

# In The Pupil's Mirror

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Modern  
Walloon  
Poetry  
from  
Belgium

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Translated  
by  
Yann  
Lovelock



IRON PRESS



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Over the years the editors of many magazines have been generous in giving space to translations and even lengthy features. Besides *Iron* itself, they have included the following: *Acumen*; *Celtic Dawn*; *Gairfish*; *Honest Ulsterman*; *Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry*; *Krino* (Eire); *Kudos*; *Oasis*; *Osiris* (U.S.); *Outposts*; *Pearl* (Denmark); *P.N. Review*; *Poesie Europe* (Germany); *Rialto*; *Stand*; *Sunk Island Review*; *Trends*; *Verse*; *Zenos*. A few also appeared in the Indian anthologies *Parnassus of World Poets 1995 & 1997*, *World Poetry 1998*, and *Luminous Candle*; in the University of Salzburg's festschrift for James Hogg, *Summoning the Sea*; and in my earlier introduction to Walloon poetry, *The Colour of the Weather* (Menard Press, 1980).

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## Yann Lovelock

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A tall West-Midlander, Yann Lovelock has a habit of stalking through the mist with sharpened fangs and swirling cloak. His victims have been too deliciously many to list. As Transylvania has been sucked dry, he has concentrated on the Low Countries in recent years, and has translated both from the Dutch and Walloon dialect. In recognition of his services in gaining the latter a wide audience, he was elected corresponding member of *La Société de Langue et Littérature Wallonnes* in 1995.

Lovelock is also a poet himself and has published many collections of verse and prose poetry, among which the most recent is *Landscape with Voices* (University of Salzburg, 1995). In former times he was the pioneer reviews editor of *IRON* magazine and continues to review in a variety of places. In 1985 he was the co-founder of *ANGULIMALA*, the Buddhist prison Chaplaincy Organisation, and still serves on its directing committee as well as teaching at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara.

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# *The Walloon Poets*

<i>Introduction</i> .....	7
---------------------------	---

## *Robert Grafé*

Ravels (in Scots) .....	13
Broken Dream .....	14

## *Louis Remacle*

Voyèdje (original).....	17
Awa (in Scots) .....	17
At Daybreak .....	18
In the Castle of Dust .....	18
The Clouds .....	19
By the Castle .....	19
Happiness .....	20
Soldier .....	20
The Tall Flowers .....	21
After a Thousand Years .....	21
The Last .....	22
Calvary .....	23
Pardon.....	23
Snow .....	24
Darkness .....	25
Night.....	25
Wold .....	26
Dream.....	26
Carnivals.....	27
Last Journey .....	27
Bedtime .....	28
Emptiness .....	28
No One .....	29
The Rooks .....	29

## *Albert Maquet*

Seven Prose Poems .....	33
In the Pupil's Mirror.....	35
Stranger .....	39
Light in the Darkness.....	39
Miracle .....	40

The Hour .....	40
Downpour.....	41
Suns .....	42
The Whatsit .....	43
Images .....	43
Dance Figure of the Gnats .....	44
Two Sections from 'Aiming High' .....	45
from Ultimate Sightings.....	46
The Complaint of the Circus Artiste .....	47
from Tetrasticha .....	50

### ***Jeanne Houbart-Houge***

Showing Off.....	53
Summer's Fiddle .....	53
Roads .....	54
September Women .....	55
Brown Study.....	56

### ***Jenny d'Inverno***

Where Angels Fear to Tread .....	59
An Old Refrain for a Rainy Sunday .....	59
White Night .....	60
The Weather's Colour .....	61
Accordion.....	61
Journey .....	62
Dark .....	62

### ***Victor George***

After Us .....	65
Gris Pwin (original) .....	66
Grey Bread (translation).....	66
'But if you're the boys...'	67
'Lord, it's evening already...'	67
'Harvests to get in...'	68
'You who return at times...'	68
'We'd thrown down our tools...'	69
'Tree is what I say...'	69
'Sons, take me back...'	70
'All the seeds have been sown...'	70

<i>Textual and bibliographical notes</i> .....	71
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## *Introduction*

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In the sixth century a small settlement grew up twelve miles to the south-east of the formerly Roman town of Tongeren. It was built on the Legia, a stream leading into the Meuse, after which it was named. It soon became the favourite residence of the bishops of Tongeren, who moved their bishopric there definitively in 930. After their elevation to princes of the Holy Roman Empire, Liège became capital of an extensive independent territory comprising a good part of the present Belgian provinces of Liège, Limburg and Namur. Latin was the language of administration, but what was spoken in the town and everywhere south of it was Walloon. This was a language independently derived from Latin and quite distinct from French. There is a large substratum of Celtic and Germanic words; it is more conservative of Latin forms; 'w' is pronounced as in English.

The educated began using Walloon for certain literary effects in about 1600, at a period from which the earliest folk literature is preserved. It continued in use over the following centuries, until the political chaos caused by the French Revolution. After nine centuries of independence and prominence, the townspeople did not take kindly to their marginalisation when the kingdom of Belgium was eventually created with Brussels as capital. One means of asserting their regional separateness was to foster the Walloon language, preserving the traditional culture and creating a sophisticated contemporary literature in it. Other regional centres followed their example, with promising results.

One reason for Walloon's success as a literary medium was that it had not been simply a means of popular communication between second-class citizens. It already had a history of use by a self-confident educated élite who now continued to foster it, spurred on by the equation of language and national identity that was part of Romantic ideology. French, the language of government and political manipulation, might be adopted in Brussels; in Liège they would do without airs and graces, they would say what they meant directly, pungently, and with the minimum of words.

The case of Walloon is in many ways parallel to that of Scots. Nowadays the survival of both tongues is threatened by the inroads of the

mass media. Since the time when Caesar described them, however, fighting off threats to their culture is a virtue Belgians have had to learn of necessity and the picture is not all gloomy. Walloon is taught both at school and adult level, is given radio and television time – especially since situational comedy has long been a popular genre – and Walloon publications get generous government funding.

**B**ut the Walloon voice also needs to make itself heard internationally and its literature to prove itself side by side with that of its neighbours. Since the war a band of Walloon intellectuals, initially based in Liège, has set itself to achieve this through the creation of a modernist literature. But it has had to do it in competition not simply with the languages of smaller nations like Greek or Danish, but with linguistic minorities within major states, such as the Catalans in Spain or the Macedonians of former Yugoslavia.

Among the Walloon modernist pioneers some were more prominent as ideologues than as writers. The critic and academic, Maurice Piron (1914-86), edited key poets and anthologies and created the climate of opinion that made modernism acceptable. Robert Grafé (1896-1968) inspired generations of schoolchildren to love and respect their inheritance. He wrote little himself and only began to publish late, at the same time as Maquet and d'Inverno were breaking into print and Remacle was renewing his style. His curious poem 'Ravels', first published in 1951 and several times anthologised since, obviously owes something to Surrealism. Grafé's own Leftist sympathies and the high profile of Belgium's Revolutionary Surrealists (some of whom had been active in the anti-Nazi underground) help explain this. But its quality is enhanced by the colloquial rhythms and assumed rusticity.

Louis Remacle, born in a country district to the south-east of Liège in 1910, made his literary reputation as a young man between the wars. An academic whose speciality was linguistics, he remained an active dialect scholar after retirement. In modernising his style, he also took a leaf from the Surrealist book by introducing dream images or even basing entire poems on dreams. His prevailing mood is elegiac, pessimistic and alienated, as is the case with many of his European contemporaries. But he is also a magnificent formalist. All the rhymes in 'After A Thousand Years', for example, are on *-an*, *-on*, *-in*, and there are internal rhymes as well. They serve a function beyond mere virtuosity: in that they echo the sound of children's voices (*-in*) and the dog's barking (*-an*, *-on*) to which the defunct clings at the end, the affirmation there invades from the start what appears to be the statement of

a contrary position. It is sophistication of this order which makes the new Walloon poetry noteworthy.

Albert Maquet, born in the industrial suburbs of Liège in 1922, was fortunate in meeting both Grafé and Remacle early on; they remained life-long friends, as did Maurice Piron. One of Maquet's initiatives towards internationalising Walloon contacts has been to encourage co-operation between writers in various minority tongues. He himself has shared books with the Occitan poet Henri Espieux and the Piedmontese Tavo Burat. For a while he taught at Turin University before taking up the professorship in Italian at Liège.

Maquet's early poetry was avowedly influenced by the Surrealists and their precursors. Max Jacob's example was the one he followed in writing his own prose-poems, more or less the first written in Walloon. Throughout his career he has been a tireless experimenter with new forms – some of them traditional, it is true, but reintroduced after long disuse and adapted to modern themes. The range of his models has been wide and includes sound poetry (in 'Dance Figure'), the Italian hermetic poets (in 'Aiming High'), and the mediaeval complaint. This last, the song of the ill-used lover, had already been transformed by Laforgue in French; Maquet's contribution is to return the genre to the popular sphere and write from the feminine point of view, as in 'The Whatsit' and 'Complaint of the Circus Artiste'.

**F**our years Maquet's junior, Jenny d'Inverno was another young poet encouraged by Grafé and accepted by the modernisers as one of themselves. Her highly crafted verse subverts traditional modes from within, often by a subtle shift at the end. Her particular target is that favourite theme of feminine amateurs, the old maid's yearning for love. But whereas the poems she satirises are all much the same, her approach is rich and varied. Compare, for instance, the shock tactics employed at the end of 'An Old Refrain' with the subtle ambiguity of meaning in the last line of 'Dark', or the equally subtle way in which the situation is reversed by the last two lines of 'Accordion'. These poems, which were written before Maquet's complaints, also make an interesting comparison with his.

Jeanne Houbart-Houge is Remacle's contemporary and was for a long time prominent in teaching dialect at adult level. She came on the scene later than the others, partly because she was sent to Poland in 1940 as a slave labourer and did not return for ten years. Her collection of stories, *Tales from a foreign land (Contes d'on payis d'ôte pâ*, 1980), generally accounted her best work, is about this experience. Purists complain of her use of dialect that she gives the impression of thinking in French and translating into

Walloon. They are therefore more given to emphasising her bad points and overlooking her undeniable merits. Among these is the achievement of a genuinely modernist tone in such poems as 'Roads' and 'Summer's Fiddle' and the introduction of purely feminine activities as a source of imagery. Her writing demonstrates what can be achieved once a climate of renewal is established.

Victor George belongs to the younger generation who learned from the modernists. Born in the rural Condroz area south of the Meuse in 1937, he was a teacher at secondary level before taking early retirement. This has left him at liberty to edit the monthly literary magazine *Cahiers Wallons* and act as secretary to the 'dialect academy', La Société de Langue et de Littérature Wallonnes. In this position he was preceded by Jenny d'Inverno; both Remacle and Maquet have served as its president.

The Condroz straddles the present provinces of Liège and Namur and its dialect is transitional. George also owes a debt to Namur modernists such as Jean Guillaume (b.1918) and Georges Smal (1928-88), particularly in the way he draws on the details of village life to affirm its strengths and continuities, and in the way this develops into the mystical vision of his later work. The virtues of Walloon are nowhere better illustrated. Because of its limitations, abstract statements have to be made through the medium of concrete example, idiom, proverb and allusion. At a linguistic level, 'We'd Thrown Down Our Tools' is representative of how this approach necessitates a reading between the lines. At the imaginative level, the picturing of death as the eviction of a tenant in 'Lord, It's Evening Already' is marvellously realised. More than an extended metaphor, it presents the image as if it were the subject itself.

**T**he achievement of modernism in Walloon is astounding, threatened as it is by the greater fluency offered by French and the temptation towards trivialisation exerted by its popular ethos. But in many ways it is also the ideal idiom for modernism. It draws the poet down from the ivory tower of obscurity; its vocabulary and outlook is rooted in the everyday. Although the poets try in various ways to point to a vision beyond and behind this, they can only do so through its mediation. The down-to-earth must always be appealed to, common sense can never be left behind. It might even be said that poetry written under these conditions has a greater chance of enduring acceptance than any other.

*Yann Lovelock,  
Birmingham, 1990-97*

*Robert Grafé*  
(1896-1968)



## *Ravels*

The flitterbat keeks an' it lauchs,  
mune's oot, it kens reavers are scairt.

Fer doun aneath the caister wa'  
there's gowd fu' o' barrels an' a'.

Ane day oot after woodcock  
the auld gillie dround in a bog.

We havena seen yon vagabones  
sin he war eaten o' the wolves.

Hizzie leanin' at the winnock,  
dae ye hear the cushie peughle?

Spread ablaw the claith o' the pool  
blaws the gowan gars men forget.

*keek – peep, look; lauch – laugh; reaver – robber; caister – castle; hizzie – young girl; winnock – window; cushie – dove; peughle – sound of clearing the throat; blaw – grow; gowan – daisy; gar – make.*

## *Broken Dream\**

It was enough to read on the page of a book the bird's name whose song I had heard. I shall not say what bird it was. I shall not go into its song.

That song brought back a wood on the slope of a hill, its paths and bushes, trees and glades, and the rilling of a small stream in all its freshness. What the hill is called would mean nothing, nor the small stream.

Then, while the bird was singing, I suddenly saw you, yourself, under the trees, and you came back to me whole-hearted with your joy in living. I shall not repeat your words now. I shall not profane your name.

*\*This, the last poem Grafé wrote, was originally written in Italian and later (1963) adapted into Walloon.*

*Louis Remacle*

(1910-97)



## Voyèdje

Dj'èsteû dré vos, tot près, tot près.  
 Vos d'morîz sins rîre nè djâzer;  
 èt v' savîz si bin la k' dj'èsteû  
 ku v' lèyîz vos doûs-ûs sèrés.

Mès l' tête mu houkéve oute dès teûts,  
 tote blanke du fleûrs duzos l' bleû cî:  
 dj'ènn'a nn'alé, avâ l' prétins,  
 tot doucémint, sins k' vos l' vèyahîz.

Èt v'la k' vos n' m'av nin ruc'nohou  
 cwand ku v's-av rudrouvi lès-ûs:  
 dj'èsteû évôye si lon, si lon,  
 ku m' bouneûr nu m'aveût nin sù...

## Awa

I ligged by you, sae neigh, sae neigh.  
 Ye'd lips fe nouthèr lauch ne lied;  
 An' sin ye kent weel whaur I ligged  
 Yir lids were sneckit fast as deid.

The yird ca'd me ayont the roofs  
 Wi' flowers o' white i' blaewort lift:  
 I gaed my lane intil the spring  
 A' saftly 'fore ye'd see me shift.

Ye did na ken my face nae mair  
 Sin syne yir een were opit neist;  
 A cappilowe owre fer, owre fer,  
 Has cut me frae my happiness.

*Ligged – lay; neigh – near; lauch – laughter; lied – speech; kent – knew; sneckit – closed;  
 deid – death; yird – earth; blaewort – bluebell harebell; lift – air, sky; gaed my lane – went  
 alone; intil- into; sin syne – after; cappilowe – a reaping match whose object was to out-dis-  
 tance one's opponent.*

## *At Daybreak*

The road had been long as a pilgrimage...  
Never a soul we'd met nor found a house  
Walking all night, and one by one the stars  
Faded over the plain where we rested;  
Light crested the sky but the grass stayed dark.  
'Are you happy?' she said; 'another joy  
Will make us more uncloyed at heart than children;  
We'll be alone for always and in love.'  
And with the new day burning the world's rim  
She seemed turned younger and her hair more blonde:  
But why, as she leaned over, did her breath  
Feel chill to me as those at point of death?

## *In the Castle of Dust*

The white towers climbed to the clouds,  
Bathed by the silver moon in light,  
And a cool air strayed over the heath.

Night passed and on the point of day  
The wind sprang up, we saw it rise  
About the towers like thin smoke.

Walls that its gust was powdering,  
Tall towers that weathered away,  
For all their shining image stayed.

Lovely they were, and we'd walked so long  
It was a pleasure to lie down  
Side by side in the castle of dust.

## *The Clouds*

Sunned on the slope,  
leaves glinted  
and the grass was long.  
'Lets sit,' you said,  
and side by side  
among the blades  
we idled there,  
watching clouds pass  
with the lazy  
pace of our youth  
beyond recall  
the width of sky.

## *By the Castle*

I was playing in the sun and you were not near me.  
The castle was waiting with its great white walls,  
Its little windows, as if it saw coming all the days  
Of my childhood on the road beyond the fields.

Where were you? Wasn't this road unrolling toward you?  
The breeze of my summers was dawdling in the beeches;  
And as it shifted the shadows about me and the sun  
There was no one to say how lazy the days were.

Where was I? Wasn't this road on the way toward me?  
Its long procession pilgrimaged across the sky:  
And on my knees in the grass, unhearing, unseeing,  
I was laughing as I looked for beech-mast in the ruts.

I was playing by myself among the castle beeches;  
Even had they been shown me I'd not have dared know  
All my feverish days in a twittering flock  
That sang like birds on the highest branches.

## *Happiness*

The living star of other days  
slipped down from my window.

Shadow, like a heavy fog,  
had laid my lids asleep.

Voices there, young voices,  
clear voices like young bells,

Rose up and sang to me  
all the happiness I'd dreamed of.

And I entered very quietly  
the old house with its large doors.

Then of a sudden could no longer hear them  
and the walls shone with light.

## *Soldier*

I cannot tell what hour night reached.  
I was watching soldiers come back:  
Their happiness too full for speech.

Only one at the lorry's tail,  
Older than them, his eyes far off,  
Looked for a land he knew and failed.

I thought I recognised that play  
Of lines his mouth made and its set;  
It seemed as if he glanced my way.

I raised my hand to give some sign,  
But no change crossed his meagre face.  
And now I saw that it was I...

## *The Tall Flowers*

Your eyes have summoned me at light's last hour.  
Again long clouds are dawdling through the sky.  
And by the path that draws to you I've seen  
The tall red flowers reaching up their heads.

Your gentleness is on me like fresh youth  
But they are rooted deeper in my years.  
I'd left them far behind; they keep their place  
And rise towards me like a child's content.

You've taken all. Your eyes so light my ways  
That I forget the suns and days that pass.  
Why should I now hale back to mind old joys  
Faced with these flowers whose name I can't recall?

All the wood's paths withdraw into the dark;  
All the sky's clouds have disembarked from time.  
You are close by and here I am distressed,  
Lost among flowers that do not know my face.

## *After a Thousand Years*

After a thousand years, so many fade,  
Said the earth, so many men from mind!  
And as all keep fraying, I remainder  
And store them deep in my drawers.

No one here will remember for long  
The rap of your stick in the lane.  
Try, if that pleases, tracing the prints  
You've scattered in seasons of sand.

Look, what was it out there just shone?  
No head lifts; no one is wondering  
If it is flowers or stars have gone,  
If it's man or dream at an end.

You were known, you were often slandered.  
Now you're alone and the slate clean.  
But how daylong children's voices cling  
Or a dog at night giving lung!

## *The Last*

The whole night trembles through like iron filings  
and it seems as if you heard across the cloud fields  
a flock confused or afraid its bearings are lost.

There's only one star left shining over the hills,  
a single star to guard eternity.

I feel the hours of my life close round me like grass  
and a wind from somewhere that stoops to caress it.

Only one star but, look, I'm ready.

'Brothers, will you take me with you?'

Up the length of powdering road  
they come in thousands from the trough of time, one after another  
massing upslope without a backward glance,  
and I shoulder myself in their line, for fear of being the last.

## *Calvary*

*for my father*

The black angel that had thrown him down with a blow of its wing  
took flight again soundlessly over the trees.

We laid him like a statue of stone in the grass  
and found it had sprinkled dust  
in his weathered face and the crinkle of his brow...

The black angel came back to circle over the house.

We took him into the parlour, checked the clock's swing,  
and his half shut eyes gathered that softness  
the sky has at dusk after the sun has gone...  
One day the door was left wide: it seemed to us  
the rooms were suddenly emptied of grief

and we heard the black angel flying off over the village.

## *Pardon*

Sad birds were left,  
like sins, among the hedges.

Nightfall like soft rain,  
and I waited on my knees beside a tree.

A tall church, then,  
unwalled, its pillars white.

*(Contd.)*

And mantled in a cope of mist  
the old saint ascended the avenue.

Did he see me? Eyes far off,  
no opening of lips or hands.

But I heard a stir  
deep in time, like a spring.

## *Snow*

When shall we find again road leading to road?

Flake by flake snow falls beyond hearing;  
we feel its distance spread like a white night;  
and here's the other night, like heavy cloud  
thickening over the roof of the world.

Our shouting dies; there's no one to answer.

We'll ride one next to another becalmed  
and let our dreams helm down into deep night  
as if the snow had overwhelmed the stars.

The roads will have remade themselves tomorrow  
and we'll see burrow back towards our house  
the white path under the white bushes...

## *Darkness*

Have I abandoned you without knowing...

Summer had burnt our skin like hail;  
my eyes were thirsty for your own,  
your voice's trembling echoed mine.

When you went down the dale at dusk  
my arms stayed full of happiness.

But step by step with spread of night  
the heart's old poison pushed up new  
its yellow tuft of evil flowers.

I was alone; and in the gloom  
there seemed to sweep along my road  
deep water blacker than the dark.

## *Night*

The moon is white, the roofs are white,  
and the houses a thousand years old.

Hearing my footsteps in the road  
makes it seem I don't belong.

The great beeches wait without moving  
as if nothing ought ever to change.

The spring-head looks up and I glimpse  
darkness asleep in its mirror.

Is it possible, going so far,  
not to see the days as they are?

But here is the place and now the time  
For saying words that none will hear.

## *Wold*

A road with no start or end,  
running like time  
– and a man who remembers.

I had left my youth  
asleep in the long grasses.  
Like black clouds  
the years crowded.  
And downpours of dust  
have covered the uplands.

A road longer than time  
– a man who comes and goes  
and cannot get his bearings.

## *Dream*

...So, this is what they heard cried out:  
And the road that crossed the bridge  
Sank its length into the stream.  
Our hands had nowhere to grip  
And the water, heavy with sand,  
Carried us off to the last land  
Where there's no longer road nor bridge  
And hours go by like water.  
They let the birds expire:  
They let the stars unpetal.  
And then white boats arrived  
Carrying snow from somewhere;  
And like blindmen the children  
Scurried with great black steps,  
Unaware it was too late.  
So, this is what they heard cried out...

## *Carnivals*

Why keep an eye on the time  
if no house'll receive us?  
    (White villages downslope  
    look out for tousled thieves.)

Let's wrap ourselves for sleep  
in the furred moss of the dark.  
    (Birds of ill-omen roost  
    on the grey roofs downslope.)

Here there are stars and flowers  
arraying night and wold.  
    (On the steeple's murk downslope  
    a weeping mask.)

## *Last Journey*

Mellow and blue, the dusk of summer fell.  
Our hollyhocks grew high against the wall.  
You chuckled in the doorway where you stood  
And said, 'I've given everything to God.'  
And I, on impulse, 'Mother, let's go back.'  
There were two walking sticks behind the bench.  
We made our way through copses and the dark  
To our first village, which will be our last.  
Scrambled together all the crests of Wanne\*  
To our first threshold, which will be our last.  
Heat lightning filled the sky by fold and weald  
And our dog followed us, that had grown old.

*\*Wanne is the village a few kms south of Stavelot in which Remacle grew up.*

## *Bedtime*

They've just knocked the old steeple down:  
the people don't know where to pray.

Twilight: the time  
when mist creeps up.

Where will they find, if it's that way,  
to pitch their hell and paradise?

A cart grinds by,  
the last, it's late.

Granny, don't you know where they live,  
the angels who guard over us?

A small bird cheeps;  
out peeps a star.

## *Emptiness*

Pressure of work and idle fuss  
Encircle me in emptiness.

Has it an aim? Is there no end?  
Nothing to stand for nor comprehend.

I am alone, I am stripped bare:  
All lost, unlearned, I had to share.

Tall spreading trees, is it allowed  
To know oneself beneath your boughs?

Where are my hands? Where is my face?  
I find no trace in their blind space.

Each time I look, I turn to mist,  
And what persists there can't exist.

## *No One*

Something stirs. Like a step.  
No, not at all my heart's tap.

Someone, then. Look through the window,  
Arms out in welcome if so.

Well, they say, sure to be back.  
Knocking at your house or mine?

When did he come? And from where?  
My like, with me in his stare.

Fast as I can, I hurry to find  
If it's the mirror he's behind.

Look for him long as you like:  
Now and for ever there's no one.

## *The Rooks*

A memory that outlasts the journey, gold,  
The sinking sun has undercut the clouds...  
And what next, I ask myself, seeing it.  
– To listen as boughs waver, watch them heave;  
And let the rooks arrive in heavy flocks;  
Then to sleep, sleep among the dried up leaves,  
Surrounded by the scent of bygone years...

Leaves autumn has released and shaken loose  
Upon the greying fescues of lank fields...  
– but like another falling foliage,  
Like sad leaves off a tree one cannot see,  
The black birds falter in their distant flight...

Rooks of the year before, malcontent rooks,  
When I glimpse your slow whirlwind glide above,  
Why does it seem you've returned from so far?

By hundreds and by thousands the sky's filled  
By more than all such leaves as drop today,  
As you wheel crying, swoop and turn aside.  
Like dirges starting new, that fall and rise,  
Your sounds spread rippling over the drowned earth.  
To hear you makes me think the whole world's leaves  
begin to shed round me in soft showers.  
Tumbling one by another, manifold,  
By myriad, their odour takes me back,  
As do your heavy wings and grieving call...

To sleep and dream, night covering the plain...  
Above me the tall branches by the spring,  
Great branches pressed together and stripped bare,  
Lift up into the dark like groping hands  
That reach to claim hope back and their lost birds.

To sleep, outsleep the hours, beyond all time;  
To sleep among dead leaves as on a bed;  
– With dark rooks, each one perching by the next,  
Beneath the moon that's parched their rueful prayer  
And journeys on alone to scatter light  
Over the trees of earth, all white, like dust...

*Albert Maquet*

(b. 1922)



## *Seven Prose Poems*

### *The Farewell*

I hadn't done a thing, my shadow stopped and watched me go off like a stranger.

And I didn't fancy turning in case I might not recognise it now.

The moon looked down as if in embarrassment.

It was like I'd a hole in my head and I couldn't remember being so light and so heavy both at once.

### *Alloverish*

Pants on the door-knob. Shirt chucked over a chair. One shoe here, one shoe there. My collar and tie on the chimney-breast.

And my heart all over the place.

In a bit of a state, as it were.

### *Nap*

The new Minister lit his cigar, fell into an armchair and said to his private secretary: 'Now look here, Arnold, I'm not in to anyone, understand?'

And when Arnold came back to wake him his cigar was out and he was no longer Minister.

### *Without Title*

*Horum omnium fortissimi Belgae proptere quod a cultu atque humanitate provinciae longissime absunt.*

JULIUS CAESAR

He put in some red, he put in some yellow, he put in some black. He did a lion, a tomb (open), an old man trying to get out. He was an artist other lands would envy for their own.

So: the day he was going to unveil his work to the public, up comes the local band behind the burgomaster. The Minister spoke of our industry, of art, etc. The schoolchildren sang the national anthem, but as there'd already been a bellyful of ditties the old man got cramp and upended into the (open) tomb, which creaked and shut. Hearing this carry-on, the lion got angry. Everyone was in a blue funk and ran for their lives.

Only the artist stuck it out.

And for this he was given a medal.

Unless it was for his lovely big painting which was, I must say, really well done.

### *The Story*

You never can tell.

Have we a disbelieving air? He always flies in a rage and shouts: 'I'll be hanged if it's a lie!'

And the hangman leaps out of nowhere and strings him up in a trice.

...But the truth of the matter might have been it was the story he didn't care for.

### *Advice*

You should never push back a drawer too roughly, nor slam a door, nor walk on your shadow.

Felicities surround us, faces trying to look into ours and hands that ferret everywhere we are.

### *Sick Man*

The man who had eyes in place of his hands and nothing in place of his eyes lay bedridden till yesterday.

I brought him a cup of camomile and while I stirred the sugar with a silver spoon his hands watched my eyes while his eyes did nothing.

## *In the Pupil's Mirror*

*to Maurice Piron*

Without his noticing –  
like a dream which leaves a stain  
in the end the shadow reached  
the middle of his face.

He tried to rouse himself,  
to tumble his malaise,  
but his body was crumbling  
like chalk into dust.

Then the shadow lay out-  
stretched where he slackened,  
and when the light faded  
they saw he was missing.

\*

What time is left he passes  
watching it grow like a flower,  
his hand glued to the window,  
his long thief's hand.

The others, huddled by the fire,  
drowse and contract  
as their frosting dreams  
freeze to the pane.

Make no noise to wake them,  
be still if you enter.  
Hand, flower and window  
are not what you think.

\*

It's a few hours from here  
where they pretend they're dying.  
It's fair sometimes. It freezes.  
They'll never find a cure.  
Each one that draws a breath  
thinks he's returned to life  
and spends his time accounting  
the shortfall in his days.

But still, there's laughter there,  
like all ,it seems, they weep,  
and even die sometimes  
when they've made death add up.

\*

One after the other I wake  
head over tail on the card,  
doing what needs be to lose  
the half of my body in play.

And it won't work making me out  
by looking the wrong way round,  
you'd go as wide of the road  
to find me a right side up.

No one will ever grasp  
whether I'm one or we're two;  
the harder he seeks to grip  
I'll slip between his fingers.

\*

I hardly dare stir any more.  
Wherever I am or I go  
it's as if I used myself up,  
as if I divided myself.

I feel the air filter in  
and my fragments rasp as it pulls,  
between two breaths, between glances,  
snagged somewhere inside.

How could I live any quicker?  
Every way my head turns  
it's always myself I see still  
stretching back.

\*

No face. No shoulder.  
Only my heart in my hands.  
Is it true it freezes outdoors  
the same as in here?

Only my hands. Only my heart.  
And the hour that has stopped.  
Oh, to cut and run  
to kingdom come!

Is it true it has frozen  
that much in the village?  
No shoulder. Hand. Nor face.  
Heart, are you there?

\*

What dare I do any more if each of my gestures  
kills a guardian angel, leaving it standing  
to ape what I was (and never again would know how),  
as though to reveal what I'd rather were secret?

Should you and I meet, when it is doesn't matter,  
there will be nothing of my life you do not know.  
You'll watch me go my road, one angel to the next,  
not even noticing the death I've put them to.

Then the day that won't carry me further a step  
my hands shall be lifted and each of them opened  
for the last of my angels to lay its doll's head  
there where none of the others were able to stay.

\*

For as many years as the night has woken  
over our happiness, wherever it hides,  
for as many years as we've felt it moving  
in our very depths as if it were our age,

for as many years as we've tried to seize it  
and extort the secret it would have its own,  
we never thought that it could wear us down  
whom our shadow had made half itself before.

## *Stranger*

Folk, all the acquaintances I'd had  
Would make believe they were dead to cut me.  
The others would watch me pass like the plague  
From the shelter of their narrow windows.  
Wherever I'd be, no one there but myself.  
Nothing hidden but at my approach.  
Water, the ponds would rebuff my face  
And my shadow itself leave no trace now.  
It would be a day that never ended,  
As if the darkness flinched back before it.  
And so quiet you could hear a fly!  
I'd search for a sign to say I existed;  
Then feel all at once so alone  
I wouldn't know where to go any longer.  
I'd stretch out there full length on the stones  
And see the sun through my lids.  
I should think of nothing. Let myself get well.  
Would hear the sound of my blood pumping madly.  
And before I needed to come to myself  
I'd take my life up, unwrinkled, at will.

## *Light in the Darkness*

I resemble myself even more in the shadow,  
Like a fire banked up.  
Face bowed above its years,  
Flower of snow and sun that drowns over its light,  
Dream of the night-sky, broken dream,  
I hear crackling, savagely reined,  
My blood that holds back its flame.  
To live, to live for nothing, for myself;  
To live so little, straitened, strong!  
Hours fade in the dark.  
Somewhere day breaks.  
  
I gleam all alone against death.

## *Miracle*

The sky's clean  
as a blue apron laundered fresh  
and the sun streams a light so young  
you'd think it too new burnished.

A white scrimmage of wings from the dove-cot.  
The geese in the orchard are linen alive.

Down to the tabby-cat curled on the threshold,  
making a stripe of fire in the shade,  
all seems to re-echo the world's first second.

I could not stir if I wished,  
I am planted here, I shall soon take root,  
I no longer know where I'm from.

In the meadow a tree already beckons...

## *The Hour*

All the cats looked alike, gargoyles in stone  
Whose slit lids let escape a gleam of gold.

Wordless, the great trees with upraised arms  
Steadied the toppling sky of clustered stars.

It was not the globe of the moon that shone  
But all moons at once since the world began.  
And everything so hushed all you could hear  
Was flit of fireflies in the foliage.

We took our time, walking pressed close in dread  
At so much happiness we might drop dead.

## *Downpour*

Time like a hare,  
the beating rain.  
An evil air  
breathes in my brain.

Time on the move.  
My life is gone.  
What am I doing  
here looking on?

Am I so feeble,  
my blood so thin?  
A lilac leaf  
runs at the brim.

The hour overheard  
dies drop by drop.  
My guttered heart  
seeps to a stop.

## *Suns*

### 1

All in an instant, no word to say,  
the sun will make a hole in the sky  
and its shadow stride in seven-league boots  
over the ocean's mirror.

On our shoulders will fall in one swoop  
cold to chill a warlock's blood.  
Time will withdraw outside of time.  
The earth will shiver in its spider's threads.

### 2

Imagine the suns, old tramps of the sky,  
worn out with humping their light round the shop;  
having turned like a top, run without stop, spun,  
imagine them, eternity's clogs  
suddenly sluggish, so slow, no go,  
teetering see-saw at their dog-end,  
ready to, falling now, tumbling about us  
for ever and always their hullabaloo.

### 3

Let there be a bird still  
to sing above our bones.  
Let there be a single tree  
to sign the air with our blood,  
a tree, a flower, what more  
before in an instant  
the stars one by one blow out  
and in the wind our dust.

## *The Whatsit*

If I had, she said, the jaws of a dragon,  
a tail that jiggled more than a joystick,  
if I'd paws for running belly to earth,  
dog's teeth for real, here-you-are fur,  
if I had claws, if I had wings,  
a bugaboo's horns or any such things,  
if I could snarl and breathe fire out,  
scratch, bite, bay, be a bruiser, play  
the devil's tattoo or the dotty bint, snout up flint,  
uprooting the road like a patch of potatoes,  
and toot down rainpipes for my own trumpet,  
they'd probably think me a rum bit of crumpet,  
but I'd never, never be more than I am,  
an unattractive little what's-its-name.

## *Images*

In the high window  
gestures collect  
glued behind glass.

A dream of light  
and shadows, weightless,  
free of the past.

Behind the curtain  
the hour you suppose  
slowly runs down,

While the image  
of peace lingers still  
under the full moon.

## *Dance-Figure of the Gnats on the Slopes of the Cornillon Slag Heaps*

A band of gnats sets up a hum  
To lure the slow-worms to the sack  
The sandman brings to blind their eyes,  
They gobble up some butterflies  
In order to get vitamins  
And improvise a dithyramb  
Upon the fiddles of their back.

But in the midst of dithyramps  
You'll always find a slow-worm comes,  
A squirmy slow-worm with shut eyes  
The sandman's blinded from his sack,  
That flails its tail about the skies  
To frighten off the butterflies,  
The favourite dish of jitterbugs,  
With shudders quite demoniac.

Still you can't pin, when all is done,  
Between the fiction and the fact,  
Whether the jumbo-jet that flies  
Over your head with gnat-like hum  
Or else the surly slow-worm's whack  
That terrifies the butterflies,  
Comes now to utterance within  
The limits of the dithyramb.

Hum um, sigh I, um um,  
Um um, oh aye, um um,  
The slow-worms and the butterflies,  
The gnatty hum of dithyramps,  
The sandman and the tail's attack:  
How can we fail to turn glum eyes  
With such a jumbled bric-a-brac  
To spike our gun till kingdom-come?  
Um um, aye aye, um um,  
Um um, aye aye, um um.

## *Two Sections from 'Aiming High'*

bud

the night  
abstracts  
shooting star:

stirring erect  
under the finger's  
caress  
the nipple  
ignites

blood's matching fire

\*

the bird that sings  
is a bird only

the bird does only  
what it does

the bird hides  
in its cage  
to sing

the bird's future is  
stored in the craw  
with its past

the bird dies  
every night

from *Ultimate Sightings*

get away  
will it make it

the fly

fat chance

it has landed like a devil's snot unawares on the white page  
within the man's reach

within reach of the hand the man lifts to strike cold-bloodedly  
whack for no reason

to leave of this whatsit with transparent wings that buzzed that  
stung that filled the air with the miracle of living  
only the smear  
of a small mean  
dirt-i-ness

with death lurking in the palm of his hand  
the man scarcely gave himself time to see the angel and the  
angel to escape him amen

\* \*

Tatting of silk,satin bow,  
Afterglow tremor of wings,  
Heirloom of the shining day,  
Butterfly of night and dew,

Barred once again in my lamp,  
Trapped in its cluster of bulbs,  
Down falls the drunk soon enough,  
Never a doubt I'm agog.

Well, show off your regal trim,  
Stagger me with frogs and loops,  
But, no offence, watch your step –  
My hand, caressing, can crush.

## *The Complaint of the Circus Artiste*

Little you see as they surge in  
she said – my pants on and braces  
moustache and street-arab graces –  
that it's a girl not a fellow  
sitting there playing the cello  
and to tell all still a virgin

it's me Biribi  
peak of chic  
the prettiest  
the proudest miss  
of world renown  
ever to work as  
belle of the circus  
the finest  
show in town.

My mother Hortense – she ran on  
shot into fame from a cannon  
but for papa sawdust rumour  
pointed to one of the tamers  
the day I put on my famous  
act with the camels and puma

yes me Biribi  
peak of chic  
the prettiest  
the proudest miss  
of world renown  
ever to work as  
belle of the circus  
the finest  
show in town.

Not a thought then that a quiet  
chap who swallowed swords would try at  
wrestling for my family jewel:  
now he's had to throw the towel in  
it's another song he's howling  
and his fire's run out of fuel

trust me Biribi  
peak of chic  
the prettiest  
the proudest miss  
of world renown  
ever to work as  
belle of the circus  
the finest  
show in town.

Though it puts me out of patience  
that blokes go in for these relations  
there's a place to put the squeeze on  
till they hop it into reason  
and if some may not recover  
others get the message over

for me Biribi  
peak of chic  
the prettiest  
the proudest miss  
of world renown  
ever to work as  
belle of the circus  
the finest  
show in town.

That's before I first laid eyes on  
handsome Rudolph with his boa  
belted round his waist and saw a  
man I really could have married  
but the jealous serpent carried  
Rudy's corpse from my horizon

ah me Biribi  
peak of chic  
the prettiest  
the proudest miss  
of world renown  
ever to work as  
belle of the circus  
the finest  
show in town.

Now with prospects only so-so  
Poor Clare would be best part for me  
but one born to fortune's baubee  
stays a true child of the tumblers  
so I beg your pardon chum as  
here I peg on playing Coco

that's me Biribi  
peak of chic  
the prettiest  
the proudest miss  
of world renown  
ever to work as  
belle of the circus  
the finest  
show in town.

from *Tetrasticha*

*Upsilon*

Never make a beeline for a feline  
ball of fur.  
Dreams you haven't dreamed of turn the millstones  
of its purr.

*Phi*

Now do you see the gashes, the gaps  
Bored through the hawthorn stand  
Of days frittered away,  
False dawn, a name written in sand?

*Jeanne*  
*Houbart-Houge*  
(b. 1910)



## *Showing Off*

I've bunched my memories  
together  
and tied them up  
with the future's thread.

I've woven my old joys  
in ribbon  
and sewed them trim  
to my weekdays hat.

Do you hear, like me,  
the bust rub-a-dub of a cardboard drum  
and the hunchbacked laugh of a puppet?

## *Summer's Fiddle*

The fading fiddle of summer  
still tries a tune over.  
The wordless song and the last green of the trees  
cradles the memory of roses.

You'd like to give up your failings, your questions,  
to give up human attachment  
and think only of green.  
A branch,  
just a branch that brushes the window,  
a branch of green  
which turns into something immense,  
some immeasurable thing  
you do not know how to grasp.

## *Roads*

Roads run at random  
and wander over the earth  
shutting in the seasons.

Like the pearls of a great necklace,  
they thread green villages  
and towns the colour of smoke.  
They would like to reach heaven,  
the roads that run at random.

There are too many pearls on their way,  
there are too many pearls to thread.

Men walk at random  
and wander over the earth  
shutting in shadows.

Like the beads of a great rosary,  
they tell their suffering,  
their joys, their pleasures and desires.  
They would like to reach heaven,  
the men that walk at random.

There are too many beads to their lives,  
there are too many beads to tell.

The roads run at random,  
men walk them to the end.

But the rim of heaven  
rolls back at each step  
they take in the dust  
of the roads  
that run at random.

## *September Women*

Where are they off to, the September women?

All the songs that they hummed,  
All the tunes that they heard,  
Have wrinkled their faces.  
They've wanted so much.  
So withered, so weathered,  
The September women,  
Their heart is encumbered,  
It lumbers the body.

Spring's away to the weald,  
Summer's chased down its road  
And autumn picks  
At the last fine days.

Is it the cemetery they're bound for up the bank,  
The September women?

What change do you get for a silver handful of hair?

## *Brown Study*

In the small country cemetery  
where the wild grasses  
nibble at the mildewed crosses,  
where peace is master.

In the small country cemetery  
like thousands of others,  
I count the outlines of forgotten graves,  
I muse and remember...

A blackbird whistles.

And,  
going back home,  
I too whistle a tune,  
a tune  
like a hundred thousand others.

*Jenny d'Inverno*

(b. 1926)



## *Where Angels Fear to Tread*

Where from? Where to?  
There's no time – for you.  
Only the moment of your passing by.

You start the dogs snarling,  
Restrained by their chains  
From hurling themselves at your back.

Folk don't know you from Eve,  
Peering behind curtains twitched aside.  
You don't belong round here.

They're frightened for their cash  
And for their bit of straw.  
They're fearful of your hands  
And of the tongues next door,  
Of God knows what.

Well, so you don't want a thing?

– Ramble off. You're a nuisance, scam!

## *An Old Refrain for a Rainy Sunday*

Once on a time  
there was a past  
the worse for wear  
from constant use on Sundays.

And every time  
that past was stirred  
its arm-pits made  
a down at mouth grim gurning.

The ageing lass  
who takes to heart  
her threadbare past  
daren't shake it out, for spiders.

Let be, my lass!  
You fuss too much  
about the past...  
Better get laid:  
spending never made a miser.

## *White Night*

White night,  
        final as a shroud  
        That changes the hard coin of joy  
        To lies of black currency.

Chill night,  
        singing only for one  
        At the window of her castles of glass  
        And chasing off the dawn at heel.  
My halting dream, always alone,  
– white dream, foolishly familiar with the stars –  
Has come to cast itself in your mirror.

## *The Weather's Colour*

My heart flags, the weather's colour,  
Colour of fields and mist,  
Colour of summer dripping  
Tearfully among the box-leaves.

And before me the road I must go  
Under the fine rain's whisper  
Gleams like a tear that trickles  
Down the sunless cheek of the old world...

For joy is rusted by drizzle,  
And the dream husking in my breast  
Rattles powerless to take flight,  
Black and brooding, like a crow.

## *Accordion*

Poor accordion, I listened only to you  
the length of that Sunday.  
The fingers that fondled you seemed to me saddened  
and closed my grief in the tune.

Those fingers, like mine, were yearning for someone.  
And in our dreams you wavered  
as at times you waited for the moon to travel,  
plunged at times as if into the Meuse.

And you kept on playing the same tune over.  
Then my thoughts took a wrong turn:  
as when one's long recovered from an illness  
and the mind dwells on it still.

## *Journey*

I'll have lived like one who drags her feet,  
like an ass stooped under its distress,  
patient as those the verdict goes against.

– Some babble of the time of love.

I'll have hunted, like one blind,  
like one who is forgetful or approaches death,  
the black fishpond they call love  
that blossoms when the stars come out.

I'll have meant, like one who hankers,  
to seize the whole of heaven in my hands,  
and my fingers, which anchor on nothing,  
at the moment of death, touch only  
the monkey grin of my stupidity.

## *Dark*

Sticks, to beat dogs with.  
Wars, to shake people up.  
Fire, to set in the straw.

Prisons, to try your luck in.  
Heartache, that's for lovers.  
Hairy stockings, for hard knocks.

Summer, for the thirsty.  
Ugly mugs, for mirrors.  
Minxes, for old gentlemen.

– But happiness, for whom does it blaze?  
For the rich or for the humble? Which?

– No question: not at any rate for me.

*Victor George*

*(b. 1937)*



## *After Us*

Stone greyer than at Halloween,  
handful of scattered houses.

Whey dripping from the muslin bag  
left the white kitten to lap.

Three pigeons up on old Ned's roof,  
his missis cussing them beneath.

Corn-ears to bruise between fingers,  
sometimes the zest of baking bread.

Laundry on the meadow drying,  
the loft full to the rafters.

Glimmer of your shoes upslope  
the morning's news of dewfall.

Both hands over bare earth,  
outreach of clay, day and night.

That's all, then, after us,  
all that, see, nothing else.

## *Gris Pwin*

Dj'a tamehi lès-onnèyes qu'ont brotchi fou d' mès mwins.  
Dj'a wézi, dj'a nahi,  
kèn'ter èt can'vèssi.

Dj'a brê d'â lon, 'Mins wè d'meûre-t-èle?' âs djins qu' passint.  
Dj'a ratindou dès-ons ètîrs  
po-dri l' bârîte.

Èt l' djoû qu' dj'a r'clapé l'ouch, sins moti, po todî,  
dji m'a-st-assi à l' tâve èt crohi à plins dints  
è gris pwin di m' djônèsse.

## *Grey Bread*

I've winnowed the years which poured from my hands.  
I've peered, I've pried,  
ransacked and rummaged.

I've shouted, 'Where's she staying?' to folk far off.  
A twelvemonth and a day  
I waited at the gate.

And with the door's slamming, wordlessly, finally,  
sat down at table to munch open-mouthed  
the grey bread of my youth.

*'But if you're the boys...'*

But if you boys have it made, explain  
Why he's left again like some poor mutt,  
An underdog shut out of doors.

If you're good old boys, tell me how come  
You've turned your back as though that man  
Were an also-ran not waited for.

And if you're the boys, then why have I  
Been put away like some poor schlock  
Down on his luck who's earned a scowl?

*'Lord, it's evening already...'*

Lord, it's evening already, and more to do still.  
Coffee time's come, the pot's put to warm on the stove.  
And yet it's surely your hand on my shoulder now,  
Telling me 'Time your work here was finished, my lad.'

And me just back from putting the horse in its stall,  
Now I'm ordered to hand in my nosebag at once!  
Wife's at her kneading, we won't be eating her bread,  
Nuts started falling, we won't be getting them in!

Oh, I know the mill's grinding the grain of the hours,  
But to take to my heels with no word like a thief!  
Such a lot still to dream of before setting out,  
Such a lot to get on with...Say it's a joke, Lord.

*'Harvests to get in...'*

Harvests to get in,  
haylofts to pack,

all the sheaves to stook,  
all the ears we must thresh,

all the bread to be kneaded,  
the whole world to feed,

all the winters, all summers,  
all the hours to reel off,

all the wool to unwind,  
all the water to channel,

and our coffin to nail.

*'You who return at times...'*

You who return at times from the great land without name  
To keep me company on heavy days,  
The tongue you speak is that of the living no longer,  
Neighbours to me yet so far off.

The one who understands you has already set out.  
But since the world began we poor devils  
Have lifted the same door's latch and twisted the key  
In its rusty niche. On the other side, brother,  
You only enter once.

*'We'd thrown down our tools...'*

We'd thrown down our tools,  
Sent them all to the devil,  
Turned our back on the team  
And slammed the house door.

We'd got the green light.  
Free and breezy as swells  
We followed the band  
And whistled the latest.

Then we reached for our stick  
To flourish it far from our den  
And when we got back in  
The cock had crowed three times.

*'Tree is what I say...'*

Tree is what I say and I say time,  
What comes to pass, what stays behind.  
For ten companions on the wing  
How much was cast to seed?

Man is what I say and I say earth,  
What carries on and what expires.  
For the most fiery break of day  
How many stars that fade?

And is it for my sake  
That our clock really strikes?

*'Sons, take me back...'*

Sons, take me back to time's aurora,  
The first blush of dawn of our first morning.  
Take me back with the light to our whitest source  
In the page's margin, our name's first furrow.

What sense can pippin or apple-tree make  
If sap and root have yet to be savoured?  
What can the beech they'll saw my coffin from  
Until I've gnawed its mast between my teeth?

Diapered still, and old enough to die,  
Touching the earth, I touch the stars as well.

*'All the seeds have been sown...'*

All the seeds have been sown and all words said.  
I have kept nothing back.  
It's time to kneel, hands emptied, full of days,  
And to rest one's weight on what hours remain.

But the grain, hardly spiked, has gone whence it sprang.  
Where's the start? Where the end?  
A shadow has passed, without face, without name.

All the trees are in leaf and the dead alive.

## Textual and bibliographical notes

A first encounter with Walloon to anyone who knows French is as odd as the average Englishman's with Scots. Familiar and unfamiliar are inextricably mixed – and half the time the unfamiliar only appears so because of its unaccustomed clothing. In order to convey this sensation, two of the first poems are translated into Scots. Other reasons for this are discussed in my article 'Transfiguring Speech' in *Honest Ulsterman* 103. Further information concerning Remacle, Maquet and George can be found in the articles devoted to them in *P.N.Review* 75, 85 and 118.

An overview of renewal in Walloon poetry from the 19th century to the present is given in my article *Do vèt, do nwâr* in the James Hogg Festschrift *Summoning the Sea* (Univ. Salzburg, 1996). There is a wider selection of Walloon poets in my earlier anthology *The Colour of the Weather* (Menard, London, 1980) and, for the really hardy, there is a French bilingual selection edited by Maurice Piron, *Poètes wallons d'aujourd'hui* (Gallimard, Paris, 1961). Piron also edited an historical anthology of texts from the 17th century on, annotated with a very occasional translation, *Anthologie de la littérature wallonne* (Mardaga, Liège, 1979).

The sources of the material translated are the following: Robert Grafé's poems are in the memorial volume edited by Maquet, *Robert Grafé, 1896-1968* (SLLW, Liège, 1987). Remacle's poems are from his collections *A tchêstê d'poûssîre* (Gothier, Liège, 1946); *Fagne* (Cahiers Wallons, Namur, 1969); *Mwête-Fontin.ne* (Cahiers Wallons, Namur, 1974). 'Dream' and 'Night' appeared in *Anthologie du Prix Biennal de Littérature Wallonne*, ed. Octave Servais (Ville de Liège, 1963). 'Bedtime' and 'No One' were among the last poems he published in the magazine *La Vie Wallonne* (LIV, 1980). Maquet's poems are from the collections *Djeû d'Apèles* (L'Horizon Nouveau, Liège, 1947); *Luire dans le noir* (Seghers, Paris, 1955); *Come ine blanke ariësse* (1975); *Dès steûles divins lès nûlèyes* (1986); *Lès 4 solos* (1987); *Forvûzions* (1990); *Tchansons po/so dès-êrs inte deûs-êrs* (1991) – all of these published by Cahiers Wallons; *Hôte aspagne* (Augusta Eburonum, Liège, 1988); *Tetrastikha* (SLLW, Liège, 1996).

All the Houbart-Houge poems are from her privately printed third collection *Grîse teûle* (1971), which had won the SLLW's silver medal in 1966. The translation of 'Summer's fiddle', formerly published in my *The Colour of the Weather*, was set to music as part of Raymond Premru's 'Songs from Seasons', first performed in 1982. Jenny d'Inverno's poems

are from her collection *On neûr vèvî qu'on nome amoûr* (SLLW, Liège, 1977). George's poems are from his award-winning collections *Adju k'pagnon* (Servais, Namur, 1963 – Prix des Critiques, Liège); *Gris pwin* (Epécé, Ciney, 1965 – Liège Prix Biennal); *In Paradisum* (Cahiers Wallons, Namur, 1978 – Prix Georges Michaux); *Rècinèyes* (SLLW, Liège, 1979); *Totes lès-ameûrs dè monde* (Cahiers Wallons, Namur, 1983 – Prix biennal de lit. wal. du Ministère de la communauté française).



*As this varied anthology proves there is much more to Belgium than Hercule Poirot, Jean Claude Van Damme and EU directives from Brussels. The Modernist dialect poetry from Liège equals the best in Europe and is more accessible than most. In this collection Yann Lovelock introduces us to six poets, using a variety of styles (and occasionally breaking into brogue). Recently elected a corresponding member of the Walloon Dialect Academy himself, Lovelock is a well known specialist in Low Countries poetry and also translates from Dutch. So forget high-speed trains through the Channel Tunnel; journey instead in the strange and imaginative country east of Brussels.*

**Robert Grafé**  
**Louis Rémacle**  
**Albert Maquet**  
**Jeanne Houbart-Houge**  
**Jenny d'Inverno**  
**Victor George**

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