



One Hundred and One Poems by Paul Verlaine: A Bilingual Edition

Paul Verlaine , Norman R. Shapiro (Translator)

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French poet Paul Verlaine, a major representative of the Symbolist Movement during the latter half of the nineteenth century, was one of the most gifted and prolific poets of his time. Norman Shapiro's superb translations display Verlaine's ability to transform into timeless verse the essence of everyday life and make evident the reasons for his renown in France and throughout the Western world.

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Date : Published November 1st 2000 by University of Chicago Press (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9780226853451

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Format : Paperback 309 pages

Genre : Poetry, Classics, Cultural, France, European Literature, French Literature, Literature

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From Reader Review One Hundred and One Poems by Paul Verlaine: A Bilingual Edition for online ebook

Marc says

Beautiful, representative anthology of the work of Verlaine, good chronological spread.

Alisu' says

"Pe solitaru-mi suflet cade plictiseala.
Sar zice ca launtric port un macel dement.
O, sa nu poti, in doruri fiind atit de lent!
O, sa nu vrei sa-ti mai dispara amorteala!"

Eadweard says

Seashells

Each seashell in the walls where we
Made love—our grotto rendezvous—
Has its own special property

One has our souls' deep crimson hue
Snatched from our hearts' blood when I flare
And flame with passion, as do you;

This one affects that look you wear—
Languid and pale—when, listless, spent,
You scold me for my mocking air:

This one would sport the innocent
Curve of your ear; that one, like bud
Of rose, your neck's: pink, corpulent;

But one there was that fired my blood.

--

In Muted Tone

Gently, let us steep our love

In the silence deep, as thus,
Branches arching high above
Twine their shadows over us.

Let us blend our souls as one,
Hearts' and senses' ecstasies,
Evergreen, in unison
With the pines' vague lethargies.

Dim your eyes and, heart at rest,
Freed from all futile endeavor,
Arms crossed on your slumbering breast,
Banish vain desire forever.

Let us yield then, you and I,
To the waftings, calm and sweet,
As their breeze-blown lullaby
Sways the gold grass at your feet.

And, when night begins to fall
From the black oaks, darkening,
In the nightingale's soft call
Our despair will, solemn, sing.

--

Like city's rain, my heart...

Like city's rain, my heart
Rains teardrops too. What now,
This languorous ache, this smart
That pierces, wounds my heart?

Gentle, the sound of rain
Pattering roof and ground!
Ah, for the heart in pain,
Sweet is the sound of rain!

Tears rain—but who knows why?—
And fill my heartsick heart.
No faithless lover's lie?...
It mourns, and who knows why?

And nothing pains me so—
With neither love nor hate—
As simply not to know
Why my heart suffers so.

--

Languor

I am the Empire as the decadence
Draws to a close: midst Vandals' conquest, I
Compose my fey rhymes, my acrostics wry,
A-dance with languid, sun-gilt indolence.

A dense ennui sickens my soul, my sense.
I'm told that bloody battles rage hard by:
Why can I not—slow, flaccid-witted—why
Will I not flower, a bit, life's impotence?

Why can I—will I—not die just a bit!
Ah! Nothing left to drink? You laugh,
Bathyllus!
Nothing to say! No food, no drink to fill us!

Only a poem; into the fire with it!
Only a randy slave to let you languish;
Only a vague ennui's dim, obscure anguish.

--

I dreamed of you last night; and you...

I dreamed of you last night; and you
Swooned in a thousand posturings,
Warbling and cooing a myriad things...

And me, I kissed you through and through,
As one might suck a fruit, all round,
Everywhere—hill, plain, valley, mound.

I was a pliant spring, elastic,
Coiling, uncoiling. Damn! My back,
My gasps... Ah, what a firm attack!

And you, my sweet, no less fantastic:
Your back, your gasps, your bouncings, boundings,
Like a gazelle, spanned the surroundings...

When I awoke to your caress,

The same delights were ours: not less,
But more our festive lustfulness!

--

On a Copy of Les Fleurs du mal

These poems, strange, are, to my mind,
Like the strange poems that might have sprung
From a Marquis de Sade, refined,
If he could speak the angels' tongue.

--

Quatrain

With neither joy nor penitence
In these lethargic times, the one
And only laugh that still makes sense
Comes from a grinning skeleton.

Sugar Hiccups says

I can't read French, but for some reason (yes, shoot me now) I feel like Shapiro's translation doesn't capture the melodious ferocity of Verlaine's verse as well as it should. Or maybe I need to pick me up some French.

Clare Bear says

Found another great poet. Here's a taster..

The Young Fools (Les Ingénus)
by Paul Verlaine
Translated by Louis Simpson

High-heels were struggling with a full-length dress
So that, between the wind and the terrain,
At times a shining stocking would be seen,
And gone too soon. We liked that foolishness.

Also, at times a jealous insect's dart

Bothered out beauties. Suddenly a white
Nape flashed beneath the branches, and this sight
Was a delicate feast for a young fool's heart.

Evening fell, equivocal, dissembling,
The women who hung dreaming on our arms
Spoke in low voices, words that had such charms
That ever since our stunned soul has been trembling.

His personal life sounds very volatile also..did a stint in prison for shooting at his lover, but then came out of the joint with a great novel apparently. Will mark that to-read also.
