

Song: *Go and catch a falling star* | Poem by John Donne (1572-1631)

* Donne's poem uses "woman" and "she" where I have exercised my prerogative as the composer and as a living, woman artist to use "hero" and "he." I have also omitted two lines from the final verse in my setting.

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,
Tell me where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the devil's foot,
Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
Serves to advance an honest mind.

If thou be born to see strange sights
 Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights,
 Till age snow white hairs on thee,

Thou, when thou returns't, wilt tell me,
All strange wonders that befell thee,
 And swear,
 No where,
Lives a [hero] true, and fair*

If thou find'st one, let me know,
 Such a pilgrimage were sweet;
Yet do not, I would not go,
Though [he] were true when we first meet,
 Yet [he]*
 Will be
False, ere I come, to two, or three.

***Selections of 'Sonnets from the Portuguese'* | Poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)**

* [] indicates lines not used in my setting

VII. The face of all the world is changed

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. [The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.]*
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art [or shalt be,] there or here;
And this... this [lute and] song... [loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know)] are only dear,
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

XXIV. Let the world's sharpness

Let the world's sharpness like a clasping knife
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm

Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer;
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXI. Say over again

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem a "cuckoo-song," [as thou dost treat it,]
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!" Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—[toll
The silver iterance!]
—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

Suite for Chignik Bay | Poems by L.Wood

1. First sight

hover sky-bound above a jewel-green sea
sun glares on featherless wings
and i am cradled in sheet-metal and fiberglass
i cannot hear the engine roar
silence compared with the vastness of open air
borne above a blue cascade-rimmed verdant bowl.
we are so small.

2. On solid ground

eden. Sea licks the soft-rocked shore
embraced by verdure of impossible green
summer but the air bites chill.
We don't belong.

3. Hole in the rock

waves.
i race my brother and sister to the arch
tide out and exposed, we pass the portal
unseen
lonesome
alone.
we are so small.

4. Gravity

will we go? we asked him in a warm familiar place
but it wasn't home.
if there's gravity, we'll go
home.
and we make do.

5. Irises

my mother always followed
willingly unwilling
she danced a sad song
but a wild one
lonesome
alone.
she made do.

6. Ghost barge

a shipwreck not worth saving
rusted rails
carcasses
spent condoms flung as careless as the loves they left
we children haunted our haunted ship
and it thrilled us just to be alive.
we don't belong.

7. Irises II

in summer the swamp bloomed with wild purple iris
a crust of hearty beauty above the treacherous fen
every moment passed. noticed.
every second.
lonesome
alone.
we are so small.

8. Sunset

there was a certain day every october
is this it?
is this the long goodbye?
when the sun dipped below the summit
one last time
gone.
we are so small.

Sequence of St. Eulalie | Text anonymous, late 9th c.

*Buona pulcella fut Eulalia
Bel auret corps bellezour anima
Voldrent la veintre li deo Inimi
Voldrent la faire diaule seruir
Elle n'ont eskolted les mals conselliers
Qu'elle deo raniyet chi maent sus en ciel
Ne por or ned argent ne paramenz
Por manatce regiel ne preiement
Niule cose non la pouret omque pleier*

Eulalia was a good girl
Beautiful of body and a soul more beautiful still.
The enemies of God wanted to overcome her,
They wanted to make her serve the devil.
She does not listen to the evil counselors,
Those who would have her deny God in heaven.
Not for gold nor silver nor jewels,
Nor for the king's threats or entreaties,
Nothing could persuade the girl.

La polle sempre non amast lo deo menestier
E por o fut presentede Maximien
Chi rex eret a sels dis soure pagiens
Il li enorted don't lei nonque chielt
Qued elle fuiet lo nom christien
Ell'ent adunet lo suon element
Melz sostendriet les empedementz
Qu'elle perdesse sa virginitet
Por o's furet morte a grand honestet
Enz enl fou lo getterent com arde tost
Elle colpes non auret por o no's coist
A czo no's voldret concreidre li rex pagiens
Ad une spede li roveret tolr lo chief
La domnizelle celle kose non contredist
Volt lo seule lazsier si ruovet krist
In figure de colomb volat a ciel
Tuit oram que por nos degnet preier
Qued avuisset de nos Christus mercit
Post la mort et a lui nos laist venir
Par souue clementia

Una ciutatz fo | Text by Peire Cardenal, early 13th c.

Una ciutatz fo, no sai cals
On cazet una plueia tals
Que tug l'ome de la Ciutat
Que toquet foron dessentat

Tug desseneron mas sol us
Aquel ne escapet, ses plus
Que era dins una maizo
On dormie quant aiso fo.

Aquel levet cant ac dormit
E fo se de ploure gequit,
E venc foras entre las gens.
E tug feron dessenamens:

L'uns ac roquet, l'autre fon nus
E l'autre escupi ves sus;
L'uns trais peira, l'autre astella,
L'autre esquintet sa gonella.

E l'uns ferit e l'autre enpeis,
E l'autre cuget esser reis
E tenc se ricamen pels flancx,
E l'autre sautet per los bancx.

L'uns menasset, l'autre maldis,
L'autre juret e l'autre ris,
L'autre parlet e non saup que,
L'autre fes metolas dese.

The little chick continued to serve God
And for this she was brought before Maximian
Who was then the king of the pagans.
He exhorted her, but she did not care
To abandon the name of Christian.
She gathered up her strength:
Better to suffer the persecution
Than to lose her purity.
For these reasons she died with great honor.
They threw her into the fire to be burned,
But she had no sins and her body wuld not burn.
The pagan king could not give in to this,
So he had her head cut off with a sword.
The girl could not oppose the idea
For she called upon Christ and abandoned early life
In the form of a dove, she flew to heaven .
Let us all pray that she will deign to pray for us
That Christ will have mercy upon us
And allow us to come to him after death
Through his grace.

There was a town, I can't say where;
They had a brief rainshower there
And all on whom drops chanced to fall
Lost their good sense; then, one and all.

They went berserk and there were none
Got off unscathed except just one—
Through the whole time of this mishap
One man was home taking a nap.

As soon as this rainshower was through
And this man's nap was over too,
He strolled out but it all seemed changed—
His townfolk's minds must be deranged.

One wore a child's shirt, one went bare;
One spit straight up in the air.
One threw a stick, one heaved a boulder;
One ripped up his own tunic's shoulder.

One hit folks; one shoved them around;
One thought himself a king, new-crowned,
And hands on hips, would proudly prance;
One on shop-counters stomped a dance;

One growled wild threats; one swore and vowed;
One laughed; on of them cursed out loud;
One chattered without sense or rhyme;
One made fierce faces all the time.

E aquel qu'avia son sen
Meravillet se mot fortmen
E vi ben que dessentat son.
E guarda aval et amon

Si negun savi n'i veira,
E negun savi non i ha,
Granz mravillas ac de lor,
Mas mot l'an il de lui major

Que.l vezon estar suuamen.
Cuidon c'aia perdut son sen
Car so qu'il fan no.l vezon faire,
A cascun de lor es veiaire

L'uns l'empenh e l'autre lo bota.
El cuia eusir de la rota;
L'uns esquinta, l'autre l'atrai,
El pren colps e leva e quai.

Cazen levan, a grans scambutz,
S'en fug a sa maizo de sautz,
Fangos e batutz e mieg mortz.
Et ac gaug can lor fon estortz.

Aquist faula es per lo mon:
Semblanz es als homes que i son.
Aquest esgles es la ciutatz,
Quez es totz plens de dessentatz.

Li plueia sai es cazeguda:
Cobeitatz, e si es venguda
Un' erguelhoz' e granz maleza
Que tota la gen a perpreza.

Qu'il son savi e ben senat,
Mas lui tenon per dessentat.
Qui.l fer en gauta, qui en col.
El no pot mudar no.s degol.

The man who'd kept his wits intact
Stared all around, taken aback.
To find his townfolk brain-bereft,
He looked to right and looked to left.

For just one man still sane and sound.
Not one sane man was to be found.
Marveling at them all, he gazed;
They looked back, even more amazed

To see him standing there so calmly.
They thought the poor man must be balmy
Acting in that outlandish way—
Everyone there was certain they

Were compos mentis, sound of brain,
So clearly, he must be insane.
One slapped his face, then clenched his neck;
One knocked him down flat on the deck;

One shoved him; one gave him a kick;
He tried to slip off, stealthy, quick,
But one grabbed, spinning him around.
He got up, slipped, fell to the ground.

Then lurching, stumbling in his stride,
Crept back to his own house to hide.
Bruised, mud-spattered and half-dead,
Relieved though, he'd squirmed loose and fled.

Our world's seen in this parable
And all this wide world's folk as well;
This earth's the town I have in mind
Where mania's never hard to find.

A rain of covetousness fell
Over this world and us as well,
Spreading a huge, malicious pride
That preys on humans far and wide.

Translation by W.D. Snodgrass

Straight on Through | text by Willa Cather (1873-1974) excerpt from the novel *My Antonia*

...I wanted to walk straight on through the red grass and over the edge of the world, which could not be very far away. The light and air about me told me that the world ended here: only the ground and sun and sky were left, and if one went a little farther there would only be sun and sky, and one would float off into them, like the tawny hawks which sailed over our heads making slow shadows on the grass.

We must like it (10-02-1017) | Poem by Tierza Askren

We must like it
The rat-a-tat ring of explosions
The breathless panic
The wails

Like the passion play of mothers screaming for their lost
Little ones
And fathers bent in half with grief and
Hopelessness

Like the feel of cold steel on our fingers
Like the power of that bullet
Gives meaning to our lives

We must like it
Like the fear that the world is falling apart around us
(Even as it isn't, even as we inch forward)
Like to know that OUR people
Are real people
Our time
Was a better time
Our streets
Were safer . . .

I think we must like it.
The feeling of always feeling like
You have an enemy
And your enemy has no heart
No reason
No passion
No . . .

We must like it
Knowing that death lurks around the corner
And even if we taunt it
Even if we lure it
Even if we beg it to come
we could not have seen it coming

We like the pure pleasure of casting stones at molehills
And building idols
To mountains

They were, after all,
Our mountains.

And we like them red with blood between the
White snow
And the blue sky.