

PARIS

A POEM

BY

HOPE MIRRLEES



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A
NOTRE DAME DE PARIS
EN RECONNAISSANCE
DES GRACES ACCORDEES

I want a holophrase

NORD-SUD

ZIG-ZAG

LION NOIR

CACAO BLOOKER

Black-figured vases in Etruscan tombs

RUE DU BAC (DUBONNET)

SOLFERINO (DUBONNET)

CHAMBRE DES DEPUTES

Brekekekek coax coax we are passing under the Seine

DUBONNET

The Scarlet Woman shouting BYRRH and deafening
St. John at Patmos

Vous descendez Madame?

QUI SOUVENT SE PESE BIEN SE CONNAIT

QUI BIEN SE CONNAIT BIEN SE PORTE

CONCORDE

I can't

I must go slowly

(3)

The Tuileries are in a trance
because the painters have
stared at them so long

Little boys in black overalls whose hands, sticky with
play, are like the newly furled leaves of the horse-
chestnuts ride round and round on wooden horses till
their heads turn.

Pigeons perch on statues
And are turned to stone.

Le départ pour Cythère.

These nymphs are harmless,
Fear not their soft mouths—
Some Pasteur made the Gauls immune
Against the bite of Nymphs . . . look

Gambetta
A red stud in the button-hole of his frock-coat
The obscene conjugal *tutoiment*
Mais c'est logique.

The Esprit Français is leaning over him,
Whispering

Secrets
exquisite significant
fade plastic

Of the XIIIth Duchess of Alba
Long long as the Eiffel Tower
Fathoms deep in haschich
With languid compelling finger
Pointing invisible Magi
To a little white Maltese:

The back-ground gray and olive-green
Like le Midi, the Louvre, la Seine. . . .

Of ivory paper-knives, a lion carved on the handle,
Lysistrata had one, but the workmanship of these is
Empire. . . .

Of . . .

I see the Arc de Triomphe,
Square and shadowy like Julius Cæsar's dreams:

Scorn the laws of solid geometry,
Step boldly into the wall of the Salle Caillebotte

And on and on . . .

I hate the Etoile
The Bois bores me:

Tortoises with gem-encrusted carapace

A Roman boy picking a thorn out of his foot

A flock of discalceated Madame Récamiers
Moaning for the Chateaubriand *de nos jours*.

And yet . . . quite near

Saunters the ancient rue Saint-Honoré
Shabby and indifferent, as a Grand Seigneur from Brit-
tany

An Auvergnat, all the mountains of Auvergne in
every chestnut that he sells. . . .

Paris is a huge home-sick peasant,
He carries a thousand villages in his heart.

Hidden courts
With fauns in very low-relief piping among lotuses
And creepers grown on trellises
Are secret valleys where little gods are born.

One often hears a cock
Do do do mi i i

He cannot sing of towns—
Old Hesiod's ghost with leisure to be melancholy
Amid the timeless idleness of Acheron
Yearning for 'Works and Days' . . . hark!

The lovely Spirit of the Year
Is stiff and stark

(6)

Laid out in acres of brown fields,
The crisp, straight lines of his archaic drapery
Well chiselled by the plough . . .

And there are pretty things—
Children hung with amulets
Playing at *Pigeon vole*,
Red roofs,
Blue smocks,
And jolly saints . . .

AU
BON MARCHE
ACTUELLEMENT
TOILETTES
PRINTANIERES

The jeunesse dorée of the sycamores.

In the Churches during Lent Christ and the Saints
are shrouded in mauve veils.

Far away in gardens
Crocuses,
Chionodoxa, the Princess in a Serbian fairy-tale,
Then
The goldsmith's chef d'œuvre—lily of the valley,
Soon

Dog-roses will stare at gypsies, wanes, and pilgrimages

(7)

All the time
Scentless Lyons' roses,
Icy,
Plastic,
Named after wives of Mayors. . . .

Did Ingres paint a portrait of Madame Jacquemart
André?

In the Louvre
The Pietà of Avignon,
L'Olympe,
Giles,
Mantegna's Seven Deadly Sins,
The Chardins;

They arise, serene and unetiolated, one by one from
their subterranean sleep of five long years.

Like Duncan they slept well.

President Wilson grins like a dog and runs about the
city, sniffing with innocent enjoyment the diluvial
urine of Gargantua.

The poplar buds are golden chrysalids;
The Ballet of green Butterflies
Will soon begin.

During the cyclic Grand Guignol of Catholicism
Shrieks,
Lacerations,
Bloody sweat—
Le petit Jésus fait pipi.

Lilac

SPRING IS SOLOMON'S LITTLE SISTER; SHE HAS NO
BREASTS.

LAIT SUPERIEUR
DE LA
FERME DE RAMBOUILLET

ICI ON CONSULTE
LE BOTTIN

CHARCUTERIE
COMESTIBLES DE IRE CHOIX

APERITIFS

ALIMENTS DIABETIQUES
DEUIL EN 24 HEURES

Messieursetdames

Little temples of Mercury;
The circumference of their *templum*
A nice sense of scale,

(9)

A golden drop of Harpagon's blood,
Preserve from impious widening.

Great bunches of lilac among syphons, vermouth,
Bocks, tobacco.

Messieurs et dames

NE FERMEZ PAS LA PORTE
S. V. P
LE PRIMUS S'EN CHARGERA

At marble tables sit ouvriers in blue linen suits discuss-
ing:

La journée de huit heures,
Whether Landru is a Sadist,
The learned seal at the Nouveau Cirque
Cottin. . . .

Echoes of Bossuet chanting dead queens.

méticuleux
bélligerants
hebdomadaire
immonde

The Roman Legions
Wingèd
Invisible
Fight their last fight in Gaul.

(10)

The ghost of Père Lachaise
Is walking the streets,
He is draped in a black curtain embroidered with the
letter H,
He is hung with paper wreaths,
He is beautiful and horrible and the close friend of
Rousseau, the official of the Douane.
The unities are smashed,
The stage is thick with corpses. . . .

Kind clever *gaillards*
Their *eidola* in hideous frames inset with the brass
motto

MORT AU CHAMP D'HONNEUR;

And little widows moaning

Le pauvre grand!

Le pauvre grand!

And petites bourgeoises with tight lips and strident
voices are counting out the change and saying *Mes-*
sieursetdames and their hearts are the ruined province
of Picardie. . . .

They are not like us, who, ghoulish, bury our friends
a score of times before they're dead but—

Never never again will the Marne
Flow between happy banks.

It is pleasant to sit on the Grand Boulevards—
They smell of

Cloacæ
Hot indiarubber
Poudre de riz
Algerian tobacco

Monsieur Jourdain in the blue and red of the Zouaves
Is premier danseur in the Ballet Turque
’Ya bon!
Mamamouchi

YANKEES—“and say besides that in Aleppo once . . .”
Many a *Mardi Gras* and *Carême Prenant* of the
Peace Carnival;

Crape veils,
Mouths pursed up with lip-salve as if they had just said:
Cho - co - lat . . .
“Elles se balancent sur les hanches.”

Lizard-eyes,
Assyrian beards,
Boots with cloth tops—

The tart little race, whose brain, the Arabs said, was
one of the three perches of the Spirit of God.

Ouiouioui, c’est passionnant—on en a pour son argent.
Le fromage n’est pas un plat logique.

A a a a oui c’est un délicieux garçon
Il me semble que toute femme sincère doit se retrouver
en Anna Karénine.

Never the catalepsy of the Teuton
What time
Subaqueous
Cell on cell
Experience
Very slowly
Is forming up
Into something beautiful—awful—huge

The coming to
Thick halting speech—the curse of vastness.

The first of May

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(13)

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There was a ritual fight for her sweet body
Between two virgins—Mary and the moon

The wicked April moon.

The silence of *la grève*

Rain

The Louvre is melting into mist

It will soon be transparent
And through it will glimmer the mysterious island
gardens of the Place du Carrousel.

The Seine, old egotist, meanders imperturbably to-
wards the sea,

Ruminating on weeds and rain . . .

If through his sluggish watery sleep come dreams
They are the blue ghosts of king-fishers.

(14)

The Eiffel Tower is two dimensional,
Etched on thick white paper.

Poilus in wedgwood blue with bundles *Terre de Sienne*
are camping round the gray sphinx of the Tuileries.
They look as if a war-artist were making a sketch of
them in chalks, to be 'edited' in the Rue des Pyram-
ides at 10 francs a copy.

Désœuvrement,
Apprehension;
Vronsky and Anna
Starting up in separate beds in a cold sweat
Reading calamity in the same dream
Of a gigantic sinister mujik. . . .

Whatever happens, some day it will look beautiful:
Clio is a great French painter,
She walks upon the waters and they are still.
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stand motionless
and plastic mid the flames.

Manet's *Massacres des Jours de Juin*,
David's *Prise de la Bastille*,
Poussin's *Fronde*,
Hang in a quiet gallery.

All this time the Virgin has not been idle;
The windows of les Galeries Lafayette, le Bon Marché,
la Samaritaine,

Hold holy bait,
Waxen Pandoras in white veils and ties of her own
decking;
Catéchisme de Persévérance,
The decrees of the Seven Œcumenical Councils re-
duced to the *format* of the *Bibliothèque Rose*,
Première Communion,
(Prometheus has swallowed the bait)
Petits Lycéens,
Por-no-gra-phia,
Charming pigmy brides,
Little Saint Hugh avenged—

THE CHILDREN EAT THE JEW.

PHOTO MIDGET

Heigh ho!
I wade knee-deep in dreams—

Heavy sweet going
As through a field of hay in Périgord.

The Louvre, the Ritz, the Palais-Royale, the Hôtel
de Ville

Are light and frail
Plaster pavilions of pleasure
Set up to serve the ten days junketing
Of citizens in masks and dominoes
A l'occasion du mariage de Monseigneur le Dauphin.

(16)

From the top floor of an old Hôtel,
Tranced,
I gaze down at the narrow rue de Beaune.
Hawkers chant their wares liturgically:
Hatless women in black shawls
Carry long loaves—Triptolemos in swaddling clothes:
Workmen in pale blue:
Barrows of vegetables:
Busy dogs:
They come and go.
They are very small.

Stories. . . .

The lost romance
Penned by some Ovid, an unwilling thrall
In Fairyland,
No one knows its name;
It was the guild-secret of the Italian painters.
They spent their lives in illustrating it. . . .

The Chinese village in a genius's mind. . . .

Little funny things ceaselessly happening.

In the Ile Saint-Louis, in the rue Saint Antoine, in
the Place des Vosges
The Seventeenth Century lies exquisitely dying. . . .

Hu s s h



In the parish of Saint Thomas d'Aquin there is
an alley called l'impasse des Deux Anges.

Houses with rows of impassive windows;

They are like blind dogs

The only things that they can see are ghosts.

Hark to the small dry voice

As of an old nun chanting Masses

For the soul of a brother killed at Sebastopol. . . .

MOLIERE

EST MORT

DANS CETTE MAISON

LE 17 FEVRIER 1673

VOLTAIRE

EST MORT

DANS CETTE MAISON

LE 30 MAI 1778

CHATEAUBRIAND
EST MORT
DANS CETTE MAISON
LE 4 JUILLET 1848

That is not all,
Paradise cannot hold for long the famous dead
of Paris. . . .

There are les Champs Elysées!
Sainte-Beuve, a tight bouquet in his hand for Madame
Victor-Hugo,
Passes on the Pont-Neuf the duc de la Rochefoucauld
With a superbly leisurely gait
Making for the *salon d'automne*
Of Madame de Lafayette;

They cannot see each other.

Il fait lourd,
The dreams have reached my waist.

We went to Benediction in Notre-Dame-des-Champs,
Droning. . . droning. . . droning.
The Virgin sits in her garden;
She wears the blue habit and the wingèd linen head-
dress of the nuns of Saint Vincent de Paul.
The Holy Ghost coos in his dove-cot.
The Seven Stages of the Cross are cut in box,

Lilies bloom, blue, green, and pink,
The bulbs were votive offerings
From a converted Jap.
An angelic troubadour
Sings her songs
Of little venial sins.
Upon the wall of sunset-sky wasps never fret
The plums of Paradise.

La Liberté La Presse!
La Liberté La Presse!

The sun is sinking behind le Petit-Palais.
In the Algerian desert they are shouting the Koran.

La Liberté La Presse!

The sky is apricot;
Against it there pass
Across the Pont Solférino
Fiacres and little people all black,
Flies nibbling the celestial apricot—
That one with broad-brimmed hat and tippeted pelisse
must be a priest.

They are black and two-dimensional and look like
silhouettes of Louis-Philippe citizens.

All down the Quais the bouquinistes shut their
green boxes.

From the VII^{me} arrondissement
Night like a vampire
Sucks all colour, all sound.

The winds are sleeping in their Hyperbórean cave;
The narrow streets bend proudly to the stars;
From time to time a taxi hoots like an owl.

But behind the ramparts of the Louvre
Freud has dredged the river and, grinning horribly,
waves his garbage in a glare of electricity.

Taxis,
Taxis,
Taxis,

They moan and yell and squeak
Like a thousand tom-cats in rut.

The whores like lions are seeking their meat from God:

An English padre tilts with the Moulin Rouge:

Crotchets and quavers have the heads of niggers and
they writhe in obscene syncopation:

Toutes les cartes marchent avec une allumette!

A hundred lenses refracting the Masque of the Seven
Deadly Sins for American astigmatism:

*"I dont like the gurls of the night-club—they love
women."*

Toutes les cartes marchent avec une allumette!

DAWN

Verlaine's bed-time . . . Alchemy

Absynthe,
Algerian tobacco,
Talk, talk, talk,

Manuring the white violets of the moon.

The President of the Republic lies in bed beside his
wife, and it may be at this very moment . . .

In the Abbaye of Port-Royal babies are being born,
Perhaps someone who cannot sleep is reading *le*
Crime et le Châtiment.

The sun is rising,
Soon les Halles will open,
The sky is saffron behind the two towers of Nôtre-
Dame.

JE VOUS SALUE PARIS PLEIN DE GRACE.

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3 Rue de Beaune
Paris
Spring 1919

NOTES

P.1. *Nord-Sud*, one of the underground railways of Paris. *Dubonnet*, *Zig-zag*, *Lion Noir*, *Cacao Blooker* are posters. *Rue du Bac*, etc. are names of stations.

P.11. “It is pleasant to sit on the Grands Boulevards” to page 13 “the curse of vastness” is a description of the Grands Boulevards.

P.13. “The first of May, there is no lily of the valley.” On May 1, the *Mois de Marie*, lily of the valley is normally sold in all the streets of Paris; but on May 1, 1919, the day of the general strike, no lily of the valley was offered for sale.

P.14. The April moon, *la lune rousse*, is supposed to have a malign influence on vegetation.

P.15. “The windows of les Galeries Lafayette, etc.” During Lent life-size wax dolls, dressed like candidates for Première Communion, are exposed in the windows of the big shops.

P.22. The Abbaye de Port-Royal is now a maternity hospital.