

Classic Poetry Series

Pablo Neruda
- poems -

Publication Date:

2011

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Pablo Neruda(12 July 1904 – 23 September 1973)

Pablo Neruda was the pen name and, later, legal name of the Chilean poet and politician Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. He chose his pen name after Czech poet Jan Neruda.

Neruda wrote in a variety of styles such as erotically charged love poems as in his collection *Twenty Poems of Love and a Song of Despair*, surrealist poems, historical epics, and overtly political manifestos. In 1971 Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez once called him "the greatest poet of the 20th century in any language." Neruda always wrote in green ink as it was his personal color of hope.

On July 15, 1945, at Pacaembu Stadium in São Paulo, Brazil, he read to 100,000 people in honor of Communist revolutionary leader Luís Carlos Prestes. During his lifetime, Neruda occupied many diplomatic positions and served a stint as a senator for the Chilean Communist Party. When Conservative Chilean President González Videla outlawed communism in Chile in 1948, a warrant was issued for Neruda's arrest. Friends hid him for months in a house basement in the Chilean port of Valparaíso. Later, Neruda escaped into exile through a mountain pass near Maihue Lake into Argentina. Years later, Neruda was a close collaborator to socialist President Salvador Allende. When Neruda returned to Chile after his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Allende invited him to read at the Estadio Nacional before 70,000 people.

Neruda was hospitalized with cancer at the time of the Chilean coup d'état led by Augusto Pinochet. Three days after being hospitalized, Neruda died of heart failure. Already a legend in life, Neruda's death reverberated around the world. Pinochet had denied permission to transform Neruda's funeral into a public event. However, thousands of grieving Chileans disobeyed the curfew and crowded the streets.

'carnal Apple, Woman Filled, Burning Moon,'

Carnal apple, Woman filled, burning moon,
dark smell of seaweed, crush of mud and light,
what secret knowledge is clasped between your pillars?
What primal night does Man touch with his senses?
Ay, Love is a journey through waters and stars,
through suffocating air, sharp tempests of grain:
Love is a war of lightning,
and two bodies ruined by a single sweetness.
Kiss by kiss I cover your tiny infinity,
your margins, your rivers, your diminutive villages,
and a genital fire, transformed by delight,
slips through the narrow channels of blood
to precipitate a nocturnal carnation,
to be, and be nothing but light in the dark.

Pablo Neruda

'In The Wave-Strike Over Unquiet Stones'

In the wave-strike over unquiet stones
the brightness bursts and bears the rose
and the ring of water contracts to a cluster
to one drop of azure brine that falls.
O magnolia radiance breaking in spume,
magnetic voyager whose death flowers
and returns, eternal, to being and nothingness:
shattered brine, dazzling leap of the ocean.
Merged, you and I, my love, seal the silence
while the sea destroys its continual forms,
collapses its turrets of wildness and whiteness,
because in the weft of those unseen garments
of headlong water, and perpetual sand,
we bear the sole, relentless tenderness.

Pablo Neruda

'march Days Return With Their Covert Light'

March days return with their covert light,
and huge fish swim through the sky,
vague earthly vapours progress in secret,
things slip to silence one by one.
Through fortuity, at this crisis of errant skies,
you reunite the lives of the sea to that of fire,
grey lurchings of the ship of winter
to the form that love carved in the guitar.
O love, O rose soaked by mermaids and spume,
dancing flame that climbs the invisible stairway,
to waken the blood in insomnia's labyrinth,
so that the waves can complete themselves in the sky,
the sea forget its cargoes and rages,
and the world fall into darkness's nets.

Pablo Neruda

'perhaps Not To Be Is To Be Without Your Being.'

Perhaps not to be is to be without your being,
without your going, that cuts noon light
like a blue flower, without your passing
later through fog and stones,
without the torch you lift in your hand
that others may not see as golden,
that perhaps no one believed blossomed
the glowing origin of the rose,
without, in the end, your being, your coming
suddenly, inspiringly, to know my life,
blaze of the rose-tree, wheat of the breeze:
and it follows that I am, because you are:
it follows from 'you are', that I am, and we:
and, because of love, you will, I will,
We will, come to be.

Pablo Neruda

A Dog Has Died

My dog has died.
I buried him in the garden
next to a rusted old machine.

Some day I'll join him right there,
but now he's gone with his shaggy coat,
his bad manners and his cold nose,
and I, the materialist, who never believed
in any promised heaven in the sky
for any human being,
I believe in a heaven I'll never enter.
Yes, I believe in a heaven for all dogdom
where my dog waits for my arrival
waving his fan-like tail in friendship.

Ai, I'll not speak of sadness here on earth,
of having lost a companion
who was never servile.
His friendship for me, like that of a porcupine
withholding its authority,
was the friendship of a star, aloof,
with no more intimacy than was called for,
with no exaggerations:
he never climbed all over my clothes
filling me full of his hair or his mange,
he never rubbed up against my knee
like other dogs obsessed with sex.

No, my dog used to gaze at me,
paying me the attention I need,
the attention required
to make a vain person like me understand
that, being a dog, he was wasting time,
but, with those eyes so much purer than mine,
he'd keep on gazing at me
with a look that reserved for me alone
all his sweet and shaggy life,
always near me, never troubling me,
and asking nothing.

Ai, how many times have I envied his tail
as we walked together on the shores of the sea
in the lonely winter of Isla Negra
where the wintering birds filled the sky
and my hairy dog was jumping about
full of the voltage of the sea's movement:
my wandering dog, sniffing away
with his golden tail held high,
face to face with the ocean's spray.

Joyful, joyful, joyful,
as only dogs know how to be happy
with only the autonomy
of their shameless spirit.

There are no good-byes for my dog who has died,
and we don't now and never did lie to each other.

So now he's gone and I buried him,
and that's all there is to it.

Translated, from the Spanish, by Alfred Yankauer

Pablo Neruda

A Lemon

Out of lemon flowers
loosed
on the moonlight, love's
lashed and insatiable
essences,
sodden with fragrance,
the lemon tree's yellow
emerges,
the lemons
move down
from the tree's planetarium

Delicate merchandise!
The harbors are big with it-
bazaars
for the light and the
barbarous gold.
We open
the halves
of a miracle,
and a clotting of acids
brims
into the starry
divisions:
creation's
original juices,
irreducible, changeless,
alive:
so the freshness lives on
in a lemon,
in the sweet-smelling house of the rind,
the proportions, arcane and acerb.

Cutting the lemon
the knife
leaves a little cathedral:
alcoves unguessed by the eye
that open acidulous glass
to the light; topazes

riding the droplets,
altars,
aromatic facades.

So, while the hand
holds the cut of the lemon,
half a world
on a trencher,
the gold of the universe
wells
to your touch:
a cup yellow
with miracles,
a breast and a nipple
perfuming the earth;
a flashing made fruitage,
the diminutive fire of a planet.

Pablo Neruda

A Song Of Despair

The memory of you emerges from the night around me.
The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.
It is the hour of departure, oh deserted one!

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart.
Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked.

In you the wars and the flights accumulated.
From you the wings of the song birds rose.

You swallowed everything, like distance.
Like the sea, like time. In you everything sank!

It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.

Pilot's dread, fury of blind driver,
turbulent drunkenness of love, in you everything sank!

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded.
Lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

You girdled sorrow, you clung to desire,
sadness stunned you, in you everything sank!

I made the wall of shadow draw back,
beyond desire and act, I walked on.

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost,
I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

Like a jar you housed infinite tenderness.
and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar.

There was the black solitude of the islands,
and there, woman of love, your arms took me in.

There was thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit.
There were grief and ruins, and you were the miracle.

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me
in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms!

How terrible and brief my desire was to you!
How difficult and drunken, how tensed and avid.

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,
still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds.

Oh the bitten mouth, oh the kissed limbs,
oh the hungering teeth, oh the entwined bodies.

Oh the mad coupling of hope and force
in which we merged and despaired.

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour.
And the word scarcely begun on the lips.

This was my destiny and in it was my voyage of my longing,
and in it my longing fell, in you everything sank!

Oh pit of debris, everything fell into you,
what sorrow did you not express, in what sorrow are you not drowned!

From billow to billow you still called and sang.
Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel.

You still flowered in songs, you still broke the currents.
Oh pit of debris, open and bitter well.

Pale blind diver, luckless slinger,
lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

It is the hour of departure, the hard cold hour
which the night fastens to all the timetables.

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore.
Cold stars heave up, black birds migrate.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.
Only tremulous shadow twists in my hands.

Oh farther than everything. Oh farther than everything.

It is the hour of departure. Oh abandoned one!

Pablo Neruda

Absence

I have scarcely left you
When you go in me, crystalline,
Or trembling,
Or uneasy, wounded by me
Or overwhelmed with love, as
when your eyes
Close upon the gift of life
That without cease I give you.

My love,
We have found each other
Thirsty and we have
Drunk up all the water and the
Blood,
We found each other
Hungry
And we bit each other
As fire bites,
Leaving wounds in us.

But wait for me,
Keep for me your sweetness.
I will give you too
A rose.

Pablo Neruda

Algunas Bestias

Era el crepúsculo de la iguana.
Desde la arcoirisada crestería
su leengua como un dardo
se hundía en la verdura,
el hormiguero monacal pisaba
con melodioso pie la selva,
el guanaco fino como el oxígeno
en las anchas alturas pardas
iba calzando botas de oro,
mientras la llama abría cándidos
ojos en la delicadeza
del mundo lleno de rocío.
Los monos trenzaban un hilo
interminablemente erótico
en las riberas de la aurora,
derribando muros de polen
y espantando el vuelo violeta
de las mariposas de Muzo
Era la noche de los caimanes,
la noche pura y pululante
de hocicos saliendo del légamo,
y de las ciénagas soñolientas
un ruido opaco de armaduras
volvía al origen terrestre.
El jaguar tocaba las hojas
con su ausencia fosforescente,
el puma corre en el ramaje
como el fuego devorador
mientras arden en él los ojos
alcohólicos de la selva.
Los tejones rascan los pies
del río, husmean el nido
cuya delicia palpitante
atacarán con dientes rojos.
Y en el fondo del agua magna,
como el círculo de la tierra,
está la gigante anaconda
cubierta de barro rituales,
devoradora y religiosa.

Pablo Neruda

Always

I am not jealous
of what came before me.

Come with a man
on your shoulders,
come with a hundred men in your hair,
come with a thousand men between your breasts and your feet,
come like a river
full of drowned men
which flows down to the wild sea,
to the eternal surf, to Time!

Bring them all
to where I am waiting for you;
we shall always be alone,
we shall always be you and I
alone on earth,
to start our life!

Pablo Neruda

And Because Love Battles

And because love battles
not only in its burning agricultures
but also in the mouth of men and women,
I will finish off by taking the path away
to those who between my chest and your fragrance
want to interpose their obscure plant.

About me, nothing worse
they will tell you, my love,
than what I told you.

I lived in the prairies
before I got to know you
and I did not wait love but I was
laying in wait for and I jumped on the rose.

What more can they tell you?
I am neither good nor bad but a man,
and they will then associate the danger
of my life, which you know
and which with your passion you shared.

And good, this danger
is danger of love, of complete love
for all life,
for all lives,
and if this love brings us
the death and the prisons,
I am sure that your big eyes,
as when I kiss them,
will then close with pride,
into double pride, love,
with your pride and my pride.

But to my ears they will come before
to wear down the tour
of the sweet and hard love which binds us,
and they will say: "The one
you love,

is not a woman for you,
Why do you love her? I think
you could find one more beautiful,
more serious, more deep,
more other, you understand me, look how she's light,
and what a head she has,
and look at how she dresses,
and etcetera and etcetera".

And I in these lines say:
Like this I want you, love,
love, Like this I love you,
as you dress
and how your hair lifts up
and how your mouth smiles,
light as the water
of the spring upon the pure stones,
Like this I love you, beloved.

To bread I do not ask to teach me
but only not to lack during every day of life.
I don't know anything about light, from where
it comes nor where it goes,
I only want the light to light up,
I do not ask to the night
explanations,
I wait for it and it envelops me,
And so you, bread and light
And shadow are.

You came to my life
with what you were bringing,
made
of light and bread and shadow I expected you,
and Like this I need you,
Like this I love you,
and to those who want to hear tomorrow
that which I will not tell them, let them read it here,
and let them back off today because it is early
for these arguments.

Tomorrow we will only give them

a leaf of the tree of our love, a leaf
which will fall on the earth
like if it had been made by our lips
like a kiss which falls
from our invincible heights
to show the fire and the tenderness
of a true love.

Pablo Neruda

Bird

It was passed from one bird to another,
the whole gift of the day.
The day went from flute to flute,
went dressed in vegetation,
in flights which opened a tunnel
through the wind would pass
to where birds were breaking open
the dense blue air -
and there, night came in.

When I returned from so many journeys,
I stayed suspended and green
between sun and geography -
I saw how wings worked,
how perfumes are transmitted
by feathery telegraph,
and from above I saw the path,
the springs and the roof tiles,
the fishermen at their trades,
the trousers of the foam;
I saw it all from my green sky.
I had no more alphabet
than the swallows in their courses,
the tiny, shining water
of the small bird on fire
which dances out of the pollen.

Pablo Neruda

Brown And Agile Child

Brown and agile child, the sun which forms the fruit
And ripens the grain and twists the seaweed
Has made your happy body and your luminous eyes
And given your mouth the smile of water.

A black and anguished sun is entangled in the twigs
Of your black mane when you hold out your arms.
You play in the sun as in a tidal river
And it leaves two dark pools in your eyes.

Brown and agile child, nothing draws me to you,
Everything pulls away from me here in the noon.
You are the delirious youth of bee,
The drunkenness of the wave, the power of the wheat.

My somber heart seeks you always
I love your happy body, your rich, soft voice.
Dusky butterfly, sweet and sure
Like the wheatfield, the sun, the poppy, and the water.

Pablo Neruda

Canto Xii From The Heights Of Macchu Picchu

Arise to birth with me, my brother.
Give me your hand out of the depths
sown by your sorrows.
You will not return from these stone fastnesses.
You will not emerge from subterranean time.
Your rasping voice will not come back,
nor your pierced eyes rise from their sockets.

Look at me from the depths of the earth,
tiller of fields, weaver, reticent shepherd,
groom of totemic guanacos,
mason high on your treacherous scaffolding,
iceman of Andean tears,
jeweler with crushed fingers,
farmer anxious among his seedlings,
potter wasted among his clays--
bring to the cup of this new life
your ancient buried sorrows.
Show me your blood and your furrow;
say to me: here I was scourged
because a gem was dull or because the earth
failed to give up in time its tithe of corn or stone.
Point out to me the rock on which you stumbled,
the wood they used to crucify your body.
Strike the old flints
to kindle ancient lamps, light up the whips
glued to your wounds throughout the centuries
and light the axes gleaming with your blood.

I come to speak for your dead mouths.

Throughout the earth
let dead lips congregate,
out of the depths spin this long night to me
as if I rode at anchor here with you.

And tell me everything, tell chain by chain,
and link by link, and step by step;
sharpen the knives you kept hidden away,

thrust them into my breast, into my hands,
like a torrent of sunbursts,
an Amazon of buried jaguars,
and leave me cry: hours, days and years,
blind ages, stellar centuries.

And give me silence, give me water, hope.

Give me the struggle, the iron, the volcanoes.

Let bodies cling like magnets to my body.

Come quickly to my veins and to my mouth.

Speak through my speech, and through my blood.

Pablo Neruda

Castro Alves From Brazil

Castro Alves from Brazil, for whom did you sing?
Did you sing for the flower? For the water
whose beauty whispered words to the stones?
Did you sing to the eyes, to the torn profile
of the woman you once loved? For the spring?

Yes, but those petals were not dewed,
those black waters had no words,
those eyes were those who saw death,
still burning the tortures behind love,
Spring was splashed with blood.

I sang for the slaves, aboard the ships
as a dark branch of wrath.
They travelled, and bled from the ships
leaving us the weight of a stolen blood.

I sang in those days against the inferno,
against the sharp languages of greed,
against the gold drenched in the torment,
against the hand that rose the whip,
against the maestros of darkness.

Each rose had one dead man in their roots.
The light, the night, the sky were covered in tears,
the eyes separated from wounded hands
and it was my voice the only one to fill the silence.

I wanted that from the man we could be rescued,
I believed that the route passed through the man,
and from there destiny would be made.
I sang for those who had no voice.
My voice hit doors that until then were closed
so that, fighting, Freedom could be let in.

Castro Alves from Brazil, now that your pure book
is reborn to a free land,
let me, poet of our America,
to crown your head with the laurels of the people.

Your voice joined the eternal and loud voice of the men.
You sang well. You sang how it must be sung.

Pablo Neruda

Cat's Dream

How neatly a cat sleeps,
sleeps with its paws and its posture,
sleeps with its wicked claws,
and with its unfeeling blood,
sleeps with all the rings-
a series of burnt circles-
which have formed the odd geology
of its sand-colored tail.

I should like to sleep like a cat,
with all the fur of time,
with a tongue rough as flint,
with the dry sex of fire;
and after speaking to no one,
stretch myself over the world,
over roofs and landscapes,
with a passionate desire
to hunt the rats in my dreams.

I have seen how the cat asleep
would undulate, how the night
flowed through it like dark water;
and at times, it was going to fall
or possibly plunge into
the bare deserted snowdrifts.
Sometimes it grew so much in sleep
like a tiger's great-grandfather,
and would leap in the darkness over
rooftops, clouds and volcanoes.

Sleep, sleep cat of the night,
with episcopal ceremony
and your stone-carved moustache.
Take care of all our dreams;
control the obscurity
of our slumbering prowess
with your relentless heart
and the great ruff of your tail.

Translated by Alastair Reid

Pablo Neruda

Chant To Bolivar

Our Father thou art in Heaven,
in water, in air
in all our silent and broad latitude
everything bears your name, Father in our dwelling:
your name raises sweetness in sugar cane
Bolivar tin has a Bolivar gleam
the Bolívar bird flies over the Bolivar volcano
the potato, the saltpeter, the special shadows,
the brooks, the phosphorous stone veins
everything comes from your extinguished life
your legacy was rivers, plains, bell towers
your legacy is our daily bread, oh Father.

Pablo Neruda

Clenched Soul

We have lost even this twilight.
No one saw us this evening hand in hand
while the blue night dropped on the world.

I have seen from my window
the fiesta of sunset in the distant mountain tops.

Sometimes a piece of sun
burned like a coin in my hand.

I remembered you with my soul clenched
in that sadness of mine that you know.

Where were you then?
Who else was there?
Saying what?
Why will the whole of love come on me suddenly
when I am sad and feel you are far away?

The book fell that always closed at twilight
and my blue sweater rolled like a hurt dog at my feet.

Always, always you recede through the evenings
toward the twilight erasing statues.

Pablo Neruda

Come With Me, I Said, And No One Knew (VII)

Come with me, I said, and no one knew
where, or how my pain throbbed,
no carnations or barcaroles for me,
only a wound that love had opened.

I said it again: Come with me, as if I were dying,
and no one saw the moon that bled in my mouth
or the blood that rose into the silence.
O Love, now we can forget the star that has such thorns!

That is why when I heard your voice repeat
Come with me, it was as if you had let loose
the grief, the love, the fury of a cork-trapped wine

the geysers flooding from deep in its vault:
in my mouth I felt the taste of fire again,
of blood and carnations, of rock and scald.

Pablo Neruda

Death Alone

There are lone cemeteries,
tombs full of soundless bones,
the heart threading a tunnel,
a dark, dark tunnel :
like a wreck we die to the very core,
as if drowning at the heart
or collapsing inwards from skin to soul.

There are corpses,
clammy slabs for feet,
there is death in the bones,
like a pure sound,
a bark without its dog,
out of certain bells, certain tombs
swelling in this humidity like lament or rain.

I see, when alone at times,
coffins under sail
setting out with the pale dead, women in their dead braids,
bakers as white as angels,
thoughtful girls married to notaries,
coffins ascending the vertical river of the dead,
the wine-dark river to its source,
with their sails swollen with the sound of death,
filled with the silent noise of death.

Death is drawn to sound
like a slipper without a foot, a suit without its wearer,
comes to knock with a ring, stoneless and fingerless,
comes to shout without a mouth, a tongue, without a throat.
Nevertheless its footsteps sound
and its clothes echo, hushed like a tree.

I do not know, I am ignorant, I hardly see
but it seems to me that its song has the colour of wet violets,
violets well used to the earth,
since the face of death is green,
and the gaze of death green
with the etched moisture of a violet's leaf

and its grave colour of exasperated winter.

But death goes about the earth also, riding a broom
lapping the ground in search of the dead -
death is in the broom,
it is the tongue of death looking for the dead,
the needle of death looking for the thread.

Death lies in our beds :
in the lazy mattresses, the black blankets,
lives a full stretch and then suddenly blows,
blows sound unknown filling out the sheets
and there are beds sailing into a harbour
where death is waiting, dressed as an admiral.

Pablo Neruda

Don'T Go Far Off

Don't go far off, not even for a day, because --
because -- I don't know how to say it: a day is long
and I will be waiting for you, as in an empty station
when the trains are parked off somewhere else, asleep.

Don't leave me, even for an hour, because
then the little drops of anguish will all run together,
the smoke that roams looking for a home will drift
into me, choking my lost heart.

Oh, may your silhouette never dissolve on the beach;
may your eyelids never flutter into the empty distance.
Don't leave me for a second, my dearest,

because in that moment you'll have gone so far
I'll wander mazily over all the earth, asking,
Will you come back? Will you leave me here, dying?

Pablo Neruda

Drunk As Drunk

Translated from the Spanish by Christopher Logue

Drunk as drunk on turpentine
From your open kisses,
Your wet body wedged
Between my wet body and the strake
Of our boat that is made of flowers,
Feasted, we guide it - our fingers
Like tallows adorned with yellow metal -
Over the sky's hot rim,
The day's last breath in our sails.

Pinned by the sun between solstice
And equinox, drowsy and tangled together
We drifted for months and woke
With the bitter taste of land on our lips,
Eyelids all sticky, and we longed for lime
And the sound of a rope
Lowering a bucket down its well. Then,
We came by night to the Fortunate Isles,
And lay like fish
Under the net of our kisses.

Pablo Neruda

Enigma With Flower

Victory. It has come late, I had not learnt
how to arrive, like the lily, at will,
the white figure, that pierces
the motionless eternity of earth,
pushing at clear, faint, form,
till the hour strikes: that clay,
with a white ray, or a spur of milk.
Shedding of clothing, the thick darkness of soil,
on whose cliff the fair flower advances,
till the flag of its whiteness
defeats the contemptible deep of night,
and, from the motion of light,
spills itself in astonished seed.

Pablo Neruda

Enigmas

You've asked me what the lobster is weaving there with
his golden feet?

I reply, the ocean knows this.

You say, what is the ascidia waiting for in its transparent
bell? What is it waiting for?

I tell you it is waiting for time, like you.

You ask me whom the *Macrocystis* alga hugs in its arms?

Study, study it, at a certain hour, in a certain sea I know.

You question me about the wicked tusk of the narwhal,
and I reply by describing

how the sea unicorn with the harpoon in it dies.

You enquire about the kingfisher's feathers,

which tremble in the pure springs of the southern tides?

Or you've found in the cards a new question touching on
the crystal architecture

of the sea anemone, and you'll deal that to me now?

You want to understand the electric nature of the ocean
spines?

The armored stalactite that breaks as it walks?

The hook of the angler fish, the music stretched out
in the deep places like a thread in the water?

I want to tell you the ocean knows this, that life in its
jewel boxes

is endless as the sand, impossible to count, pure,
and among the blood-colored grapes time has made the
petal

hard and shiny, made the jellyfish full of light
and untied its knot, letting its musical threads fall
from a horn of plenty made of infinite mother-of-pearl.

I am nothing but the empty net which has gone on ahead
of human eyes, dead in those darknesses,
of fingers accustomed to the triangle, longitudes
on the timid globe of an orange.

I walked around as you do, investigating
the endless star,
and in my net, during the night, I woke up naked,

the only thing caught, a fish trapped inside the wind.

Translated by Robert Bly

Pablo Neruda

Entrance Of The Rivers

Beloved of the rivers, beset
By azure water and transparent drops,
Like a tree of veins your spectre
Of dark goddess biting apples:
And then awakening naked
To be tattooed by the rivers,
And in the wet heights your head
Filled the world with new dew.

Water rose to your waist,
You are made of wellsprings
And lakes shone on your forehead.
From your sources of density you drew
Water like vital tears
And hauled the riverbeds to the sand
Across the planetary night,
Crossing rough, dilated stone,
Breaking down on the way
All the salt of geology,
Cutting through forests of compact walls
Dislodging the muscles of quartz.

Pablo Neruda

Epithalamium

Do you remember when
in winter
we reached the island?
The sea raised toward us
a crown of cold.
On the walls the climbing vines
murmured letting
dark leaves fall
as we passed.
You too were a little leaf
that trembled on my chest.
Life's wind put you there.
At first I did not see you: I did not know
that you were walking with me,
until your roots
pierced my chest
joined the threads of my blood
spoke through my mouth
flourished with me.
Thus was your inadvertent presence
invisible leaf or branch
and suddenly my heart was filled with fruits and sounds
You occupied the house
that darkly awaited you
and then you lit the lamps.

...

the island of stone and moss
echoed in the secret of its grottoes
like the song in your mouth
and the flower that was born
between the crevices of the stone
with its secret syllable
spoke, as it passed, your name
of blazing plant
and the steep rock raised
like the wall of the world,
knew my song, well beloved,

and all things spoke of
your love, my love, beloved
because earth, time, sea, island
life, tide
the seed that half opens
its lips in the earth
the devouring flower
the movement of spring
everything recognizes us.
Our love was born
outside the walls
in the wind
in the night
in the earth
and that's why the clay and the flower
the mud and the roots
know your name
and know that my mouth
joined yours
because we were sown together in the earth
and we alone did not know it
and that we grow together
and flower together
and therefore
when we pass
your name is on the petals
of the rose that grows on the stone,
my name is in the grottoes
They know it all
we have no secrets
we have grown together
but we did not know it.
The sea knows our love, the stones
of the rocky height
know that our kisses flowered
with infinite purity
as in their crevices a scarlet
mouth dawns
just as our love and the kiss
that joins your mouth and mine
in an eternal flower.
My love,

sweet spring,
flower and sea, surround us.
We did not change it
for our winter
when the wind
began to decipher your name
and today at all hours it repeats
when
the leaves did not know
that you were a leaf
when
the roots did not know that you were seeking me
in my breast.
Love, love,
spring
offers us the sky
but the dark earth
is our name
our love belongs to all time and the earth.
Loving each other, my arm
beneath your neck of sand
we shall wait
as earth and time change
on the island
as the leaves fall
from the silent climbing vines
as autumn departs
through the broken window.
But we
are going to wait for
our friend
our red-eyed friend
the fire,
when the wind again
shakes the frontiers of the island
and does not know the names of everyone
winter
will seek us, my love
always
it will seek us, because we know it
because we do not fear it
because have

with us
fire
forever,
spring with us
forever
and when a leaf
falls
from the climbing vines
you know, my love
what name is written o
on that leaf,
a names that is yours and mine
our love name, a single
being, the arrow
that pierced winter
the invincible love
the fire of the days
a leaf
that dropped upon my breast
a leaf from the tree
of life
that made a nest and sang
that put out roots
that gave flowers and fruits.
And so you see, my love,
how I move around the island
around the world
safe in the midst of spring
crazy with light in the cold
walking tranquil in the fire
lifting your petal
weight in my arms
as if I had never walked
except with you, my heart
as if I could not walk
except with you
as if I could not sing
except when you sing.

Pablo Neruda

Fable Of The Mermaid And The Drunks

All those men were there inside,
when she came in totally naked.
They had been drinking: they began to spit.
Newly come from the river, she knew nothing.
She was a mermaid who had lost her way.
The insults flowed down her gleaming flesh.
Obscenities drowned her golden breasts.
Not knowing tears, she did not weep tears.
Not knowing clothes, she did not have clothes.
They blackened her with burnt corks and cigarette stubs,
and rolled around laughing on the tavern floor.
She did not speak because she had no speech.
Her eyes were the colour of distant love,
her twin arms were made of white topaz.
Her lips moved, silent, in a coral light,
and suddenly she went out by that door.
Entering the river she was cleaned,
shining like a white stone in the rain,
and without looking back she swam again
swam towards emptiness, swam towards death.

Pablo Neruda

Finale

Matilde, years or days
sleeping, feverish,
here or there,
gazing off,
twisting my spine,
bleeding true blood,
perhaps I awaken
or am lost, sleeping:
hospital beds, foreign windows,
white uniforms of the silent walkers,
the clumsiness of feet.

And then, these journeys
and my sea of renewal:
your head on the pillow,
your hands floating
in the light, in my light,
over my earth.

It was beautiful to live
when you lived!

The world is bluer and of the earth
at night, when I sleep
enormous, within your small hands

Pablo Neruda

Fleas Interest Me So Much

Fleas interest me so much
that I let them bite me for hours.
They are perfect, ancient, Sanskrit,
machines that admit of no appeal.
They do not bite to eat,
they bite only to jump;
they are the dancers of the celestial sphere,
delicate acrobats
in the softest and most profound circus;
let them gallop on my skin,
divulge their emotions,
amuse themselves with my blood,
but someone should introduce them to me.
I want to know them closely,
I want to know what to rely on.

Pablo Neruda

From – Twenty Poems Of Love

I can write the saddest lines tonight.

Write for example: 'The night is fractured
and they shiver, blue, those stars, in the distance'

The night wind turns in the sky and sings.
I can write the saddest lines tonight.
I loved her, sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like these I held her in my arms.
I kissed her greatly under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.
How could I not have loved her huge, still eyes.

I can write the saddest lines tonight.
To think I don't have her, to feel I have lost her.

Hear the vast night, vaster without her.
Lines fall on the soul like dew on the grass.

What does it matter that I couldn't keep her.
The night is fractured and she is not with me.

That is all. Someone sings far off. Far off,
my soul is not content to have lost her.

As though to reach her, my sight looks for her.
My heart looks for her: she is not with me

The same night whitens, in the same branches.
We, from that time, we are not the same.

I don't love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.
My voice tried to find the breeze to reach her.

Another's kisses on her, like my kisses.
Her voice, her bright body, infinite eyes.

I don't love her, that's certain, but perhaps I love her.
Love is brief: forgetting lasts so long.

Since, on these nights, I held her in my arms,
my soul is not content to have lost her.

Though this is the last pain she will make me suffer,
and these are the last lines I will write for her.

Pablo Neruda

From The Book Of Questions

III.

Tell me, is the rose naked
or is that her only dress?

Why do trees conceal
the splendor of their roots?

Who hears the regrets
of the thieving automobile?

Is there anything in the world sadder
than a train standing in the rain?

Pablo Neruda

From The Heights Of Maccho Picchu

Rise up to be born with me, brother.
Give me your hand from the deep
Zone seeded by your sorrow.
You won't return from under the rocks.
You won't return from your subterranean time.
Your hardened voice won't return.
Your gouged-out eyes won't return.

Look at me from the depth of the earth,
laborer, weaver, silent shepherd:
tamer of wild llamas like spirit images:
construction worker on a daring scaffold:
waterer of the tears of the Andes:
jeweler with broken fingers:
farmer trembling as you sow:
potter, poured out into your clay:
bring to the cup of this new life
your old buried sorrows.
Show me your blood and your furrow,
Tell me, "Here I was punished,
Because the jewel didn't shine or the earth
Didn't yield grain or stones on time."
Show me the stone you fell over
And the wood on which they crucified you,
Make a spark from the old flints for me,
For the old lamps to show the whips still stuck
After centuries in the old wounds
And the axes shining with blood.
I come to speak for your dead mouth.
Across the earth come together all
The silent worn-out lips
And from the depth speak to me all this long night
Like I was pinned down there with you.
Tell me all, chain by chain,
Link by link and step by step,
Sharpen the knives which you hid,
Put them in my breast and in my hand,
Like a river of yellow lightning
Like a river of buried jaguars

And let me weep, hours, days, years,
For blind ages, cycles of stars.

Give me silence, water, hope.

Give me struggle, iron, volcanoes.

Stick bodies to me like magnets.

Draw near to my veins and my mouth.

Speak through my words and my blood.

Pablo Neruda

Gautama Christ

The names of God and especially those of His representative
Who is called Jesus or Christ according to holy books and
someone's mouth
These names have been used, worn out and left
On the shores of rivers of of human lives
Like the empty shells of a mollusk.
However when we touch these sacred but exhausted
Names, these wounded scattered petals
Which have come out of the oceans of love and fear
Something still remains, a sip of water,
A rainbow footprint that still shimmers in the light.
While the names of God were used
By the best and the worst, by the clean and the dirty
By the white and the black, by bloody murderers
And by victims flaming gold with napalm
While Nixon with his hands
Of Cain blessed those whom he condemned to death,
While fewer and fewer divine footprints were found
on the beach
People began to study colors,
The future of honey, the sign of uranium
They looked with anxiety and hope for the possibilities
Of killing themselves or not killing themselves, of organizing
themselves into a fabric
Of going further on, of breaking through limits without stopping

What we came across in these blood thirsty times
With their smoke of burning trash, their dead ashes
As we weren't able to stop looking
We often stopped to look at the names of God
We lifted them with tenderness because they reminded us
Of our ancestors, of the first people, those who said the prayers
Those who discovered the hymn that united them in misfortune
And now seeing the empty fragments which sheltered those
ancient people
We feel those smooth substances,
Worn out and used up by good and by evil.

Gentleman Alone

The young maricones and the horny muchachas,
The big fat widows delirious from insomnia,
The young wives thirty hours' pregnant,
And the hoarse tomcats that cross my garden at night,
Like a collar of palpitating sexual oysters
Surround my solitary home,
Enemies of my soul,
Conspirators in pajamas
Who exchange deep kisses for passwords.
Radiant summer brings out the lovers
In melancholy regiments,
Fat and thin and happy and sad couples;
Under the elegant coconut palms, near the ocean and moon,
There is a continual life of pants and panties,
A hum from the fondling of silk stockings,
And women's breasts that glisten like eyes.
The salary man, after a while,
After the week's tedium, and the novels read in bed at night,
Has decisively fucked his neighbor,
And now takes her to the miserable movies,
Where the heroes are horses or passionate princes,
And he caresses her legs covered with sweet down
With his ardent and sweaty palms that smell like cigarettes.
The night of the hunter and the night of the husband
Come together like bed sheets and bury me,
And the hours after lunch, when the students and priests are masturbating,
And the animals mount each other openly,
And the bees smell of blood, and the flies buzz cholericly,
And cousins play strange games with cousins,
And doctors glower at the husband of the young patient,
And the early morning in which the professor, without a thought,
Pays his conjugal debt and eats breakfast,
And to top it all off, the adulterers, who love each other truly
On beds big and tall as ships:
So, eternally,
This twisted and breathing forest crushes me
With gigantic flowers like mouth and teeth
And black roots like fingernails and shoes.

Translated by Mike Topp

Pablo Neruda

Here I Love You

Here I love you.
In the dark pines the wind disentangles itself.
The moon glows like phosphorous on the vagrant waters.
Days, all one kind, go chasing each other.

The snow unfurls in dancing figures.
A silver gull slips down from the west.
Sometimes a sail. High, high stars.
Oh the black cross of a ship.
Alone.

Sometimes I get up early and even my soul is wet.
Far away the sea sounds and resounds.
This is a port.

Here I love you.
Here I love you and the horizon hides you in vain.
I love you still among these cold things.
Sometimes my kisses go on those heavy vessels
that cross the sea towards no arrival.
I see myself forgotten like those old anchors.

The piers sadden when the afternoon moors there.
My life grows tired, hungry to no purpose.
I love what I do not have. You are so far.
My loathing wrestles with the slow twilights.
But night comes and starts to sing to me.

The moon turns its clockwork dream.
The biggest stars look at me with your eyes.
And as I love you, the pines in the wind
want to sing your name with their leaves of wire.

Pablo Neruda

I Crave Your Mouth, Your Voice, Your Hair

I crave your mouth, your voice, your hair.
Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets.
Bread does not nourish me, dawn disrupts me, all day
I hunt for the liquid measure of your steps.

I hunger for your sleek laugh,
your hands the color of a savage harvest,
hunger for the pale stones of your fingernails,
I want to eat your skin like a whole almond.

I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your lovely body,
the sovereign nose of your arrogant face,
I want to eat the fleeting shade of your lashes,

and I pace around hungry, sniffing the twilight,
hunting for you, for your hot heart,
like a puma in the barrens of Quitratue.

Translated by Stephen Tapscott

Pablo Neruda

I Do Not Love You Except Because I Love You

I do not love you except because I love you;
I go from loving to not loving you,
From waiting to not waiting for you
My heart moves from cold to fire.

I love you only because it's you the one I love;
I hate you deeply, and hating you
Bend to you, and the measure of my changing love for you
Is that I do not see you but love you blindly.

Maybe January light will consume
My heart with its cruel
Ray, stealing my key to true calm.

In this part of the story I am the one who
Dies, the only one, and I will die of love because I love you,
Because I love you, Love, in fire and blood.

Pablo Neruda

I Like For You To Be Still

i like for you to be still
it is as though you are absent
And you hear me from far away
And my voice does not touch you
it seems as though your eyes had flown away
And it seems that a kiss had sealed your mouth
As all things are filled with my soul
You emerge from the things
Filled with my soul
You are like my soul
A butterfly of dream
And you are like the word: Melancholy

i like for you to be still
And you seem far away
it sounds as though you are lamenting
A butterfly cooing like a dove
And you hear me from far away
And my voice does not reach you
Let me come to be still in your silence
And let me talk to you with your silence
That is bright as a lamp
Simple, as a ring
You are like the night
With its stillness and constellations
Your silence is that of a star
As remote and candid

i like for you to be still
it is as though you are absent
Distant and full of sorrow
So you would've died
One word then, One smile is enough
And i'm happy;
Happy that it's not true

Pablo Neruda

I Like You Calm, As If You Were Absent

I like you calm, as if you were absent,
and you hear me far-off, and my voice does not touch you.
It seems that your eyelids have taken to flying:
it seems that a kiss has sealed up your mouth.
Since all these things are filled with my spirit,
you come from things, filled with my spirit.
You appear as my soul, as the butterfly's dreaming,
and you appear as Sadness's word.
I like you calm, as if you were distant,
you are a moaning, a butterfly's cooing.
You hear me far-off, my voice does not reach you.
Let me be calmed, then, calmed by your silence.
Let me commune, then, commune with your silence,
clear as a light, and pure as a ring.
You are like night, calmed, constellated.
Your silence is star-like, as distant, as true.
I like you calm, as if you were absent:
distant and saddened, as if you were dead.
One word at that moment, a smile, is sufficient.
And I thrill, then, I thrill: that it cannot be so.

XV From: 'Veinte poemas de amor'

I like you calm, as if you were absent,
and you hear me far-off, and my voice does not touch you.
It seems that your eyelids have taken to flying:
it seems that a kiss has sealed up your mouth.
Since all these things are filled with my spirit,
you come from things, filled with my spirit.
You appear as my soul, as the butterfly's dreaming,
and you appear as Sadness's word.
I like you calm, as if you were distant,
you are a moaning, a butterfly's cooing.
You hear me far-off, my voice does not reach you.
Let me be calmed, then, calmed by your silence.
Let me commune, then, commune with your silence,
clear as a light, and pure as a ring.
You are like night, calmed, constellated.
Your silence is star-like, as distant, as true.
I like you calm, as if you were absent:

distant and saddened, as if you were dead.
One word at that moment, a smile, is sufficient.
And I thrill, then, I thrill: that it cannot be so.

Pablo Neruda

I Remember You As You Were

I remember you as you were in the last autumn.
You were the grey beret and the still heart.
In your eyes the flames of the twilight fought on.
And the leaves fell in the water of your soul.

Clasping my arms like a climbing plant
the leaves garnered your voice, that was slow and at peace.
Bonfire of awe in which my thirst was burning.
Sweet blue hyacinth twisted over my soul.

I feel your eyes traveling, and the autumn is far off:
Grey beret, voice of a bird, heart like a house
Towards which my deep longings migrated
And my kisses fell, happy as embers.

Sky from a ship. Field from the hills:
Your memory is made of light, of smoke, of a still pond!
Beyond your eyes, farther on, the evenings were blazing.
Dry autumn leaves revolved in your soul.

Pablo Neruda

If You Forget Me

I want you to know
one thing.

You know how this is:
if I look
at the crystal moon, at the red branch
of the slow autumn at my window,
if I touch
near the fire
the impalpable ash
or the wrinkled body of the log,
everything carries me to you,
as if everything that exists,
aromas, light, metals,
were little boats
that sail
toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

Well, now,
if little by little you stop loving me
I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly
you forget me
do not look for me,
for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,
the wind of banners
that passes through my life,
and you decide
to leave me at the shore
of the heart where I have roots,
remember
that on that day,
at that hour,
I shall lift my arms
and my roots will set off
to seek another land.

But
if each day,
each hour,
you feel that you are destined for me
with implacable sweetness,
if each day a flower
climbs up to your lips to seek me,
ah my love, ah my own,
in me all that fire is repeated,
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
my love feeds on your love, beloved,
and as long as you live it will be in your arms
without leaving mine.

Pablo Neruda

I'M Explaining A Few Things

You are going to ask: and where are the lilacs?
and the poppy-petalled metaphysics?
and the rain repeatedly spattering
its words and drilling them full
of apertures and birds?
I'll tell you all the news.

I lived in a suburb,
a suburb of Madrid, with bells,
and clocks, and trees.

From there you could look out
over Castille's dry face:
a leather ocean.

My house was called
the house of flowers, because in every cranny
geraniums burst: it was
a good-looking house
with its dogs and children.

Remember, Raul?

Eh, Rafael? Federico, do you remember
from under the ground
my balconies on which
the light of June drowned flowers in your mouth?

Brother, my brother!

Everything

loud with big voices, the salt of merchandises,
pile-ups of palpitating bread,
the stalls of my suburb of Arguelles with its statue
like a drained inkwell in a swirl of hake:

oil flowed into spoons,

a deep baying

of feet and hands swelled in the streets,

metres, litres, the sharp

measure of life,

stacked-up fish,

the texture of roofs with a cold sun in which

the weather vane falters,

the fine, frenzied ivory of potatoes,

wave on wave of tomatoes rolling down the sea.

And one morning all that was burning,
one morning the bonfires
leapt out of the earth
devouring human beings --
and from then on fire,
gunpowder from then on,
and from then on blood.
Bandits with planes and Moors,
bandits with finger-rings and duchesses,
bandits with black friars spattering blessings
came through the sky to kill children
and the blood of children ran through the streets
without fuss, like children's blood.

Jackals that the jackals would despise,
stones that the dry thistle would bite on and spit out,
vipers that the vipers would abominate!

Face to face with you I have seen the blood
of Spain tower like a tide
to drown you in one wave
of pride and knives!

Treacherous
generals:
see my dead house,
look at broken Spain :
from every house burning metal flows
instead of flowers,
from every socket of Spain
Spain emerges
and from every dead child a rifle with eyes,
and from every crime bullets are born
which will one day find
the bull's eye of your hearts.

And you'll ask: why doesn't his poetry
speak of dreams and leaves
and the great volcanoes of his native land?

Come and see the blood in the streets.
Come and see
The blood in the streets.
Come and see the blood
In the streets!

Pablo Neruda

In My Sky At Twilight

In my sky at twilight you are like a cloud
and your form and colour are the way I love them.
You are mine, mine, woman with sweet lips
and in your life my infinite dreams live.

The lamp of my soul dyes your feet,
the sour wine is sweeter on your lips,
oh reaper of my evening song,
how solitary dreams believe you to be mine!

You are mine, mine, I go shouting it to the afternoon's
wind, and the wind hauls on my widowed voice.
Huntress of the depth of my eyes, your plunder
stills your nocturnal regard as though it were water.

You are taken in the net of my music, my love,
and my nets of music are wide as the sky.
My soul is born on the shore of your eyes of mourning.
In your eyes of mourning the land of dreams begin.

Pablo Neruda

In You The Earth

Little
rose,
roselet,
at times,
tiny and naked,
it seems
as though you would fit
in one of my hands,
as though I'll clasp you like this
and carry you to my mouth,
but
suddenly
my feet touch your feet and my mouth your lips:
you have grown,
your shoulders rise like two hills,
your breasts wander over my breast,
my arm scarcely manages to encircle the thin
new-moon line of your waist:
in love you loosened yourself like sea water:
I can scarcely measure the sky's most spacious eyes
and I lean down to your mouth to kiss the earth.

Pablo Neruda

It's Good To Feel You Are Close To Me

It's good to feel you are close to me in the night, love,
invisible in your sleep, intently nocturnal,
while I untangle my worries
as if they were twisted nets.

Withdrawn, your heart sails through dream,
but your body, relinquished so, breathes
seeking me without seeing me perfecting my dream
like a plant that seeds itself in the dark.

Rising, you will be that other, alive in the dawn,
but from the frontiers lost in the night,
from the presence and the absence where we meet ourselves,

something remains, drawing us into the light of life
as if the sign of the shadows had sealed
its secret creatures with flame.

Pablo Neruda

La Muerta

Si de pronto no existes,
si de pronto no vives,
yo seguiré viviendo.

No me atrevo,
no me atrevo a escribirlo,
si te mueres.

Yo seguiré viviendo.

Porque donde no tiene voz un hombre
allí, mi voz.

Donde los negros sean apaleados,
yo no puedo estar muerto.
Cuando entren en la cárcel mis hermanos
entraré yo con ellos.

Cuando la victoria,
no mi victoria,
sino la gran Victoria llegue,
aunque esté mudo debo hablar:
yo la veré llegar aunque esté ciego.

No, perdóname.
Si tú no vives,
si tú, querida, amor mío, si tú
te has muerto,
todas las hojas caerán en mi pecho,
lloverá sobre mi alma noche y día,
la nieve quemará mi corazón,
andaré con frío y fuego
y muerte y nieve,
mis pies querrán marchar hacia donde tú duermes, pero seguiré vivo,
porque tú me quisiste sobre
todas las cosas indomable,
y, amor, porque tú sabes que soy no sólo un hombre
sino todos los hombres

La Reina (And Translation)

The Queen

I have named you queen.
There are taller than you, taller.
There are purer than you, purer.
There are lovelier than you, lovelier.
But you are the queen.

When you go through the streets
No one recognizes you.
No one sees your crystal crown, no one looks
At the carpet of red gold
That you tread as you pass,
The nonexistent carpet.

And when you appear
All the rivers sound
In my body, bells
Shake the sky,
And a hymn fills the world.

Only you and I,
Only you and I, my love,
Listen to me.

Yo te he nombrado reina.
Hay más altas que tú, más altas.
Hay más puras que tú, más puras.
Hay más bellas que tú, hay más bellas.
Pero tú eres la reina.

Cuando vas por las calles
nadie te reconoce.
Nadie ve tu corona de cristal, nadie mira
la alfombra de oro rojo
que pisas donde pasas,
la alfombra que no existe.

Y cuando asomas
suenan todos los ríos
en mi cuerpo, sacuden
el cielo las campanas,
y un himno llena el mundo.

Sólo tú y yo,
sólo tú y yo, amor mío,
lo escuchamos.

Pablo Neruda

Leaning Into The Afternoons

Leaning into the afternoons I cast my sad nets
towards your oceanic eyes.

There in the highest blaze my solitude lengthens and flames,
its arms turning like a drowning man's.

I send out red signals across your absent eyes
that smell like the sea or the beach by a lighthouse.

You keep only darkness, my distant female,
from your regard sometimes the coast of dread emerges.

Leaning into the afternoons I fling my sad nets
to that sea that is thrashed by your oceanic eyes.

The birds of night peck at the first stars
that flash like my soul when I love you.

The night gallops on its shadowy mare
shedding blue tassels over the land.

Pablo Neruda

Leave Me A Place Underground

Leave me a place underground, a labyrinth,
where I can go, when I wish to turn,
without eyes, without touch,
in the void, to dumb stone,
or the finger of shadow.

I know that you cannot, no one, no thing
can deliver up that place, or that path,
but what can I do with my pitiful passions,
if they are no use, on the surface
of everyday life,
if I cannot look to survive,
except by dying, going beyond, entering
into the state, metallic and slumbering,
of primeval flame?

Pablo Neruda

Lone Gentleman

The gay young men and the love-sick girls,
and the abandoned widows suffering in sleepless delirium,
and the young pregnant wives of thirty hours,
and the raucous cats that cruise my garden in the shadows,
like a necklace of pulsating oysters of sex
surround my lonely residence,
like enemies lined up against my soul,
like conspirators in bedroom clothes
who exchange long deep kisses to order.

The radiant summer leads to lovers
in predictable melancholic regiments,
made of fat and skinny, sad and happy pairings:
under the elegant coconut palms, near the ocean and the moon,
goes an endless movement of trousers and dresses,
a whisper of silk stockings being caressed,
and womens breasts that sparkle like eyes.

The little employee, after it all,
after the weeks boredom, and novels read by night in bed,
has definitively seduced the girl next door,
and carried her away to a run-down movie house
where the heroes are studs or princes mad with passion,
and strokes her legs covered with soft down
with his moist and ardent hands that smell of cigarettes.

The seducers afternoons and married peoples nights
come together like the sheets and bury me,
and the hours after lunch when the young male students
and the young girl students, and the priests, masturbate,
and the creatures fornicate outright,
and the bees smell of blood, and the flies madly buzz,
and boy and girl cousins play oddly together,
and doctors stare in fury at the young patients husband,
and the morning hours in which the professor, as if to pass the time,
performs his marriage duties, and breakfasts,
and moreover, the adulterers, who love each other truly
on beds as high and deep as ocean liners:
finally, eternally surrounding me

is a gigantic forest breathing and tangled
with gigantic flowers like mouths with teeth
and black roots in the shape of hooves and shoes.

Pablo Neruda

Lost In The Forest

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off it seemed
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,
a shout muffled by huge autumns,
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there, the hazel-sprig
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood--
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent.

Pablo Neruda

Lost In The Forest...

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off it seemed
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,
a shout muffled by huge autumns,
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there, the hazel-sprig
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood---
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent.

Pablo Neruda

Love

What's wrong with you, with us,
what's happening to us?
Ah our love is a harsh cord
that binds us wounding us
and if we want
to leave our wound,
to separate,
it makes a new knot for us and condemns us
to drain our blood and burn together.

What's wrong with you? I look at you
and I find nothing in you but two eyes
like all eyes, a mouth
lost among a thousand mouths that I have kissed, more beautiful,
a body just like those that have slipped
beneath my body without leaving any memory.

And how empty you went through the world
like a wheat-colored jar
without air, without sound, without substance!
I vainly sought in you
depth for my arms
that dig, without cease, beneath the earth:
beneath your skin, beneath your eyes,
nothing,
beneath your double breast scarcely
raised
a current of crystalline order
that does not know why it flows singing.
Why, why, why,
my love, why?

Pablo Neruda

Love Sonnet XVII

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Pablo Neruda

Love, We'Re Going Home Now

Love, we're going home now,
Where the vines clamber over the trellis:
Even before you, the summer will arrive,
On its honeysuckle feet, in your bedroom.

Our nomadic kisses wandered over all the world:
Armenia, dollop of disinterred honey:
Ceylon, green dove: and the YangTse with its old
Old patience, dividing the day from the night.

And now, dearest, we return, across the crackling sea
Like two blind birds to their wall,
To their nest in a distant spring:

Because love cannot always fly without resting,
Our lives return to the wall, to the rocks of the sea:
Our kisses head back home where they belong.

Pablo Neruda

Lovely One

Lovely one,
Just as on the cool stone
Of the spring, the water
Opens a wide flash of foam,
So is the smile of your face,
Lovely one.

Lovely one,
With delicate hands and slender feet
Like a silver pony,
Walking, flower of the world,
Thus I see you,
Lovely one.

Lovely one,
With a nest of copper entangled
On your head, a nest
The color of dark honey
Where my heart burns and rests,
Lovely one.

Lovely one,
Your eyes are too big for your face,
Your eyes are too big for the earth.

There are countries, there are rivers,
In your eyes,
My country is your eyes,
I walk through them,
They light the world
Through which I walk,
Lovely one.

Lovely one,
Your breasts are like two loaves made
Of grainy earth and golden moon,
Lovely one.

Lovely one,

Your waist,
My arm shaped it like a river when
It flowed a thousand years through your sweet body,
Lovely one.

Lovely one,
There is nothing like your hips,
Perhaps earth has
In some hidden place
The curve and the fragrance of your body,
Perhaps in some place,
Lovely one.

Lovely one, my lovely one,
Your voice, your skin, your nails,
Lovely one, my lovely one,
Your being, your light, your shadow,
Lovely one,
All that is mine, lovely one,
All that is mine, my dear,
When you walk or rest,
When you sing or sleep,
When you suffer or dream,
Always,
When you are near or far,
Always,
You are mine, my lovely one,
Always.

Pablo Neruda

Luminous Mind, Bright Devil

Luminous mind, bright devil
of absolute clusterings, of upright noon---:
here we are at last, alone, without loneliness,
far from the savage city's delirium.

Just as a pure line describes the dove's curve,
as the fire honors and nourishes peace,
so you and I made this heavenly outcome.
The mind and love live naked in this house.

Furious dreams, rivers of bitter certainty,
decisions harder than the dreams of a hammer
flowed into the lovers' double cup,

until those twins were lifted into balance
on the scale: the mind and love, like two wings.
---So this transparency was built.

Pablo Neruda

Lxxxiv From: 'cien Sonetos De Amor'

One time more, my love, the net of light extinguishes
work, wheels, flames, boredoms and farewells,
and we surrender the swaying wheat to night,
the wheat that noon stole from earth and light.
The moon alone in the midst of its clear page
sustains the pillars of Heaven's Bay,
the room acquires the slowness of gold,
and your hands go here and there preparing night.
O love, O night. O cupola ringed by a river
of impenetrable water in the shadows of Heaven,
that raises and drowns its tempestuous orbs,
until we are only the one dark space
a glass into which fall celestial ashes,
one drop in the flow of a vast slow river

Pablo Neruda

Magellanic Penguin

Neither clown nor child nor black
nor white but verticle
and a questioning innocence
dressed in night and snow:
The mother smiles at the sailor,
the fisherman at the astronaut,
but the child child does not smile
when he looks at the bird child,
and from the disorderly ocean
the immaculate passenger
emerges in snowy mourning.

I was without doubt the child bird
there in the cold archipelagoes
when it looked at me with its eyes,
with its ancient ocean eyes:
it had neither arms nor wings
but hard little oars
on its sides:
it was as old as the salt;
the age of moving water,
and it looked at me from its age:
since then I know I do not exist;
I am a worm in the sand.

the reasons for my respect
remained in the sand:
the religious bird
did not need to fly,
did not need to sing,
and through its form was visible
its wild soul bled salt:
as if a vein from the bitter sea
had been broken.

Penguin, static traveler,
deliberate priest of the cold,
I salute your vertical salt
and envy your plumed pride.

Pablo Neruda

Nothing But Death

There are cemeteries that are lonely,
graves full of bones that do not make a sound,
the heart moving through a tunnel,
in it darkness, darkness, darkness,
like a shipwreck we die going into ourselves,
as though we were drowning inside our hearts,
as though we lived falling out of the skin into the soul.

And there are corpses,
feet made of cold and sticky clay,
death is inside the bones,
like a barking where there are no dogs,
coming out from bells somewhere, from graves somewhere,
growing in the damp air like tears of rain.

Sometimes I see alone
coffins under sail,
embarking with the pale dead, with women that have dead hair,
with bakers who are as white as angels,
and pensive young girls married to notary publics,
caskets sailing up the vertical river of the dead,
the river of dark purple,
moving upstream with sails filled out by the sound of death,
filled by the sound of death which is silence.

Death arrives among all that sound
like a shoe with no foot in it, like a suit with no man in it,
comes and knocks, using a ring with no stone in it, with no
finger in it,
comes and shouts with no mouth, with no tongue, with no
throat.

Nevertheless its steps can be heard
and its clothing makes a hushed sound, like a tree.

I'm not sure, I understand only a little, I can hardly see,
but it seems to me that its singing has the color of damp violets,
of violets that are at home in the earth,
because the face of death is green,
and the look death gives is green,

with the penetrating dampness of a violet leaf
and the somber color of embittered winter.

But death also goes through the world dressed as a broom,
lapping the floor, looking for dead bodies,
death is inside the broom,
the broom is the tongue of death looking for corpses,
it is the needle of death looking for thread.

Death is inside the folding cots:
it spends its life sleeping on the slow mattresses,
in the black blankets, and suddenly breathes out:
it blows out a mournful sound that swells the sheets,
and the beds go sailing toward a port
where death is waiting, dressed like an admiral.

Translated by Robert Bly

Pablo Neruda

Oda Al Tomate

La calle
se llenó de tomates,
mediodía,
verano,
la luz
se parte
en dos
mitades
de tomate,
corre
por las calles
el jugo.
En diciembre
se desata
el tomate,
invade
las cocinas,
entra por los almuerzos,
se sienta
reposado
en los aparadores,
entre los vasos,
las matequilleras,
los saleros azules.
Tiene
luz propia,
majestad benigna.
Debemos, por desgracia,
asesinarlo:
se hunde
el cuchillo
en su pulpa viviente,
es una roja
viscera,
un sol
fresco,
profundo,
inagotable,
llena las ensaladas

de Chile,
se casa alegremente
con la clara cebolla,
y para celebrarlo
se deja
caer
aceite,
hijo
esencial del olivo,
sobre sus hemisferios entreabiertos,
agrega
la pimienta
su fragancia,
la sal su magnetismo:
son las bodas
del día
el perejil
levanta
banderines,
las papas
hierven vigorosamente,
el asado
golpea
con su aroma
en la puerta,
es hora!
vamos!
y sobre
la mesa, en la cintura
del verano,
el tomate,
astro de tierra,
estrella
repetida
y fecunda,
nos muestra
sus circunvoluciones,
sus canales,
la insigne plenitud
y la abundancia
sin hueso,
sin coraza,

sin escamas ni espinas,
nos entrega
el regalo
de su color fogoso
y la totalidad de su frescura.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To A Large Tuna In The Market

Among the market greens,
a bullet
from the ocean
depths,
a swimming
projectile,
I saw you,
dead.

All around you
were lettuces,
sea foam
of the earth,
carrots,
grapes,
but
of the ocean
truth,
of the unknown,
of the
unfathomable
shadow, the
depths
of the sea,
the abyss,
only you had survived,
a pitch-black, varnished
witness
to deepest night.

Only you, well-aimed
dark bullet
from the abyss,
mangled
at one tip,
but constantly
reborn,
at anchor in the current,
winged fins

windmilling
in the swift
flight
of
the
marine
shadow,
a mourning arrow,
dart of the sea,
olive, oily fish.
I saw you dead,
a deceased king
of my own ocean,
green
assault, silver
submarine fir,
seed
of seaquakes,
now
only dead remains,
yet
in all the market
yours
was the only
purposeful form
amid
the bewildering rout
of nature;
amid the fragile greens
you were
a solitary ship,
armed
among the vegetables
fin and prow black and oiled,
as if you were still
the vessel of the wind,
the one and only
pure
ocean
machine:
unflawed, navigating
the waters of death.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To A Naked Beauty

With chaste heart, and pure
eyes
I celebrate you, my beauty,
restraining my blood
so that the line
surges and follows
your contour,
and you bed yourself in my verse,
as in woodland, or wave-spume:
earth's perfume,
sea's music.

Nakedly beautiful,
whether it is your feet, arching
at a primal touch
of sound or breeze,
or your ears,
tiny spiral shells
from the splendour of America's oceans.
Your breasts also,
of equal fullness, overflowing
with the living light
and, yes,
winged
your eyelids of silken corn
that disclose
or enclose
the deep twin landscapes of your eyes.

The line of your back
separating you
falls away into paler regions
then surges
to the smooth hemispheres
of an apple,
and goes splitting
your loveliness
into two pillars
of burnt gold, pure alabaster,

to be lost in the twin clusters of your feet,
from which, once more, lifts and takes fire
the double tree of your symmetry:
flower of fire, open circle of candles,
swollen fruit raised
over the meeting of earth and ocean.

Your body - from what substances
agate, quartz, ears of wheat,
did it flow, was it gathered,
rising like bread
in the warmth,
and signalling hills
silvered,
valleys of a single petal, sweetnesses
of velvet depth,
until the pure, fine, form of woman
thickened
and rested there?

It is not so much light that falls
over the world
extended by your body
its suffocating snow,
as brightness, pouring itself out of you,
as if you were
burning inside.

Under your skin the moon is alive

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Age

I don't believe in age.
All old people
carry
in their eyes,
a child,
and children,
at times
observe us with the
eyes of wise ancients.
Shall we measure
life
in meters or kilometers
or months?
How far since you were born?
How long
must you wander
until
like all men
instead of walking on its surface
we rest below the earth?
To the man, to the woman
who utilized their
energies, goodness, strength,
anger, love, tenderness,
to those who truly
alive
flowered,
and in their sensuality matured,
let us not apply
the measure
of a time
that may be
something else, a mineral
mantle, a solar
bird, a flower,
something, maybe,
but not a measure.
Time, metal
or bird, long

petiolate flower,
stretch
through
man's life,
shower him
with blossoms
and with
bright
water
or with hidden sun.
I proclaim you
road,
not shroud,
a pristine
ladder
with treads
of air,
a suit lovingly
renewed
through springtimes
around the world.
Now,
time, I roll you up,
I deposit you in my
bait box
and I am off to fish
with your long line
the fishes of the dawn!

translated from the Spanish by Margaret Sayers Peden

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Bird Watching

Now

Let's look for birds!

The tall iron branches
in the forest,

The dense
fertility on the ground.

The world

is wet.

A dewdrop or raindrop
shines,

a diminutive star
among the leaves.

The morning time

mother earth

is cool.

The air

is like a river

which shakes

the silence.

It smells of rosemary,

of space

and roots.

Overhead,

a crazy song.

It's a bird.

How

out of its throat

smaller than a finger

can there fall the waters

of its song?

Luminous ease!

Invisible

power

torrent

of music

in the leaves.

Sacred conversations!

Clean and fresh washed

is this

day resounding
like a green dulcimer.
I bury
my shoes
in the mud,
jump over rivulets.
A thorn
bites me and a gust
of air like a crystal
wave
splits up inside my chest.
Where
are the birds?
Maybe it was
that
rustling in the foliage
or that fleeting pellet
of brown velvet
or that displaced
perfume? That
leaf that let loose cinnamon smell
- was that a bird? That dust
from an irritated magnolia
or that fruit
which fell with a thump -
was that a flight?
Oh, invisible little
critters
birds of the devil
with their ringing
with their useless feathers.
I only want
to caress them,
to see them resplendent.
I don't want
to see under glass
the embalmed lightning.
I want to see them living.
I want to touch their gloves
of real hide,
which they never forget in
the branches

and to converse with
them
sitting on my shoulders
although they may leave
me like certain statues
undeservedly whitewashed.
Impossible.
You can't touch them.
You can hear them
like a heavenly
rustle or movement.
They converse
with precision.
They repeat
their observations.
They brag
of how much they do.
They comment
on everything that exists.
They learn
certain sciences
like hydrography.
and by a sure science
they know
where there are harvests
of grain

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Broken Things

Things get broken
at home
like they were pushed
by an invisible, deliberate smasher.
It's not my hands
or yours
It wasn't the girls
with their hard fingernails
or the motion of the planet.
It wasn't anything or anybody
It wasn't the wind
It wasn't the orange-colored noontime
Or night over the earth
It wasn't even the nose or the elbow
Or the hips getting bigger
or the ankle
or the air.
The plate broke, the lamp fell
All the flower pots tumbled over
one by one. That pot
which overflowed with scarlet
in the middle of October,
it got tired from all the violets
and another empty one
rolled round and round and round
all through winter
until it was only the powder
of a flowerpot,
a broken memory, shining dust.

And that clock
whose sound
was
the voice of our lives,
the secret
thread of our weeks,
which released
one by one, so many hours
for honey and silence

for so many births and jobs,
that clock also
fell
and its delicate blue guts
vibrated
among the broken glass
its wide heart
unsprung.

Life goes on grinding up
glass, wearing out clothes
making fragments
breaking down
forms
and what lasts through time
is like an island on a ship in the sea,
perishable
surrounded by dangerous fragility
by merciless waters and threats.

Let's put all our treasures together
-- the clocks, plates, cups cracked by the cold --
into a sack and carry them
to the sea
and let our possessions sink
into one alarming breaker
that sounds like a river.
May whatever breaks
be reconstructed by the sea
with the long labor of its tides.
So many useless things
which nobody broke
but which got broken anyway

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Clothes

Every morning you wait,
clothes, over a chair,
to fill yourself with
my vanity, my love,
my hope, my body.
Barely
risen from sleep,
I relinquish the water,
enter your sleeves,
my legs look for
the hollows of your legs,
and so embraced
by your indefatigable faithfulness
I rise, to tread the grass,
enter poetry,
consider through the windows,
the things,
the men, the women,
the deeds and the fights
go on forming me,
go on making me face things
working my hands,
opening my eyes,
using my mouth,
and so,
clothes,
I too go forming you,
extending your elbows,
snapping your threads,
and so your life expands
in the image of my life.
In the wind
you billow and snap
as if you were my soul,
at bad times
you cling
to my bones,
vacant, for the night,
darkness, sleep

populate with their phantoms
your wings and mine.
I wonder
if one day
a bullet
from the enemy
will leave you stained with my blood
and then
you will die with me
or one day
not quite
so dramatic
but simple,
you will fall ill,
clothes,
with me,
grow old
with me, with my body
and joined
we will enter
the earth.
Because of this
each day
I greet you
with reverence and then
you embrace me and I forget you,
because we are one
and we will go on
facing the wind, in the night,
the streets or the fight,
a single body,
one day, one day, some day, still.

Pablo Neruda

Ode to Hope

Oceanic dawn
at the center
of my life,
waves like grapes,
the sky's solitude,
you fill me
and flood
the complete sea,
the undiminished sky,
tempo
and space,
sea foam's white
battalions,
the orange earth,
the sun's
fiery waist
in agony,
so many
gifts and talents,
birds soaring into their dreams,
and the sea, the sea,
suspended
aroma,
chorus of rich, resonant salt,
and meanwhile,
we men,
touch the water,
struggling,
and hoping,
we touch the sea,
hoping.

And the waves tell the firm coast:
'Everything will be fulfilled.'

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Ironing

Poetry is white:
it comes from water swathed in drops,
it wrinkles and gathers,
this planet's skin has to spread out,
the sea's whiteness has to be ironed out,
and the hands keep moving,
the sacred surfaces get smoothed,
and things are done this way:
the hands make the world every day,
fire conjoins with steel,
linen, canvas, and cotton arrive
from the scuffles in the laundries,
and from light a dove is born:
chastity returns out of the foam.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Maize

America, from a grain
of maize you grew
to crown
with spacious lands
the ocean foam.
A grain of maize was your geography.
From the grain
a green lance rose,
was covered with gold,
to grace the heights
of Peru with its yellow tassels.

But, poet, let
history rest in its shroud;
praise with your lyre
the grain in its granaries:
sing to the simple maize in the kitchen.

First, a fine beard
fluttered in the field
above the tender teeth
of the young ear.
Then the husks parted
and fruitfulness burst its veils
of pale papyrus
that grains of laughter
might fall upon the earth.
To the stone,
in your journey,
you returned.
Not to the terrible stone,
the bloody
triangle of Mexican death,
but to the grinding stone,
sacred
stone of your kitchens.
There, milk and matter,
strength-giving, nutritious
cornmeal pulp,

you were worked and patted
by the wondrous hands
of dark-skinned women.

Wherever you fall, maize,
whether into the
splendid pot of partridge, or among
country beans, you light up
the meal and lend it
your virginal flavor.

Oh, to bite into
the steaming ear beside the sea
of distant song and deepest waltz.
To boil you
as your aroma
spreads through
blue sierras.

But is there
no end
to your treasure?

In chalky, barren lands
bordered
by the sea, along
the rocky Chilean coast,
at times
only your radiance
reaches the empty
table of the miner.

Your light, your cornmeal, your hope
pervades America's solitudes,
and to hunger
your lances
are enemy legions.

Within your husks,
like gentle kernels,
our sober provincial
children's hearts were nurtured,

until life began
to shuck us from the ear.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To My Socks

Mara Mori brought me
a pair of socks
which she knitted herself
with her shepherd's hands,
two socks as soft as rabbits.
I slipped my feet into them
as if they were two cases
knitted with threads of twilight and goatskin,
Violent socks,
my feet were two fish made of wool,
two long sharks
sea blue, shot through
by one golden thread,
two immense blackbirds,
two cannons,
my feet were honored in this way
by these heavenly socks.
They were so handsome for the first time
my feet seemed to me unacceptable
like two decrepit firemen,
firemen unworthy of that woven fire,
of those glowing socks.

Nevertheless, I resisted the sharp temptation
to save them somewhere as schoolboys
keep fireflies,
as learned men collect
sacred texts,
I resisted the mad impulse to put them
in a golden cage and each day give them
birdseed and pieces of pink melon.
Like explorers in the jungle
who hand over the very rare green deer
to the spit and eat it with remorse,
I stretched out my feet and pulled on
the magnificent socks and then my shoes.

The moral of my ode is this:
beauty is twice beauty

and what is good is doubly good
when it is a matter of two socks
made of wool in winter.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Sadness

Sadness, scarab
with seven crippled feet,
spiderweb egg,
scramble-brained rat,
bitch's skeleton:
No entry here.
Don't come in.
Go away.
Go back
south with your umbrella,
go back
north with your serpent's teeth.
A poet lives here.
No sadness may
cross this threshold.
Through these windows
comes the breath of the world,
fresh red roses,
flags embroidered with
the victories of the people.
No.
No entry.
Flap
your bat's wings,
I will trample the feathers
that fall from your mantle,
I will sweep the bits and pieces
of your carcass to
the four corners of the wind,
I will wring your neck,
I will stitch your eyelids shut,
I will sew your shroud,
sadness, and bury your rodent bones
beneath the springtime of an apple tree.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Salt

This salt
in the salt cellar
I once saw in the salt mines.
I know
you won't
believe me
but
it sings
salt sings, the skin
of the salt mines
sings
with a mouth smothered
by the earth.
I shivered in those
solitudes
when I heard
the voice
of
the salt
in the desert.
Near Antofagasta
the nitrous
pampa
resounds:
a
broken
voice,
a mournful
song.

In its caves
the salt moans, mountain
of buried light,
translucent cathedral,
crystal of the sea, oblivion
of the waves.
And then on every table
in the world,
salt,

we see your piquant
powder
sprinkling
vital light
upon
our food.
Preserver
of the ancient
holds of ships,
discoverer
on
the high seas,
earliest
sailor
of the unknown, shifting
byways of the foam.
Dust of the sea, in you
the tongue receives a kiss
from ocean night:
taste imparts to every seasoned
dish your ocean essence;
the smallest,
miniature
wave from the saltcellar
reveals to us
more than domestic whiteness;
in it, we taste infinitude.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To The Artichoke

The artichoke
With a tender heart
Dressed up like a warrior,
Standing at attention, it built
A small helmet
Under its scales
It remained
Unshakeable,
By its side
The crazy vegetables
Uncurled
Their tendrills and leaf-crowns,
Throbbing bulbs,
In the sub-soil
The carrot
With its red mustaches
Was sleeping,
The grapevine
Hung out to dry its branches
Through which the wine will rise,
The cabbage
Dedicated itself
To trying on skirts,
The oregano
To perfuming the world,
And the sweet
Artichoke
There in the garden,
Dressed like a warrior,
Burnished
Like a proud
Pomegrante.
And one day
Side by side
In big wicker baskets
Walking through the market
To realize their dream
The artichoke army
In formation.

Never was it so military
Like on parade.
The men
In their white shirts
Among the vegetables
Were
The Marshals
Of the artichokes
Lines in close order
Command voices,
And the bang
Of a falling box.

But
Then
Maria
Comes
With her basket
She chooses
An artichoke,
She's not afraid of it.
She examines it, she observes it
Up against the light like it was an egg,
She buys it,
She mixes it up
In her handbag
With a pair of shoes
With a cabbage head and a
Bottle
Of vinegar
Until
She enters the kitchen
And submerges it in a pot.

Thus ends
In peace
This career
Of the armed vegetable
Which is called an artichoke,
Then
Scale by scale,
We strip off

The delicacy
And eat
The peaceful mush
Of its green heart.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To The Book

When I close a book
I open life.
I hear
faltering cries
among harbours.
Copper ignots
slide down sand-pits
to Tocopilla.
Night time.
Among the islands
our ocean
throbs with fish,
touches the feet, the thighs,
the chalk ribs
of my country.
The whole of night
clings to its shores, by dawn
it wakes up singing
as if it had excited a guitar.

The ocean's surge is calling.
The wind
calls me
and Rodriguez calls,
and Jose Antonio--
I got a telegram
from the "Mine" Union
and the one I love
(whose name I won't let out)
expects me in Bucalemu.

No book has been able
to wrap me in paper,
to fill me up
with typography,
with heavenly imprints
or was ever able
to bind my eyes,
I come out of books to people orchards

with the hoarse family of my song,
to work the burning metals
or to eat smoked beef
by mountain firesides.
I love adventurous
books,
books of forest or snow,
depth or sky
but hate
the spider book
in which thought
has laid poisonous wires
to trap the juvenile
and circling fly.
Book, let me go.
I won't go clothed
in volumes,
I don't come out
of collected works,
my poems
have not eaten poems--
they devour
exciting happenings,
feed on rough weather,
and dig their food
out of earth and men.
I'm on my way
with dust in my shoes
free of mythology:
send books back to their shelves,
I'm going down into the streets.
I learned about life
from life itself,
love I learned in a single kiss
and could teach no one anything
except that I have lived
with something in common among men,
when fighting with them,
when saying all their say in my song.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To The Cat

The animals were imperfect,
long-tailed,
unfortunate in their heads.
Little by little they
put themselves together,
making themselves a landscape,
acquiring spots, grace, flight.
The cat,
only the cat
appeared complete and proud:
he was born completely finished,
walking alone and knowing what he wanted.

Man wants to be fish or fowl,
the snake would like to have wings
the dog is a disoriented lion,
the engineer would like to be a poet,
the fly studies to be a swift,
the poet tries to imitate the fly,
but the cat
only wants to be a cat
and any cat is a cat
from his whiskers to his tail,
from his hopeful vision of a rat
to the real thing,
from the night to his golden eyes.

There is no unity
like him,
the moon and the flower
do not have such context:
he is just one thing
like the sun or the topaz,
and the elastic line of his contours
is firm and subtle like
the line of a ship's prow.
His yellow eyes
have just one
groove

to coin the gold of night time.

Oh little
emperor without a sphere of influence
conqueror without a country,
smallest living-room tiger, nuptial
sultan of the sky,
of the erotic roof-tiles,
the wind of love
in the storm
you claim
when you pass
and place
four delicate feet
on the ground,
smelling,
distrusting
all that is terrestrial,
because everything
is too unclean
for the immaculate foot of the cat.

Oh independent wild beast
of the house
arrogant
vestige of the night,
lazy, gymnastic
and alien,
very deep cat,
secret policeman
of bedrooms,
insignia
of a
disappeared velvet,
surely there is no
enigma
in your manner,
perhaps you are not a mystery,
everyone knows of you
and you belong
to the least mysterious inhabitant,
perhaps everyone believes it,

everyone believes himself the owner,
proprietor,
uncle
of a cat,
companion,
colleague,
disciple
or friend
of his cat.

Not me.

I do not subscribe.

I do not know the cat.

I know it all, life and its archipelago,

the sea and the incalculable city,

botany,

the gynecium and its frenzies,

the plus and the minus of mathematics,

the volcanic frauds of the world,

the unreal shell of the crocodile,

the unknown kindness of the fireman,

the blue atavism of the priest,

but I cannot decipher a cat.

My reason slips on his indifference,

his eyes have golden numbers.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Tomatoes

The street
filled with tomatoes
midday,
summer,
light is
halved
like
a
tomato,
its juice
runs
through the streets.
In December,
unabated,
the tomato
invades
the kitchen,
it enters at lunchtime,
takes
its ease
on countertops,
among glasses,
butter dishes,
blue saltcellars.
It sheds
its own light,
benign majesty.
Unfortunately, we must
murder it:
the knife
sinks
into living flesh,
red
viscera,
a cool
sun,
profound,
inexhaustible,
populates the salads

of Chile,
happily, it is wed
to the clear onion,
and to celebrate the union
we
pour
oil,
essential
child of the olive,
onto its halved hemispheres,
pepper
adds
its fragrance,
salt, its magnetism;
it is the wedding
of the day,
parsley
hoists
its flag,
potatoes
bubble vigorously,
the aroma
of the roast
knocks
at the door,
it's time!
come on!
and, on
the table, at the midpoint
of summer,
the tomato,
star of earth,
recurrent
and fertile
star,
displays
its convolutions,
its canals,
its remarkable amplitude
and abundance,
no pit,
no husk,

no leaves or thorns,
the tomato offers
its gift
of fiery color
and cool completeness.

Pablo Neruda

Ode To Wine

Day-colored wine,
night-colored wine,
wine with purple feet
or wine with topaz blood,
wine,
starry child
of earth,
wine, smooth
as a golden sword,
soft
as lascivious velvet,
wine, spiral-seashelled
and full of wonder,
amorous,
marine;
never has one goblet contained you,
one song, one man,
you are choral, gregarious,
at the least, you must be shared.
At times
you feed on mortal
memories;
your wave carries us
from tomb to tomb,
stonecutter of icy sepulchers,
and we weep
transitory tears;
your
glorious
spring dress
is different,
blood rises through the shoots,
wind incites the day,
nothing is left
of your immutable soul.
Wine
stirs the spring, happiness
bursts through the earth like a plant,
walls crumble,

and rocky cliffs,
chasms close,
as song is born.
A jug of wine, and thou beside me
in the wilderness,
sang the ancient poet.
Let the wine pitcher
add to the kiss of love its own.

My darling, suddenly
the line of your hip
becomes the brimming curve
of the wine goblet,
your breast is the grape cluster,
your nipples are the grapes,
the gleam of spirits lights your hair,
and your navel is a chaste seal
stamped on the vessel of your belly,
your love an inexhaustible
cascade of wine,
light that illuminates my senses,
the earthly splendor of life.

But you are more than love,
the fiery kiss,
the heat of fire,
more than the wine of life;
you are
the community of man,
translucency,
chorus of discipline,
abundance of flowers.
I like on the table,
when we're speaking,
the light of a bottle
of intelligent wine.
Drink it,
and remember in every
drop of gold,
in every topaz glass,
in every purple ladle,
that autumn labored

to fill the vessel with wine;
and in the ritual of his office,
let the simple man remember
to think of the soil and of his duty,
to propagate the canticle of the wine.

Pablo Neruda

Poesia

Y fue a esa edad... Llegó la poesía
a buscarme. No sé, no sé de dónde
salió, de invierno o río.
No sé cómo ni cuándo,
no, no eran voces, no eran
palabras, ni silencio,
pero desde una calle me llamaba,
desde las ramas de la noche,
de pronto entre los otros,
entre fuegos violentos
o regresando solo,
allí estaba sin rostro
y me tocaba.

Yo no sabía qué decir, mi boca
no sabía
nombrar,
mis ojos eran ciegos,
y algo golpeaba en mi alma,
fiebre o alas perdidas,
y me fui haciendo solo,
descifrando
aquella quemadura,
y escribí la primera línea vaga,
vaga, sin cuerpo, pura
tontería,
pura sabiduría
del que no sabe nada,
y vi de pronto
el cielo
desgranado
y abierto,
planetas,
plantaciones palpitantes,
la sombra perforada,
acribillada
por flechas, fuego y flores,
la noche arrolladora, el universo.

Y yo, mínimo ser,
ebrio del gran vacío
constelado,
a semejanza, a imagen
del misterio,
me sentí parte pura
del abismo,
rodé con las estrellas,
mi corazón se desató en el viento.

Pablo Neruda

Poetry

And it was at that age ... Poetry arrived
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
it came from, from winter or a river.
I don't know how or when,
no they were not voices, they were not
words, nor silence,
but from a street I was summoned,
from the branches of night,
abruptly from the others,
among violent fires
or returning alone,
there I was without a face
and it touched me.

I did not know what to say, my mouth
had no way
with names,
my eyes were blind,
and something started in my soul,
fever or forgotten wings,
and I made my own way,
deciphering
that fire,
and I wrote the first faint line,
faint, without substance, pure
nonsense,
pure wisdom
of someone who knows nothing,
and suddenly I saw
the heavens
unfastened
and open,
planets,
palpitating plantations,
shadow perforated,
riddled
with arrows, fire and flowers,
the winding night, the universe.

And I, infinitesimal being,
drunk with the great starry
void,
likeness, image of
mystery,
felt myself a pure part
of the abyss,
I wheeled with the stars,
my heart broke loose on the wind.

Pablo Neruda

Poet's Obligation

To whoever is not listening to the sea
this Friday morning, to whoever is cooped up
in house or office, factory or woman
or street or mine or harsh prison cell;
to him I come, and, without speaking or looking,
I arrive and open the door of his prison,
and a vibration starts up, vague and insistent,
a great fragment of thunder sets in motion
the rumble of the planet and the foam,
the raucous rivers of the ocean flood,
the star vibrates swiftly in its corona,
and the sea is beating, dying and continuing.

So, drawn on by my destiny,
I ceaselessly must listen to and keep
the sea's lamenting in my awareness,
I must feel the crash of the hard water
and gather it up in a perpetual cup
so that, wherever those in prison may be,
wherever they suffer the autumn's castigation,
I may be there with an errant wave,
I may move, passing through windows,
and hearing me, eyes will glance upward
saying 'How can I reach the sea?'
And I shall broadcast, saying nothing,
the starry echoes of the wave,
a breaking up of foam and quicksand,
a rustling of salt withdrawing,
the grey cry of the sea-birds on the coast.

So, through me, freedom and the sea
will make their answer to the shuttered heart.

Pablo Neruda

Poor Creatures

What it takes on this planet,
to make love to each other in peace.
Everyone pries under your sheets,
everyone interferes with your loving.
They say terrible things about a man and a woman,
who after much milling about,
all sorts of compunctions,
do something unique,
they both lie with each other in one bed.
I ask myself whether frogs are so furtive,
or sneeze as they please.
Whether they whisper to each other in swamps about illegitimate frogs,
or the joys of amphibious living.
I ask myself if birds single out enemy birds,
or bulls gossip with bullocks before they go out in public with cows.
Even the roads have eyes and the parks their police.
Hotels spy on their guests,
windows name names,
canons and squadrons debark on missions to liquidate love.
All those ears and those jaws working incessantly,
till a man and his girl
have to raise their climax,
full tilt,
on a bicycle.

Pablo Neruda

Poor Fellows

What it takes on this planet,
to make love to each other in peace.
Everyone pries under your sheets,
everyone interferes with your loving.
They say terrible things about a man and a woman,
who after much milling about,
all sorts of compunctions,
do something unique,
they both lie with each other in one bed.
I ask myself whether frogs are so furtive,
or sneeze as they please.
Whether they whisper to each other in swamps about illegitimate frogs,
or the joys of amphibious living.
I ask myself if birds single out enemy birds,
or bulls gossip with bullocks before they go out in public with cows.
Even the roads have eyes and the parks their police.
Hotels spy on their guests,
windows name names,
canons and squadrons debark on missions to liquidate love.
All those ears and those jaws working incessantly,
till a man and his girl
have to raise their climax,
full tilt,
on a bicycle.

Pablo Neruda

Potter

Your whole body has
a fullness or a gentleness destined for me.

When I move my hand up
I find in each place a dove
that was seeking me, as
if they had, love, made you of clay
for my own potter's hands.

Your knees, your breasts,
your waist
are missing parts of me like the hollow
of a thirsty earth
from which they broke off
a form,
and together
we are complete like a single river,
like a single grain of sand.

Pablo Neruda

Puedo Escribir

Puedo escribir los versos màs tristes esta noche.

Escribir, por ejemplo: 'La noche està estrellada,
y tiritan, azules, los astros, a lo lejos.'

El viento de la noche gira en el cielo y canta.

Puedo escribir los versos màs tristes esta noche.
Yo la quise, y a veces ella tambièn me quiso.

En las noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos.
La besè tantas veces bajo el cielo infinito.

Ella me quiso, a veces yo tambièn la quería.
Còmo no haber amado sus grandes ojos fijos.

Puedo escribir los versos màs tristes esta noche.
Pensar que no la tengo. Sentir que la he perdido.

Oir la noche inmensa, màs inmensa sin ella.
Y el verso cae al alma como al pasto el rocío.

Què importa que mi amor no pudiera guardarla.
La noche està estrellada y ella no està conmigo.

Eso es todo. A lo lejos alguien canta. A lo lejos.
Mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Como para acercarla mi mirada la busca.
Mi corazòn la busca, y ella no està conmigo.

La misma noche que hace blanquear los mismos àrboles.
Nosotros, los de entonces, ya no somos los mismos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero cuànto la quise.
Mi voz buscaba el viento para tocar su oído.

De otro. Serà de otro. Como antes de mis besos.
Su voz, su cuerpo claro. Sus ojos infinitos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero tal vez la quiero.
Es tan corto el amor, y es tan largo el olvido.

Porque en noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos,
mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Aunque ésta sea el último dolor que ella me causa,
y éstos sean los últimos versos que yo le escribo.

Pablo Neruda

Saddest Poem

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

Write, for instance: "The night is full of stars,
and the stars, blue, shiver in the distance."

The night wind whirls in the sky and sings.

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like this, I held her in my arms.
I kissed her so many times under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her.
How could I not have loved her large, still eyes?

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
To think I don't have her. To feel that I've lost her.

To hear the immense night, more immense without her.
And the poem falls to the soul as dew to grass.

What does it matter that my love couldn't keep her.
The night is full of stars and she is not with me.

That's all. Far away, someone sings. Far away.
My soul is lost without her.

As if to bring her near, my eyes search for her.
My heart searches for her and she is not with me.

The same night that whitens the same trees.
We, we who were, we are the same no longer.

I no longer love her, true, but how much I loved her.
My voice searched the wind to touch her ear.

Someone else's. She will be someone else's. As she once
belonged to my kisses.

Her voice, her light body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, true, but perhaps I love her.
Love is so short and oblivion so long.

Because on nights like this I held her in my arms,
my soul is lost without her.

Although this may be the last pain she causes me,
and this may be the last poem I write for her.

Pablo Neruda

So That You Will Hear Me

So that you will hear me
my words
sometimes grow thin
as the tracks of the gulls on the beaches.

Necklace, drunken bell
for your hands smooth as grapes.

And I watch my words from a long way off.
They are more yours than mine.
They climb on my old suffering like ivy.

It climbs the same way on damp walls.
You are to blame for this cruel sport.
They are fleeing from my dark lair.
You fill everything, you fill everything.

Before you they peopled the solitude that you occupy,
and they are more used to my sadness than you are.

Now I want them to say what I want to say to you
to make you hear as I want you to hear me.

The wind of anguish still hauls on them as usual.
Sometimes hurricanes of dreams still knock them over.
You listen to other voices in my painful voice.

Lament of old mouths, blood of old supplications.
Love me, companion. Don't forsake me. Follow me.
Follow me, companion, on this wave of anguish.

But my words become stained with your love.
You occupy everything, you occupy everything.

I am making them into an endless necklace
for your white hands, smooth as grapes.

Pablo Neruda

Some Beasts

It was the twilight of the iguana:

From a rainbowed battlement,
a tongue like a javelin
lunging in verdure;
an ant heap treading the jungle,
monastic, on musical feet;
the guanaco, oxygen-fine
in the high places swarthed with distances,
cobbling his feet into gold;
the llama of scrupulous eye
the widens his gaze on the dews
of a delicate world.

A monkey is weaving
a thread of insatiable lusts
on the margins of morning:
he topples a pollen-fall,
startles the violet-flight
of the butterfly, wings on the Muzo.

It was the night of the alligator:
snouts moving out of the slime,
in original darkness, the pullulations,
a clatter of armour, opaque
in the sleep of the bog,
turning back to the chalk of the sources.

The jaguar touches the leaves
with his phosphorous absence,
the puma speeds to his covert
in the blaze of his hungers,
his eyeballs, a jungle of alcohol,
burn in his head.

Pablo Neruda

Sonata

Neither the heart cut by a piece of glass
in a wasteland of thorns
nor the atrocious waters seen in the corners
of certain houses, waters like eyelids and eyes
can capture your waist in my hands
when my heart lifts its oaks
towards your unbreakable thread of snow.

Nocturnal sugar, spirit
of the crowns,
ransomed
human blood, your kisses
send into exile
and a stroke of water, with remnants of the sea,
neats on the silences that wait for you
surrounding the worn chairs, wearing out doors.

Nights with bright spindles,
divided, material, nothing
but voice, nothing but
naked every day.

Over your breasts of motionless current,
over your legs of firmness and water,
over the permanence and the pride
of your naked hair
I want to be, my love, now that the tears are
thrown
into the raucous baskets where they accumulate,
I want to be, my love, alone with a syllable
of mangled silver, alone with a tip
of your breast of snow.

Pablo Neruda

Soneto Xvii

No te amo como si fueras rosa de sal, topacio
o flecha de claveles que propagan el fuego:
te amo como se aman ciertas cosas oscuras,
secretamente, entre la sombra y el alma.

Te amo como la planta que no florece y lleva
dentro de sí, escondida, la luz de aquellas flores,
y gracias a tu amor vive oscuro en mi cuerpo
el apretado aroma que ascendió de la tierra.

Te amo sin saber cómo, ni cuándo, ni de dónde,
te amo directamente sin problemas ni orgullo:
así te amo porque no sé amar de otra manera,

sino así de este modo en que no soy ni eres,
tan cerca que tu mano sobre mi pecho es mía,
tan cerca que se cierran tus ojos con mi sueño.

Pablo Neruda

Song Of Despair

The memory of you emerges from the night around me.
The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.
It is the hour of departure, oh deserted one!

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart.
Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked.

In you the wars and the flights accumulated.
From you the wings of the song birds rose.

You swallowed everything, like distance.
Like the sea, like time. In you everything sank!

It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.

Pilot's dread, fury of blind driver,
turbulent drunkenness of love, in you everything sank!

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded.
Lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

You girdled sorrow, you clung to desire,
sadness stunned you, in you everything sank!

I made the wall of shadow draw back,
beyond desire and act, I walked on.

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost,
I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

Like a jar you housed infinite tenderness.
and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar.

There was the black solitude of the islands,
and there, woman of love, your arms took me in.

There was thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit.
There were grief and ruins, and you were the miracle.

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me
in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms!

How terrible and brief my desire was to you!
How difficult and drunken, how tensed and avid.

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,
still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds.

Oh the bitten mouth, oh the kissed limbs,
oh the hungering teeth, oh the entwined bodies.

Oh the mad coupling of hope and force
in which we merged and despaired.

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour.
And the word scarcely begun on the lips.

This was my destiny and in it was my voyage of my longing,
and in it my longing fell, in you everything sank!

Oh pit of debris, everything fell into you,
what sorrow did you not express, in what sorrow are you not drowned!

From billow to billow you still called and sang.
Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel.

You still flowered in songs, you still broke the currents.
Oh pit of debris, open and bitter well.

Pale blind diver, luckless slinger,
lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

It is the hour of departure, the hard cold hour
which the night fastens to all the timetables.

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore.
Cold stars heave up, black birds migrate.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.
Only tremulous shadow twists in my hands.

Oh farther than everything. Oh farther than everything.

It is the hour of departure. Oh abandoned one!

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet IX: There Where The Waves Shatter

There where the waves shatter on the restless rocks
the clear light bursts and enacts its rose,
and the sea-circle shrinks to a cluster of buds,
to one drop of blue salt, falling.

O bright magnolia bursting in the foam,
magnetic transient whose death blooms
and vanishes--being, nothingness--forever:
broken salt, dazzling lurch of the sea.

You & I, Love, together we ratify the silence,
while the sea destroys its perpetual statues,
collapses its towers of wild speed and whiteness:

because in the weavings of those invisible fabrics,
galloping water, incessant sand,
we make the only permanent tenderness.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Lxxiii: Maybe You'll Remember

Maybe you'll remember that razor-faced man
who slipped out from the dark like a blade
and - before we realized - knew what was there:
he saw the smoke and concluded fire.

The pallid woman with black hair
rose like a fish from the abyss,
and the two of them built up a contraption,
armed to the teeth, against love.

Man and woman, they felled mountains and gardens,
then went down to the river, they scaled the walls,
they hoisted their atrocious artillery up the hill.

Then love knew it was called love.
And when I lifted my eyes to your name,
suddenly your heart showed me my way.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Lxxxix

And now you're mine. Rest with your dream in my dream.
Love and pain and work should all sleep, now.
The night turns on its invisible wheels,
and you are pure beside me as a sleeping amber.

No one else, Love, will sleep in my dreams. You will go,
we will go together, over the waters of time.
No one else will travel through the shadows with me,
only you, evergreen, ever sun, ever moon.

Your hands have already opened their delicate fists
and let their soft drifting signs drop away; your eyes closed like two gray
wings, and I move

after, following the folding water you carry, that carries
me away. The night, the world, the wind spin out their destiny.
Without you, I am your dream, only that, and that is all.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Lxxxi: Rest With Your Dream Inside My Dream

Already, you are mine. Rest with your dream inside my dream.
Love, grief, labour, must sleep now.
Night revolves on invisible wheels
and joined to me you are pure as sleeping amber.

No one else will sleep with my dream, love.
You will go we will go joined by the waters of time.
No other one will travel the shadows with me,
only you, eternal nature, eternal sun, eternal moon.

Already your hands have opened their delicate fists
and let fall, without direction, their gentle signs,
you eyes enclosing themselves like two grey wings,

while I follow the waters you bring that take me onwards:
night, Earth, winds weave their fate, and already,
not only am I not without you, I alone am your dream.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Viii

If your eyes were not the color of the moon,
of a day full [here, interrupted by the baby waking -- continued about 26
hours later]

of a day full of clay, and work, and fire,
if even held-in you did not move in agile grace like the air,
if you were not an amber week,

not the yellow moment
when autumn climbs up through the vines;
if you were not that bread the fragrant moon
kneads, sprinkling its flour across the sky,

oh, my dearest, I could not love you so!
But when I hold you I hold everything that is --
sand, time, the tree of the rain,

everything is alive so that I can be alive:
without moving I can see it all:
in your life I see everything that lives.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet VIII: If Your Eyes Were Not The Color Of The Moon

If your eyes were not the color of the moon,
of a day full [here, interrupted by the baby waking - continued about 26
hours later]

of a day full of clay, and work, and fire,
if even held-in you did not move in agile grace like the air,
if you were not an amber week,

not the yellow moment
when autumn climbs up through the vines;
if you were not that bread the fragrant moon
kneads, sprinkling its flour across the sky,

oh, my dearest, I could not love you so!
But when I hold you I hold everything that is -
sand, time, the tree of the rain,

everything is alive so that I can be alive:
without moving I can see it all:
in your life I see everything that lives.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xcv:Who Ever Desired Each Other As We Do

Who ever desired each other as we do? Let us look
for the ancient ashes of hearts that burned,
and let our kisses touch there, one by one,
till the flower, disembodied, rises again.

Let us love that Desire that consumed its own fruit
and went down, aspect and power, into the earth:
We are its continuing light,
its indestructible, fragile seed

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xi

I crave your mouth, your voice, your hair.
Silent and starving, I prowl through the streets.
Bread does not nourish me, dawn disrupts me, all day
I hunt for the liquid measure of your steps.

I hunger for your sleek laugh,
your hands the color of a savage harvest,
hunger for the pale stones of your fingernails,
I want to eat your skin like a whole almond.

I want to eat the sunbeam flaring in your lovely body,
the sovereign nose of your arrogant face,
I want to eat the fleeting shade of your lashes,

and I pace around hungry, sniffing the twilight,
hunting for you, for your hot heart,
like a puma in the barrens of Quitratue.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xiii: The Light That Rises From Your Feet To Your Hair

The light that rises from your feet to your hair,
the strength enfolding your delicate form,
are not mother of pearl, not chilly silver:
you are made of bread, a bread the fire adores.

The grain grew high in its harvest of you,
in good time the flour swelled;
as the dough rose, doubling your breasts,
my love was the coal waiting ready in the earth.

Oh, bread your forehead, your legs, your mouth,
bread I devour, born with the morning light,
my love, beacon-flag of the bakeries:

fire taught you a lesson of the blood;
you learned your holiness from flour,
from bread your language and aroma.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xlii: I Hunt For A Sign Of You

I hunt for a sign of you in all the others,
In the rapid undulant river of women,
Braids, shyly sinking eyes,
Light step that slices, sailing through the foam.

Suddenly I think I can make out your nails,
Oblong, quick, nieces of a cherry:
Then it's your hair that passes by, and I think
I see your image, a bonfire, burning in the water.

I searched, but no one else had your rhythms,
Your light, the shady day you brought from the forest;
Nobody had your tiny ears.

You are whole, exact, and everything you are is one,
And so I go along, with you I float along, loving
A wide Mississippi toward a feminine sea.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xvii

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xxv

Before I loved you, love, nothing was my own:
I wandered through the streets, among
Objects:
Nothing mattered or had a name:
The world was made of air, which waited.

I knew rooms full of ashes,
Tunnels where the moon lived,
Rough warehouses that growled 'get lost',
Questions that insisted in the sand.

Everything was empty, dead, mute,
Fallen abandoned, and decayed:
Inconceivably alien, it all

Belonged to someone else - to no one:
Till your beauty and your poverty
Filled the autumn plentiful with gifts.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xxvii: Naked You Are As Simple As One Of Your Hands

Naked, you are simple as one of your hands,
Smooth, earthy, small, transparent, round:
You have moonlines, applepathways:
Naked, you are slender as a naked grain of wheat.

Naked, you are blue as the night in Cuba;
You have vines and stars in your hair;
Naked, you are spacious and yellow
As summer in a golden church.

Naked, you are tiny as one of your nails,
Curved, subtle, rosy, till the day is born
And you withdraw to the underground world,

as if down a long tunnel of clothing and of chores:
Your clear light dims, gets dressed, drops its leaves,
And becomes a naked hand again.

Pablo Neruda

Sonnet Xxxiv (You Are The Daughter Of The Sea)

You are the daughter of the sea, oregano's first cousin.
Swimmer, your body is pure as the water;
cook, your blood is quick as the soil.
Everything you do is full of flowers, rich with the earth.

Your eyes go out toward the water, and the waves rise;
your hands go out to the earth and the seeds swell;
you know the deep essence of water and the earth,
conjoined in you like a formula for clay.

Naiad: cut your body into turquoise pieces,
they will bloom resurrected in the kitchen.
This is how you become everything that lives.

And so at last, you sleep, in the circle of my arms
that push back the shadows so that you can rest--
vegetables, seaweed, herbs: the foam of your dreams.

Translated by Stephen Tapscott

Submitted by Hen

Pablo Neruda

Still Another Day: I

Today is that day, the day that carried
a desperate light that since has died.
Don't let the squatters know:
let's keep it all between us,
day, between your bell
and my secret.

Today is dead winter in the forgotten land
that comes to visit me, with a cross on the map
and a volcano in the snow, to return to me,
to return again the water
fallen on the roof of my childhood.
Today when the sun began with its shafts
to tell the story, so clear, so old,
the slanting rain fell like a sword,
the rain my hard heart welcomes.

You, my love, still asleep in August,
my queen, my woman, my vastness, my geography
kiss of mud, the carbon-coated zither,
you, vestment of my persistent song,
today you are reborn again and with the sky's
black water confuse me and compel me:
I must renew my bones in your kingdom,
I must still uncloud my earthly duties.

Pablo Neruda

Still Another Day: XVII/Men

The truth is in the prologue. Death to the romantic fool,
to the expert in solitary confinement,
I'm the same as the teacher from Colombia,
the rotarian from Philadelphia, the merchant
from Paysandu who save his silver
to come here. We all arrive by different streets,
by unequal languages, at Silence.

Pablo Neruda

Tell Me, Is The Rose Naked?

Tell me, is the rose naked
Or is that her only dress?

Why do trees conceal
The splendor of their roots?

Who hears the regrets
Of the thieving automobile?

Is there anything in the world sadder
Than a train standing in the rain?

Pablo Neruda

The Dead Woman

If suddenly you do not exist,
if suddenly you no longer live,
I shall live on.

I do not dare,
I do not dare to write it,
if you die.

I shall live on.

For where a man has no voice,
there, my voice.

Where blacks are beaten,
I cannot be dead.
When my brothers go to prison
I shall go with them.

When victory,
not my victory,
but the great victory comes,
even though I am mute I must speak;
I shall see it come even
though I am blind.

No, forgive me.
If you no longer live,
if you, beloved, my love,
if you have died,
all the leaves will fall in my breast,
it will rain on my soul night and day,
the snow will burn my heart,
I shall walk with frost and fire and death and snow,
my feet will want to walk to where you are sleeping, but
I shall stay alive,
because above all things
you wanted me indomitable,
and, my love, because you know that I am not only a man
but all mankind.

The Dictators

An odor has remained among the sugarcane:
a mixture of blood and body, a penetrating
petal that brings nausea.
Between the coconut palms the graves are full
of ruined bones, of speechless death-rattles.
The delicate dictator is talking
with top hats, gold braid, and collars.
The tiny palace gleams like a watch
and the rapid laughs with gloves on
cross the corridors at times
and join the dead voices
and the blue mouths freshly buried.
The weeping cannot be seen, like a plant
whose seeds fall endlessly on the earth,
whose large blind leaves grow even without light.
Hatred has grown scale on scale,
blow on blow, in the ghastly water of the swamp,
with a snout full of ooze and silence

Pablo Neruda

The Eighth Of September

This day, Today, was a brimming glass.
This day, Today, was an immense wave.
This day was all the Earth.
This day, the storm-driven ocean
lifted us up in a kiss
so exalted we trembled
at the lightning flash
and bound as one, fell,
and drowned, without being unbound.
This day our bodies grew
stretched out to Earth's limits,
orbited there, melded there
to one globe of wax, or a meteor's flame.
A strange door opened, between us,
and someone, with no face as yet,
waited for us there.

Pablo Neruda

The Fear

They all ask me to jump
to invigorate and to play soccer,
to run, to swim and to fly.
Very well.

They all advise me rest,
they all send me to the doctor,
looking at me a certain way.
What happens?

They all advise me to travel,
to come and to leave, to stay,
to die and not to die.
It does not matter.

They all see the difficulties
of my surprised bowels
by awful X-rayed portraits.
I do not agree.

They all sting my poetry
with relentless forks
seeking, without doubt, a fly,
I Am afraid.

I am afraid of everyone,
of the cold water, of the death.
I am like all the mortals,
unavoidable.

And for that, in these short days
I am not going to pay attention to them,
I am going to open myself up and shut myself in
with my more perfidious enemy,
Pablo Neruda.

Pablo Neruda

The Fickle One

My eyes went away from me
Following a dark girl who went by.

She was made of black motherofpearl
Made of darkpurple grapes,
And she lashed my blood
With her tail of fire.

After them all I go.

A pale blonde went by
Like a golden plant
Swaying her gifts.
And my mouth went
Like a wave
Discharging on her breast
Lightningbolts of blood.

After them all I go.

But to you, without my moving,
Without seeing you, distant you,
Go my blood and my kisses,
My dark one and my fair one,
My broad one and my slender one,
My ugly one, my beauty,
Made of all the gold
And of all the silver,
Made of all the wheat
And of all the earth,
Made of all the water
Of sea waves,
Made for my arms
Made for my kisses,
Made for my soul.

Pablo Neruda

The House Of Odes

Writing
these
odes
in this
year nineteen
hundred and
fifty-five,
readying and tuning
my demanding, murmuring lyre,
I know who I am
and where my song is going.
I understand
that the shopper for myths
and mysteries
may enter
my wood
and adobe
house of odes,
may despise
the utensils,
the portraits
of father and mother and country
on the walls,
the simplicity
of the bread
and the saltcellar. But
that's how it is in my house of odes.
I deposed the dark monarchy,
the useless flowing hair of dreams,
I trod on the tail
of the cerebral reptile,
and set things
-- water and fire -
in harmony with man and earth.
I want everything
to have
a handle,
I want everything to be
a cup or a tool,

I want people to enter a hardware
store through the door of my odes.
I work at
cutting
newly hewn boards,
storing casks
of honey,
arranging
horseshoes, harness,
forks:
I want everyone to enter here,
let them ask questions,
ask for anything they want.
I am from the South, a Chilean,
a sailor
returned
from the seas.
I did not stay in the islands,
a king.
I did not stay ensconced
in the land of dreams.
I returned to labor simply
beside others,
for everyone.
So that everyone
may live here,
I build my house
with transparent
odes.

Pablo Neruda

The Insect

From your hips down to your feet
I want to make a long journey.

I am smaller than an insect.

Over these hills I pass,
hills the colour of oats,
crossed with faint tracks
that only I know,
scorched centimetres,
pale perspectives.

Now here is a mountain.
I shall never leave this.
What a giant growth of moss!
And a crater, a rose
of moist fire!

Coming down your legs
I trace a spiral,
or sleep on the way,
and arrive at your knees,
round hardness
like the hard peaks
of a bright continent.

Sliding down to your feet
I reach the eight slits
of your pointed, slow,
peninsular toes,
and from them I fall down
to the white emptiness
of the sheet, seeking blindly
and hungrily the form
of your fiery crucible!

Pablo Neruda

The Light Wraps You

The light wraps you in its mortal flame.
Abstracted pale mourner, standing that way
against the old propellers of the twilight
that revolves around you.

Speechless, my friend,
alone in the loneliness of this hour of the dead
and filled with the lives of fire,
pure heir of the ruined day.

A bough of fruit falls from the sun on your dark garment.
The great roots of night
grow suddenly from your soul,
and the things that hide in you come out again
so that a blue and palled people
your newly born, takes nourishment.

Oh magnificent and fecund and magnetic slave
of the circle that moves in turn through black and gold:
rise, lead and possess a creation
so rich in life that its flowers perish
and it is full of sadness.

Pablo Neruda

The Men

I'm Ramón González Barbagelata from anywhere,
from Cucuy, from Paraná, from Rio Turbio, from Oruro,
from Maracaibo, from Parral, from Ovalle, from Loconmilla,
I'm the poor devil from the poor Third World,
I'm the third-class passenger installed, good God!
in the lavish whiteness of snow-covered mountains,
concealed among orchids of subtle idiosyncrasy.

I've arrived at this famous year 20000, and what do I get?
With what do I scratch myself? What do I have to do with
the three glorious zeros that flaunt themselves
over my very own zero, my own non-existence?
Pity that brave heart awaiting its call
or the man enfolded by warmer love,
nothing's left today except my flimsy skeleton,
my eyes unhinged, confronting the era's beginning.

The era's beginning: are these ruined shacks,
these poor schools, these people still in rags and tatters,
this cloddish insecurity of my poor families,
is all this the day? the century's beginning, the golden door?

Well, enough said, I, at least, discreet,
as in office, patched and pensive,
I proclaim the redundancy of the inaugural:
I've arrived here with all my baggage,
bad luck and worse jobs,
misery always waiting with open arms,
the mobilization of people piled up on top of each other,
and the manifold geography of hunger.

Pablo Neruda

The Night In Isla Negra

Ancient night and the unruly salt
beat at the walls of my house.
The shadow is all one, the sky
throbs now along with the ocean,
and sky and shadow erupt
in the crash of their vast conflict.
All night long they struggle;
nobody knows the name
of the harsh light that keeps slowly opening
like a languid fruit.
So on the coast comes to light,
out of seething shadow, the harsh dawn,
gnawed at by the moving salt,
swept clean by the mass of night,
bloodstained in its sea-washed crater.

Pablo Neruda

The Old Women Of The Ocean

To the solemn sea the old women come
With their shawls knotted around their necks
With their fragile feet cracking.

They sit down alone on the shore
Without moving their eyes or their hands
Without changing the clouds or the silence.

The obscene sea breaks and claws
Rushes downhill trumpeting
Shakes its bull's beard.

The gentle old ladies seated
As if in a transparent boat
They look at the terrorist waves.

Where will they go and where have they been?
They come from every corner
They come from our own lives.

Now they have the ocean
The cold and burning emptiness
The solitude full of flames.

They come from all the pasts
From houses which were fragrant
From burnt-up evenings.

They look, or don't look, at the sea
With their walking sticks they draw signs in the sand
And the sea erases their calligraphy.

The old women get up and go away
With their fragile bird feet
While the waves flood in
Traveling naked in the wind.

Pablo Neruda

The People

I recall that man and not two centuries
have passed since I saw him,
he went neither by horse nor by carriage:
purely on foot
he outstripped
distances,
and carried no sword or armour,
only nets on his shoulder,
axe or hammer or spade,
never fighting the rest of his species:
his exploits were with water and earth,
with wheat so that it turned into bread,
with giant trees to render them wood,
with walls to open up doors,
with sand to construct the walls,
and with ocean for it to bear.

I knew him and he is still not cancelled in me.

The carriages fell to pieces,
war destroyed doors and walls,
the city was a handful of ashes,
all the clothes turned to dust,
and he remains to me,
he survives in the sand,
when everything before
seemed imperishable but him.

In the going and coming of families
at times he was my father or kinsman
or perhaps it was scarcely him or not
the one who did not return to his house
because water or earth swallowed him up
or a tree or an engine killed him,
or he was the saddened carpenter
who went behind the coffin, without tears,
someone in the end who had no name,
except those that metal or timber have,
and on whom others gazed from on high

without seeing the ant
for the anthill
and so that when his feet did not stir,
because the poor exhausted one had died,
they never saw what they had not seen:
already there were other feet where he'd been.

The other feet were still his,
and the other hands,
the man remained:
when it seemed that now he was done for
he was the same once more,
there he was digging again at the earth,
cutting cloth, minus a shirt,
there he was and was not, like before,
he had gone down and was once more,
and since he never owned graveyards,
or tombs, nor was his name carved
on the stone he sweated to quarry,
no one knew he had come
and no one knew when he died,
so that only when the poor man could
he returned to life once more, without it being noted.

He was the man, no doubt of it, without heritage,
without cattle, without a flag,
and he was not distinguished from others,
the others who were him,
from the heights he was grey like the subsoil,
tanned like the leather,
he was yellow reaping the wheat,
he was black down in the mine,
he was the colour of stone on the fortress,
in the fishing boat the colour of tuna,
and the colour of horses in the meadow:
how could anyone distinguish him
if he was inseparable, elemental,
earth, coal or sea vested in man?

Where he lived whatever
a man touched grew:
the hostile stones,

quarried
by his hands,
took on order
and one by one formed
the right clarity of a building,
he made bread with his hands,
moved the engines,
the distances peopled themselves with towns,
other men grew,
bees arrived,
and by man's creating and breeding
spring walked the market squares
between bakeries and doves.

The maker of loaves was forgotten,
he who quarried and journeyed, beating down
and opening furrows, transporting sand,
when everything existed he no longer existed,
he gave his existence, that's all.
He went elsewhere to labour, and at last
he was dead, rolling
like a stone in the river:
death carried him downstream.

I, who knew him, saw him descend
till he was no longer except what he left:
roads he could scarcely know,
houses he never ever would live in.

I turn to see him, and I await him

I see him in his grave and resurrected.

I distinguish him among all
who are his equals
and it seems to me it cannot be,
that like this we go nowhere,
that to survive like this holds no glory.

I believe that this man
must be enthroned, rightly shod and crowned.
I believe that those who made such things

must be the masters of all these things.
And that those who made bread should eat!

And those in the mines must have light!

Enough now of grey men enslaved!

Enough of the pale 'missing ones'!

Not another man passes except as a king.

Not a single woman without her crown.

Golden gauntlets for every hand.

Fruits of the sun for all the unknowns!

I knew that man and when I could,
when he still had eyes in his head,
when he still had a voice in his mouth
I searched for him among tombs, and I said
grasping his arm that was not yet dust:

'All will be gone, you will live on,

You ignite life.

You made what is yours.'

So let no one trouble themselves when
I seem to be alone and am not alone,
I am with no one and speak for them all:

Some listen to me, without knowing,
but those I sing, those who do know
go on being born, and will fill up the Earth.

Pablo Neruda

The Portrait In The Rock

Oh yes I knew him, I spent years with him,
with his golden and stony substance,
he was a man who was tired -
in Paraguay he left his father and mother,
his sons, his nephews,
his latest in-laws,
his house, his chickens,
and some half-opened books.
They called him to the door.
When he opened it, the police took him,
and they beat him up so much
that he spat blood in France, in Denmark,
in Spain, in Italy, moving about,
and so he died and I stopped seeing his face,
stopped hearing his profound silence ;
then once, on a night of storms,
with snow spreading
a smooth cloak on the mountains,
on horseback, there, far off,
I looked and there was my friend -
his face was formed in stone,
his profile defied the wild weather,
in his nose the wind was muffling
the moaning of the persecuted.
There the exile came to ground.
Changed into stone, he lives in his own country.

Pablo Neruda

The Queen

I have named you queen.
There are taller than you, taller.
There are purer than you, purer.
There are lovelier than you, lovelier.
But you are the queen.

When you go through the streets
No one recognizes you.
No one sees your crystal crown, no one looks
At the carpet of red gold
That you tread as you pass,
The nonexistent carpet.

And when you appear
All the rivers sound
In my body, bells
Shake the sky,
And a hymn fills the world.

Only you and I,
Only you and I, my love,
Listen to me.

- - - - -

LA REINA

Yo te he nombrado reina.
Hay más altas que tú, más altas.
Hay más puras que tú, más puras.
Hay más bellas que tú, hay más bellas.
Pero tú eres la reina.

Cuando vas por las calles
nadie te reconoce.
Nadie ve tu corona de cristal, nadie mira
la alfombra de oro rojo
que pisas donde pasas,
la alfombra que no existe.

Y cuando asomas
suenan todos los ríos
en mi cuerpo, sacuden
el cielo las campanas,
y un himno llena el mundo.

Sólo tú y yo,
sólo tú y yo, amor mío,
lo escuchamos.

Pablo Neruda

The Question

Love, a question
has destroyed you.

I have come back to you
from thorny uncertainty.

I want you straight as
the sword or the road.

But you insist
on keeping a nook
of shadow that I do not want.

My love,
understand me,
I love all of you,
from eyes to feet, to toenails,
inside,
all the brightness, which you kept.

It is I, my love,
who knocks at your door.
It is not the ghost, it is not
the one who once stopped
at your window.
I knock down the door:
I enter your life:
I come to live in your soul:
you cannot cope with me.

You must open door to door,
you must obey me,
you must open your eyes
so that I may search in them,
you must see how I walk
with heavy steps
along all the roads
that, blind, were waiting for me.

Do not fear,
I am yours,
but
I am not the passenger or the beggar,
I am your master,
the one you were waiting for,
and now I enter
your life,
no more to leave it,
love, love, love,
but to stay.

Pablo Neruda

The Saddest Poem

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

Write, for instance: "The night is full of stars,
and the stars, blue, shiver in the distance."

The night wind whirls in the sky and sings.

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like this, I held her in my arms.
I kissed her so many times under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her.
How could I not have loved her large, still eyes?

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
To think I don't have her. To feel that I've lost her.

To hear the immense night, more immense without her.
And the poem falls to the soul as dew to grass.

What does it matter that my love couldn't keep her.
The night is full of stars and she is not with me.

That's all. Far away, someone sings. Far away.
My soul is lost without her.

As if to bring her near, my eyes search for her.
My heart searches for her and she is not with me.

The same night that whitens the same trees.
We, we who were, we are the same no longer.

I no longer love her, true, but how much I loved her.
My voice searched the wind to touch her ear.

Someone else's. She will be someone else's. As she once
belonged to my kisses.

Her voice, her light body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, true, but perhaps I love her.
Love is so short and oblivion so long.

Because on nights like this I held her in my arms,
my soul is lost without her.

Although this may be the last pain she causes me,
and this may be the last poem I write for her.

Pablo Neruda

The Song Of Despair

You swallowed everything, like distance.
Like the sea, like time.
In you everything sank!
It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.
Pilot's dread, fury of a blind diver,
turbulent drunkenness of love,
in you everything sank!

Pablo Neruda

The Tree Is Here, Still, In Pure Stone

The tree is here, still, in pure stone,
in deep evidence, in solid beauty,
layered, through a hundred million years.
Agate, cornelian, gemstone
transmuted the timber and sap
until damp corruptions
fissured the giant's trunk
fusing a parallel being:
the living leaves
unmade themselves
and when the pillar was overthrown
fire in the forest, blaze of the dust-cloud,
celestial ashes mantled it round,
until time, and the lava, created
this gift, of translucent stone.

Pablo Neruda

The United Fruit Co.

When the trumpet sounded, it was
all prepared on the earth,
the Jehovah parcelled out the earth
to Coca Cola, Inc., Anaconda,
Ford Motors, and other entities:
The Fruit Company, Inc.
reserved for itself the most succulent,
the central coast of my own land,
the delicate waist of America.
It rechristened its territories
as the 'Banana Republics'
and over the sleeping dead,
over the restless heroes
who brought about the greatness, the liberty and the flags,
it established the comic opera:
abolished the independencies,
presented crowns of Caesar,
unsheathed envy, attracted
the dictatorship of the flies,
Trujillo flies, Tacho flies,
Carias flies, Martines flies,
Ubico flies, damp flies
of modest blood and marmalade,
drunken flies who zoom
over the ordinary graves,
circus flies, wise flies
well trained in tyranny.

Among the blood-thirsty flies
the Fruit Company lands its ships,
taking off the coffee and the fruit;
the treasure of our submerged
territories flow as though
on plates into the ships.

Meanwhile Indians are falling
into the sugared chasms
of the harbours, wrapped
for burials in the mist of the dawn:

a body rolls, a thing
that has no name, a fallen cipher,
a cluster of the dead fruit
thrown down on the dump.

Pablo Neruda

The Weary One

The weary one, orphan
of the masses, the self,
the crushed one, the one made of concrete,
the one without a country in crowded restaurants,
he who wanted to go far away, always farther away,
didn't know what to do there, whether he wanted
or didn't want to leave or remain on the island,
the hesitant one, the hybrid, entangled in himself,
had no place here: the straight-angled stone,
the infinite look of the granite prism,
the circular solitude all banished him:
he went somewhere else with his sorrows,
he returned to the agony of his native land,
to his indecisions, of winter and summer.

Pablo Neruda

The White Mans Burden

Lost in the forest, I broke off a dark twig
and lifted its whisper to my thirsty lips:
maybe it was the voice of the rain crying,
a cracked bell, or a torn heart.

Something from far off it seemed
deep and secret to me, hidden by the earth,
a shout muffled by huge autumns,
by the moist half-open darkness of the leaves.

Wakening from the dreaming forest there, the hazel-sprig
sang under my tongue, its drifting fragrance
climbed up through my conscious mind

as if suddenly the roots I had left behind
cried out to me, the land I had lost with my childhood---
and I stopped, wounded by the wandering scent

Pablo Neruda

The Wide Ocean

Ocean, if you were to give, a measure, a ferment, a fruit
of your gifts and destructions, into my hand,
I would choose your far-off repose, your contour of steel,
your vigilant spaces of air and darkness,
and the power of your white tongue,
that shatters and overthrows columns,
breaking them down to your proper purity.

Not the final breaker, heavy with brine,
that thunders onshore, and creates
the silence of sand, that encircles the world,
but the inner spaces of force,
the naked power of the waters,
the immovable solitude, brimming with lives.
It is Time perhaps, or the vessel filled
with all motion, pure Oneness,
that death cannot touch, the visceral green
of consuming totality.

Only a salt kiss remains of the drowned arm,
that lifts a spray: a humid scent,
of the damp flower, is left,
from the bodies of men. Your energies
form, in a trickle that is not spent,
form, in retreat into silence.

The falling wave,
arch of identity, shattering feathers,
is only spume when it clears,
and returns to its source, unconsumed.

Your whole force heads for its origin.
The husks that your load threshes,
are only the crushed, plundered, deliveries,
that your act of abundance expelled,
all those that take life from your branches.

Your form extends beyond breakers,
vibrant, and rhythmic, like the chest, cloaking

a single being, and its breathings,
that lift into the content of light,
plains raised above waves,
forming the naked surface of earth.
You fill your true self with your substance.
You overflow curve with silence.

The vessel trembles with your salt and sweetness,
the universal cavern of waters,
and nothing is lost from you, as it is
from the desolate crater, or the bay of a hill,
those empty heights, signs, scars,
guarding the wounded air.

Your petals throbbing against the Earth,
trembling your submarine harvests,
your menace thickening the smooth swell,
with pulsations and swarming of schools,
and only the thread of the net raises
the dead lightning of fish-scale,
one wounded millimetre, in the space
of your crystal completeness.

Pablo Neruda

Tie Your Heart At Night To Mine, Love,

Tie your heart at night to mine, love,
and both will defeat the darkness
like twin drums beating in the forest
against the heavy wall of wet leaves.

Night crossing: black coal of dream
that cuts the thread of earthly orbs
with the punctuality of a headlong train
that pulls cold stone and shadow endlessly.

Love, because of it, tie me to a purer movement,
to the grip on life that beats in your breast,
with the wings of a submerged swan,

So that our dream might reply
to the sky's questioning stars
with one key, one door closed to shadow.

Pablo Neruda

Tonight I Can Write The Saddest Lines

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, 'The night is shattered
and the blue stars shiver in the distance.'

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.

She loved me sometimes, and I loved her too.
How could one not have loved her great still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more immense without her.
And the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture.

What does it matter that my love could not keep her.
The night is shattered and she is not with me.

This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.
My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

My sight searches for her as though to go to her.
My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.

The same night whitening the same trees.
We, of that time, are no longer the same.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.
My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing.

Another's. She will be another's. Like my kisses before.
Her voice. Her bright body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but maybe I love her.
Love is so short, forgetting is so long.

Because through nights like this one I held her in my arms
my sould is not satisfied that it has lost her.

Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer
and these the last verses that I write for her.

Pablo Neruda

Tower Of Light

O tower of light, sad beauty
that magnified necklaces and statues in the sea,
calcareous eye, insignia of the vast waters, cry
of the mourning petrel, tooth of the sea, wife
of the Oceanian wind, O separate rose
from the long stem of the trampled bush
that the depths, converted into archipelago,
O natural star, green diadem,
alone in your lonesome dynasty,
still unattainable, elusive, desolate
like one drop, like one grape, like the sea.

Pablo Neruda

Triangles

Three triangles of birds crossed
Over the enormous ocean which extended
In winter like a green beast.
Everything just lay there, the silence,
The unfolding gray, the heavy light
Of space, some land now and then.
Over everything there was passing
A flight
And another flight
Of dark birds, winter bodies
Trembling triangles
Whose wings,
Frantically flapping, hardly
Can carry the gray cold, the desolate days
From one place to another
Along the coast of Chile.
I am here while from one sky to another
The trembling of the migratory birds
Leaves me sunk inside myself, inside my own matter
Like an everlasting well
Dug by an immovable spiral.
Now they have disappeared
Black feathers of the sea
Iron birds
From steep slopes and rock piles
Now at noon
I am in front of emptiness. It's a winter
Space stretched out
And the sea has put
Over its blue face
A bitter mask.

Pablo Neruda

Unity

There is something dense, united, settled in the depths,
repeating its number, its identical sign.

How it is noted that stones have touched time,
in their refined matter there is an odor of age,
of water brought by the sea, from salt and sleep.

I'm encircled by a single thing, a single movement:
a mineral weight, a honeyed light
cling to the sound of the word "noche";
the tint of wheat, of ivory, of tears,
things of leather, of wood, of wool,
archaic, faded, uniform,
collect around me like walls.

I work quietly, wheeling over myself,
a crow over death, a crow in mourning.
I mediate, isolated in the spread of seasons,
centric, encircled by a silent geometry:
a partial temperature drifts down from the sky,
a distant empire of confused unities
reunites encircling me.

Pablo Neruda

Walking Around

It so happens I am sick of being a man.
And it happens that I walk into tailorshops and movie
houses
dried up, waterproof, like a swan made of felt
steering my way in a water of wombs and ashes.

The smell of barbershops makes me break into hoarse
sobs.

The only thing I want is to lie still like stones or wool.
The only thing I want is to see no more stores, no gardens,
no more goods, no spectacles, no elevators.

It so happens that I am sick of my feet and my nails
and my hair and my shadow.
It so happens I am sick of being a man.

Still it would be marvelous
to terrify a law clerk with a cut lily,
or kill a nun with a blow on the ear.
It would be great
to go through the streets with a green knife
letting out yells until I died of the cold.

I don't want to go on being a root in the dark,
insecure, stretched out, shivering with sleep,
going on down, into the moist guts of the earth,
taking in and thinking, eating every day.

I don't want so much misery.
I don't want to go on as a root and a tomb,
alone under the ground, a warehouse with corpses,
half frozen, dying of grief.

That's why Monday, when it sees me coming
with my convict face, blazes up like gasoline,
and it howls on its way like a wounded wheel,
and leaves tracks full of warm blood leading toward the
night.

And it pushes me into certain corners, into some moist
houses,
into hospitals where the bones fly out the window,
into shoeshops that smell like vinegar,
and certain streets hideous as cracks in the skin.

There are sulphur-colored birds, and hideous intestines
hanging over the doors of houses that I hate,
and there are false teeth forgotten in a coffeepot,
there are mirrors
that ought to have wept from shame and terror,
there are umbrellas everywhere, and venoms, and umbilical
cords.

I stroll along serenely, with my eyes, my shoes,
my rage, forgetting everything,
I walk by, going through office buildings and orthopedic
shops,
and courtyards with washing hanging from the line:
underwear, towels and shirts from which slow
dirty tears are falling.

Translated by Robert Bly

Pablo Neruda

Walking Around (Original Spanish)

(Original Spanish; can someone provide the title?)

Sucede que me canso de ser hombre.
Sucede que entro en las sastrerías y en los cines
marchito, impenetrable, como un cisne de fieltro
Navegando en un agua de origen y ceniza.
El olor de las peluquerías me hace llorar a gritos.
Sólo quiero un descanso de piedras o de lana,
sólo quiero no ver establecimientos ni jardines,
ni mercaderías, ni anteojos, ni ascensores.
Sucede que me canso de mis pies y mis uñas
y mi pelo y mi sombra.
Sucede que me canso de ser hombre.
Sin embargo sería delicioso
asustar a un notario con un lirio cortado
o dar muerte a una monja con un golpe de oreja.
Sería bello
ir por las calles con un cuchillo verde
y dando gritos hasta morir de frío
No quiero seguir siendo raíz en las tinieblas,
vacilante, extendido, tiritando de sueño,
hacia abajo, en las tapias mojadas de la tierra,
absorbiendo y pensando, comiendo cada día.
No quiero para mí tantas desgracias.
No quiero continuar de raíz y de tumba,
de subterráneo solo, de bodega con muertos
ateridos, muriéndome de pena.
Por eso el día lunes arde como el petróleo
cuando me ve llegar con mi cara de cárcel,
y aúlla en su transcurso como una rueda herida,
y da pasos de sangre caliente hacia la noche.
Y me empuja a ciertos rincones, a ciertas casas húmedas,
a hospitales donde los huesos salen por la ventana,
a ciertas zapaterías con olor a vinagre,
a calles espantosas como grietas.
Hay pájaros de color de azufre y horribles intestinos
colgando de las puertas de las casas que odio,
hay dentaduras olvidadas en una cafetera,
hay espejos

que debieran haber llorado de vergüenza y espanto,
hay paraguas en todas partes, y venenos, y ombligos.
Yo paseo con calma, con ojos, con zapatos,
con furia, con olvido,
paso, cruzo oficinas y tiendas de ortopedia,
y patios donde hay ropas colgadas de un alambre:
calzoncillos, toallas y camisas que lloran
lentas lágrimas sucias.

Pablo Neruda

(English Translation of Walking Around by Robert Bly)

It so happens I am sick of being a man.
And it happens that I walk into tailorshops and movie
houses
dried up, waterproof, like a swan made of felt
steering my way in a water of wombs and ashes.

The smell of barbershops makes me break into hoarse
sobs.

The only thing I want is to lie still like stones or wool.
The only thing I want is to see no more stores, no gardens,
no more goods, no spectacles, no elevators.

It so happens that I am sick of my feet and my nails
and my hair and my shadow.

It so happens I am sick of being a man.

Still it would be marvelous
to terrify a law clerk with a cut lily,
or kill a nun with a blow on the ear.
It would be great
to go through the streets with a green knife
letting out yells until I died of the cold.

I don't want to go on being a root in the dark,
insecure, stretched out, shivering with sleep,
going on down, into the moist guts of the earth,
taking in and thinking, eating every day.

I don't want so much misery.

I don't want to go on as a root and a tomb,
alone under the ground, a warehouse with corpses,
half frozen, dying of grief.

That's why Monday, when it sees me coming
with my convict face, blazes up like gasoline,
and it howls on its way like a wounded wheel,
and leaves tracks full of warm blood leading toward the
night.

And it pushes me into certain corners, into some moist
houses,
into hospitals where the bones fly out the window,
into shoeshops that smell like vinegar,
and certain streets hideous as cracks in the skin.

There are sulphur-colored birds, and hideous intestines
hanging over the doors of houses that I hate,
and there are false teeth forgotten in a coffeepot,
there are mirrors
that ought to have wept from shame and terror,
there are umbrellas everywhere, and venoms, and umbilical
cords.

I stroll along serenely, with my eyes, my shoes,
my rage, forgetting everything,
I walk by, going through office buildings and orthopedic
shops,
and courtyards with washing hanging from the line:
underwear, towels and shirts from which slow
dirty tears are falling.

Pablo Neruda

Waltz

I touch hatred like a covered breast;
I without stopping go from garment to garment,
sleeping at a distance.

I am not, I'm of no use, I do not know
anyone; I have no weapons of ocean or wood,
I do not live in this house.

My mouth is full of night and water.
The abiding moon determines
what I do not have.

What I have is in the midst of the waves,
a ray of water, a day for myself,
an iron depth.

There is no cross-tide, there is no shield, no costume,
there is no special solution too deep to be sounded,
no vicious eyelid.

I live suddenly and other times I follow.
I touch a face suddenly and it murders me.
I have no time.

Do not look for me when drawing
the usual wild thread or the
bleeding net.

Do not call me: that is my occupation.
Do not ask my name or my condition.
Leave me in the middle of my own moon
in my wounded ground.

Pablo Neruda

Water

Everything on the earth bristled, the bramble
pricked and the green thread
nibbled away, the petal fell, falling
until the only flower was the falling itself.
Water is another matter,
has no direction but its own bright grace,
runs through all imaginable colors,
takes limpid lessons
from stone,
and in those functionings plays out
the unrealized ambitions of the foam.

Pablo Neruda

We Are Many

Of the many men whom I am, whom we are,
I cannot settle on a single one.
They are lost to me under the cover of clothing
They have departed for another city.

When everything seems to be set
to show me off as a man of intelligence,
the fool I keep concealed on my person
takes over my talk and occupies my mouth.

On other occasions, I am dozing in the midst
of people of some distinction,
and when I summon my courageous self,
a coward completely unknown to me
swaddles my poor skeleton
in a thousand tiny reservations.

When a stately home bursts into flames,
instead of the fireman I summon,
an arsonist bursts on the scene,
and he is I. There is nothing I can do.
What must I do to distinguish myself?
How can I put myself together?

All the books I read
lionize dazzling hero figures,
brimming with self-assurance.
I die with envy of them;
and, in films where bullets fly on the wind,
I am left in envy of the cowboys,
left admiring even the horses.

But when I call upon my DASHING BEING,
out comes the same OLD LAZY SELF,
and so I never know just WHO I AM,
nor how many I am, nor WHO WE WILL BE BEING.
I would like to be able to touch a bell
and call up my real self, the truly me,
because if I really need my proper self,

I must not allow myself to disappear.

While I am writing, I am far away;
and when I come back, I have already left.
I should like to see if the same thing happens
to other people as it does to me,
to see if as many people are as I am,
and if they seem the same way to themselves.
When this problem has been thoroughly explored,
I am going to school myself so well in things
that, when I try to explain my problems,
I shall speak, not of self, but of geography.

Pablo Neruda

What Spain Was Like

Spain was a taut, dry drum-head
Daily beating a dull thud
Flatlands and eagle's nest
Silence lashed by the storm.
How much, to the point of weeping, in my soul
I love your hard soil, your poor bread,
Your poor people, how much in the deep place
Of my being there is still the lost flower
Of your wrinkled villages, motionless in time
And your metallic meadows
Stretched out in the moonlight through the ages,
Now devoured by a false god.

All your confinement, your animal isolation
While you are still conscious
Surrounded by the abstract stones of silence,
Your rough wine, your smooth wine
Your violent and dangerous vineyards.

Solar stone, pure among the regions
Of the world, Spain streaked
With blood and metal, blue and victorious
Proletarian Spain, made of petals and bullets
Unique, alive, asleep - resounding.

Pablo Neruda

Xvii (I Do Not Love You...)

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

Translated by Stephen Tapscott

Anonymous Submission

Pablo Neruda

Your Feet

When I cannot look at your face
I look at your feet.
Your feet of arched bone,
your hard little feet.
I know that they support you,
and that your sweet weight
rises upon them.
Your waist and your breasts,
the doubled purple
of your nipples,
the sockets of your eyes
that have just flown away,
your wide fruit mouth,
your red tresses,
my little tower.
But I love your feet
only because they walked
upon the earth and upon
the wind and upon the waters,
until they found me.

Pablo Neruda

Your Hands

When your hands leap
towards mine, love,
what do they bring me in flight?
Why did they stop
at my lips, so suddenly,
why do I know them,
as if once before,
I have touched them,
as if, before being,
they travelled
my forehead, my waist?
Their smoothness came
winging through time,
over the sea and the smoke,
over the Spring,
and when you laid
your hands on my chest
I knew those wings
of the gold doves,
I knew that clay,
and that colour of grain.
The years of my life
have been roadways of searching,
a climbing of stairs,
a crossing of reefs.
Trains hurled me onwards
waters recalled me,
on the surface of grapes
it seemed that I touched you.
Wood, of a sudden,
made contact with you,
the almond-tree summoned
your hidden smoothness,
until both your hands
closed on my chest,
like a pair of wings
ending their flight.

Your Laughter

Take bread away from me, if you wish,
take air away, but
do not take from me your laughter.

Do not take away the rose,
the lance flower that you pluck,
the water that suddenly
bursts forth in joy,
the sudden wave
of silver born in you.

My struggle is harsh and I come back
with eyes tired
at times from having seen
the unchanging earth,
but when your laughter enters
it rises to the sky seeking me
and it opens for me all
the doors of life.

My love, in the darkest
hour your laughter
opens, and if suddenly
you see my blood staining
the stones of the street,
laugh, because your laughter
will be for my hands
like a fresh sword.

Next to the sea in the autumn,
your laughter must raise
its foamy cascade,
and in the spring, love,
I want your laughter like
the flower I was waiting for,
the blue flower, the rose
of my echoing country.

Laugh at the night,

at the day, at the moon,
laugh at the twisted
streets of the island,
laugh at this clumsy
boy who loves you,
but when I open
my eyes and close them,
when my steps go,
when my steps return,
deny me bread, air,
light, spring,
but never your laughter
for I would die.

Pablo Neruda