

Poèmes épars

de Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo

Traduits en anglais par Hrishikesh Srinivas

Tous droits réservés – 2026

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I

MALAGASY POEMS

Traductions de *Poèmes épars en malgache (1922-1932)* de Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo
à partir des traductions en français de Jean-Luc Raharimanana et Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo
Œuvres complètes, tome II.

Le poète, le narrateur, le dramaturge, le critique, le passeur de langues, l'historien,
édités par by Serge Meitinger, Liliane Ramarosoa, Laurence Ink et Claire Riffard,
Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2012.

Édition 2020 en ligne : <https://rabearivelo.huma-num.fr/poemes-epars-en-malgache.xml>

Les poèmes *Ao an'ala* “In the forest”, *Lavenona hadino* “Forgotten embers”, et *Tononkira*
“Poem”, traduits à partir de la version en ligne, figurent en 2^e partie,
dans la section “Six poems in Hova free verse” I, V, et VI.

Legacy

When the Hour-of-change sounds,
remember, o beloved, that the legacy
left here by my heart
for you, in the depth of its silence,
is this: — A few verses to set to music,
— Thin ribbons, souvenirs attached...

Leaf through the Book the Years have closed,
but which my heart in sorrow will open —
You'll hear the sobs of hurt —
The wound which is always open, never closed,
— Yes, this wound which smiles all the while hidden —
in the bottom of my heart — my young heart.

Monument

To great men, who've more than done their duty
Who deserve our memory as well as homage,
The stelae and monuments, grand and grandiose
Our children and generations to come will pay respects to.

Generals celebrated for their courage,
Writers renowned for their struggles;
To what they accomplished, still in our hearts,
The posthumous stelae and monuments.

Remembered in stone, these works
Our marvelling descendants will reflect on,
The passing months, following years,
Won't change, nor wipe away their names.

Flesh dies off, but never fame,
In the mouths of the living, Glory, Honour!
Where they reside will never be destroyed:
These famous names will remain in our memories.

Life is an orchard, they say,
Life will go to ashes quick, as it decays.
But onward go Mr. *GRANDJEAN* and Dr. *VILLETTE*,
Making *ANTIFARASINA*, making *NUTETE*.

To this famous *NUTETE* which saves lives,
This *ANTIFARASINA* which quells complaints.
I'll offer here stelae that time won't destroy,
Won't leave the mouth, will be tongue's speech.

I'll set up here the monument
Months and years won't bend,
I'll do it with three knots difficult to undo
I'll set it up high so that it's immediately seen.

I'll make of its verso a sacred stone
To celebrate *ANTIFARASINA*
And the other side will be for *NUTETE*
For Mr. *GRANDJEAN* and Dr. *VILLETTE*!

K. VERBAL.

Elegy

The soul sighs
Sadness is forever;
The body also frets,
Not knowing what to do.

Reminding me, for it swings,
Between this hardness in spirit
Not daring to hope
And wilful love of life.

Just like in the evening,
Looking towards Anosy,
The star already setting,
Wild geese will pass by...

The song of teals
Spread out as ever,
Seemingly obsessive,
Pressure my sigh to yield there,

A railbird's rhythm...
In the valleys,
The rivers with their ebb and flow
Will they wreck me?

O night, please come
Cradle in the waves this sad heart;
It suffers! Because
Beneath griefs crushed...

My heart whimpering,
Sorry and weeping,
O Destiny, whatever the hour
For goodness and bettering...

Mist

Covered in golden dust
The mountain heights
Glimmer in sight
Despite the fog and mist.

Yes, my friends, as evening falls
This truly is my favourite time.
When rejoices the soul,
Then I recover my joy.

From afar, there,
An army of wild teals,
Crying, calling each other,
As if to count themselves: how many?

Evening already, dusk...
The sun going to sleep
And I, still seeking
The cure-all warmth!

So blow, O Zephyr,
That soft breath be
These vapours of dreams
That never come.

O Destiny, your task is so
As to make this possible,
Well, come on then, let all
The land's good times roll!

The living want to sleep,
Give sweet dreams;
And let peace of the soul
Fill the hour to come!

Sadness

When the hour is inevitable,
Death calling for my life,
The tomb deaf to my begging heart —
This is my wish, my only fiat:

Eyes closed won't lament
The grief and foolishness
They take to be the norm,
Rule and legislate in this world...

But tears of silence will turn over
Tears weighted by my life,
To say this: goodbye, bless you,
Your good will change people.

My lips will be sealed and dead.
Won't list out such sad things,
Won't lay out to-do's and sighs so heavy!
Actions trying to outdo fate: just trouble!

But those lips, like my heart's, will murmur:
"It's not his fault, and no-one has the right to blame him
If I had been lost and filled with sadness!
Oh! he called, but it was I who never moved!"

Memories

On sand, on the water's edge,
Apparently, I built my prior days,
And only black birds, crows and herons,
Remain to laugh at what'd been planned.

— What'd been planned, undone — desired!
Smiles were given, stayed unrequited!
It's back, I remember, slow, in silence,
The veil that covered the face of my yesterdays.

My heart pounding. My spirit
Considering one above this flesh:
And a new life uprooting mine
As a turbulent whirling wind...

The sand of that time carried away by water —
Just so the days gone by were felled.
O! Feel free, crows and herons,
To make fun of what had been planned!

But... Back to life

I

My heart has been so eaten by roving beasts
That only mere leftovers remain!
The new moon looks to be mean,
For Adalo moon in tears to lose spirit.

Will I grow tired of waiting, and will
My final strength desert me in unending search
For hope in you,
O full Alahamady moon of triumphant kings?

II

My heart suffers, yet I don't know,
I cannot say the reason for all this.
For my heart is at once full and enraged —
Both full and enraged, and soaked in tears.

Silence remains the sole cure,
To weed out this lawless evil;
Surely my lost strength will return
When at last the plaint decides to stop...

III

The plaint? ...spread out beneath my soul
Like mud under a pond,
Unable to rise up to distress others,
Pretending to sleep like a baby.

Careful though... keep it in,
So it doesn't rise up, the old pain,
Not a sound, don't awaken it,
Cradle it to sleep, cradle it lest it arise...

*Then will this my dead heart awaken,
Awaken to tell the reason for all this,
You'll know, you'll know what saddens within:
Of course it's none other than... YOUR BUSINESS.*

Tanala missing talismans

When the high moon disappears,
Hidden and no longer in view,
Ankaratra laments, inconsolable.
Appeasing the heart, here comes Andringitra.

The turtledoves here, once out of the forests,
Cry, Alack! Alack! As though crazed?
Melancholic, we say, separated from their loves —
To change it all, for Tanala talismans.

Come here, o bird? Come sing a little?
Alaoatra behind, mourning the migrators;
Alas, no more grebe? Instead cries and tears? —
I'll quell the laments, won't accept their law.

Fog and sadness. — Is that Ankaratra?
Sighs and regret. — Still Ankaratra?
The furthest from loved ones mourns the most. —
But that's not what makes a man crumble.

The sounding hour, maybe, will call them back...
The sickness of love will cause them grief;
Does it seem like a shadowy wraith, my lost soul? —
Tanala missing talismans am I, my friends!

Shall I catch my turtledoves,
Shall I catch them for others, for other griefs?
Alack! Sorrows! Alack! Open wounds. —
I stand proud, beaten but never overcome.

She's gone already, little star so desired,
No more than stinging and coldness now;
Do I regretfully tear off my attached sighs?
Change course, onward for other loves.

Untitled

My heart flies high, so high,
Resolved to defy the skies,
Once touched, alas, can no further —
Wings hurt — watch it fall!

Wanting to surpass you, o day's eye
Brilliant! Wanting to never stop,
As day begets nightfall,
And night emerges aggravated.

And only the darkness of now remains,
The knitting and threading darkness...
I cradle gently my heavy heart,
And I caress, caress my eyes inflamed!

Ah! This sadness appears to fall away...
Will what I keep close go the same way?
Oh, no! My sorrows grip me,
And I, I can smell blood only!

Monsoon thoughts

For S. and M.

Slow rolls the eventide rain,
 The low night,
Now setting sky and earth heavy with sleep,
 And carrying from here from there...
— From here from there, but where to? Where exactly, soul
 Seeming tired, frightened,
Where from there, from here to convey these your dreams
 Which fill you, and suddenly
Turn, turn in your heart, turn in your spirit,
 Like water set to boil?

Flickering softly, as if trembling and sad,
 My lamp. — Sleeps,
Everything here sleeps before my piercing eyes.
 Where, oh where does it hide,
Soul, this dream that's crushed you so?
 Come bring out that voice,
And in this heart of mine, softly, come whisper
 Your true words!
And I'll know everything undivulged...
 Soul, speak!

My lamp is dead already, the rain ceased;
 Even the earth is a silence,

And in my heart, so deep. — I hear nothing,

Nothing that isn't silence...

And yet! Yet how unquenchable

This need to hear once more

The tenor of you, o obscure fate,

An unfulfilled happiness longing

For body and soul filled with fears and doubts

Such "storm and stress."

Slow lifts the eventide rain;

Day's almost here

To surprise awake the sky and earth

And bring us back from elsewhere...

— Elsewhere, but where? Where do you come from, Soul

Seeming tired, fearful?

Where do you come from carrying this dream

That's crushed, and suddenly

Lifted from the heart, lifted from the spirit,

Like water set to boil?

No regret

(Song in response to Samuel Ratany)

It's not some new thing
But a long time running
This way:
When the water dries up, it's just
Mud arisen and left —
Devouring mud licked smooth by the waves!

That too the only crossing:
So the rivers of life. Yet, alas, empty,
The heart that is given away,
This heart seeking happiness and peace
Again and always,
And its only consolation, to drink of tears!

But, I submit,
It won't be stubborn red tears
Nor *the blood of supplication*
That will fill and refill
This *heart which remembers* —
That will refill *the bitter cup*!

Still the only thing to run in it
Was ashen cinder announcing it was out
The fire in my heart,

The torch a-lighting the cleft dugout
Remnants now ashore
Devoured by time its ravages and passages.

Oh! A deranged gale
That passed for a bit of mist!
Once passed,
Only brought sound and fury.
But for what forsaken reason
Surprise awake the forgotten?

And this and that...
At other crossings stand I;
And I won't sigh
If it never returns, this other life
Already carried away by the years
This home my heart can only mourn!

Illusion! Sepia cinders
Cover the days gone by!
It's lipped with milk
The cup I switched with my cup!
O Remnants,
You, too, devoured by time's ravages!

Here's the new thing
Never realised all that time.
This way after all:

The water's dried up — and nothing's left,

Not even mud!

Where's it all gone? Where? Swallowed by the waves.

Written with pain and pity

I

Vagabond thoughts, secret dreams,
Almost imperceptible tremors,
Beating wings, for which country? — To cross,
Go over there, for what end? —
Filled yet with every desire,
Filled with everything, everything and more...
Beating wings, for which country? — To cross,
Almost imperceptible tremors...

Tremors... The reason? — I don't know!
Because the heart is weak and short-sighted!
Only the soul seems to fill up again,
Only listening to itself,
Silencing past mistakes!
My dust back to haunt me maybe...
Only the soul seems to fill up again,
Because the heart is weak and short-sighted!

And only pain and pity left...
Oh! I am after all: human!
So young, and wasting away already?
A lamb, and the rope let fall?
— My thoughts left trampled,

In knots tightening, unravelling, endlessly...
So young, and wasting away already?
Oh! I am after all: human!

II

Here they are, slowly turning over,
My leftover and wasting thoughts,
O my youth which will be so short
Engulfed in this dark lair already,
No place for youthful grins,
No shelter for prideful gains!
O my youth which will be so short,
My leftover and wasting thoughts!

As a bird soaring for the heavens
This flight taking off from within me,
Full and whole of this soul's sweetness,
Prepared and unencumbered...
Sweet worry, don't worry so,
Sweet worry of you, o Earth!
Full and whole of this soul's sweetness,
This flight taking off from within me!

Worry... Quiet, quiet!
Quiet, o my crumbling flesh,
Quiet, o my foregone flesh!

Rest in peace, won't you;
If you must go, so long, blessed be,
For the heavens it's taken off, this long life of mine!
Quiet, o my foregone flesh!
Quiet, o my crumbling flesh!

Hearts tied

When far away from her, like so:

As dried lily, as withered rose,
Sighs missing you, in sorrow,
This leafless bud unrecognised, a flower?
I guess... unrecognised till this day.

Fading colours, shrivelling stalks,
Become like straws, no longer this lily
Nor laugh nor smile but begging notes
Like thunderstorm gusts that don't die down.

The very sun becomes a furnace,
The air too turns into a killer,
Such is life during the darkest of days:
Hemlock for the milk-hopeful...

The meek lyre, music of Eden,
That unheard one, that unbeing one...
To remind that the self is but a solitary clap,
To remind that mere haystack is what isn't lily.

O faraway bird! O shifting wind!
Go tell the loved and beloved
That he's weak and crying for her
The one who isn't by her side, so far here.

Poem

Le cœur a beau mentir, la blessure est au fond...
Well may the heart lie, the wound is deep within...

A. de MUSSET

Don't ask for this or that reason,
My silence profound and filled with tears!
Don't ask, because you know the reason,
Memory is at the bottom of all this...

I remember my laughing days of yesteryear,
Which, alas, are no more than empty shadows!
I remember! ... So I cry but with no reply,
Neglected, like a nothing that never was!

Oh! In what kind of strange land, truly,
Were you kept, o my bygone days,
You that've gone over somewhere lightly,
Carrying there great expectations to be?

Sand at the edge of rapid water,
Yielding beneath shades and waves?
Or rock fragile and easily crumbled
Blanketed in quiet oblivious drizzles?

There's no more of you left but dust,
Dust motes set down, cloth-spread dust,

Dust pervading this my new breath,
Dust lifted by the slightest breeze.

It'll go everywhere, lose all strength, —
Then go from strength to strength —
Oh! Cruel and vainglorious dust,
Blinding all the way to the bottom of the soul!

Untitled

Goodbye, goodbye, my dear kin;
Goodbye, blessed be — for one day
Our weeping hearts will meet,
And will be happy,
At peace, joyful and together again. —
Honey-sweet will be fruits thus far acrid,
Whole will be those that were broken,
And each shed tears of the one spirit.
Goodbye, goodbye — blessed be. But listen...
To this my brief, my very last, message:

.....

We'll see each other again, and then and always, blessed,
Until my return, oh hold your peace:
My heart is nowhere else but by your side,
For ever and now.

New dream

11th October 1926: three in the morning.

The taciturn sky — my turbulent heart
The night is uncovered beneath this black shroud
But the stars so low won't be so many.
Sadness comes level — and so ushers in the day.

What is this dream that refuses to let go the spirit?
I feel it there, I hold onto it, in my heart to stay,
Dream, singular dream, that moves, overwhelms, me.

Untitled

Your spumy waves, here they are in great swells, o hurt,
Like a slurred voice rolling, drunk on tears and sorrows.
From here arise these songs that undress and brand
The wounds hidden within — in this chamber of yours, o my heart.

Untitled

Look, examine these days you've trampled,
O heart oblivious to your returning fate,
Holding on to your dreams, doubtful now as then,
Holding out for what's nice and desirable here!

Look and you'll see that they're nothing else
But shade or light presenting omens:
You are disconsolate, they portend sorrow;
You worry to no avail, they know no end!

Days dissolving... dawn or dusk?
In rain, nourishing or skin-raising?
Or days at once lifting spirits, open wide?
Or rather days blown apart, wind-terrorised?

Little flower still to bring colour
Clinging helpless against a brash branch,
Will you open in triumph or droop low?
Be ephemeral bloom or persistent bud?

Alas! Examine the days you've crossed,
O heart misled by your returning fate,
Heart eaten by unease and hesitation,
Here, holding out for what's nice and desirable,

We'll see then that they're nothing else
But light and shade presenting omens:
To manifest that you both, united in your pain,
Are full of these different days of unknown ends.

Memories

For Thomas ROBSON

O solitary flowering tree,
Shading little daughters,
Draped in a toga yellow-green
With leaves starry all over;

The hillside draped in basil
In redolent sage and avoko,
Will barely cover and hold still
What's left, your powder my heart!

That was you, o Ambatofotsy,
Left behind and so timeworn,
Toppled beloved town of honey,
Town of honey, as good as ruins.

And you all and you numerous,
In colours and in light bathed,
Rejoice, because they'll be unscathed
For you the years that bury us:

For his adroit *hand*,
And his unwavering *eye*,
Had searched for and met
Your sweet face given to hide...

Kept in wells of colour,
Of pure blue, of landscapes serene,
The teardrop of your face troubled,
Just on the verge, so green.

Go on (...where will you turn?)
In my sight: There appears
My friend, your tombstone,
To kiss the blue skies.

There is a singing bird
(Dove?) there, somewhere,
Its song? — O passers-by,
This as in echo rises there:

*Those you brought up, o life
Must pass on and crumble away;
The only ones left standing always
Are those you sustain, o mind.*

Oh even if it does its best to hide away
This singing bird, this birdsong,
We can be sure that its RENOWN
Won't shift, won't die away!

Poem

Let the wind disperse, let
Disperse, deleave, evening, morning:
The years have long degraded the seeds,
No more than deadwood now.

...Let the wind disperse, let
Disperse, deleave, evening, morning:
Have no fear for time and time again
Will return to regreen the dry branches.

For the years will change the verses, replace
The brittle years we trample today:
The seeds spread as legacy of those years,
They'll be your stock from a tree long-gone.

For the years will change the verses, replace
The brittle years we trample today:
The winds will cease, fall silent. That legacy
Of the earth's stock will ripen for you.

...Life, what is it? Oh! what is it really,
Life? — Legacy left by the dead:
Seeds already gone will still disperse,
Still sprout and still ripen from within!

...Life, what is it? Oh! what is it really,
Life? — Legacy left by the dead:
Bound for ashes, but still spread within
Being, the heart and blood inside us!

*You'll surpass all that, o love,
O my love just barely come up!
You'll surpass, surpass it, for you'll be
Successor to yesterday's tree!*

Untitled

Where do you fly, o Past, where we call to you

Yet it's only a feeble echo that replies

And responds? ...

— Responds and returns our old singing,

Already no more than sighs mingled with tears!

Tears that don't roll, soaking the whole heart!

O Past, o Past, o Past, wait a moment:

Listen, woe betides!

Oh! Our songs of old like a vessel decked in flowers

Embalming our mind, scenting the way...

Withering away?

Songs and arms to break these waves of hopelessness

On which, yet, we lean back, in the hope

They lead to you, o majesty of lively waters,

O life's pledge,

None other than you, o dear and beloved!

And so we'll wreck ourselves, alas! you're wrecked...

Our songs, our songs alone, and again, sound

In my heart!

Resounding that I might hear like a mournful dirge

Proclaiming defeat, o unfound destiny

You who rolls and fells the weak, yet you

Who couldn't sail

And who lies down there now sunk in the deep!

No last goodbye, nor hand nor handkerchief waving

Not even a sigh you follow with sobbing

For alas!

To return solitary, empty, on this exile's threshold!

To return to hear water spouting

In this holed boat, fixed for the abyss

The only security got in oaths

Forgotten already!

Oh! You've abandoned me, o Past! Past I call to

Who's gone off insolent, laughing not replying,

It's nothing...

O Past, yesterday's pride and guarantee,

But of sighs, of tears today!

He's calling you, who sang, calling you with all his heart,

Pleading, begging you! Calling and beseeching you wait:

Oh allay this woe!

Poem

In memory of two friends lost one after the other:
RAHARY Raphaël James and Madame RAFARA.

.....

*La mort souffle comme le vent dans les platanes
Et le cœur d'Adonis devient comme une anémone...*

Death blows like the wind in the plane trees
And Adonis' heart becomes as an anemone...

Pierre CAMO

Blown this wind indiscriminate,
Blown and torn up the sowing fields,
Blown and bent the dear flowers,
Blown and desolate numbed flesh!

This cruel gale, stealing away and up on us
Unrealised until the instant it fells and crushes,
Then blown and gone on, ravaging beyond
Your vain beauty, o tree stood there!

Sole flower, ever popular scion,
Little flower living hardly one morning,
Already bent, totally destroyed,
All that's yours for reaping, o plot admired!

Us hoping only that at last would cease
Your brutality, o rushing, tumultuous wind,

And days bright and clear, calm days
In a row burst upon our orchards once again.

Alas, your inexorable force! Whirling round
Your mere single blow felling the steadfast!
Our branches fallen, our fruit seeds scattered,
Never to be recovered, lost already, each squandered!

O gale we cannot bear, please stop!
The root that bore us lies barren today:
Where we held hope, such is all ruin now;
Where we held trust, so is also laid low!

My heart in tears, eyes clearing space
Searching for some end to this sown trouble,
What do they see, but just a clod of earth that
Time after time, blooms into rubble?

Falling apart my eyes in flood,
Still chasing, still anticipating endlessly
The transformation the legend spoke of,
The soul's transformation like yours, o self...

As if my heart awaited still the flower's blossoming,
My dear departed, to carry around with it.
But how to hold on to their irretrievable spirit passing:

And what to speak of this heart tormented, oh, wounded!

Lay down your weeping head slowly,

Gently your thought-combing soul heard allay,

Letting a voice rise up softly:

“You are who giveth. You are who taketh away!”

Untitled

There is a force that tugs within me,
And digs in, hollows out, my heart;
My soul, oh, stiffens with cold,
Poor and sad, only laments!

Oh! This my heart, lined with ills,
Keeps watch there, astonished...
As though seeing in a dream
The face of the beloved!

O night, don't break the spell,
Don't clear off so quick!
The tears come thick and swell
When you hide a dear face so!

Your shadow so long
A veil over her visage...
It's here I sneeze
Gawking after her laughter!

Are they dead and gone
These hours of an earlier time?
Heavy the memories they leave behind,
Ah! weighing me down.

So is it only a mere shadow
That's left for my heart?
Garden, paradise,
Where are they? — Faded?

Drained of colour, dulled of spark,
Closed bud, saffron rose!
Burnout, stripped of all grandeur,
I am finished, I am fallen from her!

So goodbye and blessed be!
This day, I nurse my wounds,
Alone gently as I can console
My so wretched and sorry soul!

The misery of man

Hear, echoing, slowly,
Like blood welling up a
Feeble voice overrun by shouting,
Both upbraiding and so hurtful...

The past has returned again,
Reawakening the deadened,
Useless, abandoned things,
Coffer both empty and haunted.

It's of some that weep,
Of others disheartened!
So that in sorrow steeped,
I can only speak of woe.

— Bottomless wealth chest,
Stone raised, glory withheld,
Sundered ship never sailed:
Father and mother to dead child!

Flowers doted on all season,
Alas, each and every one faded!
Pride in their blossoming cultivation,
Overseen, yet too soon stripped away!

The flesh and blood we append
Onto our hearts will rot,
For all that's good will have its end,
And yesterday remember its lot!

— Little bird in a nest broken,
Little lamb grazing outcast,
What's left of life on the ground:
Ikala's mother and father passed.

Bodo's used to cajoling tenderness
And indulges her whims caressed,
But dawn breaks already darkness,
On this day for the parentless!

Little heart alone, in pain,
Pecked at by a bird dear,
That everyday pleasure,
How it's reduced to tears!

A little bird wanted by one's side,
Amidst laments or amid laughter,
Suddenly one of life's delights,
Sudden, alas, to make one suffer!

Caresses turned claws,
Turned injuries turned mortal wounds;
The happiness that leaves, withdraws,

That we track, hunt down, hides low!

Fallen down, those two pillars,
Indulgence and sweetness, where do they lie?
The heart remains, praying to the Highest,
For comfort for what's missing! ...

Where could it be, o earth,
The mercy you bear?
Are tears and bitter complaints
The only realities that matter?

Oh! Acrid bile and liquor
To our lips the only drink,
Earth, you've torn away loved ones
Who fostered and cradled our dreams!

Paradise I hoped for
All this time you've taken me for...
Oh but trampled, arid earth,
Peopled by ghost and spectre!

Untitled

In memory of Madame RABAKO

It takes reconciling with! — As they say advice
To cover up the pain that hurts.
The truth, above and away from all that,
Tears and sighs wholeheartedly sacrifice.

Their endless echoes, endlessly beating,
Beating in the chest, beating in the heart;
See lined their fears, and the long shadows they cast.
What your veils cover up, o Misfortune and Disaster!

Like a lamb without a shepherd
Innocent but completely lost,
Or like a finally fallen house
Looking up at the sky, solitary in prayer.

So we are, we your children,
O our mother who hath preceded us:
We tremble on this way, new all of a sudden,
Dark, of a dark endless for us!

There is thankfully a great star
We see in the low clouds shining!

It is fortune indeed, o spirit, you draw on
This song of hope and of consolation:

When our days here-below themselves gather,
Our painful routes opened up already,
Then it will return, and before us be,
Receiving us and drawing us to you, o Father!

Then will it take reconciling with, as they say,
To cover up the pain that hurts,
Forgotten yet self-evident within all that,
There beneath the tears and sighs always!

Poem cycle

I

For D. RAWELAS

O bird so quick to quail,
Where do you return to?
My heart, young, weak and frail,
Will it settle somewhere good?

Keep silent, stay quiet, don't answer!
No argument!
Future and present are as prior,
No different.

Tomorrow, like today, like whenever,
No different no matter!
The law of the living: *no quarter*
To those who suffer.

II

For M.

And I see this life lost again,
(Or at least, so I fear!)
Yet I feel my spirit and strength return,
All the while on the ground here.

So it is for any living tree,
Regreening following winter's corse;
The promise of blossoming fully
Overflows from its very core.

But I, human, what nevertheless
What harvest do I have to perceive my life's renewal?
— Yes, I who weakly survive death? —
I'm listening, o heart. Speak withal.

III

For S.

Lightning now and then lighting up the hills
Bursts arisen like birds in flames.
Of fast and fleeting strikes they're filled
And die — like caressing dreams.

My exile's heart, my heart's memory
Of you, o Iarive beyond the downs,
Astounds and shakes me,
For it seems bruised, choked and thrown...

Why? — But the sky shifts often:
Light then dark then light once again —
O life and hope, with your mien,
Yes, resembling you, o ever-changing one!

Seduction

Twists and turns, at the ready,
What conmen conceal,
What other nifty trick
Relying on my slowness still?

I know the way already
Where I'll take you,
My thoughts while guilty
Will never wrong you...

(Even if we're all smiles,
And prim and proper about,
Holding back all the while
Would make us stand out!)

Twists and turns, at the ready,
What conmen conceal,
First I'll lure with cajolery
Then thirst for words of honey.

The second tomb

My tomb is my one tomb,
but my heart is another one —
It is my tomb above ground;
it is my second tomb.

It isn't grass that covers it,
nor a gravestone either —
But my racked flesh in disquiet
that hides it then and later.

My aching sighs, my tears
and my unstoppered sobbing —
They're the returned there,
haunt me to no end!

There the dreams conceived,
but washed away swiftly,
invisibly. There the wreckage
of the ship of Hope!

There the shanties of the Past
and the songs of my Youth
sunk and no more surfaced,
not even returning in echo!

There all the plans laid
mislaid and forgotten.
There lie the bones of my faraway days
and my hours powerless.

There gradually decomposes
flesh. There it all goes out, out,
There it decays, despite youth.
There the fallen dead — all the dead.

*My tomb is my one tomb,
but my heart is another one —
It is my tomb above ground;
it is my second tomb.*

Never be alright...

If there's a loved one
Who could take away the pain,
And joy to life bring —
I'd never be alright!

If there's an angel even
Who'd clear away depression,
And cheer up anyone —
I'd never be alright!

No matter how powerful
The pangs of bubbling love,
I'd maintain and proclaim:
I'll never be alright!

I'll never be alright
Never believe in anything!
O rose, take out
The thorns you keep afront.

I'll never be alright
Never hope for anything!
O soul, leave my heart
Asleep in its neglect again.

There, I'll never be alright then!

Last effort: to forget.

But to love never again,

That, that I won't accept!

II

FRENCH POEMS

Traductions de *Poèmes épars en français (1922-1932)* de Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo

Œuvres complètes, tome II.

Le poète, le narrateur, le dramaturge, le critique, le passeur de langues, l'historien,
édités par by Serge Meitinger, Liliane Ramarosoa, Laurence Ink et Claire Riffard,
Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2012.

Fog

My soul sighs and stays sad always. My heart, too, frets and knows not what to do.

I feel my bravery ebb, and no longer dare to have faith in my love.

.....

.....

O night! Come soon to relieve my poor heart!

Poems

Regal loves

(Ambohimanga)

Under these mossy rocks shaded
by a great tree, it seems
a secret is buried here
beyond written History,

A legend. It calls to me,
with its regal prestige,
to love, to deliver, it
from this primitive place...

And I'm back in the time of Kings:
once upon a time, here, I believe,
by blue moons, serene evenings,

were crows awakening,
to the sobs reduced to echoes
of lovers of our Queens.

Pomegranate

The sun's rays burgeoning,
 searching beneath the canopy
under cover of ripe pomegranate,
 bite it to the quick,

A peck in secret yet shiversome!
 A deep hold and burn!
And soon, out of this pure prick,
 purple juice comes down.

Its taste will be all the more sweet
 to my lips, for having been
ripened with the desire

 and the fever-filled love
of the flowering, perfumed field
 and lovely sun.

Homage to Ambohimanga

To the unknown dead who rest beneath the tombstones.

The passing Southerly wind was singing
and mingling its voice with that of the light breeze in the heights,
with the black fig tree branches swaying together;
when, suddenly, I could feel a power growing around me.
— An unknown Power. It made me unsettled,
and shiver without reason to my being or my soul.
— A Power, a sacred, rather, Higher Power, a Power of spirits returned!
And it seized and paralysed my life from within!

For, becoming taken with the charms of Imanga,
I had unknowingly wandered onto an old, crumbled mound;
and, there below, amongst the mould,
lay one of the first founders of my People!...
And I stammered: “O stones cracked by time, o tombs,
o graves where the far-gone ages lie enclosed,
suffering in the silence of this solitary place!
O tombs, hear my heart begging your pardon, and forgive it!

“And you, o dead, resting there, forgotten by the Town,
o poor scabrous lambs split off from the flock,
take comfort in the shade of the bushes
caressing you like beloved hands!
Yes, take comfort, for although the current generation doesn’t even seem
to remember in exactly which place you lie together,

o dead, o unknown dead, you are nonetheless
the very source of its lifeblood!”

To the French language

O language of Villon, o language of Ronsard,
flute filled by the soft and sweet voice of Maynard,
which I learnt of Racine's burning heart in,
his suaveness French and his grace Latin;
wellspring for this true happiness of mine
that comes from having the honour and ensign
of admission into the courtyard of this temple wondrous
which, once, echoed the words Malherbe's,
and from being rather well-acquainted with Corneille;
torchlight, my nights clear and bright illuminate
and my thirst surely to the fountain bring,
that eternally fresh one where La Fontaine sings;
Honeypot the magic of Chénier draws from,
and bedecking the lovely basket the blossoms
those nine sisters of voice sublime and silver
received of Lamartine's hands pure;
o language of Villon, o language of Ronsard,
language Baudelaire unveiled with his art!

Just as these masters who came from all over
the world, attracted by your life and lustre,
to bring to you of their love their blood and muster
and to wrestle with the currents of your powerful river,
sure in the end of arriving at safe harbour;
all these masters, since that long ago moreover,

o language that Brunetto Latini borrowed,
and to this day across days, bless those,
that Moréas son of Hellas gave scent
with his breath smooth and his songs ardent;
that carried, fresh like the breeze in April,
from the new continent, the musical Merrill;
from his Flemish country brought Verhaeren
his blue azure, full harvests and legends;
when “Kostro” pressed for you his grape ripened,
and back now in our own days, leaving her Romanian
land, de Noailles dedicated to you her stanzas,
I bring you my name and my heart in homage!

Compline

I

to Sahondra

Sight for eyes, soul's pleasure, o countryside
I am taken with this evening, though my mien tries to hide
the secret sickness that is its torture,
the lull, help me in the natural splendour
of my land, land of my ancestors
to find what is needed for the gods' favour,
give me zest, tranquillity; give to me
to rebuff agitation this serenity —
and Happiness fleeting and conditional
will fly from my soul eternal.

II

to my mother

When you are healed, o mother, we shall go,
under the shade of the lilac tree time bends and breaks,
to watch the sunset setting aglow the village
its dying rays reflecting off our brows.

We shall see its great waves of fire and light
turning our silver rivers a shade of opal.
A bright kingfisher will come by, quick and nimble,
from a thatched roof for us arise.

And we shall go, o mother, our two hands together,
stronger for this magic enclosed in quietude,
and return content and filled with beatitude
and happiness secret, divine and untethered.

I know that you love, as I do, the countryside,
trees of supple and evergreen branches;
you alone know the poetry that is stanchless,
the distinguished majesty the mountains hide.

And you alone know what I shut up in myself,
what I don't know to say, and let die in my face!
O my mother, help me, in this land we face,
to learn to silence and to sing my effervescence!

— You know! my lute must not moulder!
It keeps something tender and delicate!
Teach me well to take the flame that is kept
and let it shine in my voice my treasure!

These days, of all days, will be blessed ones,
o poet's mother, o sweet inspirer!
The years to come and the eliciting Hour

will testify to our souls united, in my songs!

Yes, for if my name should stay in remembrance,
and if it should evoke a certain memory,
never could our two names cleft from each other be —
I am the stream blue, you are its brilliance.

III

to my dearest

I see your breasts' curvature
 dear, o my dearest,
as this valley fragranced
 recalls you with its picture

Its pure turn has the harmony
 of the sunset this evening
that garlands you when, Singing,
 you suffer this agony

the flowers suffer with ecstasy,
 when to the plain yonder
their breath tumbles and wanders
 betrothed to eternity

To Francis Vielé-Griffin

Here with April comes the recollection,
of the perfect happiness within the peaceful day
spent plucking the best fruits in season
and the scented flowers in beautiful Touraine

and I see those roundabout days circling gracefully,
yellow circlings so fearful of such pleasures
and I see them, in the evening, go heavy
before having bitten into the ripe fruits of their desire,

but for those milky fruits of woods moonlit
where sings in strains of joy and hope
a bird, while, one after the other appearing,
the stars open to the sky their eyes of silk and gold.

(April 1925)

Quietude

Tenderness in the way of the days' slow breath
I let go and, like a tree heavy,
plump, and doubled with ripe fruit, I'll be
indifferent to the falling dead leaves;
nothing will matter to me, as long as of my sap
strong, my branches hold!

Remorseless, unregretful

I'll let go of the season's dead, fallen leaves.
I'll say, "See, Happiness is welcoming you,
my soul, and it's just your pain past,
a bit of this anguish of yours you live today,
a little of what is left and what has fled
in the face of this, your Future promised!"

To a friend

The heart of a child, heart delicate and too tender
from tears dried on having spilled too often
before a dull mirror where all is erased,
this heart, bleeding heart you want me to hold,

ah! I fear it'll never again awaken the fleeting
eternity of a lute I've now forgotten!
It'll sing no more of Melancholy,
that voice fated to ephemerality.

Three Poems

I

Poetic (Lines)

for Tristan Derème

Untrammelled I part the bulk of this shade
that hides the azure sky, that mustn't break.
This shade is the separator, the shutter
that closes on the evening the fleeting morning
of a wonderful day on the way.

I put it back again;
then, heavy, implacable, invisible and fluid,
it keeps from me the Unrevealed
while drunk, high, blue haunts me!

Blue! Deep blue, Thought, wherein you sleep
savouring the taste of full fruits you pick,
offered, ripe and juicy, in the enchantment
of your blooming I get to see on my way,
and which, heart aflame and soul entirely moved,
I clothe in vague brightness and expressive harmony
of music, of grace, and of colour — three sisters
I love passionately for their charms of azure!

II

Lines to Sahondra

This evening has the bronze light of your face,
and the landscape in its pure oval frame,
too; the air is redolent of a soft and anxious perfume,
like that which, with a grand careless motion,
you spill into the room where the sun's honey
drips, luminous; and in the undergrowth a gleam, already,
the shining head of the agile young bull
lunar leaps and bounds in a whirlwind full
toward enclosures farther — in this undergrowth plush,
I know not what lovely strains are flushed,
like those songs artless yet profound you adore.
In my yard, a lilac in the shade, — scented, of course,
misgiving and encroaching shade — and with its crown
unbroken in the breeze that surrounds,
a lilac calls me back and shows my spirit on,
the herald of your body my love smiles upon.
This evening — when everything appears, to me, in rubies
and gems of happiness and worry — so like you, o sister lovely,
down to my soul and into my heart too —
both calm and pure before the night here so soon.

III

To the same

My love, it is time to light your
beacon, for I sail an estuary in darkness.

Fate is inscrutable and wilful. It either perishes
in darkness, or triumphs protected, my lighter!
I don't know. And my heart aswoon
believes tranquil seas await me, and that no tempest
could break the mast of the vessel preparing to quest
for the cavern where the sirens croon!

To Robert-Edward Hart

Upon the publication of *Mer indienne*

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer.

Free man, forever will you treasure the sea.

BAUDELAIRE

I see a cargo of gems and oranges

moored in port, ready to set sail for the Unknown.

The sun paints in fire on long fringed skirts,

revealing bare-breasted figures beneath their folds.

On the hot sand of the beach where turtles nest,

a circle is formed, a song arises. Strength

of a bitter nostalgia! Oh! Brightly clothed, best

dance these girls full of their innocence!

But the stern is off already. A mountainside breeze

breathes haste of departure into the blue masts;

the continent of the palm tree your cargo leaves,

whose greening dome you'll see no more.

Before you stretches only the ocean water

of many faces, of countless hearts

drinking, in leaps, the thin gold blood

dripping from those beaten foreheads

while in a choir on coral banks lying lordly

and lascivious, their flesh tending voluptuous

to the sun's last love the sirens frolic
and toss into nightfall their call treacherous.

Land. You'll go on your great Odyssey.

The mouth of a slave like an overripe pome
will ooze. Dead cities. Your itinerary
will linger long in the rubble of their walls.

Then it will be the ocean again, o fiancé
to temptation in high adventure on the seas!

Watercolours — Films

to Mary Rabako

Shores

Oceanid dance meticulously choreographed.
Kiss dispersed far and wide by scented draughts
coming and going in a wind at eight knots.
Shivers in the palm trees where collects
glowing blood of the dying sun like bottomless
goatskins. Songs emerging from fragile dhows
that press on against the immensity of the sea
and its blue mystery. Pure silence. Tears
saddening the acquaintance of a great lull.
Somali who chats with his young girlfriend
and shows her his teeth stained with green kola.
A dog, of what breed? drinks seawater.
Turtle flees. Clamour everywhere and pitiful.
Interregnum. The moon nurses the sand to null.

Hova girl

A glance — but does she know it? —
for her honest smile, and such it is
— though furtive and hesitant
in its black and blue flame —
as the mute white of the lamb
lesser for becoming bare
right to the bottom of the heart...
But this heart is fearful for a bit,
and it's a glance that flees
the curious one who roused it!

Still life

Mangos, watermelon and quinces under the hood
of a freshly-woven basket. Around, a lovely garland
of these nameless plants whose flowering is their end,
that cover our fields in vaporous perfume.

Rainy morning

Dawn hesitates at the door
like a fiancée struck by a strong feeling
at precisely the right moment,
while, in the sky-grey square,
on the hem of her dress thread
pearls of rain. Oh! How desolate
the flowers! An unspeakable sadness courses
the sky. What nightmare fills the deep sleep
absorbing its blue heart of silence
made more immense?

Tamatave

for G.-Henri de Brugada

I

Little port that drew Pierre Mac Orlan:
an accordion's hum presides over the mad rush
of an orgiastic dance in the rolling town;
add to it the fracas of a crazy draught;
and black cats, blacker than midnight
neurotically modulate the worried diamonds
of their frightened eyes, and sell Silence
their prism of a puzzle and splendour so violent
that, like a renegade meteor and spilled milk,
it goes on engraving points of moving light
into the heart of the pliant nubile dark
clutching in wild and shaking spasms
the dark windswept wood of juicy coconut trees,
more redolent than ready honeycombs.

The cats are killed, poisoned by the odour
of creole pickles filled with acrid aromas,
Tamatave, and your sky and the sea!

II

Tamatave, is it you, port of a thousand glories,
is it you I see from this high balcony

where my gaze drowns adrift in the infinite wrinkle
of the standing wave? A scorching wind,
born of bitter alkali and sea-spray,
swirls into my eyes held in light's sway
this drunken desire for sleep that overtakes you
until the moment you're delivered by dawn's hue
and the hour, when, once again, your expanse of garden
nurtured by burning sand beneath an emerald sky
will offer up its bouquet of murmuring ladies
whose green skin fills up with the sun,
bunches, thyrsi of blood and bright amber flowers
fallen to the sea's divinity
and born of her as Aphrodite,
your forebear unknown, o port of the world,
while your skittish masts under eternal azure
draw on her steely loins and salted hair.

III

In the end, revived amid bloody dawn
you drink life in tides of a heart incandescent
from the sun's cup in the wider bounds
of the stretched sky!

Hive of grey saudade,
colour of warm ash and faraway perfume,
I feel a fever enliven the morning
with stronger desires for the unknown

blowing hope full into departing sails.

To what sumptuous triumph are we headed,
o conqueror of sleep? I see the ensigns
of dhows moving on the choppy water,
and what fabulous brightness bursting
in sprays that flood Rimbaud's boats
drunken in the light and held up by that
open blue sky which promises to stay ever clear
for their frail masts, for their crazy adventure!
And on the rust of the waves the scatter
of treasure plunder seized by sailors
in the gulf of sleep and on the vast beaches
that stretch peaceful through their dreams.

O port, it won't be today yet
when I shall have to leave to indulge my itch
in the bright rhythm of ocean spray!
For I shall know for many a long day
the bitter personal resentment of picking apart my bores
slowly in your atmosphere filled with peppery odours!

Rainy evening

to Jox

It's raining, it's raining.

The sky, blue just now like rejoicing,
turns the colour of resentment
and of a soul anguish torments.

What inertia
in the heart!

As if the soul grows a hidden heartache
as a thin beaten-down woman takes;
a shudder takes hold deep within
her. But over lonely rooftops, what furore in
the raindrops leaping?

Dying,
coming, going, wildfires,
devastations. Oh! Don't tire
so often of humming
along, my uneasy peace! May nothing
surprise you but this jolt,
this fear of catching cold!

May it go on,
the dream
while it rains
and stops raining, and the sky turns blue again,
sleeping.

So we dream. The Dream awakens.

Elegy

to Robert-Edward Hart

What's become of those children's evening songs,
which back then my dearest contentment made?
Or the very terrace where I would sit down
between artless charming daughters of the shade?

And the noble old ones who'd tell us about
their rousing exploits, while piercing heavy darkness,
the moving lament of their wives would mount
drowning out the rush of song and dance?

With a slow stillness, an unhappiness forlorn
when Nostalgia bites today weighs on me.
And o Southern Cross, your comforting gaze alone
this evening when in my heart weeps this elegy,

— having seen so much death in its everlasting! —
is to me the mirror where I might relive
some of those happy days of a bygone past
whose shadow escapes us, impossible to retrieve!

To Sahondra and Nora

Evening rain falls softly. Night is near to setting sky and earth heavy with sleep, and carrying us elsewhere. Elsewhere, but where? Where, o Soul seeming unsettled and tired?

Where will you go with this reverie that fills you until it turns in my heart, until it turns in my spirit like boiled water?

My lamp flickers softly, and seems trembling and sad. Everything sleeps before my unwavering gaze. Where does it hide, o Soul, the reverie that filled us just now?

Come and talk. In a murmur tell my small heart there your true secret. And I'll know everything undivulged... Speak, o Soul!

My lamp is out, the rain stopped. The earth too is silent only transmits its melancholy to my heart. I hear no more. Silence nor sound... And yet, yet it's as if my thirst to know your secret truth is all the more alive, o fate unknown.

And yet nothing is at peace and flesh and judgement are filled with anguish. They're completely smothered by it.

Evening rain's ceased softly. Day is ready to awaken sky and earth and bring us back from elsewhere. Elsewhere, but where? Where, o Soul seeming unsettled and broken?

Wherefrom do you bring this reverie that has filled you and now cools in my heart, cools in my spirit like boiled water.

Six poems in Hova free verse

I

In the forest

The spears day throws,
these spears of light,
land in the immense heart of the forest,
and wound it,
wound it
in the depths of silence.
Wounded! And nothing to bandage this wound,
and gentle spilling,
gentle, so gentle
of blood.
Spilling gentle
and wetting and drenching
the countless leaves,
then getting in everywhere
and everything
up to the cries of little birds which hoarsen
and become rails;
to the twelve streaks of
butterflies
and their fiery eyes
grown bleached;

to the spirit of travellers,
who can hardly speak any more,
suffocated by blood...

— Blood-scent
pregnant
with the life of the putrid forest, and pregnant
with all the life-forces there hidden.

II

Peace wish

Sorrows? — They lie at the bottom of the soul, like mud under a pond. — They won't rise up to the surface anymore, won't disturb. They're peaceful, they're wise, like babies asleep.

But careful!... Leave them be, lest the old throes grip them! Don't trouble, don't awaken them... Cradle them, let them sleep always.

If you wish that my dead heart not reawaken, — not reawaken to tell you its sorrowful secret. — And if you want to ignore who killed it... perhaps none other than... YOU!

III

Wait

It rained only much later yesterday, in the night, and I waited for you, and I shivered each time I knocked on your door — but you didn't come...

It didn't rain yesterday, o my love, for all the time I was waiting, but you didn't come. So it's all in my heart that rain of tears has fallen, and there that sobbing has rung, echoing.

And this evening, again, I wait for you. And if it rains and you couldn't make it, my tears will mingle with the sky's!

IV

Broken dream

My heart wished to soar so high and defy the peaks; but it crashed against the vaults, and could go no further. — Its wings are hurt, and now it falls!

It wanted to surpass you, o blinding sun! It didn't want to stop, even though the day was almost over. — Here comes night, and REMORSE!

Oh! only the darkness will get through to it — thick and scaly darkness. — I'll cradle my disillusioned heart in secret, and caress my swollen eyes.

Ah! but it seems like time heals wounds! And like my vertigo will go away too. — But no, my sobbing deafens me, and I hear only the beating of my blood!

V

Forgotten embers

I called you from darkness,
since I lost my way
like a young bull which, separated from the herd,
wanders into the lushness of a bush
and bellows far from the village,
and points its muzzle to the east
in the direction of the big green
and tires in intermittent wails
whose echoes return to its belly
to maim its heart, like poisoned darts.

In darkness,
on the threshold of Life,
my fragile feet, my feeble hands,
my childhood, my innocence —
all of that,
with all its vigour,
thirsted after you,
but came back all ten fingers,
and more, with blows. Came back dejected.

Since then, the sun has bit by bit come out,
and a nice leave has been my captain
and stopped me off at a novel port.

Oh! and it's now that you reply,
that you respond no longer being called? ...
I don't know, I don't know
if I should avenge that darkness,
and snuff out the daylight
on your head!
I don't know
if I should take up your old coldness against you
and give back as good as I got!
Or if I should tolerate
your callousness,
like the roadside orange tree:
grown there with nary a caretaker,
and, now, in fine season, plucked by every passerby.

O you for whom I gave call in the evening
but who abandoned me all night,
and only returns it in the morning light!

VI

Poem

Of thoughts that stream out at night,
wrecks of boats that couldn't escape the tides;
Of thoughts that couldn't rise
to lips, only stay held inside.

Wrecks of boats lost far out from the sandy shores,
simply carried along in the gulf's vicinity.
The land's desert vista before,
and behind, ocean's infinity.

O my thoughts, in the moon newborn,
when anything could appear to swallow the stars!
O my thoughts, linked, interwoven,
wreckage of a boat of enterprise jarred,

come to life at a moment exquisite
when already there lies at the edge of seeing
everything we held to be all-there-is,
and the extent of Iarive-the-serene;

In a moment of peace, in a moment of bliss:
it is fitting that from the bottom of the heart rears
the sweetest song, the song that is
the last elegy, the end of tears.

Songs of friendship

I

to Pierre Camo

I was born near eternal mountains, at the edge
of the blue bush leading to the royal village,
on the banks of a river whose shimmering waves
flow smoothly along at a stately pace.

My kin, respecting our country's history,
or the little remaining of this ended era,
brought me up, from childhood, in the cult of mystery
that reigned over the forgotten past of Imerina.

And I've always loved the rugged landscapes
before my doleful and desolate eyes,
knowing that in them and their remains aged
were the voices of glorious olden days silenced.

The shady dragon tree with its dome verdant,
the zahana giving shade to some old tombs
and the pity of its large stinking heart
broken by the heavy flight of a murder of crows;

and before the great walls, barbaric purple gauds,
rich and resonant like an oriental carpet,
a rug of scarlet spurge which adorns
with its floating veil the abandoned steps;

and the silence, the calm of a rustic earth,
its desolation and its aridity,
only this bitter and immense bareness
I had to go on toward an altar of antiquity!

And as I went to abandon my haughty sadness
to be alone among the tombs and the dead,
and, tired of following after vague shadows,
wanted to come back, filled with great regret,

with a last look held like an embrace
clothing nightfall in a love ephemeral
on the dead village and its heaped spaces,
I saw the smiling face of a stranger!

All my hope, all my effort, all my bravery
returned to me then, and I ran to them!
Since then, I've dared time and its mockery
to stitch me a treasure in their flown hem!

II

to Marcel Ormoy

Sans mes amis, ma vie est languissante.

Without my friends, my life is languishing.

Marc LAFARGUE.

Dear Ormoy, is the FLAME in you still going,
and the Friendship that's consolation to an exile,
will I see it amid the glorious breaking dawn
of the coming year, when hopes are spelled out?

Could I doubt it when, while engaging your silence,
I've often recognised your Song and its passion,
warm Shadows denying the spectre of Absence
whose obscure contours crowded my heart?

Ah! only Friendship, that crown I covet
appeared to desert my head and my door;
the most beautiful music left my life to languish
every song sang to me of the depth of my loss!

Ormoy, till dawn willing promised and awaited,
set fire to this red flower of my regret...
that may bloom and grow, in spite of the wind,
a living FLAME both pure and without SECRET.

To the muses

I

Would you abandon me, beautiful muses of France,
 o my adoptive sisters,
you who were always my dearest hope
 in Iarive country?

We met each other at the edge of the woods of gods
 I was only twenty,
and you were only eternal spring
 for the heart and the eyes;

and on the secret double line, line
 of our destiny,
the Sign of favour appeared to us
 since that God-given hour —

The Sign betraying those whose temptation
 lies in forgetting hardship
mysteriously, just barely sung
 in the pain of words!

II

Come, come to you out of no thirst for glory,
but heavy being alone
and hoping only for you, pretty burst illusory
my study dwells upon!

Come, not to love some bitter leafage
in a laurel forest
which opens up, hangs appearing green
to the fledgling novice!

Nor to bequeath a strange and difficult name
— song in what bitter key
come down from the tall palms, my island's crowns! —
to such marble deathly!

But for the sole pleasure and soul's pride
of feeling in secret
your grace with the Word won over intertwined,
o roses of Regret!

Forests

The putrid heart of the forest,
under searing arrows of the sun,
bleeds. A perfume pungent,
like that worn by women, spills
out, slow, intoxicating and secret
like those waking sweats
from feverish nights sleepless
disturbing a lover's forehead.

The heart still beats and bleeds
and it's a mystery! Lightly
blows a passing breeze,
relieves. A dawn-creeper
hides and embroiders the wound
with its grip. A wood-nymph
tips up bitter cries to entertain
the wounded, the imploring.

Finally grey wood-pigeons take off,
frightened by our too-reckless frolicking!
Down below the endured suffering
of the putrid heart of the forest
in the palm trees' green silence
reveals itself everywhere, over there,
far off, beyond the forest

and wherever its cries were sent!

Until, in mauve and blue nightfall
that will cover us in resentment,
this bleeding heart which nevertheless
perfumes us in its convulsing wild scent
will have no secret left. Its chamber
will clear itself of mistiness.