

SELECTED POEMS OF  
**RAINER MARIA RILKE**



*Awakening*  
THE *Stone*

# **AWAKENING THE STONE**

*Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke*

Introduction by Alanna Boudreau

Cover art by David Leiberg

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## INTRODUCTION

I first heard of Rainer Maria Rilke (pronounced Rain-YEH Ril-KUH) about ten years ago. I was reading a *Time Magazine* special on the late Catholic pontiff John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła), and in a section dedicated to his prose it stated that Wojtyła was a life-long devotee of the poet Rilke. This piqued my interest because, having a deep fondness for Wojtyła, I desired to love whatever he had loved during his lifetime. I did not realize then, as I began my casual exploration into “The Book of Hours” - Rilke’s collection of love poems to God - just how deeply this solitary man’s words would affect me.

Rainer Maria Rilke was born in 1875 in Prague. His mother was in mourning at the time of his birth due to the loss of an earlier child - a girl - and to console herself, she gave her son the effeminate name René. Her grief translated itself into an unfair projection onto the little boy, and much of Rilke’s childhood consisted of playing a part to appease his mother. She would dress him like a doll when guests came over, and otherwise did not focus much on him. His father was a minor railway official, and according to accounts was

a kindly man. The young Rainer, although not cooperative with his father's wish that he join the military, nonetheless eagerly absorbed values consonant with healthy masculinity: valor, honesty, discipline, self-restraint. His parents did not have a happy marriage, and by the time Rilke was an adolescent, it had ended.

One can't say for sure how much Rilke's childhood impacted him in his adult-life: I share the above limited information on his earliest days because much of his writing circles back, again and again, to his concepts of Woman and Man, and how they interact and deflect. And, despite his negative early experience with his mother, he was evidently bent on redeeming his image of woman, and on finding out the truth of the matter regarding love, freedom, and commitment.

Like Wojtyła, Rilke seemed to have an uncanny insight into the feminine heart - perhaps because he was secure enough in his masculinity to let himself *identify* with it, and perhaps because he was witness to his mother's sorrow. Apart from being an ardent lover of women, as an artist he was most interested in the concept of the woman who has been

## *Introduction*

thwarted in love, and the woman who feels hemmed in and unable to freely magnify the beauty and artistry inherent within her. Underpinning all of this was a profound sense of the soul as feminine, a belief shared by mystics and saints alike. The concepts of solitude, eros, union, and the embodiment of the divine are also key elements in Rilke's work, and if one compares notes even casually he or she will discover many parallels between the Bohemian-Austrian's missives and poems and the weekly audiences composed nearly 100 years later by a young cardinal named Karol Wojtyla.

Rainer Rilke's life, so intensely reflected in his letters, seemed to ebb and flow around the questions that, at turns, plague and inspire us all: what is it to truly live? To die, to love? What is it to be a man? What is it to be a woman? And, though these questions have immense existential weight, they become less oblique, less intimidating (at first blush) when considered through the lens of these poems. Rilke's economy of language is taut and potent, like a stem that carries an impossibly green, fluid heart. His personality - intensely loving yet cripplingly avoidant - is immediately felt. His commune with God is a relief in its candor.

This is the mark of true artistry: to have a sense of the divine in all things. To see transcendence unfolding even in the mundane. To reverence the temporal mingling of light and shadow, and delight in the contours cast thereby. This is what it is to live one's life "in widening circles."

Alanna Boudreau

Philadelphia, Spring 2018

# **AWAKENING THE STONE**

*Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke*

## **FIRST POEMS**

## EVENING

The bleak fields are asleep.  
My heart alone wakes;  
The evening in the harbor  
Down his red sails takes.

Night, guardian of dreams.  
Now wanders through the land;  
The moon, a lily white.  
Blossoms within her hand.

## MARY VIRGIN

How came, how came  
from within your night  
Mary, so much light  
And so much heaviness:  
Who was your bridegroom?

You called, you cried,  
and you have forgotten  
That you are not the same girl  
Who came to me -  
intact.

I am still blossoming, so young.  
How shall I go on tiptoe  
From childhood to Annunciation  
Through the dim twilight  
Into Your Garden.

# **THE BOOK OF PICTURES**

## PRESAGING

I am like a flag unfurled in space,  
I scent the oncoming winds  
and must bend with them,  
While the things beneath are not yet stirring.  
While doors close gently  
and there is silence in the chimneys  
And the windows do not yet tremble  
and the dust is still heavy -  
Then I feel the storm and am vibrant like the sea:  
And I expand, only to withdraw into myself  
And throw myself forth.  
I am alone in the great storm.

## AUTUMN

The leaves fall,  
falling as from far off,  
Like distant gardens  
withered in the heavens;

They fall with measured  
movements of denial.  
And in the night the heavy Earth,  
too, falls from out the stars  
into the Solitude.

All of us fall.  
This hand of mine  
must fall and lo, the other one:  
it is the law.  
But there is One who holds this falling  
With infinite softness  
in His hands.

## SILENT HOUR

Whoever weeps out in the world weeps without  
cause in the world; they weep over Me.

Whoever laughs out in the night laughs without  
cause in the night; they laugh at Me.

Whoever wanders in the world wanders in vain in  
the world; they wander to Me.

Whoever dies in the world dies without cause in  
the world: they look then at Me.

## THE ANGELS

They all have tired mouths  
And luminous, illimitable souls;  
And a longing (as if for bending)  
Trembles at times  
through their dreams.

They all resemble one another.  
In God's garden they are silent  
Like many, many intervals  
In His mighty melody.

But when they spread their wings  
They awaken the winds  
That stir as though God  
With His broad sculptor hands  
Turned the pages of the dark book of Beginning.

## SOLITUDE

Solitude is like a rain  
That evaporates over the sea  
as dusk begins to rise;  
it floats remote across the far-off plain  
Upward into its dwelling-place,  
the skies, then o'er the town it slowly sinks again.

Like rain it softly falls at the dim hour  
When ghostly lanes turn toward  
the shadowy morn;  
When hearts and limbs, laden  
with the emptiness of satiety  
Sad, alienated, from each other turn;

When people with quiet hatred  
burning deep sleep together in *one* bed  
through the gray, phantom sketching of the dawn  
Solitude winds its way, ever flowing with the river...

## KINGS IN LEGENDS

Kings in old legends seem  
Like mountains rising in the dusk.

Their radiance is blinding,  
Their loins encircled  
by girdles bright,

Their robes edged with bands  
Of precious stones  
the rarest earth affords.

With richly jeweled hands  
They hold their slender,  
shining, naked swords.

## THE KNIGHT

The Knight rides forth in coat of mail  
Into the roar of the world.  
And here is *Life*: the vines in the vale  
And friend and foe, and the feast in the hall.

And May and the maid, and  
the glen and the grail;  
God's flags afloat on every wall  
In a thousand streets unfurled.

Beneath the armor of the Knight,  
Behind the chain's black links  
Death crouches and ruminates:

"When will the sword's blade sharp and bright  
Forth from the scabbard spring  
And cut the network of the cloak  
Enmeshing me ring on ring?"

When will the foe's delivering stroke  
Set me free to dance  
And sing?"

## THE BOY

I wish I might become  
like one of these who ride  
wild horses in the night,  
With torches flaming out  
like loosened hair, on  
to the chase through  
the great swift wind ride.  
I wish to stand as  
on a boat and taunt  
the sweeping storm,  
mighty, like flag unrolled  
In darkness but with helmet  
made of gold that  
shimmers restlessly.  
And in a row behind me  
in the dark, ten men  
that glow with helmets

that are restless, too, like mine.  
Now old and dull, now clear  
as glass they shine.

One stands by me and  
blows a blast apace  
on his great flashing trumpet  
and the sound shrieks  
through the vast black  
quietude around;  
the loneliness through which,  
as through a wild mad dream,  
we race.

The houses fall behind us  
on their knees.

Before us bend the streets  
and then we gain.

The great squares yielded to us  
and then we seize them,  
and on our steeds rush  
like the roar of rain.

## INITIATION

Whosoever you are!

Out in the evening roam.

Out from the room you know so well,

And far in the dim distance

leave your home.

Whosoever you are.

Lift your eyes which lingering see

The shadows on the

foot-worn threshold fall,

Lift your eyes slowly to the dark tree that stands  
against heaven, singular, tall.

And you have looked upon Life,

its meanings rise like words

that in the silence clearer grow;

as they unfold before your will to know

Gently turn your eyes away —

## THE NEIGHBOR

Strange violin!  
Do you follow me?  
In many foreign cities,  
far away.  
Your anguished voice  
spoke to me like memory.

Do hundreds play you,  
or does but one play?

Are there in all great cities  
tempest-tossed men who would plunge  
in the river but for you?  
Who, but for you,  
would be forever lost?

Why does your lonely voice  
always come drifting to me?  
Why am I always the neighbor  
Of those sad souls who are forced  
to sing and to say:  
Life is infinitely heavier  
than the heaviness of all things.

SONG OF THE STATUE

Who so loves me that he  
Will give his precious life for me?  
I shall be set free from the stone  
If someone drowns for me in the sea,  
I shall have life, life of my own —  
For life I ache.

I long for the singing blood.  
The stone is so still and cold.  
I dream of life: life is good.  
Will no one love me and be bold  
And embrace me awake?

I weep and weep alone.  
Weep always for my stone.  
What joy is my blood to me  
If it ripens like red wine?  
It cannot call back from the sea

The life that was given for mine.  
Given for Love's sake.

## MAIDENS

### pt. I

Others must by a long dark way  
Stray to the mystic bards.  
Or ask some one who has heard them sing

Or touch the magic chords.  
Only the maidens question not  
The bridges that lead to Dream;  
Their luminous smiles are like strands of pearls  
On a silver vase a gleam.

The maidens' doors of Life lead out  
Where the song of the poet soars.  
And out beyond to the great world  
To the world beyond the doors.

## MAIDENS

### pt. II

Maidens, the poets learn from you  
to tell how solitary and remote you are.  
As night is lighted by one high bright star,  
they draw light from the distance where you  
dwell.

For a poet you must always maiden be  
Even though his eyes awaken the woman in you:  
Wedding brocade your fragile wrists would break.  
Mysterious, elusive, from him flee.

Within his garden let him wait alone  
Where benches stand expectant in the shade,  
within the chamber where the lyre was played,  
where he received you as the eternal One.

Go! It grows dark: your voice and form no more  
His senses seek; he now no longer sees  
A white robe fluttering under dark beech trees  
Along the pathway where it gleamed before.

He loves the long paths where no footfalls ring.  
And he loves much the silent chamber where,  
like a soft whisper through the quiet air  
He hears your voice, far distant, vanishing.

MAIDENS

pt. III

The softly stealing echo comes again  
From crowds of men whom,  
wearily, you shun;

And many see you there.

Thoughts run  
And tenderest memories  
are pierced with pain.

## THE BRIDE

Beloved!

Call aloud to me!

The bride keeps her vigil at the window;  
The evening wanes to dusk, the dimness creeps  
Down empty alleys of the old plane-tree.

O! Let your voice enfold me.

Look at me - take me, from this dark house,  
lonely and remote.

Through deep blue gardens  
where gray shadows float  
I will pour forth my soul  
with hands stretched out . . .

## AUTUMNAL DAY

Lord! It is time.

So great was Summer's glow:

Thy shadows lay upon the dials' faces

And o'er wide spaces let thy tempests blow.

Command to ripen

the last fruits of thine. Give to them

two more burning days and press

The last sweetness into the heavy wine.

He who has now no house

will ne'er build one.

Who is alone will now remain alone;

He will awake, will read, will letters write

Through the long day and in the lonely night;

And restless, solitary, he will rove

Where the leaves rustle, wind-blown,

in the grove.

## MOONLIGHT NIGHT

South-German night!  
The ripe moon hangs above  
Weaving enchantment  
o'er the shadowy lea.  
From the old tower  
the hours fall heavily into the dark  
as though into the sea

A rustle, a call of night-watch  
in the grove, then for a while  
void silence fills the air;  
And then a violin  
(from God knows where)  
Awakes and slowly sings:  
Oh love...oh *love*.

IN APRIL

Again the woods are fragrant,  
the lark lifts on upsoaring wings  
the heaven gray high hung  
above the tree-tops, veiled and dark.  
Where branches bare disclosed  
the empty day.

After long rainy afternoons  
an hour comes  
with its shafts of golden light  
and flings them at the windows  
in a radiant shower.

And rain drops beat the panes  
like timorous wings.  
Then all is still.  
The stones are crooned to sleep  
By the soft sound of rain

that slowly dies;  
And cradled in the branches,  
hidden deep in each bright bud,  
a slumbering silence lies.

## MEMORIES OF A CHILDHOOD

The darkness hung like richness  
in the room when in a dream  
the mother entered there;

And then a glass's tinkle  
stirred the air  
Near where a boy sat  
in the silent gloom.

The room betrayed the mother,  
or so she felt.  
She kissed her boy  
and questioned "Are you here?"

And with a gesture  
that he held most dear  
Down for a moment  
by his side she knelt.

Toward the piano  
they both shyly glanced  
For she would sing to him  
on many a night.

And the child, seated  
in the fading light  
Would listen strangely-  
as if half entranced.

His large eyes fastened  
with a quiet glow  
Upon the hand which  
by her ring seemed bent

And slowly wandering o'er  
the white keys went  
Moving as though against a drift of snow.

## DEATH

Before us great Death stands  
Our fate held close within his quiet hands.

When with proud joy we lift Life's red wine  
up to drink deep of the mystic shining cup

And ecstasy through all our being leaps —  
Death bows his head and weeps.

## REMEMBRANCE

Expectant and waiting you muse  
On the great rare thing which alone  
To enhance your life you would choose:  
The awakening of the stone.  
The deeps where yourself you would lose.

In the dusk of the shelves, embossed  
Shine the volumes in gold and browns.  
And you think of countries once crossed.  
Of pictures, of shimmering gowns  
Of the women that you have lost.

And it comes to you then at last  
And you rise for you are aware  
Of a year in the far off past  
With its wonder and prayer and fear.

MUSIC

What play you, O Boy?  
Through the garden it stole  
Like wandering steps,  
first a whisper then mute;  
What play you, O Boy?  
Your gypsying soul  
Is caught and held fast  
in the pipes of Pan's flute.

And what conjure you?  
Imprisoned is the song.  
It lingers and longs  
in the reeds where it lies;  
Your young life is strong,  
but how much stronger still  
Is the longing that through your music sighs.

Let your flute be still  
and your soul float through  
Waves of sound formless  
as waves of the sea.

For here your song lived  
and it wisely grew  
Before it was forced into melody.

Its wings beat gently,  
its note no more calls.  
Its flight has been spent  
by you, dreaming Boy!

Now it no longer steals  
over my walls  
but in my garden I'd woo it to joy.

MAIDEN MELANCHOLY

A young knight comes into my mind  
As from some myth of old.  
*He came!* You felt yourself entwined  
As a great storm would round you wind.  
He went! A blessing undefined

Seemed left, as when church-bells declined  
And left you wrapt in prayer.  
You fain would cry aloud, but bind  
Your scarf about you and tear-blind  
Weep softly in its fold.

A young knight comes into my mind  
Full armored forth to fare.  
His smile was luminously kind  
Like glint of ivory enshrined.  
Like a home-longing undivided.

Like Christmas snows  
where dark ways wind.  
Like turquoise sea-pearls.  
Like moonlight silver when combined  
With a loved book's rare gold.

## CONFIRMATION

(Paris in May, 1903)

The white veiled maids  
to confirmation go  
Through deep green garden paths  
they slowly wind;

Their childhood they are  
leaving now behind:  
The future will be different,  
they know.

Oh! Will it come? They wait:  
it must come soon!  
The next long hour slowly strikes at last.  
The whole house stirs again,  
the feast is past.  
And sadly passes by the afternoon . . .  
Like resurrection were the garments white

The wreathed procession  
walked through trees arched wide  
Into the church, as cool as silk inside,  
With long aisles of tall candles

Flaming bright: the lights all shone  
like jewels rich and rare to solemn eyes  
that watched them gleam and flare.  
Then through the silence the great song

Rose high up to the vaulted dome  
like clouds it soared.

Then luminously, gently down  
It poured over white veils  
like rain it seemed to die.

The wind through  
the white garments softly stirred  
And they grew vari-colored in each fold

And each fold hidden  
blossoms seemed to hold  
And flowers and stars  
and fluting notes of bird,

And dim, quaint figures  
shimmering like gold  
Seemed to come forth  
from distant myths of old.

Outside the day was one  
of green and blue.  
With touches of a luminous  
glowing red.

Across the quiet pond  
the small waves sped.  
Beyond the city, gardens  
hidden from view

Sent odors of sweet blossoms  
on the breeze  
And singing sounded  
through the far off trees.

It was as though  
garlands crowned everything  
And all things were touched  
softly by the sun;

And many windows opened  
one by one  
And the light  
trembled on them glistening.

## WOMAN IN LOVE

Yes: I long for you.  
To you I glide and lose myself:  
for to you I belong.  
The hope that until now  
I have denied  
Imperious comes to me  
as from your side  
Serious, unfaltering  
and swift and strong.

Those times: the times  
when I was quite alone  
Cocooned in memories  
that whispered to me low.  
My silence was the quiet of a stone  
Over which rippling  
murmuring waters flow.

But in these weeks  
of the awakening Spring  
Something within me has been freed  
Something that in the past  
dark years unconscious lay  
which rises now within me  
and commands that I give  
my poor warm life into your hands

You, who know not what I was  
Even just yesterday.

## SYMBOLS

From infinite longings finite deeds rise  
As fountains spring toward  
far-off glowing skies.

But rushing swiftly upward  
weakly bend and trembling  
from their lack of power descend-  
So through the falling torrent of our fears  
our joyous force leaps like these dancing tears.

## **NEW POEMS**

## TOMB OF A YOUNG GIRL

We still remember!  
The same as of yore  
All that has happened  
once again must be.  
As grows a lemon-tree upon the shore  
It was like that, your light,  
Soft beauty you bore.

And his blood's current  
coursed like the wild sea.  
That god who was the wanderer,  
the slim despoiler of fair women;  
he the sly, the crooked  
But sweet and glowing  
as you thought of him

Who cast a shadow  
over your young limb  
While bending like your arched brows  
o'er your eyes.

## THE POET

You Hour! From me  
you ever take your flight.  
Your swift wings wound me  
as they whir along;  
Without you, void  
would be my day and night.  
Without you,  
I'll not capture my great song.

I have no earthly spot  
where I can live,  
I have no love,  
I have no household fane.

And all the things  
to which myself I give  
Impoverish me  
with richness they attain.

## THE PANTHER

His weary glance,  
from passing by the bars  
Has grown into a dazed  
and vacant stare;  
It seems to him  
there are a thousand bars  
And out beyond those bars  
the empty air.

The pad of his strong feet,  
that ceaseless sound  
Of supple tread behind  
the iron bands  
Is like a dance of strength  
Circling around —  
While in the circle, stunned,  
a great will stands.

But there are times  
the pupils of his eyes  
Dilate, the strong limbs  
stand alert, apart.  
Tense with the flood of visions  
that arise  
Only to sink and die  
within his heart.

## GROWING BLIND

Among all the others  
there sat a guest  
Who sipped her tea  
as if one apart.  
And she held her cup  
not quite like the rest;  
once she smiled  
so it pierced one's heart.

When the group of people  
arose at last and laughed  
and talked in a merry tone  
as lingeringly through the rooms  
they passed, I saw that  
she followed alone.

Tense and still like one  
who to sing must rise

before a throng on a festal night  
she lifted her head, and  
her bright glad eyes were  
like pools which reflected light.

She followed on slowly after the last  
As though some object  
must be passed by.  
And yet as if were it once but passed  
she would no longer walk  
but fly.

## THE SPANISH DANCER

As a lit match  
first flickers in the hands  
Before it flames,  
and darts out from all sides

Bright, twitching tongues,  
so, ringed by  
growing bands of spectators  
she, quivering, glowing stands

Poised tensely for the dance,  
then forward glides  
And suddenly  
becomes a flaming torch.

Her bright hair flames,  
her burning glances scorch,  
And with a daring art  
at her command

Her whole robe blazes  
like a fire-brand  
From which is stretched  
each naked arm, awake.

Gleaming and rattling  
like a frightened snake.  
And then, as though  
the fire fainter grows,

She gathers up the flame  
and again it glows.  
As with proud gesture  
and imperious air

She flings it to the earth;  
and it lies there furiously flickering  
and crackling still  
then haughtily victorious,

But with sweet swift smile of greeting,  
she puts forth her will  
And stamps the flames out  
with her small firm feet.

OFFERING

My body glows  
in every vein and blooms  
To fullest flower  
since I first knew you.  
My walk unconsciously  
Becomes strong and sure;  
Who are you then,  
You who are waiting for me?

When from the past  
I draw myself the while  
I shed old traits  
as leaves of autumn fall;  
I only know the radiance  
of your smile.  
Like the soft gleam  
of stars, transforming all.

Through childhood's years  
I wandered unaware  
Of shimmering visions  
my thoughts now arrests  
To offer you, as on an altar fair  
That's lighted by the bright flames of your hair  
And wreathed by the blossoms  
of your breasts.

## LOVE SONG

When my soul touches yours  
a great chord sings.

How shall I tune it then  
to other things?

O! That some spot in darkness  
could be found

That does not vibrate  
whenever your depth sound.

But everything that touches you and me  
Welds us as played strings sound one melody.

Where is the instrument whence the sounds flow?  
And whose the master-hand that holds the bow?

O! Sweet song...

ARCHAIC TORSO OF APOLLO

We cannot fathom  
his mysterious head;  
Through the veiled eyes  
no flickering ray is sent.  
But from his torso  
gleaming light is shed  
As from a lamp;  
inward bent his glance  
there glows and lingers.

Otherwise the round breast  
would not blind you  
with its grace.  
Nor could the soft-curved  
circle of the thighs  
Steal to the arc whence  
issues a new race.  
Nor could this stark  
and stunted stone display

Vibrance beneath  
the shoulders heavy bar,  
Nor shine like fur  
upon a beast of prey.  
Nor break forth from  
its lines like a great star.  
There is no place  
that does not see you.  
You must change your life.

## THE BOOK OF A MONK'S LIFE

I.

I live my life in widening circles  
that stretch across the world.  
I may not complete the last,  
but I dedicate my life  
Strong pinioned toward my goal.

I circle always around God,  
Around the old tower,  
dark against the sky.  
I have been circling thus  
for ages untold.

Am I a bird that  
skims the clouds along  
Or am I a wild storm,  
or a great song?

II.

Many have painted her.  
But there was one  
who drew his radiant colors  
from the sun.

Mysteriously glowing  
through a background dim  
when he was suffering  
she came to him.

And all the heavy pain  
within his heart  
rose in his hands and stole  
into his art.

His canvas is the  
beautiful bright veil  
through which her  
sorrow shines.

There where the frail  
texture o'er her sad lips  
is closely drawn  
A trembling smile softly  
begins to dawn . . .  
Though angels with  
seven candles light the place  
You cannot read the secret of her face.

III.

In cassocks clad  
I have had many brothers

In southern cloisters where  
the laurel grows,

They paint Madonnas like  
fair human mothers  
And I dream of young Titians  
and of others

In which the God  
with shining radiance glows.

But though my vigil  
constantly I keep

My God is dark,  
like woven texture flowing,

A hundred drinking roots,  
all intertwined;  
I only know that from  
His warmth I'm growing.

More I know not: my roots  
lie hidden deep  
My branches only are  
swayed by the wind.

IV.

Thou Anxious One!

And dost thou then not hear

Against thee all my  
surging senses sing?

About thy face in circles  
drawing near my thought floats  
like a fluttering white wing.

Dost thou not see,  
before thee stands my soul  
In silence wrapt my  
Springtime's prayer to pray?  
But when thy glance rests on me  
then my whole being quickens  
and blooms like trees in May.

Thou dreamer, I am thy Dream.  
But when thou art awake

I am thy Will  
Potent with splendour,  
radiant and sublime.  
Expanding like far space star-lit and still  
Into the distant mystic realm of Time.

V.

I love my life's dark hours  
In which my senses quicken and grow deep.  
While, as from faint incense of faded flowers  
Or letters old, I magically steep  
Myself in days gone by: again I give  
Myself unto the past: again I live.

Out of my dark hours wisdom dawns apace.  
Infinite Life unrolls its boundless space . . .

Then I am shaken as a sweeping storm  
Shakes a ripe tree that grows above a grave

'Round whose cold clay the roots twine fast and warm-  
And Youth's fair visions that glowed bright and brave.  
Dreams that were closely cherished and for long  
Are lost once more in sadness and in song.

## THE BOOK OF PILGRIMAGE

I.

By day Thou are the Legend  
and the Dream

That like a whisper floats  
about all men.

The deep and brooding  
stillnesses which seem.

After the hour has struck,  
to close again.

And when the day  
with drowsy gesture bends  
And sinks to sleep  
beneath the evening skies.

As from each roof  
a tower of smoke ascends  
So does Thy Realm, my God,  
around me rise.

II.

All those who seek You tempt You,  
And those who find would bind You  
To the limits of their imagination.

But I wish to understand You  
As the wide Earth unrolls You.  
You deepen as I mature — I see You in calm and  
storm.

I do not desire the ease and vanity  
Of evidence to prove You.  
You always have been. You always were.

Perform no miracles for me.  
But justify Your laws to me  
Which, as the years pass by me, all soundlessly  
unfold.

III.

In a house was one who  
arose from the feast  
And went forth to wander  
in distant lands.

Because there was somewhere  
far off in the East  
A spot which he sought:  
where a great Church stands.

And ever his children,  
when breaking their bread,  
Thought of him and rose up  
and blessed him as dead.

In another house was  
the one who had died,  
who still sat at table  
and drank from the glass

And ever within the walls  
did abide for out of the house  
he could no more pass.  
And his children set forth

To seek for the spot  
Where stands the great Church  
which he forgot.

IV.

Extinguish my eyes,  
I still can see you.  
Close my ears,  
I can still hear your footsteps fall.

And without feet  
I still can follow you.  
And without voice  
I still can cry out to you.

Break off my arms,  
and I can still embrace you:  
Enfolding you with my heart  
as with a hand.

Hold my heart,  
And my brain will take fire of you  
As flax ignites from  
a lit fire-brand

And flame will sweep  
in a swift rushing flood  
Through all the singing currents  
of my blood.

V.

In the deep nights I dig for you,  
O Treasure!  
To seek you over the wide world  
I roam.

For all abundance  
is but meager measure  
Of your bright beauty  
which is yet to come.

Over the road to you  
the leaves are blowing.  
Few follow it,  
the way is long and steep.

You dwell in solitude.  
Oh, does your glowing  
Heart in some far off valley  
lie asleep?

My bloody hands,  
with digging bruised, I've lifted.  
Spread like a tree I stretch them  
in the air

To find you before day  
to night has drifted;  
I reach out into space  
to seek you there . . .

Then, as though with a swift  
impatient gesture,  
Flashing from distant stars  
on sweeping wing.

You come, and over earth  
a magic vesture  
Steals gently as the rain  
falls in the spring.

## THE BOOK OF POVERTY AND DEATH

### I.

Her mouth is like the mouth  
of a fine bust that cannot utter sound,  
nor breathe, nor kiss.

But that had once from Life  
received all this  
which shaped its subtle curves,  
and ever must from fullness  
of past knowledge dwell alone,  
a thing apart, a parable in stone.

### II.

Alone You wander through space.  
Profound One with the hidden face;  
You are Poverty's great rose.  
The eternal metamorphose  
of gold into the light of sun.

You are the eternally home-less One;  
into the world You never came.  
You're too mighty, too great to name;  
voice of the storm, song that the wild wind sings.  
You are a harp that shatters those  
who play Your strings.

III.

A watcher of Thy spaces make me,  
make me a listener at Thy stone,  
give to me vision and then wake me  
upon Thy oceans all alone.  
Thy rivers' courses let me follow  
where they leap the crags in their flight  
and where at dusk in caverns hollow  
they croon to music of the night.  
Send me far into Thy barren land  
where the snow clouds the wild wind drives,  
where monasteries like gray shrouds stand

august symbols of unlived lives.  
There pilgrims climb slowly one by one,  
and behind them a blind man goes:  
with him I will walk till day is done  
up the pathway that no one knows . . .

## CONVERSATION WITH DAVID LEIBERG (COVER ARTIST)

*Do you remember the first piece of art that genuinely moved you?  
Can you describe the experience?*

This will most likely be disappointing, but the first art that genuinely moved me was the Nine Inch Nails album, *The Downward Spiral*. I had been interested in mostly comic book art before that point, but I can remember listening to that album for the first time. From the first song, I was stunned by how beautiful and raw it was. Trent Reznor was so horrifically sincere in his work and it spoke of an interior life and a level of honesty/openness that I had not experienced previously. It was just absolutely beautiful to me. Now, I would say that the album really is genuinely horrific in hindsight, a tour of his own interior hell. But, the experience was moving for me and it radically changed the way I approached my own work from then on.

*What were you like as a child? When did your creative propensity first begin to show?*

As a child I was cripplingly shy. And, while I always seemed to have a close friend or two, I struggled to identify with and fit into larger groups. Art was one of the ways that helped me communicate with others. Early on, especially in middle and early high school, I used art as humorous way to create strange and funny comics that were often pretty horrific in theme. Creating these images to make people laugh or entertain my classmates was what really helped me to develop as an artist early on.

*What do you think differentiates a good drawing from a great one?*

Well, aside questions of craftsmanship and skill, I would say that what separates a great drawing from a good one is sincerity, or as St John Paul the Great puts it, "a sincere disclosure of self." Work that tries intentionally to be unique is often poor or superficial. But, a deep sincerity naturally makes a drawing truly unique and engaging as it is drawing from the interior life of the artist, who is inherently and utterly unique.

*What is one of the most valuable things you've learned through adversity and hardship?*

This is a tough one. Being the father of six small children, I feel like I know all about adversity and hardship. Seriously though, the most valuable thing that I have learned is that hardship and adversity can't be avoided. Creativity and work can't wait for serene, peaceful moments. It is work like anything else and will only be formed and made mature by adversity and hardship.

*What brings you joy?*

I'm pretty simple when it comes to joy. My wife and family bring me joy. I also love reading, movies, and tabletop games. Anytime I can do these things with my family and friends is always ideal. I also find lasting joy in prayer that is so necessary to ground myself.

*Do you have a favorite line from Rilke? When did you first come across his poetry?*

My wife's first degree was in creative writing with a focus on poetry. One of her favorite poets was Rilke, so of course I was interested. I cannot claim to be as deeply read as she is, but his work will always warmly remind me of

that time in our lives. My favorite line is from the poem, “The Quieting of Mary with the Resurrected One”:

And they began  
quietly as trees in spring  
in infinite simultaneity  
their season  
of ultimate communing

*Do you have any habits that help keep you in a creative headspace?*

Work, work, work. I'm kind of blue collar when it comes to creativity. For me, creativity grows from treating it like anything that we want to become good at. Practice and work are what feed imagination and, certainly, develop skill and flexibility. I don't wait to feel a certain way or to be in a peaceful place (with six kids, this would never happen). I have to just keep working whenever I can. Being passionate about other work (like books, movies, paintings, etc.) also helps to inform creativity for me as, of course, does my prayer life.



## THE LOVE GOOD STORY

*A little about our movement and why we exist.*

Beautiful music, books, and art have always been some of the greatest expressions of culture throughout human history. When rooted in truth, they cultivate virtue and transform you to love what is good. Think of the first time you saw your favorite band live or read a book that changed your life. Good media builds a culture you can be proud of, and sadly your options today are often limited: 1) consume shallow entertainment that leaves you empty or 2) settle for cliché alternatives that leave you wanting more.

Like you, we hate wasting time searching for good media. You've probably wasted countless hours on Spotify and Netflix like we have. You may even know young people who seem to be idly drifting and passively consuming whatever comes their way. We certainly do, and we want to

do something about it. Imagine never again settling for less. Imagine having the tools to hold media to a higher standard. Imagine investing in a generation of young people and artists who will give you hope for the future. That is the very reason our movement exists: to empower you to build a better culture.

Rather than being a passive consumer, you can become a cultural influencer who raises the standard for media and helps young people and artists turn that standard into a way of life. Whether you're simply listening to our weekly podcast or on the front lines of Love Good as a patron or apprentice, you are a part of this movement. It is an honor to accompany you as you change the world.

**[lovegoodculture.com](http://lovegoodculture.com)**