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## Note

These translations of poems by Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, Else Lasker-Schüler, Nelly Sachs and Ulla Hahn are published here for the first time. Due to copyright and reasons of space the German originals could not be printed alongside with their English versions. The titles of the German texts are listed at the beginning of each section in order of their appearance in English.

The editor wishes to thank Dr. Silke Beinssen-Hesse for her permission to make her translations accessible to a wider reading public. It is to be hoped that these beautiful versions of poems by four major German women poets do not escape the attention of compilers of collections of German poetry in English translation.

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ANNETTE VON DROSTE-HÜLSHOFF (1797 - 1848)

Die deutschen Titel der übersetzten Gedichte lauten:

Die Taxuswand

Der Knabe im Moor

Die Nadel im Baum

Mondesaufgang

Das Spiegelbild

Am Turme

Im Grase

Der Weiher

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff

The Yewtree Wall

I like to stand before  
 You, surface black and rough,  
 You, visor scratched and torn  
 That shields the face I love,  
 I like to look on you  
 As on an old damask,  
 And palely gliding view  
 The coronation masque.

When I was passed the crown  
 By hands that now are cold,  
 When I was sung renown,  
 In ditties now are old,  
 Curtain to sanctuary,  
 My paradisal door,  
 Behind, all flower for me,  
 And only thorn before.

Beyond, I know, there's yet  
 The old green garden bench,  
 Where lips aglow and wet  
 Once thought life's thirst to quench,  
 When hair still streamed about me  
 A gleaming golden trail,  
 When my call was a shout, free,  
 A horn cry through the vale.

The ivy I let grow,  
 It was love gave it care,  
 Six steps but and I know,  
 Know it's no longer there.  
 So I will ever creep  
 By your dark cloth, ne'er look,  
 And eighteen years thus keep  
 Deleted from life's book.

In years gone by you stared  
 As darkly true as now,  
 A guardian who cared,  
 Throne to our lover's vow:  
 They say an evil sleep  
 Smokes from your needles, yew,  
 Ne'er so awake from sleep  
 As when your breath I drew.

But now a weary me  
 Would drop down by your side,  
 Blown from the nearby tree,  
 A leaf, that falls aglide:  
 You tempt me like a harbour,  
 That will all storms allay:  
 To sleep within your arbour  
 Till my time's passed away!

## The Lad on the Moor

O, eery it is to walk on the moor  
 When the heather smoke mills and flees,  
 When the mists like phantom spirits lure  
 And the creeper hooks at the trees,  
 Under every step a streamlet springs,  
 When out of the fissures it hisses and sings,  
 O, eery it is to walk on moor,  
 When the rushes crack in the breeze.

Clutching his reader the trembling boy  
 Runs as though he were chased:  
 Across the hollows the winds annoy,  
 What's rustling there in the waste?  
 That is the ghostly peat-digger's serf,  
 Who drinks away the master's best turf:  
 Hoo, hoo, a mad bullock out to destroy!  
 Down ducks the child in haste.

From the waterside jagged branches creak,  
 Uncanny the fir-tree nods,  
 The small boy runs, his ears aprick,  
 Through giant reed-spears like rods:  
 And how it rustles and prickles within!  
 That is the maiden cursed to spin,  
 That is Lenora, cast out from the quick,  
 Who turns her reel in the reeds.

Ahead, ahead! and keep on the run,  
 Ahead or they'll catch him whole!  
 Under his foot it bubbles up scum,  
 It whistles up under his sole  
 Just like a ghostly tune at play:  
 That is the fiddler who went astray,  
 That is the thieving fiddler bum,  
 Who the wedding penny stole.

Then the moor erupts and a sigh goes out  
 Deep from the cavernous hole,  
 Woe, woe, that's Margaret crying aloud,  
 "Ho, ho, for my poor damned soul!"  
 The lad leaps up like a wounded deer,  
 Had not his guardian angel been near,  
 His bleaching bones might have lain about  
 Till a turf-digger set them aroll.

Then slowly the ground grows firm once more,  
 And over next to the willow  
 The lamp has a homely warmth in store,  
 The lad has reached the meadow.  
 Now safe from the moor he heaves a breath,  
 Still glancing back with the terror of death,  
 Yes, in the reeds afraid I was sore,  
 O fearful it was in the hollow.

## The Pin in the Tree

In times gone by, I was almost grown,  
 Had left off my childhood play,  
 I was not yet big, but about, I must own,  
 To good Saint Andrew to pray,  
 I used to wander, day in, day out,  
 Along the fields with Kati,  
 Did something loving lie there about?  
 Tempi passati - passati!

And in the heathland there stood a tree,  
 But a slender alder bush,  
 There we often would sit in reverie  
 And hark to the song of the thrush:  
 It had built its ragged nest up high  
 In the frail and swaying crown,  
 And with such impertinence would spy  
 From its baronet's castle down.

We caressed so much and walked so wide,  
 That the summer had passed away:  
 And we had to part: "Oh, woe betide!"  
 The tears that flowed that day:  
 Each others' hands we held all dumb,  
 Then I drew from my bow fluttering free  
 A shiny pin and with my thumb  
 Pressed it into the sapling tree.

And beneath it I noted the day and the hour,  
 Then we went each one our way  
 With such heart-rending sobs that from his bower  
 The thrush flew crying away:  
 O youthful souls are like to kings,  
 They can waste a Peru on a morrow,  
 In the tawney heath, beneath thrush's wings,  
 A Peru in love and sorrow.

Years had glid away with a sneaking gait,  
 Dispersed like a misty cloud,  
 And again I walked by the fields of late  
 With a young and frolicking crowd:  
 They were hurling sticks and crying "Hullo"  
 With jokes that made them bellow,  
 My heart grew chirpy and merry so,  
 Light-hearted as I were their fellow.

Then a sudden rush in the dense of the dale,  
 And "A thrush", they cried, "O a thrush!"  
 I started up - did I chance to grow pale?  
 I stood by the old alder bush:  
 And from backward my veil was drawn from my hair,  
 O God, I blushed like a flame,  
 When I saw it was the old pin stuck there,  
 My rusty old pin in the stem!

And then I quietly took in view  
 The inscription, and understood,  
 And suddenly felt the rising dew  
 Was unlikely to do me much good;  
 I won't complain, a treasure I store,  
 That weather or waves have not worn,  
 But yet, for ever, for evermore  
 The veil from my eye has been torn.

## Moonrise

Upon the railing of the balcony  
 I leaned, and waited, gentle light, for thee.  
 High over me, the icy crystal pall  
 All melted, swam the firmament's great hall;  
 The shimmering lake stretched out in gentle swirls,  
 Tears from the clouds or but dissolving pearls?  
 A trickling in the dusk surrounding me,  
 I waited, o thou mild pure light, for thee.

High did I stand, beside the linden's crown,  
 Beneath me twigs, stem, branches deep deep down;  
 The foliage humming with the small gnats' dance,  
 The firefly glimmering as it rose in trance,  
 And blossoms giddy as though half asleep:  
 Heart seemed to drift to haven for its keep,  
 A heart replete with joyousness and pain  
 And blessed visions of the past again.

The darkness rose, the shadows thronged in now -  
 O my mild light, where lingerest, lingerest thou? -  
 They thronged upon me like to thoughts sin-rent,  
 The firmament's high wave seemed almost spent,  
 The glowing flies had shivered out their ray,  
 The gnats had long since sunk down and away,  
 Only dark mountain-tops stood hard and near,  
 Like awesome judges rousing some dark fear.

And branches whispering about my feet,  
 Like warning rumours, or as death would greet:  
 From the wide watery valley rose a hum,  
 Like murmuring people that to court have come:  
 I felt I must account in all this strife,  
 As though a frightened soul with wasted life,  
 As though a crippled heart with nought to gain  
 Stood lonesome in its guilt and in its pain.

Then sank upon the waves that silver stream,  
 And slowly thou didst rise, thou pious gleam:  
 The alp's dark forest didst thou softly touch,  
 And gentle sages turned, who were my judge:  
 The twitching of the waves a beckoning smile,  
 On every twig a dew-drop blinked awhile,  
 And every drop a chamber seemed to be,  
 Wherein a homely lamp awaited me.

Oh moon, thou art like a belated friend,  
 That will his youth to the impoverished lend,  
 Ere time his dying memories efface  
 Life's soft reflection comes with thy embrace;  
 Thou art no sun that will entrance and blind,  
 A life of fire that blood-red death must find -  
 Art, what to ailing singers is their song  
 A strange but mild light, leading them along.

## The Mirror Image

When you regard me from the glass  
 Your eyeballs like two nebulas,  
 Like comets, soon to be extinct:  
 With features wherein wonderously  
 Two souls like spies continuously  
 Creep round, I answer whisperingly;  
 Phantom, we two are quite distinct.

You've just escaped dream's custody,  
 To freeze the warming blood in me,  
 To turn my locks from dark to hoar:  
 And yet and yet, you dusky face,  
 Where strange duplicity still plays,  
 If you stepped out from your safe case,  
 Would I then hate or love you more?

Up to your forehead's regal seat,  
 There, where the subject thoughts you treat  
 Like serfs, I'd shyly lift my gaze:  
 But from the cold gleam of the eyes,  
 Filled with dead light, as broken-wise,  
 Ghostlike, I would in scared surprise  
 Far, far withdrawn my footstool place.

What moves about the mouth so mild,  
 Gentle and helpless as a child,  
 I'd shelter faithfully from harm:  
 But when the lips play mockingly,  
 Bows tensed and aimed provokingly,  
 Through features twitching quietly,  
 Then I would fly in full alarm.

I know for sure, you are not I,  
 A being strange, and I a shy  
 Approacher, barefoot, as was Moses,  
 With powers quite unknown to me,  
 With joys and sorrows strange to me,  
 God help me, were my breast to be  
 The place your slumbering soul reposes.

And yet I feel, I am your part,  
 And share with you your shuddering heart,  
 And love and fear make but one whole.  
 Yes, if you left the crystal round,  
 Phantom, and living stepped aground,  
 I'd softly tremble, and confound  
 Myself - by weeping for your soul.

## On the Tower

I stand on a balcony high at the tower,  
 In the crying starling's air,  
 And Maenad-like let the storm with its power  
 Churn in my fluttering hair:  
 O ruffian fellow, mad to the brim,  
 I want to embrace you tight,  
 And, sinue on sinue, two steps from the rim  
 For death and for life then fight!

And far below on the beach I can hark  
 The waves like frolicking hound,  
 Wrestling each other ahiss and abark  
 As the gleaming foam flies around.  
 O, to leap down into the thick of the frey,  
 Right into the storming rout,  
 And chase through coral forests for prey  
 The merry great walruss about!

And out there I can see a pennant blow  
 Like a standard borne apace,  
 Can watch the keel turn up and go low  
 From my airy vantage place:  
 O sit I would in the fighting skiff,  
 Grasp the rudder myself through the spray  
 And hiss right over the surf-splashed reef  
 Like a sea-gull streaking the bay.

Were I a hunter chasing his beast,  
 Just a bit of a soldier at war,  
 Were I a man at the very least,  
 Then heaven had opened its door:  
 Now must I sit all nice and demure,  
 Like a good and patient child,  
 And secretly only my hair unsecure  
 And let it flutter out wild.

## In the Grass

Sweet peace in the grass, sweet swoon,  
 With the hush of the heather scent,  
 Deep flood, deep drunken at noon,  
 When the clouds in the azure are spent,  
 When upon the tired swimming head  
 Drops laughter's sweet rippling wave,  
 Dear voice, dripping whisperings down  
 As the linden flower on a grave.

In the heart, the departed then,  
 Every corpse astretch and astir,  
 Softly, softly its breath draws again,  
 Its shut eyelid quivering to stir,  
 Dead love, dead joy, dead time,  
 All those treasures buried in doubt,  
 Will touch with a shy ringing sound,  
 Like bells that the winds play about.

Hours, more fleeting than kisses are,  
 Of a ray on the mournful lake,  
 Than the sound of a roaming bird  
 That drops like pearls in its wake,  
 Than the gleaming beetle's flash  
 When it hastes through the path of the sun,  
 Than the pressure of a warm hand,  
 When the last farewell is done.

And yet Heaven, ever to me  
 Give this only to me: for the song  
 Of each roaming bird in the blue  
 A soul, that will travel along,  
 Only for each flickering ray  
 My brightly gleaming seam,  
 Each warm hand my handshake tight,  
 And for every joy, my dream.

## The Pond

It lies so still in morning's glow,  
 A pious conscience, all at peace;  
 When west winds come its glass to kiss  
 Flower of the banks will never know:  
 Bright dragon flies above it skim,  
 Blue-golden rods with scarlet gleam,  
 And on the sun's reflected glance  
 The water-spider spins its dance:  
 Sword-lily wreaths the banks enclose  
 To hear the reeds' soft slumber-song:  
 A gentle whisper comes and goes,  
 As peace, and peace, were passed along.

ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER (1869 - 1945)

Die deutschen Titel der übersetzten Gedichte lauten:

Mein blaues Klavier

Versöhnung

Weltende

Giselheer dem Tiger

Ein alter Tibetteppich

Das Lied des Spielprinzen

Scheidung

Vollmond

Weltflucht

Dasein

Zebaoth

Dann

Meine Schamröte

Abend

An mein Kind

Gebet

Else Lasker-Schüler

My Blue Piano

I have a blue piano at home  
And know not a note to play.

It stands in the dark of the cellar room  
Since the world went its brutish way.

Four star hands once would play thereon  
- Moon sing in the boat asway -  
Now rats dance to the clatter and strum.

The cracked key-board has lost its tone ...  
I lament the blue lady's decay.

Dear angels open, I have come  
- I ate of the bitter bread -  
To living me the heavenly home -  
No matter what God said.

Reconciliation  
(To my mother)

A great star will fall into my lap ...  
Let us wake this night,

Pray in the languages,  
That are indented like harps.

Let us make peace this night -  
So much God streams over.

Our hearts are children,  
Sweetly tired they would rest.

And our lips want to kiss,  
Why do you hesitate?

Does not my heart border on yours -  
Always your blood reddens my cheek.

Let us make peace this night,  
If we caress we do not die.

A great star will fall into my lap.

The End of the World

There is a weeping in the world  
As though the good Lord had passed away  
And the leaden shadow upon us hurled  
Weighs like grave-yard clay.

Come, let us hide us more closely from doom ...  
Life lies in every heart  
As in a tomb.

Let us deeply kiss, you and I -  
There's a yearning beating at the world  
From which we must die.

To Giseller the Tiger

Across your face jungles creep,  
How alive you are!

Your tiger's eyes have become sweet  
In the sun.

I am forever carrying you around  
Between my teeth.

You my Red-Indian book.  
Wild West  
Siouxchieftain.

In the twilight I parch  
Tied to the privet -

I can no longer be  
Without the scalper's game.

Your knives draw red kisses  
Upon my breast -

Till my hair flutters at your belt.

An Old Tibetan Rug

Your soul, loving mine since time we met,  
Woven one in this rug from Tibet.

Ray on ray, with hues enamoured,  
Stars, that heaven-long for each other clamoured.

Feet rest gently on the preciousness,  
Stitch on stitches in their countlessness.

Sweet Lama's son on musk-plant throne,  
How long with your mouth kissing mine  
And cheek on cheek have brightly knotted eons flown?

Song of the Playing Prince

How can I love you still more?  
I watch the beasts and flowers  
When they love.

If two stars kiss  
Or clouds form an image -  
We played it more gently.

And your hard forehead,  
It is good to lean on,  
I sit on it as on a gable.

And in the groove of your chin  
I build me a nest of prey -  
Till - you have eaten me up.

One morning then  
I'll find only my knees,  
Two yellow scarabs for an emperor's ring.

## Divorce

Once in a blazing star-flaming night  
 I took the life of the man at my side.  
 And when his cooing blood trickled toward dawn  
 His destiny gazed at me, dark and forelorn.

## Full Moon

(To my town of Thebes)

Softly the moon swims through my blood ...  
 Slumbering tones are the eyes of the day  
 wandering away - swooning back -

I cannot find your lips ...  
 Where are you, distant city  
 With the scent of blessing?

My eyelids are forever sinking  
 Over the world - all's asleep.

## Flight from the World

(Herwarth Walden, the sound-poet of the song)

I want to break out into the boundless  
 Back to myself,  
 Already autumn's meadow saffron  
 Is blossoming for my soul,  
 Perhaps it's too late to go back.  
 O, I will die among you!  
 Since you choke me with yourselves.  
 I want to draw threads around me  
 Ending tangles!  
 Disconcerting,  
 Confusing you,  
 To flee  
 Mine-wards.

## Being

Once had waving night-hair,  
 Long lies buried somewhere.  
 Once had eyes clear as streams,  
 Till melancholy took over my dreams,  
 Once had hands like shells red-white,  
 But work has eaten up their white.  
 And one day the final one will come,  
 And lower his hollow gaze  
 At my body's impermanence  
 And cast from me all dying.  
 And my soul will heave a breath  
 And drink the eternal.

## Jehovah

God, I love you in your robe of roses,  
 When you step out of the gardens, Jehova.  
 O, you god-youth,  
 You poet,  
 In solitude I drink of your perfumes.

The first blossoms of my blood yearn for you,  
 Why won't you come,  
 Sweet God,  
 Playfellow God,  
 The gold of your gates melts in my longing.

## Then

...Then came the night with your dream  
 In the still of stars burning.  
 And smiling the day passed away  
 The wild roses breathed not it would seem.

And now I yearn for dreamy May,  
 To have your love for me made clear.  
 Want to hang on your mouth burning  
 For a thousandfold dream-time year.

## My Red Shame

You, send me no longer the scent,  
 The burning balsam  
 Of your sweet gardens at night.

Shame bleeds on my cheek  
 And about me the summer air trembles.

You ...blow cool upon my cheeks  
 From scentless, unwishing grasses at night.

Only no longer the breath of your searching roses,  
 It tortures my shame.

## Evening

(Alexander von Burnus)

Breathe upon the frost of my heart  
 And when you hear it chirping  
 Fear not its black spring.

Always that strange cold spectre had me in mind  
 And sowed under my feet - hemlock.

Now a weeping angel is fashioning  
 An inscription of stars  
 Upon the column of my body.

## To My Child

Again and again you will die for me  
In the fading year, my child,

When the foliage dissolves  
And the branches grow narrow.

With the red roses  
You tasted the bitterness of death,

Not a single wilting throb  
Were you spared.

That is why I weep bitterly, eternally ...  
In the night of my heart.

I still sigh out the slumber songs  
That wept you into the sleep of death,

And my eyes no longer turn  
Towards the world;

The green of foliage hurts them,  
- But the Everlasting One dwells in me.

My love of you is the image  
We are permitted to make for ourselves of God.

I saw the angels weep too,  
In wind and in sleet.

They hovered ....  
In heavenly air.

When the moon is in flower,  
It resembles you, my child.

And I don't want to see  
How the light-rendering moth floats by carelessly.

I never anticipated death  
- Following your scent, my child.

And I love the walls of my room  
Which I paint with your boyish face.

The stars - in this month  
So many have fallen sparkling life -  
Drip heavily onto my heart.

## Prayer

(To my dear half-brother, the Blue Rider)

I'm searching for a city through all lands  
Before whose entry gate an angel stands.  
I wear his mighty wing , and feel  
It dragging broken from my shoulder bands,  
And on my brow his star sign for my seal.

And ever wander into night...  
I brought love to the world -  
That blue each heart could flower ...  
And have a weary life-time watched,  
My pulsing breath veiled darkly in God's power.

O God, your mantle close about me fast;  
I know in life's round hour-glass I'm the last,  
And when the final man pours out the world  
From your allmight you'll let me not be cast,  
There'll be another earth around me furled.

NELLY SACHS (1891 - 1970)

Die deutschen Titel der übersetzten Gedichte lauten:

In der Flucht

Hängend am Strauch der Verzweiflung

In der blauen Ferne

O der weinenden Kinder Nacht

In diesem Amethyst

Wer aber leerte den Sand aus euren Schuhen

Bereit sind alle Länder

Der versteinerte Engel

Diese Kette von Rätself

Salzige Zungen

Haar, mein Haar

Chassidim tanzen

Schmetterling

Nelly Sachs (1891-1970)

In Fleeing

In fleeing  
what a grand reception  
en route -

Wrapt  
in the cloth of winds  
feet in the prayer of the sand  
that can never say Amen  
for it goes  
from fin to wing  
and on -

The ailing butterfly  
will soon know of the sea again -  
This stone  
with the fly's inscription  
has put itself my hand -

In place of home  
I hold the metamorphoses of this world.

Hanging on the Bush of Despair

Hanging on the bush of despair  
and waiting nevertheless till the legend of flowering  
turns into its prophesy -

Knowing magic  
of a sudden the May-tree's beside itself  
stumbled from death into life -

In the Blue Distance

In the blue distance  
where the red apple-tree avenue wanders  
with sky-ascending root-feet,  
yearning is distilled  
for all who live in the valley.

The sun, prone by the road-side  
with magic wands,  
calls the travellers to halt.

They stop  
in a glassy nightmare,  
while the cricket softly scrapes  
at the invisible

and the dancing stone  
turns its dust into music.

## O the Night of the Crying Children

O the night of the crying children!  
 The night of the children marked out for death!  
 Sleep no longer has access.  
 Terrible warden women  
 Have taken the place of the mothers,  
 Have tensed a false death into the muscles of their hands,  
 Are sowing it into the walls and rafters -  
 Everywhere it broods in the nests of terror.  
 Fear suckles the young, not their mother's milk.

Only yesterday mother had drawn  
 Sleep down, like a white moon,  
 The doll with cheeks kissed pale  
 Had its place in one arm,  
 The stuffed toy grown live  
 With love  
 In the other, -  
 Now blows the wind of dying,  
 Blows the shirts away over the hair  
 That no one will comb again.

## In This Amethyst

In this amethyst  
 the eons of night are deposited  
 and a primordial apparition of light  
 kindles melancholy  
 that was liquid  
 and weeping

Your dying still glows  
 hard violet

## But Who Poured the Sand from Your Shoes

But who poured the sand from your shoes  
 When you had to rise up to die?  
 The sand that Israel took home  
 The sand of its wanderings?  
 Burning Sinai sand,  
 Mingled with the throats of nightingales,  
 Mingled with the wings of the butterfly,  
 Mingled with the yearning dust of snakes,  
 Mingled with all that dropped from the wisdom of Solomon  
 Mingled with the bitter mystery of wormwood -

O fingers  
 That poured the sand from the shoes of the dead,  
 Tomorrow you will be dust  
 In the shoes of the coming!

### All the Countries Are Ready

All the countries are ready to rise  
 from their charts.  
 Shake off their star-skin  
 hitch the blue bundles of their oceans  
 onto their backs  
 and put the mountains with those roots of fire  
 for caps on their smoking hair.

Ready to carry the last burden of sadness  
 in their bags, those butterfly pupae,  
 on whose wings one day  
 they will end their journey.

### The Petrified Angel

The petrified angel  
 still dripping with memory  
 of an earlier universe  
 without time  
 wandering through the women's ward  
 in the amber light  
 locked in with the visitation of a voice  
 primordial before any apple-bite  
 singing in the red of morning  
 with truth -

And the others comb their hair for unhappiness  
 and weep  
 when the ravens outside  
 unfurl their blackness at midnight.

### This Chain of Riddles

This chain of riddles  
 laid about the neck of night  
 the king's word written far distant  
 illegible  
 perhaps in a comet's trail  
 when the open wound of heaven  
 aches

there  
 in the beggar who has space  
 and walking on his knees  
 has measured all the highways  
 with his body

for the legible  
 must be fully suffered  
 and we must learn to die  
 in being patient -

## Salty tongues

Salty tongues of the sea  
 lick at the pearls of our illness -  
 The rose on the horizon,  
 not of dust,  
 but of night,  
 sinks into your birth -  
 Here in the sand its black cipher  
 wrapt about with time  
 grows like hair  
 still in death -

## Hair, My Hair

Hair, my hair  
 lashing out in crackling sparks -  
 desert gorsebush  
 kindled by memory.

Hair my hair  
 what fire-ball of sun  
 has been laid to rest  
 in your night?

In your ends a world is dying!  
 God has cushioned it gently,  
 extinguishing  
 in a tear-streaming body.

But also  
 in a yearning child's  
 raging desire  
 for the ever-growing origins  
 of its fire-balls.

## Hassidim Dance

Night blows  
 with flags torn from death

Black hats  
 God's lightning conductors  
 churn up the sea

they rock it  
 rock it away

hurl it up on the strand  
 there where light  
 has cut out the black wounds.

The world is tasted  
 sung off  
 on the tongue  
 it breathes with the lung of beyond.

On the sevenfold candelabra  
 the Pleiads pray -

## Butterfly

What lovely beyond  
is drawn in your dust.  
Through earth's fiery kernel  
through her rocky shell  
you were passed,  
web of farewell plotted in insubstantialities.

Butterfly  
good night of all beings!  
With your wings  
the weights of life and death  
sink down upon the rose  
that wilts as the light ripens homeward.

What lovely beyond  
is drawn in your dust.  
What royal cipher  
in the secret of the air.

ULLA HAHN (1946)

Die deutschen Titel der übersetzten Gedichte lauten:

Das wär ein Leben

Im Rahmen

Mit Haut und Haar

Tote Liebe

Und mich

Der Himmel

Angeschaut

Diese Mörderin

Fundevogel

Meine Trauer

Ohne Schnee

Tränen

### That Were a Life

I will build me a nest in the armpit  
of the man with the golden helmet. He walks  
so I walk along motionless. He bends  
his body so I upright do likewise.  
If he eats his bread in the sweat of his brow  
I lie dazed by his scents  
under his virile arm.  
His words Yes No are doubtless always  
my words. Reap not and sow not: He  
feeds me and clothes me. Nought  
he asks for this but his daily due of  
roses thornless I wind him his wreath  
twittering around his godhead.

### In a Frame

A woman at her window alone  
standing arms crossed  
before her breast in delicate  
pastel muslin  
waiting for someone to hold her  
in his gilded frame  
is beautiful only on paintings.  
When she lurks at the telephone scanning  
the dial tone polishing up  
the receiver that  
doesn't bear viewing.

### Head over Heels

I drew you from the pit of all your years  
and dipped you deep into my summer time  
I licked your hand your skin your hair and ears  
and swore to be forever mine and thine.

You turned me round. You burnt in me your sign  
with gentle fire into my thin hide.  
So I left off myself, and very soon  
began retreating back from me and mine

and from my oath. First still a memory  
a lovely remnant called me back to me.  
But I already was concealed and kept  
in you from my own self. You'd hidden me.

Till I was quite submerged in your appeal:  
And then you spewed me up head over heel.

## Dead Love

Dead love wall  
 flower split in two  
 never forget forget  
 love in the country  
 in spring all cats are  
 grey at night when  
 love awakens under  
 the sheet drawn up  
 over the brow.

## And Myself

If you wish  
 I take back everything  
 my tears  
 flow back into my eyes  
 my laughter flees  
 behind my lips  
 draw back from yours  
 have you taken back  
 everything  
 what do I want  
 more than have it all  
 back.

All the hasty trains to you  
 I drive back through  
 the flat meadows barely  
 May. Each arrival  
 to you a farewell more.  
 Each word I knock  
 back  
 into my throat  
 I take back everything  
 that you don't want  
 and myself.

## My Heaven

My heaven lies as from tonight  
 within an elbow groove  
 - in it resteth smooth  
 my chin and this my cheek  
 a long long while -

My heaven is one eighty tall  
 with blue eyes wide awake  
 for breakfast time  
 no doubt its stomach too  
 is of this world.

Looked at

You looked at me now  
I suddenly have two eyes at least  
a mouth the finest nose  
right in my face.

You touched me now  
angel's fur grows  
where you weighed upon me.

You kissed me now  
the roast pigeons fly  
capons and partridges  
simply fly from my mouth  
and you had your fill.

You have forgotten me now  
I stand there  
asking what  
good is all this  
stuff to me now I'm alone?

This Murderess

This murderess  
won't let me be  
I think I am safe  
she sends you to me

and chases you off  
I am alone  
and time beats  
in my scull

Nevermore

If you don't leave me thus  
I will leave you  
nevermore  
will you find one  
like me quickly  
afterwards  
you will weep I  
weep so  
we share the tears too.

## My Grief

My grief my bright  
 little copper kettle brightly  
 polished  
 Come we'll put on  
 tears for ourselves  
 but with  
 grace mild as  
 vanilla we  
 do want to  
 please him  
 when he  
 never comes again.

## Without Snow

How could I live without  
 this snow this winter.  
 It locks me out  
 to within. Bends my  
 hair into my head. My  
 lips withdraw  
 my tongue to behind  
 my teeth. And there falls  
 this snow this snow and the ice  
 does not melt further.

## Tears

Passing without tears  
 you go in  
 silk and satin  
 feel how I  
 weep I weep  
 but your coat  
 is not wet.