

Jules Supervielle

Jules Supervielle (1889-1957) was born in Uruguay. Even though he moved back to Pau (France) and lived all his life in Paris, the mostly sweet memories of his South-American childhood kept nourishing his poetry as it evolved into a kind of everyday mysticism, a highly sophisticated vision shyly cocooned in a thoroughly "simple" and conventional poetic form. About his numerous publications he said something very dear to Elsie Dee's own work: "I barely have known fear of commonplace (...) but most certainly fear of incomprehension".

Le signe

Signe, étoile au creux de ma main
Que je cache et que je retiens.
Pour quelle profonde aventure
Quel navire diriges-tu?
Verrai-je un jour son équipage
Et toucherai-je ses cordages?
Donnez-moi vite ces hublots
Pour que j'y passe un peu la tête,
Timon, filins et matelots,
Tout ce qu'il faut dans la tempête!
Aveugle étoile, chaude et douce
Par un clin d'œil ou quelque mousse
Descendu d'un mât dans les nues
Réponds-moi que tu m'as compris,
Étoile, larcin que je fis
Un jour, au plus fort du sommeil,
Aux nuits mangeuses de sommeil.

Emperor Yuraku

This first Japanese song by the Elsie Dee Project is made of six tankas (short poems of five lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables) related by a common theme: the *mono no aware* or "feeling of things". They are sometimes attributed to the legendary emperor Yuraku, but as we know more about them since the German scholar H.J. Klaproth has translated them and made them available to the western world, we realize they originate from the ancient Japanese oral tradition kept in the Manyoshu.

Manyoshu

Todome yenu
Inochi ni shi areba
Shikitaye no
Iye yuwa idete
Kumo gakuriniki

Awa yuki wa
Hadare ni fuyo to
Miru made ni
Nagarae chiru wa
Nami no hana zo mo

Tago no ura yu
Uchi idete mireba
Mashiro ni zo
Fuji no takane ni
Yuki wa furikuru

Sazare ishi ni
Koma wo asasete
Kokoro itami waga
Omou imo ga
Ie no atari kamo

Kazama matsu
Amashi kazukaba
Au koto no
Tayori ni namiwa
Umi to naruramu

yo no naka ni
taete sakura no
nakerisaba
haru no kokoro wa
nodokekaramashi

Rafael Alberti

Rafael Alberti, born in Cadiz in 1902, belongs to the generation of 1927 and is identified with the Spanish Renaissance literature and played an important role in their access to modernity.

Invitación al aire

Te invito, sombra, al aire.
Sombra de veinte siglos,
a la verdad del aire,
del aire, aire, aire.

Sombra que nunca sales
de tu cueva, y al mundo
no devolviste el silbo
que al nacer te dio el aire,
del aire, aire, aire.

Sombra sin luz, minera
por las profundidades
de veinte tumbas, veinte
siglos huecos sin aire,
del aire, aire, aire.

¡Sombra, a los picos, sombra,
de la verdad del aire,
del aire, aire, aire!

Henri Michaux

Elsie Dee here uses only the beginning of one of the most famous and most beautiful poems of this misfit of French speaking literature. Familiar with the morbidity and the suffocating lack of differentiation, Henri Michaux sometimes bursts into frenzies of abundant details and minute descriptions.

La Ralentie

Ralentie, on tâte le pouls des choses ; on y ronfle ; on a tout le temps ; tranquillement, toute la vie.

On gobe les sons, on les gobe tranquillement ; toute la vie.

On vie dans son soulier. On y fait le ménage. On a plus besoin de se serrer. On a tout le temps. On déguste. On rit dans son poing. On ne croit plus qu'on sait.

On n'a plus besoin de compter. On est heureuse en buvant ; on est heureuse en ne buvant pas. On fait la perle. On est, on a le temps. On est la ralentie.

On est sortie des courants d'air. On a le sourire du sabot. On n'est plus fatigué. On n'est plus touchée. On a des genoux au bout des pieds. On n'a plus honte sous la cloche. On a vendu ses monts. On a posé son oeuf, on a posé ses nerfs.

Gabriela Mistral

Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957) preceded Neruda in Chilean poetic adventure. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945, she has also worked in the field of education. Elsie Dee has a bit of a crush on this strong woman who was called at birth Lucila Godoy y Aclayaga. Her pseudonym reminds Elsie of one of her four grandmothers and the street where she lives.

Palabras Serenas

Ya en la mitad de mis días espigo
esta verdad con frescura de flor:
la vida es oro y dulzura de trigo,
es breve el odio e inmenso el amor.

Mudemos ya por el verso sonriente
aquel listado de sangre con hiel.
Abren violetas divinas, y el viento
desprende al valle un aliento de miel.

Ahora no sólo comprendo al que reza;
ahora comprendo al que rompe a cantar.
La sed es larga, la cuesta es aviesa;
pero en un lirio se enreda el mirar.

Grávidos van nuestros ojos de llanto
y un arroyuelo nos hace sonreír;
por una alondra que erige su canto
nos olvidamos que es duro morir.

No hay nada ya que mis carnes taladre.
Con el amor acabóse el hervir.
Aún me apacienta el mirar de mi madre.
¡Siento que Dios me va haciendo dormir!

Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman is another lover of simplicity, but of a fiercer kind of robust simplicity. No lace making, but sophisticated nakedness. People who prefer daylight to romantic moonshine, the early risers of happiness, will easily identify with this violent optimist and soon forgive him his naive narcissism. Moving awhile is a patchwork Elsie Dee made out of bits of much longer poems.

Moving Awhile

What do you seek so pensive and silent?
What do you need camerado?
Dear son do you think it is love?

Moving awhile among it

I will sing the song of companionship
I will be the bard of personality
For you these from me O Democracy
For you I am trilling these songs

Moving awhile among it

I will make divine magnetic lands,
With love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades

Moving awhile among it

I will plant companionship thick as tress along
 all the rivers of America,
and along the shores of the great lakes, and over the prairies
I will make inseparable cities with their arms
 about each others necks...

Moving awhile among it

However high the head of any else that head is over all

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is too notorious to add anything new about him, but his sonnets and poems in general are certainly the least known part of his work. The single theme of the sonnets is the passage of time and its harm on the love that, as we have learned through experience, never doth runs smooth. A sentence from Marcel Proust illustrates, in concentrated, the two-mile fifty-six towards one hundred fifty-four sonnets trying to express: "And what would be the wrinkles and circles under the eyes if it wasn't for the sufferings of the heart".

Sonnet #2

When forty winters shall beseige thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held:
Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.
How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use,
If thou couldst answer 'This fair child of mine
Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,'
Proving his beauty by succession thine!
This were to be new made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

Charles Baudelaire

Elsie Dee insisted that this [About](#) "album" had to include a poem by Baudelaire, the master of French symbolism, for he is, among all the dead poets we pray on, one of the most faithful visitors. And she also wanted to bring out the "happy" side of a poet mostly known for his frequent displays of «spleen» and morbidity.

L'Étranger

Qui aimes-tu le mieux, homme énigmatique, dis ? Ton père, ta mère, ta soeur ou ton frère ?

- Je n'ai ni père, ni mère, ni soeur, ni frère.
- Tes amis ?
- Vous vous servez là d'une parole dont le sens m'est restée jusqu'à ce jour inconnu.
- Ta patrie ?
- J'ignore sous quelle latitude elle est située.
- La beauté ?
- Je l'aimerais volontiers, déesse et immortelle.
- L'or ?
- Je le hais comme vous haïssez Dieu.
- Eh ! qu'aimes-tu donc, extraordinaire étranger ?
- J'aime les nuages... les nuages qui passent... là-bas... là-bas... les merveilleux nuages!

Talisien

The Song of Taliesin is to Welsh culture what the Kalevala is the Finnish culture or what Deuteronomy is to the Judeo-Christian culture: an alphabet which is also a calendar where each line is a step (moon) whose name is that of a tree. Elsie has added a few repetitions so to give this poem an air of sacred jingle.

The Calendar

I am a stag: of seven tines,
I am a flood: across a plain,
I am a wind: on a deep lake,
I am a tear: the Sun lets fall,
I am a hawk: above the cliff,
I am a thorn: beneath the nail,
I am a wonder: among flowers,
I am a wizard: who but I
Sets the cool head aflame with smoke?

I am a spear: that roars for blood,
I am a salmon: in a pool,
I am a lure: from paradise,
I am a hill: where poets walk,
I am a boar: ruthless and red,
I am a breaker: threatening doom,
I am a tide: that drags to death,
I am an infant: who but I
Peeps from the unhewn dolmen arch?

I am the womb: of every holt,
I am the blaze: on every hill,
I am the queen: of every hive,
I am the shield: for every head,
I am the tomb: of every hope.

Luis de Góngora

Luis de Góngora y Agorte (1561-1627), born in Cordoba, is the artist of the Spanish Golden Age, whose name became forever attached to Baroque art, the stylistic convolutions of his verses are of equal to that gilded ornamental Byzantine art and draped lush Italian mannerist. In his two "Solitudes", he staged a pilgrim, cynical cruelty of the court and shipwrecked among simple peasants, who sings the beauty of rustic life.

Soledad Segunda

Si de aire articulado
No son dolientes lágrimas suaves
Estas mis quejas graves,
Voces de sangre, y sangre son del alma.
Fielas de tu calma
¡Oh mar! quien otra vez las ha fiado
De su fortuna aun más que de su hado.

¡Oh mar, oh tú, supremo
Moderador piadoso de mis daños!
Tuyos serán mis años,
En tabla redimidos poco fuerte
De la bebida muerte,
Que ser quiso, en aquel peligro extremo,
Ella el forzado y su guadaña el remo.

Regiones pise ajenas,
O clima propio, planta mía perdida,
Tuya será mi vida,
Si vida me ha dejado que sea tuya
Quien me fuerza a que huya
De su prisión, dejando mis cadenas
Rastro en tus ondas más que en tus arenas.

Gabriel Pariseau

was born at L'Île Ronde in 1949.

This poem was inspired by a jogger in the midst of traffic in down-town Montreal. The suffocating car-drivers take part in a dreamed explosion involving everything... and the jogger still runs.

L'Explosion

Il court.

À sa foulée farouche
Obstinément répétitive
On le dirait furieux
Comme une folle dent
Contre la terre
Il court
À côté des autos closes
Où s'axphyxient
Sans jamais le regarder
Les chauffeurs convaincus
D'avoir les pieds sur terre
Il court
On songe à l'ouragan
Tant son visage semble tourmenté
Le métal des sabots
Claque en secousses
Fracassant
On sent qu'il cherche
À éclater
Il court à coeur ouvert
Et contre le courant
On entendra
Même enfermé dans une auto
La voix de sa déflagration
Il emporte avec lui les maisons :
Vol de vitres en éclats
Lancées de pointes meurtrières
Tissu de vitre à traverser
Une pluie de briques en vol
Une ville en ruines éventrée
Les murs sautent les clôtures
Les corniches écorchées
Suivent les cheminées
Dans une migration finale
Il est heureux dans la déflagration

Pablo Neruda

(1904-1973)

Born in Parral, Chile, Naftali Reyes has published under the pseudonyme Neruda (borrowed from the Tchech poet Jan Neruda) more than a hundred books of poetry. A parirotic socialist, he has worked primarily to reconcile poetry and the people.

He was given the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. *Oda al hombre sencillo* is one of the Odas elementales. It is highly representative of this poet of transfigured everydayness. The film "Il postino" and the novel *Una ardente patience* by Sepulveda are evocations of the the novel "Una ardente" patience by Sepulveda are evocations of the poet's retreat in Isla negra.

Oda al hombre sencillo

Voy a contarte en secreto
quién soy yo,
así, en voz alta,
me dirás quién eres,
quiro saber quien eres,
cuánto ganas,
en qué taller trabajas,
en qué mina,
en qué farmacia,
tengo una obligación terrible
y es saberlo,
saberlo todo,
día y noche saber
cómo te llamas,
ése es mi oficio,
conocer una vida
no es bastante
ni conocer todas la vidas
es necesario,
verás,
hay que desentrañar,
rascar a fondo
y como en una tela
las líneas ocultaron,
con el color, la trama
del tejido,
y borro los colores
y busco hasta encontrar
el tejido profundo,
asi también encuentro
la unidad de los hombres,
y en el pan
busco
más allá de la forma:

me gusta el pan, lo muerdo,
y entonces
veo el trigo,
los trigales tempranos,
la verde forma de la primavera,
las raíces, el agua,
por eso
más allá del pan,
veo la tierra,
el agua,
el hombre,
y así todo lo pruebo
buscándote
en todo.
Ando, nado, navego
hasta encontrarte,
y entonces te pregunto
cómo te llamas,
calle y número,
para que tú recibas
mis cartas,
para que yo te diga
quién soy y cuánto gano,
dónde vivo,
y cómo era mi padre.
Ves tú qué simple soy,
qué simple eres,
no se trata
de nada complicado,
yo trabajo contigo,
tú vives, vas y vienes,
de un lado a otro,
es muy sencillo:
eres la vida,
eres tan transparente
como el agua,
y así soy yo,
mi obligación es ésa:
ser transparente,
cada día
me educo,
cada día me peino
pensando cómo piensas,
y ando
como tú andas,
como, como tú comes,
tengo en mis brazos a mi amor
como a tu novia tu,
y entonces
cuanto esto esta probado,
cuando somos iguales

escribo,
escribo con tu vida y con la mia,
con tu amor y los míos,
con todos tus dolores
y entonces
y somos diferentes
porque, mi mano en tu hombro,
como viejos amigos
te digo en las orejas:
no sufras,
ya llega el día,
ven,
ven conmigo,
ven
con todos
los que a ti se parecen,
los más sencillos,
ven,
no sufras,
ven conmigo,
porque aunque no lo sepas,
eso yo sí lo sé:
yo sé hacia dónde vamos,
y es ésta la palabra:
nu sufras
porque ganaremos,
ganaremos nosotros,
los más sencillos,
ganaremos,
auque tú no lo creas,
ganaremos.

Lewis Carroll

pseudonyme Charles L. Dodgson, was born in Daresbury in 1832.

A celebrated intellectual, he is especially known for *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. He left many poems including the masterpiece *The Hunting of the Snark*.

The Butcher's Equation

"The thing can be done," said the Butcher, "I think.
The thing must be done, I am sure.
The thing shall be done! Bring me paper and ink,
The best there is time to procure."

The Beaver brought paper, portfolio, pens
And ink in unfailing supplies:
While strange creepy creatures came out of their dens,
And watched them with wondering eyes.

So engrossed was the Butcher, he heeded them not,
As he wrote with a pen in each hand,
And explained all the while in a popular style
Which the Beaver could well understand.

"Taking Three as the subject to reason about –
A convenient number to state –
We add Seven, and Ten, and then multiply out
By One Thousand diminished by Eight.

The result we proceed to divide, as you see,
By Nine Hundred and Ninety and Two:
Then subtract Seventeen, and the answer must be
Exactly and perfectly true.

The method employed I would gladly explain,
While I have it so clear in my head,
If I had but the time and you had but the brain –
But much yet remains to be said.

In one moment I've seen what has hitherto been
Enveloped in absolute mystery,
And without extra charge I will give you at large
A Lesson in Natural History."

Oscar Wilde

(184? –19??)

The Ballad of the Redding Geole is certainly one of the sadest poem this witty man has written. It is full of gore and morbidity, but it is also a very touching look life gone by while one was dancing and frivolously enjoying the profound superficiality of life. A short extract of this long poem has become Elsie Dee's song "The Gallows".

The Gallows

It's sweet to dance to violins
When love and life are fair
To dance to flutes to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare
But it's not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air

With mob and mow we saw them go
Slim shadows hand in hand
About about in ghostly rout
They trod a saraband
And the dammed grotesques made arabesques
Like the wind upon the sand

With the pirouettes of marionettes
They tripped on pointed tread
But with flutes of fear they filled the ear
As their grizzly masque they led
And loud they sang and long they sang
For they sang to wake the dead

Oh ho they cried the world is wide
But fettered limbs go lame
And once or twice to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game
But he does not win who plays with sin
In the secret house of shame

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Oda al dia feliz

Esta vez dejadme
ser feliz,
nada ha pasado a nadie,
no estoy in parte alguna,
sucede solamente
que soy feliz
por los quatro costados
del corazón, andando,
durmiendo y escribiendo.
Qué voy a hacerle, soy
feliz,
soy más innumerable
que el pasto
en las praderas,
siento la piel como un árbol rugoso
y el agua abajo,
los pájaros arriba,
el mar como un anillo
en mi cintura,
hecha de pan y piedra la tierra
el aire canta como una guitarra.

Tú a mi lado en la arena
eres arena, tú cantas y eres canto, el mundo
es hoy mi alma,
canto y arena,
el mundo
es hoy tu boca,
dejadme
en tu boca y en la arena
ser feliz,
ser feliz porque sí, porque respiro
y porque tú respiras,
ser feliz porque toco

tu rodilla
y es como si tocara
la piel azul del cielo
y su frescura.

Hoy dejadme
a mí solo
ser feliz,
con todos o sin todos,
ser feliz
con el pasto
y la arena,
ser feliz
con el aire y la tierra,
ser feliz,
contigo, con tu boca,
ser feliz.

Paul Eluard

(1895- 1952)

Eugène Grindel has published under the pseudonyme Paul Eluard (name of his maternal grand-mother) numerous books of poetry. He was one of the most prolific amongst the french surrealists, and one of the most constant. A simple vocabulary at the service of a fertile imagination and an equalitarian ideology. Elsie Dee made up the song *Lumière unique* by putting together extracts from *Poésie ininterrompue*.

Lumière unique

Aujourd'hui lumière unique
Aujourd'hui l'enfance entière
Changeant la vie en lumière
Sans passé sans lendemain

Aujourd'hui rêve de nuit
Au grand jour tout se délivre
Aujourd'hui je suis toujours.

Je suis ma mère et mon enfant
En chaque point de l'éternel

Les prunelles s'écarquillent
Les cachettes se dévoilent
La pauvreté rit aux larmes
De ses chagrins ridicules
Et minuit mûrit des fruits
Et midi mûrit des lunes

Tout se vide et se remplit
Au rythme de l'infini.
Et disons la vérité
La jeunesse est un trésor
La vieillesse est un trésor
L'océan est un trésor
Et la terre est une mine
L'hiver une fourrure
L'été une boisson fraîche
Et l'automne un lait d'accueil

Je suis ma mère et mon enfant
En chaque point de l'éternel

Et je ne connais rien de rien à l'avenir
Mais j'aime pour aimer et je mourrai d'amour

François Villon

(1431-1463)

Eventhough his life was not that of a role model (he robbed rich people and even killed a priest in a fight), his influence on other poets was huge and still lives on. He is the undeniable master of the ballad.

Ballade des menus propos

Je connais bien mouches en lait,
Je connais à la robe l'homme,
Je connais le beau temps du laid,
Je connais au pommier la pomme,
Je connais l'arbre à voir la gomme,
Je connais quand tout est de même,
Je connais qui besogne ou chôme,
Je connais tout, fors que moi-même.

Je connais pourpoint au collet,
Je connais le moine à la gonne,
Je connais le maître au valet,
Je connais au voile la nonne,
Je connais quand pipeur jargonne,
Je connais fols nourris de crèmes,
Je connais le vin à la tonne,
Je connais tout, fors que moi-même.

Je connais cheval et mulet,
Je connais leur charge et leur somme,
Je connais Bietris et Belet,
Je connais guet qui nombre et somme,
Je connais vision et somme,
Je connais la faute des Boesmes,
Je connais le pouvoir de Rome,
Je connais tout, fors que moi-même.

Prince, je connais tout en somme,
Je connais colorés et blêmes,
Je connais Mort qui tout consomme,
Je connais tout, fors que moi-même.

Edward Elstin Cummings

was born in Cambridge (Massachusetts) in 1894.

His travels to France in the early XXth century nurrished his appetite for modernism. Taking a defenite step away from symbolism, he created an innovative, playfull and nontheless strictly formal poetry.

If Seventy Were Young

if seventy were young
and death uncommon
(forgiving not divine,
to err inhuman)
or any thine a mine
- dingdong: dongding –
to say would be to sign

if broken hearts were whole
and cowards heroes
(the popular the wise,
a weed a tearose)
and every minus plus
- fare ill : fare well -
a frown would be a smile

if sorrowful were gay
(today tomorrow,
douting believing and
to lend to borrow)
or any foe a friend
- cry nay : cry yea -
november would be may

that you and i'd be quite
- come such perfection -
another i another you,
is a deduction
which (be it false or true)
disposes me to shoot
dogooding folk on sight

Rubén Darío

(1867-1916) was born in Nicaragua.

He traveled to Europe when symbolism was yielding to the fascination of modernism. In his own American way he succeeded to transplant the seed of modernism in Hispano-American poetry without breaking any bond with tradition. In these few verses taken from *Rimas*, he salutes the great Romantic G.A. Becquer.

Hay un verde laurel

Hay un verde laurel. En sus ramas
un enjambre de pájaros duerme
 en mudo reposo,
sin que el beso del sol los despierte.

Hay un verde laurel. En sus ramas
que el terral melancólico mueve,
 se advierte una lira,
sin que nadie esa lira descuelgue.

¡Quién pudiera, al influjo sagrado
 de un soplo celeste,
despertar en el árbol florido
las rimas que duermen!

¡Y flotando en la luz el espíritu,
mientras arde en la sangre la fiebre,
como «un himno gigante y extraño»
arrancar a la lira de Bécquer!

Sylvain Garneau

(1930-1953)

Born in Montreal, this poet mixes modernism and romantic tradition. His verses recall Rimbaud and Nelligan. He committed suicide at the age of 23.

Le Jeu

J'ai nagé jusqu'à l'autre rive
Pour y chercher des jeux nouveaux.
Je n'ai trouvé qu'un nid de grives
Caché à l'ombre d'un ormeau.

J'ai marché le long de la rive
Pour y chercher des cailloux bleus.
J'ai trouvé quatre sources vives
Et j'ai recommencé le jeu.

J'ai traversé le marécage
Pour faire des tresses d'osier.
Les poissons parmi les herbages
Me prenaient pour un échassier.

Au soleil couchant, quatre grues
Ont essayé de m'entraîner.
J'aimais leurs mines incongrues
Mais je voulais m'en retourner.

Voilà qu'on me prête main-forte.
Ils étaient douze sur le bord.
J'avais les jambes comme mortes.
Ils m'ont ramené vers le nord.

J'ai raconté ce long voyage
Le même soir à mes voisins.
Ils ne m'ont pas cru. C'est dommage.
C'est dommage pour mes cousins

Qui sont si fiers de leur famille
Mais qui ont si peur de leurs fous.
Et tant pis pour la belle fille.
On devait se marier, en août.

Demain matin, sur l'autre rive,
J'irai recommencer le jeu.
Ceux qui n'ont pas peur, qu'ils me suivent.
Ça fera moins de malheureux.

Charles d'Orléans

was born in Paris in 1493.

Taken prisoner by the English, he lived in England from 1415 to 1440. Back in his homeland, he had an elegant and refined court life in Blois. There he married Marie de Clèves who gave him the future king of France Louis XII.

Since then, this charming rondeau rolls without gathering any moss...

Orléans

Le temps a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluie
Et s'est vêtu de broderie
De soleil luisant clair et beau.

Il n'y a bête ni oiseau
Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crie:
Le temps a laissé son manteau!

Rivière, fontaine et ruisseau
Portent en livrée jolie,
Gouttes d'argent d'orfèvrerie,
Chacun s'est vêtu de nouveau:
Le temps a laissé son manteau!

Charles Algernon Swinburne

was born in London (England) in 1837.

Even if his victorian contemporaries were outraged by his mystical approach of morbidity and his unconventional use of sexual imagery, he remains an absolute master of the English meter.

Taken from his *Hymn to Proserpine*

Proserpine

All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and
sorrows are caste
Far out, with the foam of the present that sweeps
to the surf of the past :
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and
deep death waits:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between
the remote sea-gates,
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about by
the seas as with wings

And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of
unspeakable things,
White eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and
serpentine-curved,
Rolls, under the withering wind of the future, the
wave of the world.

Paul Verlaine

was born in Metz (France) in 1844.

Master of the musical verse and of the speech-like tone, his work is as profound as it appears shallow to "seriously" realist critics.

Presque peur

J'ai presque peur en vérité
tant je sens ma vie enlacée
à la radieuse pensée
qui m'a pris l'âme l'autre été,

tant votre image à jamais chère
habite en ce coeur tout à vous,
mon coeur uniquement jaloux
de vous aimer et de vous plaire

et je tremble, pardonnez-moi
d'aussi franchement vous le dire,
à penser qu'un mot, un sourire
de vous est désormais ma loi

et qu'il vous suffirait d'un geste
d'une parole ou d'un clin d'oeil
pour mettre tout mon être en deuil
de son illusion céleste

et pourtant, je ne veux vous voir,
l'avenir dût-il m'être sombre
et fécond en peines sans nombre
qu'à travers un immense espoir,

baigné dans le bonheur suprême
de me dire encore et toujours
en dépit des mornes retours,
que je vous aime, que je t'aime.

Gabriel Pariseau

was born at L'Île Ronde in 1949.

His precocious neo-romantic poetry is still very much impregnated with post-modern irony. Something like the tragical fragrance of blue flowers .

Paupière

Moi je reste assis devant ma fenêtre
je vois chaque jour des amitiés naître
et de grands amours se décomposer
la vie se déroule vu de ma fenêtre

comme le jeu pressé d'une machine à boules
moi, je reste assis devant mon ordi
quand les jours sont gris, quand il fait pas beau
je joue en duo avec Madame La Pluie

quand je sors dehors,
l'odeur des trottoirs
me donne un frisson
qui remet en question
la vie des bébés au coeur de plastique
qui remet en question
la vie des bébés en bas de nylon

j'envoie les nuages faire un long voyage
et j'entends chanter pour moi les oiseaux

Lewis Carroll

pseudonyme Charles L. Dodgson, was born in Daresbury in 1832.

A celebrated intellectual, he is especially known for *Alice in Wonderland* and *through the Looking Glass*. He left many poems including the masterpiece *The Hunting of the Snark*.

Iron gun

Were I to take an iron gun
And fire it off towards the sun
I grant t'would reach its mark at last,
But not till many years had passed.

But should that bullet change its force
And to the planets take its course,
T'would never reach the nearest star,
Because it is so very far.

Arthur Michault

was born in L'Île Noire in 1922.

Post-dada experimental poet, we tend to see nowadays in his voluntarily opacified "poèmes-machines" a prefiguration of punk.

Été chagrin

courues les rues, battus les champs
moulu le grain, brûlé l'encens
vendu l'intrus, perdu le train,
on se reprend...

fendus les flots, été chagrin
rendu l'argent : heureux destin!
sauver sa peau, ciseaux du temps
on se reprend...

nouveau printemps, parfum tenace
jouer son âme, automne ardent
oiseau vorace, perdu le temps,
on se reprend...

les rues battues, les chants
moulu le grain...

Gabriel Pariseau

was born at L'Île Ronde in 1949.

His precocious neo-romantic poetry is still very much impregnated with post-modern irony. Something like the tragical fragrance of blue flowers .

Pour George

En écoutant le chant de cet oiseau
j'apprends le temps qu'il fait,
mauvais ou beau clément, battu,
de chien perdu dément,
tordu, si lent, si cru,
le temps des vues

En comparant ses plumes à l'arc-en-ciel,
j'apprends le nom des tons,
des coloris satin doré, serin givré,
grapin mouillé mutin nacré, câlin sucré

En regardant le vol de cet engin,
je vois l'oiseau de feu sortir de l'eau
élan soudain, pipeau d'osier,
roseau troué, ciseaux d'acier,
panier percé satin battu, serin perdu,
grapin tordu, mutin si cru,
câlin perdu

Si j'en venais un jour à m'en aller
tu trouveras toujours dans le pommier
l'oiseau du temps, dit oui dit non
clément...

reviens reviens

Edward Elstin Cummings

was born in Cambridge (Massachusetts) in 1894

His travels to France in the early XXth century nurrished his appetite for modernism. Taking a defenite step away from symbolism, he created an innovative, playfull and nontheless strictly formal poetry.

The boys

The boys I mean are not refined
they go with girls who buck and bite
they do not give a fuck for luck
they hump them thirteen times a night

one hangs a hat upon her tit
one carves a cross in her behind
they do not give a shit for wit
the boys I mean are not refined

they come with girls who bite & buck
who cannot read and cannot write
who laugh like they would fall apart
and masturbate with dynamite

the boys I mean are not refined
they cannot chat of that and this
they do not give a fart for art
they kill like they would take a piss

they speak whatever's on their mind
they do whatever's in their pants
the boys I mean are not refined
they shake the mountains
when they dance

Charles Algernon Swinburne

was born in London (England) in 1837.

Even if his victorian contemporaries were outraged by his mystical approach of morbidity and his unconventional use of sexual imagery, he remains an absolute master of the English meter.

Taken from his tragedy *Atalanta in Calydon*

Atalanta

Before the beginning of years
There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;
Grief, with a cup that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance fallen from Heaven,
And madness risen from Hell
Strength without hands to smite;
Love that endures for a breath:
Night, the shadow of Light
And Life the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of slinding sang
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the labouring earth;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
& wrought with weeping & laughter,
& fashioned with loathing & love,
With Life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

Constantin Cavafy

was born in London (England) in 1837.

Even if his victorian contemporaries were outraged by his mystical approach of morbidity and his unconventional use of sexual imagery, he remains an absolute master of the English meter.

Le portrait de l'ami

Hier à midi, il a fini ce portrait.

Maintenant, il l'examine attentivement.

Il a voulu montrer la beauté de son ami dans l'intimité.

Il a voulu tracer le chemin le plus court vers la volupté.

Il a peint son ami dans un veston gris...

Une chemise rose aux reflets dorés...

... déboutonné, sans cravate!

Une chemise échanquée

pour laisser entrevoir le beau torse et le cou.

Un duvet velouté invite les yeux plus

chastes à explorer...

Ces cheveux noir de jais cachent son front

qu'aucun souci n'a encore effleuré.

Une mèche écartée révèle un grain de peau si fin...

Elle est bien là l'expression qu'il a essayé

de rendre quand il a peint les yeux...

Une bouche façonnée pour les baisers,

des lèvres pour les plus subtiles voluptés.