatever falls
Doesn't stand up. A state of suspended animation,

Vibration. Vibrate with your vibes
And wives until they're ready to drop.

Drop, fall. Another doll, door, the Yorkshire moors,
Othello, Desdemona, all former loves, chastities,
Innocences, plurals. One love, death. Through one door,
Once, once again. No other way, to the bitter.

And leaves fly whenever they're left alone. Up, up,
Amidst the clouds, the suns. Fly, fall, rise, rose.
A line is not; not enough. Enough Indians, penguins,
Pidgin Englishes. Not a line – the square root of 666.

Moments under the Way. So it is and always
There are outs and ins and wins. Repetitive music,
One rhyme, two words and destinies.
One doppelgänger, two. What's outside?
Not the world where others happen and walk.

Wrong words, empty walls, alls.
Not empty, feelings, love, disappointments,
Sorrow. A clown is empty; emptiness is a clown.

What's in except the heart? Rain, snow and milk
Where nothing will ever grow – not a child,
Not a mother. A proton and a neutron.

A splendid array of microphones and cameras,
Of *Dämmerungs*. The gods will die and say what can be said
Tomorrow, after twilight, midnight, after time, beyond
The lake where only swans sing their songs
And wrongs. They sin and their forbidden fruit
Falls on them from time to time.

Sing your song, your forbidden fruit, your mood.
Your swansong is as near as the nearest apple
You can eat whenever you feel like it, whenever you are.

Not on any top. What is is not there, where.

They pinpoint anything and something goes down the street,
Up the thought. This goes up the thought and nothing
Can stop either the thought or nought.

Never born, zero, minus one, two. A room with
Only one mirror, one bed. The room, a body.

Dying, dying. As usual. What's usual is
Nothing, not anything. Come, go, stay and die
In beds, in nets, in inters, winters.

Die, die. And dance, sing, play whatever
Can be played during plagues and days
When the suns shine and vie with each other

For eternity.

Guitar, twilight, you come into being
And die like gods and mobs.

A woman comes; so does a man. They
Wait for you, for me, for humanity
And go whenever humanity leaves them.

I stay and go astray as if there were no maps –
Only floor mops, dish mops. The Earth.

Does that ever come to any earth,
To the sound I can hear whenever
I feel like hearing anything – a sound, a thing,
A *yin*? I don't know if you know, if you're
Them or it or humans. I'll go

To you and whatever lies behind, beyond, inside,
As if nothing had ever happened.

Nothing happens. I am not
History, a story. I am Saint John, Joan, Cross.
I cover rocks with moss and *nous*.

Earthquakes are so common one quakes with fear.
An earthquake comes; and also the Messiah because
Messiahs always come at ungodly hours. But
All hours are godly. Is there anything outside God,
An iPod? Seed pods. One shouldn't live
With words and messiahs. These come and stay; so do words
And pea pods. Everything stays and looks sideways,
Down, down. And the Earth says to herself,
'I'm the Earth, the centre of the universe. Only I am the iPod.
Everybody and everything listen to my Bach,
My *Don Giovanni*, *I puritani di Scozia*, my Callas. Wait till you hear
The last note, then bury yourself in my womb. Is there anything warmer?
Any other home? Back is the traveller, the reveller.'

Whatever happens is in the air, on one cloud or under it.
Clouds and mounts, purgatories and hells and shopping malls.
And emails speak for hours. They come from malls,
Walls and dolls. They speak unwritten, absolute truths,
And the air bears with them as if it could bear with anything,
Anybody. It can, yes it can, and Creation goes on
Breathing. Water recalls the Big Bang and one hears
Church bells whenever it does recall it.

The Small Bang, the whimper.

Bells, bells, bells, bells.
Belles dames sans merci.
Sans merci, sans souci.

To behave like an actor, a singer, a winner. This winner

Wins a lot, but a lot remains in a distant corner.

There are colours in that corner, nuances, tones, details.

And in the centre there's only death, life – call it

What you wish. It calls itself: I'm life, I'm death, I'm resurrection.

All right – rise from the dead, return to the dead as often as *you*

Can. You're not Jesus Christ nor any other Christ.

You're not even Chris, nor a miss, a mistress.

You're a stone, a brook, a nook. You loop a noose around your neck.

All is done. Why do you always come back?

Don't play your part: you aren't smart.

Anyway, there are no parts, only parcels.

Carry this parcel as far as the end of this rotation

And lie down. What else? H. G. Wells?

The visible man. Another machine.

So it is. 'Is' is taken and 'so' is left behind.

A so-so performance of this window.

A man walking towards the unknown, the known,

The half-known. He finds the half and goes back from where

He came or must have come.

Must have done his duty.

Goes, goes. Somewhere come a lot and nothing

Filters in, out, down. It does filter: a drop, a splodge.

In this splodge one finds the universe.

And the universe finds no one – only stars,

Nebulas. Is it one, a man, our own microcosm,

Microeconomics, microelectronics?

One screen, one dollar. Let us live and let live molecules,
 Amoebas and other ebas and amoes. Amos.
 Does that mean anything in this context or out of it?
 What about frameworks and frames?

Flames are not far: they encroach upon frames,
 Portraits, Monas, Lisas, tailors and others.
 And others burst into flames and tears.
 And tears extinguish the flames and names.

And *nicht tremenda*. Always 'and', and '*nicht*'
 And '*niet*'. Is not; this trembles, mumbles.
 So does whatever comes into the Mind. Alone,
 Alones. Come, come, go, away, away. Again.

It's not true. The only liar is the Maya Calendar.
 We're eternal, in the annals. Rise and go to
 Other beds. Find one and lie on it until you find
 Another clock, another alarm clock. Then rise,
 Go, eat a steak, go again, come to a petrol station,
 Go again, stop, turn, go again, come to yourself,
 Another tree, and the tree will hang you or release you.

Completely at ease, ill at ease. Where do I grow?

Torn up and down. Night is calm; so is another day
 No one hears. Only one night can be heard. It is heard,
 Seen and said. Cosmic night, last night. And last night
 There was a dream – not a nightmare. Just a dream,
 A dream team. The team dreamt a dream and vice versa.
 It's not over – both dreams and teams. Night is not
 At the end of its tether, feather. Another night – only
 Feathers, but no ends. Feathers, weathers, rains, torrents,
 Suns, months, typhoons. Standing up. Is that how they die?
 Reaching for the stars. The right hand, the right word.

It's always 'on the verge of'. No verges, no offs. Champs

Elysées. Streets and needs that crop up. Miles, emails,
As if there were no monuments that always speak to each other.

They don't speak at all; nor do they look at anything.
They *are*. And streets know their stones, moods and woods.

Squares listen to a monument that says one word only.
The second word, a few seconds later.

Love is on the left. Going, picking up. Pick it up and say it is
Friendship and nonsense. They say. Stones repeat whatever has been
Said and done: as usual saying and doing don't go together.

What's together can't live on the Moon. And the Moon is the last refuge
Of scoundrels, poets. Going, picking up. Picking up moons, moonstones.
A woman in white and water – as crystal clear as another ETERNITY.

Your first eternity. Another DVD? Leave it on. The birth of the gods.
I love you, I will. I love you beyond the gods and deeds.

THE REQUIEM

And yet they sink under bottoms, atoms. The void can't be
Defined, for there are many voids. But this is the void, the only one.
And no sound resounds in it – only D-Sounds. Not Schubert,
Not Bruckner. These sounds do not bridge the gap – nothing can
Live and die without it. The body throws itself into it,
And the body is happy. What's this hymn? Happiness, freedom.
This freedom lives in the hole and sings in it. And sadness
Goes out. D-Minor chords. They die outdoors and bless their eternity.

This beginning is in the middle, in the woods where
Nothing is brown, dead or mad. There are
Meadows in the woods – as empty as nothing, as
Anything. Dawn listens to night and hears one

Sound. This is not the Sound of Night, the Cadenza of Life.

The Tree of Life forgets its roots;
There are other trees, cadenzas.

They struggle for life,
Fail to root and so die.
They turn into nymphs.

Tool and toil, trouble and double.
Witches speak to riders; history hears
Their talks, this exchange of ideas.

The ideas threaten, prophesy
Whatever will not come.
They do come: wars, ideas,
Lady Macbeths. The autumn
Covers them with dead leaves.

Every leaf cries: 'Enough, enough!'
The winter comes and snowballs
Sing what can't be sung or done.

An aria is always an aria, an opera.

Places. One finger is here. What should be done?
To stamp a passport, a day. This day
Is stamped with a sell-by date, mate. Eight minutes.

TIME is stamped and something is awful
As well as other somethings. Is the world
Made up of something and vineyards?

It is and these curtains answer questions;
So does any chest of drawers. Let them answer
Questions, answers and the future.

To the other side, to this size, to a maze of narrow passages.

Jumping from one hole to another. Death is not what it
Used to be. The lining was different. Was it there,
Beyond the great Beyond? It was – the greatest Beyond one can
Chance upon. Now it is a very small beyond, smaller
Than life, much smaller.

It was the great Beyond – larger
Than life. Now it is a number of boxes of old clothes.

To the other side, to that size, to Red Square, to White Square.

What's broken? Not everything, not this wood,
Not this sheet of paper. It is folded – a neatly folded
Sheet of paper in a jacket pocket. A masterpiece,
A new Bible. What's written cannot be un-
Written. Why do you always forsake me? Always, not
Once or twice – always, always, on hills,
In lakes and brooks, on every stone my butterfly chooses
To settle on. Every incarnation, carnation. Love.

No leaf looks like another leaf. Another drop
Of wine. A glass of wine, of drops that are
Different. Many glasses, wines, leaves,
Myths. These humans are on the horizon but neither
The horizon nor they are there or anywhere else.

One leaf (or life) doesn't sound like another life, leave,
Love. They're individuals, atoms that cast their ballots, taking
Part in Rousseau's *Social Contract*.

Active and passive: love, sounds, breaths, breasts,
A week's rest, champagne flutes. They drink
And sing the *Missa Solemnis*, Palestrina – on the horizon.

To leave whatever is around. Not only money,
 Castles, moons. A man offers the moon to his woman,
 Man, daughter. There are moons in their
 Pockets, wallets. Gifts and *nichts, nichts, nichts* –
 Forever. Even next year there'll be only
Nichts and *nichts* in every language. French will speak
 German; so will English. The soul will speak German, nothing
 Else, *nichts, nichts*. I'm dying, Germany. I'm dying,
 France. I'm dying everywhere. Where am I not?
 Sing this word, this note: in Hebrew, in Hebrew, in Hebrew.
 Sing the lack of name, God's presence in my eyes.

Play, play my soul. A string speaks
 For everybody. Yes, no, harmony, this harmony,
 The last one. It is not the last day of Creation,
 Of meditation. No comets, no destroyers –
 Only stones that remember whatever might happen
 In that century, in whatever lies ahead, behind.

Nothing lies; nothing lies. The window is open –
 The only window in the neighbourhood.
 Look at the garden.

What is none. A thought answers itself
 And what comes should come. That's what is said
 Forever. A book says what God says. This
 Happens, that endures. Cry, cry. Everything cries
 And listens. Moss rolls and gathers
 Stones. And stones gather thoughts, my *ergo sum*.

Not everything, just a few things: a bumble-bee
 I can hear. It enjoys itself; every *it* does.
 Every he or she does not. And planes go wherever
 There are other planes – their comrades. All
 Of them flock together. All, all, any.

Any language is at one with its counterparts.
 There are no counterparts – only parts
 Of the same whole. Universal, universal. We have
 One street in our legs and so go along it,
 Sideways.

The mind says, 'I am' and it doesn't;
 It isn't.

Flee, flee, fly: Fleance, means, moments.

The moon is not the answer.
 I give up – how many were there?

One way, a street, a way of thinking, living,
 Meaning. Other means, always other,
 Others, mothers. They say, 'I'm your mother, Goethe's
 Mothers, *Götter*'s mother.' I'm born again, before,
 Coming out, down from the grave where
 Many bones, homes have been buried.

My homes. They look at other people
 And say, 'You're just bodies. We know names.'

They give me a name, a home, a bone
 On which I'll build my eternity, my nausea.

Perhaps the answer is everywhere:
 Not on any tree, any leaf, in nature,
 In God. *Everywhere*. There
 Are no names, either here or there, beyond walls,
 Evils, goods, wares.

One name – not that of God.
 The name of a dwarf
 Who knows everything.

Doesn't it break? A cliff and a myth break life
 And whatever clings to it. Reality, dream, fancy. Stop
 Looking back and sideways. Only one spot, one
 Lot, one mob that claims its rights. For once blood doesn't flow;
 The brain does. It flows and rivers are born – like stars,
 Like what *can* be born.

Was anything born? Only the born were
 Born and prosper, for no angel stands
 Between life and life. They go, cross frontiers and reach
 The end. This sounds like a beginning: sounds are
 In the grass, Green Mass, Red Mass, White Mass. The B Minor Mass.

Where are universal grammars, rituals?

Kluft, kluft. I don't know
 If this word means 'separation'
 Or 'fissure', or 'mischief'.

Creases, crinkles, wrinkles?
 Old age or sage, or page?

Universal grammar, conduct.
 Going down on one's knees, saying,
 'Where is it? Where is? Where?'

Here it is, here it is – not a haiku
 With its proverbial cherry blossom or
 Birds that speak to poets. Not one
 Verse, one hearse, one-horse town.

This page, nothing more.

Just shoo me away as if I was a child!

FAREWELL TO PARIS

Thomas doubts, but a candle one finds
 Here and there doesn't lose its
 Light. And there are lights and nights in this corner
 Which is the centrepiece of the universe,

And of this verse, of this night. Paris by night,
 My last night in Paris. I forsake my lights when I need
 My heart, its darkness. I'll come sooner
 Or later. Not now. Let me wait for another mystery,
 My own mystery of Paris, the love I'll catch up with.
 I'll never live without you, your arcades.

I'll carry my candles along your boulevards,
 Up and down your lives, your unutterable names.

Night can't do anything. What is it to do?

Sleep, ignorance. The Gordian knot of knowledge is cut, left outside
 Creation. Amputation, they call it. Do human gods need
 Ignorance to sustain their balance – the harmony
 They speak of whenever choosing another beach, another sun?

Another man. Not a superman – just something else.
 Not a Martian, not an indigo child. Another, other, mother.
 Give me another birth! Show me another
 Window where a skyscraper looks like a tree.

That's what they are. We're a universal campaign,
 Champagne. One table, drinkers, tinkers.

We all drink to our life that sees no end, for our life
 Doesn't see anything, not even its own shadow.

Other lives know that. They mock our life
 Saying, 'You're alone, you're mortal.'
 Their freedom is infinite.

We walk down the street
Shouting, 'Dancing in the rain, dancing in the rain.'

Don't I? You don't. I tell you what
I can tell anybody, your body.

That's over, as usual. What's left doesn't
Amount to any amount. They live and die;
So do I. What else does one need?

Speed. They got into the car and zoomed off.

They zoomed off; so did I. Another planet,
Another world, as they say. Or do they say,
'Another dimension'? They do. They do what
They can. What, what? A can of beans.

It's not a hope. This hope or another one
Plays with life and words and finds

A loophole. We're saved; the world has survived at last.

Many problems and earthquakes. They're behind. Behind
What? There's nothing behind. Something's beyond: a wall, you,
And many Wallts, many Whitmans – the poets no one
Cares about.

What's around? Vaults, vaults, lots of wings.
Whom do they belong to? Birds – not Hitchcock's
Birds, to be sure. Our birds, our Keats, emperors and clowns.

Show them up! They stand in the middle,
On the uppermost floors. Others are in another
Middle or running downhill. They question

God and angels, as is their wont.
They curse angels and their wives, daughters.

That's not all – just a beginning. And this
Beginning's in the middle which is
Zenon and his tortoise – so many Achillesees,
Running downhill, downdale.

Drinking ale, suffering from asthma.
The sun doesn't rise; only prayers do.
So do a few hymns, a few Francises.

Face to face. With what?

Not yourself, not this weather,
This feather. They bring it
From Mars or a dream and say, 'This feather
Is yours.' Nothing's mine, nothing.

I'll repeat this word, any word, any image.
We didn't manage to crawl through the gap.

I was the white sun in a desert.
You were the white doom.

This brain. This memory I know nothing about.
This memory doesn't know: memories say what they
Must say. They don't think; nor do they dream.

This unconscious is 'un' and not 'co'.
To dig up whatever lies under this surface,
Under that suit. One wears
One's unconscious under something.

The unders go out; so does he
Or she or myths or 'It' or a '*mite*'.

The beauty I know by heart.

Where do sounds go?

To the fields where nothing can hide,
Not even smells and flavours. They
Create a world where so many vultures
Struggle for death. They win. What remains doesn't
Play with anything save nothing – the best player
One can chance upon in this courtyard, that

Cemetery. Let them sleep – the quick,
 The dead who are in no mood for looking up
 Where keys await them.

Open the door!

There are...They say what...

Many things, one idea.
 And one bird that tells the truth
 And flies as if there were no
 Truths or lies or dice.

God doesn't play; neither do
 Others play or watch and dream.

And going comes as if there was
 No spot where one could say,
 'I'm at home.'

No end, no end. What will you do?
 You'll do nothing. And weather doesn't say
 Anything. I'm beautiful, I'm beautiful.

It is; it was. You were beautiful, kind, naughty.
 You were a woman. It is.

And nothing, nothing. You say and
 You're done for. No landscapes,
 Birds. You're him. You're not what you are,
 Will be. You are and your house mounts
 Its horse and rides off.

There's the sky you can't hear.
 It is not the sky.

You'll do what's been done. What's not?
 You say 'this window'.

I say 'this window'.
 That's done. Is it not? No flowers.

'Last' is just a word; or a star.

I go and say, 'My last word, second.'

But seconds go too and I know
 I'll go on, if they stop.

Another drop of blood. They lose
 What they can as long as there's something:
 Time, another cloudy sky.

And all of them die as if they
 Couldn't have flown to another moon, doom, monsoon.

Fly, my dear: you've nothing else to do.

As you say. And what's done isn't
 Said. Let's open our mouth
 And let in the words we could utter,
 If any word was here or there.

What counts is the upper word,
 The nether one. They talk to each
 Other and what they say can't be
 Heard anywhere, not even on Venus.

And Venus hears everything.

An hour of what may be done,
 Done or not. Not 'to be'. Undone
 And nothing does what is or
 Not.

A light, a forest. The end is as near
 As the middle. So is another end, hand.

It was. An atom goes where it does.
 What to record? A movement, a joy, another
 Happiness. A graphic description. This
 Does what it can do and nothing
 Interferes, for once. Sleep well, don't sleep at all, anywhere.

The movement goes and finds another movement,
 Another stop. It stops; all the stops will stop forever.

Then they'll go to meadows
 And hills, to oceans, other motions. Say what they are.
 Say what they'll ever be tomorrow, at sunset.

HAMLET

I am what I am not and the flowers
 You can pick. You do pick them
 And what you hear is my melody,
 Remedy. Now I start; now I stop.
 No way, no other way. Only
 This way, this country, this woman.
 And a long day, Saint Valentine's Day,
 Saint Vladimir's Day. God a mercy.
 Souls, souls. Immortal.

What is done,
 Be it an event,
 A memory.

These rivers

And flowers,
These Ophelias
Hamlets, Lears.

Flowing, floating – South, West.
Losing their bearings.

We haven't lost God.

'Last' is just a word; or a star.

I go and say, 'My last word, second.'

But seconds go too and I know
I'll go on, if they stop.

ON STILTS

Alpine meadows and shadows. Skiing along
This path that leads to another bust.

A human, this time. A human being or just a
Being. Or just a. No quotes, no unquotes.

The usual quota of troublemakers.
This goes, that goes. And heaven always lies, lies,
Lies. Heaven never dies.

What dies is not heaven. Just another earth,
Moss. Of course they become something else;
They never die. Any sea is a number of
Clouds. Any cloud is just a cloud. Flying nowhere.

A few strings. They play what they want.
A landscape answers this, that or *niet*.

It depends on this landscape, on another animal,
On shapes, apes. They know
Nothing. Bliss comes, it doesn't.
Other blisses, misses.

You come, my dear. You stay.
As eternal as this statuette.

You sound, you are sounds.
And the moon is somewhere as if
Anything was where.

You know my name, thy
Name. You put your name down,
Up, in between. Let it lie, sleep,
In, in, out, in.

What if it's otherwise?
 Another hill. The last fall, foot.
 No limits, only a limit.
 And a figure. Where? There.
 Every.

Dying is, was. A puppet
 On the floor where there are no
 Floors. Egypt in Japan.
 Done, done. A dawn.

They come, theirs. So was it,
 And done, and where. When are you?
 Theirs. They slip through a cloud.
 You too. You just do.

Too. So many toos.
 Yet this comes as if nothing,
 Nothing was and yes, it.
 It says 'it'. That's it, that will do.
 This is far away.

I haven't. They do, we do.
 No images, no nature. Just do, am.
 I am am and ma and da.
 Go, go, go. You'll find what you wish to find.
 And they'll say you're a man, a god.
 All right, you're a god and nothing else
 Counts. Not even these roses.
 They do not count. They do not count at all.

And nothing. Once again, once again.
 You choose it, whatever it is
 And cling to it. It doesn't choose you. Nothing

Chooses you, I, am, why. Nothing chooses
 Why, and I am the Why. I am also Yet.
 You are Yet, I am Yet, the Net, *niet*. Others are still,
 Stills, Stilts, Mills.

They go round.
 A round face,
 Round God.
 Round angels.
 Spherical gods.
 Flat ones, flats.

Again. I am Now, Thing, Ming.
 I am whatever you want me to be or not to be.
 I am after the beep but not before it.
 I am not the beep, alas.
 I wish I could be a beep – a short one.
 I'm busy, dying. I can't answer you. Please don't call
 Again. You are IT, ID, Freud, Jung. Why?
 Why am I here? Young and old. Dying, dying at
 Last, not least.

A letter. They remember You, Thou and Tao.
 I remember A, O. No Ts, not at all.
 Ou, ou, ou. And You. You're as beautiful as always.
 And the always is as beautiful
 As Your sisters, brothers. I'm trying to
 Sleep. You're my sleep, my death, my Mass and
 I don't know whether I am not, odd, what.
 I am not You, not Thou.
 I am else, Wells and probably a bit of
 Something they know by heart, all of them.

And once again. So be it and it is.
 I look forward, backward. All is sideways.

Ways are sides and so on. No ons, just
 Sos, sos, sos. Another day, morning, evening.
 Perhaps. Another lapse of
 Memory. And You, Thou. No, no one, One is not.
 There are two, three. There's
 Thee. Of, of, of. Off. Let us accept and this and
 Whatever comes. Nothing comes nor goes.
 You are You, This,
 That, Miaow, Miaow. Not the Library of Alexandria.

Low. A sound, a mound. The Mount of Purges,
 Of Gatorio. I go up and find another Hell, Well, Tell.
 And Tell tells me everything. So I go
 To Paradise and find ice, a lot of it. No para, no Ra.
 No gods, whoever they are, whatever passports they've got.
 Only one God, two Gods, threes, fourths.
 We live with them and outside, in the weather,
 Snows, winters. And all of them say, 'No, no, no, no, no.'
 You say 'no' too. And the blue
 Comes out of the blue, of the black, of the rack and ruin.

I abandon, forsake, for someone's sake.
 It is too late, it is life or not. It is a bottle of
 Sake. You have a tissue and you do
 Whatever you wish with it. It is a network, a net,
 A work, a wok, a walk.

It means nothing, as usual.

There are many tissues: human tissue, plant tissue,
 Brain/lung/muscle/fat tissues.

I have none of them. I have none.

I have one.

I reduce myself. One dot is enough

And one world is enough.
 One dot, one world. They look at each other;
 They do not. So many dots and do-nots.
 Come, come. No one comes.
 No Second Coming, no Fourth One, Fifth One. One.
 I am you, Thou, Now.
 I am not Now. Now is not now either. Neither.
 I'm not sailing slowly down the river. Nor up, in the middle.
 I'm in the up of nowhere.
 In the up, forever.

To shut one's eyes, one's book.
 There's the Book and a book and a brook.
 This is the Brook as long as you Look
 At it. I look, I hear. I hear myself, Schubert, Heisenberg.
 He says you always meet yourself, even if you study
 The world. I don't study it. Yet I meet myself.
 How sad, my God. Why this
 Sadness? Why? Why? Should I just say 'why'? Y.
 Y, Y,Y, Y. I, I, I, I, I.

In a dream, a few words. I don't
 Remember them. A poem.
 What I don't remember, an unwritten
 Poem, is everywhere. What we
 Do remember is a minute. The rest is silence,
 Eternity. Even more –
 The More that is far more eternal than
 Any eternity.

And it. I take it and eat it.
 I wasn't 70 years ago. I am now.
 I'm not what I am. I am what
 Not. Pick me up and do whatever You
 Wish. But you are not You. You are

Just One, Some, Any.

Any, any, any. You stand somewhere and
Judge my life. I have no life,
Just some, any, nanny. Judge these ny and na.
Sentence them to death.

To eternal resurrection.

Again, again, again.
You are here. You are my books
And nooks. So many crannies.
None. There's always the One which
Stands in a corner waiting
For a punishment. You're punished, so are
They. They're looking at the sun;
So are you. And you show up.
You appear first in the clouds and then
Go down, reach Yourself.

If that comes. It does not, is not.
No coming, no going. I stay where I
Am. And landscapes
Stay where they are as if they were the Earth.
As if the Earth were somewhere.
Not here – in the cosmos, amidst the stars
And moons. There are many moons,
No earths. Let us live on a moon, on our doom.
This doom is over and down.
It is our down.
Let us be our own down; or up, or middle.
Let us be our everywhere.

There, and over there, and
Over. I hear myself and listen to whatever
You say, they say. There's nothing,
Only words, wise sayings. And the only, the only
Only. Not much. I take it, pick

Up what is there, anywhere. Here. Over
Here. And again space, time, mine, thine, *ein*.

You're my brother, sister. And nothing beyond, nowhere.
And there are only beyonds and nuns and nonce words.

You are a word. No the word, just a word.
I utter you again and again.

And you, and you. So many times.
Why? Do I need you? Can't I die alone?
I can't, I can't die. I'm dying,
I'm Egypt, I'm Syria. I'm dying but can't die.
I can't live properly. Perhaps I can't live
At all. But I can't die.
Death goes and stops. I don't keep him company.
I'm my own company. I was born and stay
Where I'm staying. I'm staying,
Staying, staying. And my garden is singing.

Is, another is. And the brain
Looks for itself, finds itself and does
What should be done. This should,
That shouldn't. And the ball is rolling
As far as another galaxy.
So does the other galaxy as we expand and spend.

And nothing comes once more.

Silence is not. They said and not and did.
They did not. I'm going through my desert
And hearing 'yes'.

Even 'why' sounds like 'yes'.

And death. I am you, you are
 Not, ought. You are not undone,
 Dead. Tomorrow I won't make
 Any phone calls. Tomorrow
 I'll lie in your tomb: I have none.
 Tomorrow I'll talk to the dead,
 To Plato, Dante, Bach, Mozart.
 I'll say I'm also dead and alive:
 We're being allowed to stand
 As historic monuments. As, not.

Beyond. And nothing, as usual.
 I'm used to all of you. You're nothings
 And everythings and middlethings,
 Middle men and women.
 I'm used to the song I'm listening to.
 A Schoenberg lied. I'm used to it; yet I've never
 Heard it. I've heard you and you and you;
 Songs, men, comets. I've heard
 And become. That's what I am. Take me,
 Leave me.

Leave me, leave me, leave me.

I, I. And also I. The same burden.
 I wish it could become an urden, a rden.
 Or just a den. I am an animal,
 Your animal, a domestic animal. I go
 Out to take a walk in your garden.
 I take this walk and many other walks.
 I come back and find my food.
 Don't let me starve to death, to another birth.
 Let me starve.

Just You. Not Thou, not Else.
 Let me touch You or just Ou.
 Let me touch wounds, blood.

Let me drink your blood, your,
 Your, your, your. The rest is
 Silence, not yours. Let me eat
 Y, not S. Not yours. You, YOU.
 Nothing after. Nor before, it.
 No its, only YOU, YOU, YOU.
 YOU? Not? Nor? Just O, O.

No, I can't. Why didn't I jump
 From that window?
 There was a window. No jumps, no lumps
 Of sugar. Just a cup of tea.
 You drink it and say it is your breakfast
 Tea. It is perhaps your final tea. It
 Is not. A lot in store for you. You yourself. You are
 In store, in stock. You're also out of stock.
 Live, live till the end. And the end is coming.
 It is not. You are coming, going,
 Mowing the grass, Black Mass, White One, Two.
 Three.

Three. Not two, not one.
 You are three. You move between
 Spirits, bodies and nobodies.
 You move, live and speak at some corners.
 They hear you, but they're not they or
 Even it. They inhabit.
 What?
 They inhabit this what and other whats.
 And there are no breaks. Only aches.
 Give me anything.

Do, do. So what? So God. And you come
 And say. You're born and say and may and can.
 But can is limited so you *cannot*,

Not *entirely*. You just die. All
Right. You can die, you can be risen
From the dead. You are risen from them.
Risen, risen. No, no. You're sitting by your only window
And see a dog, one dog, one woman. They walk
And walk to the horizon. And the horizon is
Waiting for them.

Smell, good, not good. Go, another triangle:
You, yours, I. Or just I, an angle, a dot.
Not even an angle, an eagle. Above the mountain,
Eagles circled in soundless flight.
Yesterday. Time is going. No more eagles,
Only needles. And one is just a needle or a tingle, a mingle.
One is one and lets go of everything: needles, doodles,
Noodles. One is really one.

[illegible]

I negate. Not I, not me, not Yes.
Only hailing, exhaling, inhaling.
Only ailing. Is it your leg again?
Yes, it is my leg, again and again.
What else? My tooth, my God.
Another mountain, two steps.
You dance, die and dance again.
One step, this time. You dance.
Time, time. Another woman, man.
Another, just another other, *pausa*,
Silence. How beautiful absence is:
Nonnences, nonsuchences, nonsenses.

You are you, no one, only
You, not Thou, just you, near

My heart, in my heart.
 My heart is big enough for you,
 For Thou, for all letters.
 If you come, I'll open all doors
 If there are any doors to open.
 And if there are none, I'll bang on my
 Walls, create a few doors
 And let you in, in, in, in.
 And if there are no ins, I'll create,
 N, N, N, N, N. I'll create the last
 NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN.

And if there is no, nothing? If is there.
 I stay on a mountain and say, 'Ever, Never'.
 I describe the worlds as they are,
 As they are not and will be. I lost a woman.
 Was there, in my room. I lost all worlds
 Dantes, Platos. A cave, I see her shadow.
 I talk to her. And 'no' sounds as 'now'. And never
 Is your death. My death. I'll come down to it.
 Why should I stand up there, writing poems, playing
 Sonatas?

I'll come down. One melody might resurrect you.

One, does, so it was. An image,
 A sound, another sound. What is that, dead?
 What is dead? You touch yourself
 And touch and touch. So much for that.
 Dead again. Blood on the floor.
 I am not on the floor. I am not blood,
 Dead. And whatever it is.
 And again. A second, a second.
 Why should one count a second?
 Why should two count two seconds?
 What has gone is three.

My sound. I don't hear it any more.
 Don't, don't. A soft sound. Is there?
 One sound again. Not mine.

I'm trying. I'll always try. May, May.
 Poets always speak of this *Monat*.
 Because of flowers? Flowers, flowers.
 I'll buy some yesterday. And yesterday
 Will come at last. The last Month, *Tanz*.

Is that so, as the Japanese say?
 It is that so. There are no other sos.
 Only one so. It is enough for one's life.
 Just one. How sad, as usual.
 Everything is as usual. Even sos are.
 Again two minutes. They are also sos; and nos.

No, no, yes, no. That's how we go.
 A lullaby. Everything is a lullaby, bye-bye.
 Bye. See you here, there, everywhere.
 You're an alligator so I'll see you,
 And your husband, your wife, your eldest son.
 And I'll see your youngest moon, boon.
 Dionysus, Crucified, My Saviour.

Add three cloves of crushed garlic.

You add them. So what?
 Three crushed thoughts, blind thoughts.
 They neither run nor go. Crushed.

So is the garlic. What isn't crushed? This
 And that. This carrot hasn't been crushed. That.

Neither has been this. Neither has been.
 You taste and say there's no this,

That. There's only you, your taste buds.
 You taste, they bud. What's left is that, this, one.

What, this, one. They run, go. They fly
 Sometimes. And sometimes does, does not.

These are minutes. You know what is about to happen.
 It is not, nor is it happening.
 It is not about either. Yet you know for sure, you,
 You know what it is and does and was and has been.

You know everything: death, mess.
 You pray. Let us pray: 'You are, You are,
 Thou I, Thou I, Thou I. Help, S, O. Help. You hou.'

And end. Today, tomorrow.
 I put these ends together. What do they say,
 Sing, Ying, Yang? They yawn. I do not.
 I cannot. I have to put on ends and odds and go
 To several points. These points will not come
 So I have to go. I will go, whatever,
 Atever. Give me a string, I'll play.
 I'm playing, listening. There's something to listen to.
 You can listen to the verb 'to listen'. And
 The verb 'to hear', 'to see'. To listen to 'the Sea'.

The universe expands, distends. What if I'm not
 The universe? I'm not a verse either.

I am your shell, whoever you are. Come, make yourself
 At home. You are at home. Could I play
 For you? I have to stop. What? Listening to myself,
 To selves, shelves. Shelves listen to whatever
 They hold. I hold nothing except my own hand. I shake it, shake
 It. I shake it, Him, Yours. I am very near, almost here.

I am overhear.

No, not you, not come.

Not go. Yes is not. Sometimes it is.

Not now, not anywhere. I am

Where, Theo, Leo. I am today's weather,

Last night's tether. I am ends and

Beginnings. I am swords and words.

I am lo, law, go, a go-go dancer.

I am a chancer, a second chancer.

A second experiment, the experiment.

I am this air, hair. I am Lorelei.

O, or. Life is there.

Not in that corner; in another corner,

In another wall, doll. Inside.

I go and keep this life, this bride,

This mother of sorts.

I was born. And so on, and so

On. There's no on. There's an alarm clock

And it clocks, clocks, clocks, clocks.

No peace. All right, peace, a beach, our

Sun. Our breakfast, dinner. Our inner peace,

Outer peace. Everything is in the

Body, in the mind and outside. And on the other side

Of all coins.

Boom, boom, boom, boom.

Another pain. Boom, boom, doom.

Go home. Where is your home? In boom, in doom, in moom.

Go to moom, enter it.

This is a moom, a very spacious

Moon. You'll feel comfortable here. And you'll sing,
 'In the moon, in the moon, in the moom.'

To Vladimir Martynov

No other letters. Only L, E, T, R. In Russia
 They sing: '*Dolgaya leta*.' They wish you to live
 Forever. But the letter 'e' is not in your
 Alphabet. Let, let. Let it be, as usual. Let this death be
 What it is. Let another death be and prosper.
 Let this death be Russian, that one Polish, that one
 Jewish. A passport, a password. Come in.

And or, or. Another. Not this,
 Not whatever it is. It is. It is not.
 Another, another. And you give.
 You do not. What you not?
 And that, and that. What counts.
 You count. And you are.
 In the midst of all the stars.
 A straw that thinks?
 A reed that sings?
 Sing, sing, my Reed.
 Sing, sing, my Sting.

I ask for one thought,
 Only, only. Give me
 This thought, one.
 Let it be infinite.

Dum, dom. What is you and not
 You? Nor yourself, myself.
 Under, somewhere up and down and
 Down again. And walls, and molls.
 What is ol? I know one letter.

This letter is L or M or O.
 Shall I stand on this letter?
 I should, otherwise.
 I stand on this letter, on top of it.
 I'm standing on top.
 I know the letter P. And T.
 And E. ET. PT.

What is done, none.
 You're here, my dear, whoever.
 And ever, forever. And sorry.
 What's over there? You.
 But you. Here, there, Figaro,
 Bulgari. And you are.

And are you. So be it. It is always be.
 So is be and always. Such is life,
 And no one comes, no one.

No one comes. Even 'comes' does not.
 Even does does not.

That is, is. Not is coming.
 Not coming. Is this, not that.
 Is everywhere except
 Here. Down here, down, down.
 Coming up. What is doing?
 Not nothing. Just
 Doing. Doing, doing.
 That is so it is.

At once. What is once?
 No upons, no times. There have,
 Never times, only stretches.
 One of them.
 My stretch, my match, my tetch.

I strike this, that. Lights everywhere.
 At once, once upon. There was
 A woman, a man. There was, there,
 There, there, there.

And don't I say? I say is not.
 And you go, you leave me.
 So many leaves, leaves.

Are there so many trees?
 There are, there are.

There's rain. But it isn't
 Raining. It isn't anything,
 It is nothing. O thing.

No knowledge. No intuition.
 Yes, a space, two spaces.
 Nothing else. Just the sea.
 And one cloud, one doubt.

Close this doubt, close every.
 And every is over there.

No one can close it, not even
 Fate. An open door. Open.

An object, a subject.
 A few leaves in a garden, not
 In the Garden of Eden.

They don't think therefore
 They are. They stammer.
 They talk their logos;
 They don't know how to talk it.

They talk, they sing,
They ring their bells.

And again, as usual, and I say to myself,
To anybody whatever, and whatever
Is a whatever, the whatever. And again as if
There were nobody, nothing.

There are, there are. And are is even in trees and
Bushes. So is is. And andand.

You praise. What else? Praise, praise, prize.
And nothing. And like, alike. There is.
As if there were, there was. There was, it was.

The sun doesn't. Nor does Mars, Saturn.
I do. The heights of.
Three thoughts. Not the Holy Trinity.
Just three thoughts. Just the HOL.

KONECHNOST

Where, where, whereto,
 and without and, and fear, joy,
 without joy, anything, goes,
 goes, you let me,
 another mirror, another everything,
 no music, only, only,
 life is, is is, and so goes, doesn't, n't,
 yet, yet, fields, seas, galaxies,
 nothing beyond, small,
 small, precious, a precious not.

Two notes. And so not and so is are tomorrow.
 To sing. A lullaby. How does it go?
 Bye-bye. It doesn't go. What do you
 want? Another quartet? Another
 Beethoven? What is not won't be. Not
 now. The now will not be in the past
 and even in the future. Let us try,
 let us live, let us leave, leave.

No horizons. Only dales, vales, hills,
 downs and mounds. And outs.
 I am out, and up. Go, go, go, go, go, go.
 Until what? Until you reach.
 Until you're rich. And what is not is
 yet, and yet, and yet another yet.
 So I

My hand.
 Something important
 might drop from it.

I go to my garden and scrape away
 the dead leaves to reveal
 the tiny shoot of a new plant.

This plant is sure to live longer than Schubert.

And what is, a tunnel,
a sigh of, a sign, Napoleon said,
dead, so did St Augustine,
yet, mad, you are what you
are, what they, a month of Sundays,
a month of days, of
Mays, of maybe.

Only instants, stops, stopgaps, gaps. One looks,
sees and what is comes; and what isn't yet.
Yet's in the making; so is Yeats.

A stone goes to theirs and what can be done.
A castle built. Air, water, summer. An-
other; in the other. Else.

A lip goes on singing. Goes.

And saying. Am not.
And blue sky, all other:
green, red. You are and
Am. M your colour.

And, and. So you are
and it is a river,
and nothing: you can't even
drown, you can nothing,
nothing, nothing.
You can nothing, thing and no.

You can what you can and
there is

there is

there is

I met you many years ago.

I speak of years, of yours,
yours sincerely, very faithfully.

In every sentence there is an end,
several ends. Every letter
is an end in itself.

I go from one end to another,
hoping there will always be another end.

You say what you wish. I do the same
so as not to die.

You do not say anything
and you are found dead,
or not found at all.

You are lost, so am I. Not yet.

It is very long, this yet.
There are many other yets.

Early will I see thee.

One seeks, gets sick on the way.
One sees someone, after seeking,
living, leaving everything behind.

One sees. You are right.
You cannot be wrong.
It is no longer forbidden.
Nothing yes.
As something is done
something is undone or done again.

You're my twin brother, my undone and one
 and two and ten degrees below zero,
 behind it. Let us go and come,
 and Mum, my Mummy, Daddy, nephews.

Let me die alone, in my womb.

Might happen. All these dots and nots,
 and fogs, bogs, frogs. Another
 life, midlife and wife. Always in the midst and
 mids and summers.

No more dreams, though.
 No dream teams.

Else is down, so is anything, anyone, any, nanny.
 And up is as nothing as can be. Even more
 so. As more as no.

As more as the Atlantic and Romantic.

I remember some, or none.
 Or damn it. So much has been lost
 on the way and under it.

Above it?

Not, not. Above, above.
 Above everything. Like a giraffe.

Like the last god who gets in
 before the First One.

A life. Or just a drive through

many centuries, tragedies and wonders?

Just a way, another may, another
may not.

The same jackpot.

So easy, die, live. To not, to
everything. Just there. At the push of
the *mouche*, fly. Bye-bye,
glory, Shakespeare.

Lost you many times.

Have I?

What lost? Have?

Eve, Eve.

If not Adam,

not a man, not first, nor

last.

Last remake.

Make.

Another night, might.

What can? Sleeping, dreaming

of what has been: what,

been, has. I wish I could be has

or evernot: the eternal androgyne

whose body is a soul, a

multiple soul. The, the, the.

Another. Enough? Not, not.

So is rot and lot and something going,

Not going. Try this medicine that

The world of good. Another.

And harmony is not.

The voice of ta

So is to speak. And see just,
another just, another,
speak, silent, grow, drop out of,
drop, and drop, drop, rope,
and so and on. I am you and your, her.
You see, me, me,

Other things, beings,
non-beings,
non, non, a tree growing
through ings. And
nowhere except this, today.

And only yesterday
goes astray.

And again. A river talks, smokes,
so does the horizon. A lost,
a found, a nothing. And just another
whose, whose, whose.

Another hand as if. No rivers.
Only Norths, Norths, ices, Parme

Nides. Alone,
now.

I thought.

No thoughts come
and only scents.

Gone, gone.

A pair of bells, tolling, calling,
doing something
we know nothing about.

Except about, above the sky. Above
Paradise.

what i plunge into
time
one space,
only one

and time,
is, is,
what goes and
and
and

What have you
With your life?
This, that.

I have, done and
for.

Castle, air, hair.

The river goes
And not is
And is is on

And t is t

now, when?
the sun rises, goes

and it has been
so has what

when, when

in the middle of yin-yang

in the nya

what if
and fields, ponds
over, over
over and above and
as if an and
you talk
as if and what, of
what of
what of
water
air
earth
mist
mistic

and, and
as you, i
so is, as

too much
no much
well, i do
so do do
and do an

not, not,
 long, stems from
 a river's song
 just a spot

so, so
 song,
 river,
 what did you

have
 been
nein

there might be
 in the go, in the non
 go
 but all others are
 and not not
 and not to share and
 wear tear

you are
 shall we, he, be
 not to he, sh

numbers of
 numbers
 things out
 rageous

yet

one, one
 multiply
 soul, soul, soul
 seul, seul
 so

so o o

limitless
and if there are
there are
and no less, no less

trees, of course
how many
what does it
a pond,
a monde,
and so several
millions, billi

leave this drop
where it drops

and not
and so be done

i am
was, has
so much, so

and you are
some
where
you where
were
ere
not the o
n, n,
e
e

and i do
still
and i and not
what is
yes
something that
that something

i is always
and where
and please
kneel down
do not pray

yes no on
thy thee
what is is
never is ne
ver, ver, ver

i am sadly
land
lived off
out, up

my dear

eternal
thy wheels, needles,
going through
one lake what is
walking to its reflection
to the stars
only one
half-a-st
and a hand
reaching for

Dante as if
 as if
 für Elise
 für für für für für für
 für

and if i were
 i were what has
 and nothing should

slovo, warm, worm
 and you go to visit
 your grand, all is never
 a bowl, your hair
 Sulamiff, mother
 my cradle, hair,
 Sarah, daughter
 never-never
 ever

seventieth birthday

know, now
 so many years
 arrayed in purple and green

as long as
 i stay and done
 long may i

do and am
 live another
 etern

well what of it
 what of any, every

i should not
right

and all is next
and peace and East
so were we
and become what if ever
and ever ever
and some go from it
to see what is beyond the sea
and the horizon
comes and stops and ever ever

yes yes
what comes and go
es
and something

no use no
muses

only i and i
and autumn
last leaf

what if, what
you know what that
another that and
and and

i am nine
well done well

W

W

W

there is a time and once

many onces
this once, that on

and all is as if
even if is
as if as as
if nothing, as

all is
ever be, been
what is das?

das is what
water i drink and
do not

i if you can

not is yes

i do and what have you
what have
and i do not
and either this or
river, river what does it
i saw remember
and what is does and
does it not and thou now ever
you doing
nothing
and i am
an i
am
ad
in 1215 AD/AD 1215

what is you?

and 's'?

and ''''''

means q

and it

you say AAAAAA

in Russian

in French it sounds thus

thus thus thus thus

show me a grove

an orange grove

touch, even without

i see, smell

nothing comes

nothing can come and go

come lake or whatever

one is is is is

and again+++++++

all is well

at the bottom

of another well

all is beautiful

a work, another work (wok)

nature, artists, born

stars, tars.

born and crawl

and jump and well

look at the stars

the stars'll look at you

if not then, tone

what lasts what not

and thou thyest

and myest

halogen hob

sinister

lob

and again

i b tg t t t tm o!ç §yd\$(wsytr<

KON

I do not find a thing.
Nor does a thing find me.

Sitting on my flowers,
Like an insect.

They need no water.

Je ne trouve pas une chose.
Une chose ne me trouve pas.

Assis sur mes fleurs,
Comme un insecte.

Elles n'ont pas besoin d'eau.

OSTATNI

*I den' ni noch. Zaria zaroïu vstala.
Ia vmig prishol, i v mige tom pochil.
Oziora, more. Esm' vsegdashnii il.
Mogili net, a est' lish pokrivalo.*

POST(CARD)

If I had known. I known, known,
And leaves and destiny, where?
There are only dawns and even night
Does not come. Do they? What?
I knew everything was in the North.
Now I know I am in the habit
Of doing, doing, singing. Another Mass,
Another string and everything happens.

As if it were true, truer than the truth

Itself, herself. What is over
 Is certainly over, and just one image, mother,
 Mother of everything. Even of this
 Everything, of this everlasting

I might have. And those rocks I cannot see
 Because I am sitting, not climbing,
 Not doing what life must do. And life does not

All is situated. A word comes.
 Does it, must it? So I return
 To where I was born, inborn, in a
 In the, so must be done.
 And I am, travel as far as
 Distant I, perhaps to W, Z.
 As far as not, as dot.

I thought I was finished, oblong.
 And then another piece of
 News, old. I put this piece into,
 Onto. Something slips and yet you
 Are, you are. You all
 Ways.

Do you know what's in it?
 In it and it that goes,
 Stops. I pick it up and go down,
 Down, down, yet.
 Whatever is is yet, still, what.
 I hold it down.

And yet. And what is far
 Away. You are, so, let us.

There's no. So you trust,

Must. Nothing will ever.

What you are. And
Vremia, vremia, time
 In Russian. You put
 Re and mi apart and
 Your Mass, quartet
 Are everywhere, here.

And what is. That is.
 And I am far from everywhere.
 As if there were nothing
 In the North and in the East.
 I carry you, I don't.
 And here's your gift.
 When?

And if I? So in the heart
 Or you're what you're not
 And the last note of whatever.

Flowers somewhere. And I tell
 Or fire is where so many
 There are nos and blessings cover even
 Non

EMBROIDERY OF FIRE

To Gōzō Yoshimasu

I've reached my destination at last.

My mother would have said I haven't reached it.
 She used to say, 'The aim is far away.'

She was right: I'm still far from everything, down to the world,
Up to the stars. I've no idea where my aim has ever been;
Hopefully within eternity, on its outskirts.

Whatever I do, I'll arrive on time: death is
As punctual as kings.

My granny knitted me some gloves, keeping in mind
The ruthlessness of the Russian winter. And also
Of the Russian autumn – of all Russian phenomena.
In Russia you'd better not venture outdoors without gloves,
Boots and several fur hats.

Yet fire is everywhere – not only in Moscow,
In 1812.

The destination is in the needle.

And what is. Where. It's not.
It is a not and you begin to note, note,
Embroider. This embroidery adorns the tsar's
Palace or malice. And everything is
Done. Do, do, everything.
Everything is done. No point in
Paying homage to ashes.

Only ashes pay homage
To ashes. And you come.

I must have loved you in former lives.
Nothing is former, everything is more or less.
More than less, before your very eyes.

We'll make our incarnation together,
Our Versailles lives, a Jewish life,
Russian courts and Chinese changes.
They'll all unite and we'll just bow

To the inevitable, the beautiful.

I don't know if I should think or write
Or live without any purpose.

What purposes are there? No matter, no
Spirit. Only the momentum
I gained somewhere, somehow.

I know
I lost it on the way.

And something must be there.
For what? And what is also a question,
An answer. And you go through
Many, many steps, and snowballs
And balls and carnivals.

And all of them
Go through you as if you were
Transparent, unsubstantial.

Like everything. Less or more.

And if you are still on the page –
Doesn't that sound Russian for once,
For twice, for thrice – let us go on
Until I see at close range all our churches,
And all the murders perpetrated
In the name of murderers.

Whatever you perpetrate is in the name
Of something, somebody.
And if you get rid of bodies, souls,
You'll perpetrate a crime against

The dawn that will come, whatever happens
Or does not happen.

Why do I get closer and closer?
Can you get closer to whatever you cannot see?
You cannot see whatever is the aim of yours,
Of yours, anything. And you carry out this
Anything in the hope it's the only thing you've ever
Thought about in your mother's womb.
And probably elsewhere, assuming there are
Elsewhere and elsewhere. And where.

I think unthinkable is permissible.
You think, you have a thought,
A dozen of them. But your thought is
Not, not, not a thought. Yet in a moment
You become thinkable. You are nought.
And then you become an honest prayer, 'Let me see
The Wagnerian Ocean and Universe.
And Socrates. And Thou, Thou, Thou.'

And somewhere floats
To

