
Ianthe's alt.sex.intergen 'Poems of the Week'. Number 18.
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This week's theme is ELEGIES FOR A LOST CLASSICAL GREECE.
['Greek love' used to be a euphemism for boy-love - see
Eglinton, J.Z. (Psued.) Greek Love. New York. Oliver
Layton Press, 1964. 504pp - an early comprehensive
historical survey of pederasty - long out-of-print, and
in need of being reprinted by some adventurous publisher.]

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- * S. S. Saale (Dates unknown. English poet, late 1800's),
 'Sonnet'.
 - * Robert Payne (England ?, 1911-1969),
 'The Gold Singer'.
 - * Yvacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov (Russia, 1866-1949),
 'Narcissus'.
 - * Euginio Montale (Italy, 1896-1981),
 'The Hands-hold Dance'.
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Saale is probably a psuedonym. I can find nothing on Payne
beyond his dates and the fact that he was probably English;
he obviously deserves to be better known. Ivanov was the
first proletarian writer to achieve recognition after the
Bolshevik coup, before which he had been a Siberian circus
worker who had taught himself to write by copying whole volumes
of Tolstoy and Flaubert by hand. Montale, the great Italian
poet, essayist and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature
in 1975, contributed a genuinely new voice to Italian poetry,
and was an uncompromising opponent of fascism under Mussolini
- although I doubt he was a child-lover like fellow Italian
poet Pasolini - but he wrote a nice poem which fits the theme.

SONNET

Upon the wall, of idling boys a row,
 The grimy barges not more dull than they
 When sudden in the midst of all their play
They strip and plunge into the stream below;
Changed by a miracle, they rise as though
 The youth of Greece burst on this later day,
 As on their lithe bodies many a ray
Of sunlight dallies with its blushing glow.

Flower of clear beauty, naked purity,
 With thy sweet presence olden days return,
 Like fragrant ashes from a classic urn,
Flashed into life anew once more we see
Narcissus by the pool, or 'neath the tree

Young Daphnis, and new pulses throb and burn.

S. S. Saale.

THE GOLD SINGER

All is gold. Though the green hill still lies in the west,
And the flaming swords of the past rise from the Cross,
The green apple tree also is gold, and gold is the singing
Voice of the angels in vestments the colour of bronze
Flesh of the youths, and their songs are continually ringing
In the gold channels of ears, and gold is the Lion who walks
In the evening of our songs, when the laughter is stilled, and the ocean
Breaks with the waves on gold cliffs, and the earth is stilled by their silence
Into the dusk of gold brighter than permanence.

For you, the gold-dusted singer, whose coming is like feathers,
O bearded singer, coming out of the dusk,
You who take pleasure in permanence, remain with us ever,
Sing from the golden boughs, O golden singer,
Sing of the youths in the morning, green leaves falling around them,
Sing of the youthful rivers, the breasts that are burdened with song.
The Jordan is swelling its banks. The hyacinths are red with the blood
Of vine-wreathed Adonis. The limbs of the tiger
Are stiff with creation. And the leopards are writhing.
Sing of the dawn of creation. Sing of the tiger.

O sorrow of gold, O sorrow of youths of the west,
The gold lies among flowers, his limbs are smiling
For the gold dust dropped upon them, the gold light of his eyes.
Before the onset of winter calls down upon his eyelids
The fierce world of his vigour, the lion and the tiger.
Call down, call down, before the birds fall from the trees
A word that will hover in silence on his gold knees,
For you who are gold, whose brightness is like the bread of the angels,
Must be this boy's lover forever, and be like the angels,
You, the gold-dusted singer, singing among the apple trees!

Robert Payne.

[Note: both "hyacinths" and "red", used above, were common in queer English and French literature, from about 1885 until 1935 as code-words for male-male love - both pederastic and adult-adult. Payne's use of them in 'The Gold Singer' is probably a (last?) late homage to such traditions.]

NARCISSUS

Who are you, handsome young boy ? Like a faun you roam in the forest.
But you're no child of the groves: so noble is your fine face.

Movements that flow with a charm, and the richness of your gilded sandals
Show you descend from the gods or are the son of a king.

Keen, having slackened your step, you have tagged a mysterious murmur,
Gracefully tilting your head, moving your finger in time.

Is it Pan's pipe that you hear - or the amorous moaning of Echo ?
The talk of naiads at play ? Or shy dryads' whispered speech ?

You rest on arm on a hip and over this arm, like Lyaeus,
You have capriciously thrown your light, draping shoulder fleece.

Are you not Bacchus himself, cherished by the young nymphs of Nysa ?
Hunter, a naked idler, favourite of gods and goddesses all ?

Are you the proud Narcissus - carried off, alone, in your fancy -
Wandering in languorous dreams, full of a music not heard ?

Go to the nymph who calls you, you who have not known your own self,
But do not bend, do not look into the stream's sleepy face.

For seeing you mirrored there - ah, if you are not really Narcissus,
O stranger, I tremble so, you a Narcissus will be.

Vyacheslav Ivonovich Ivanov.

[Note: "a music not heard" or 'silent music' was a code-phrase for male-male love - it was probably coined first in the paederastic poetry of Oscar Wilde's lover Lord Alfred Douglas, but may rest upon an earlier classical allusion. There seems to have been a worldwide homosexual/paederastic diaspora, via literature, from the 1890s to the Second World War and perhaps beyond, so it is likely that Ivanov would have been linked to others around the world through this shadowy 'Homintern' (jokingly alleged to have "marched arm-in-arm with the Soviet Comintern") - see: Weeks, Jeffrey. Coming Out - homosexual politics in Britain from the 19th Century to the present. London. Quartet Books, 1977. Chapter 10 - 'Creating a Consciousness', and especially pages 122-127 on The Order of Charonea.]

THE HANDS-HOLD DANCE

The hands-hold dance of children on the dry river-bed
was life exploding out of blazing heat.

Between sparse reeds and a thicket grew
the human tuft in the pure air.

The passer-by could feel as torture
his detachment from such ancient roots.
In the golden-age flourishing on happy banks
even a name, a garment was a vice.

Eugenio Montale.

from 'FANNY SKELLER' (The Nameless Love: A Creed)

Once, more than two thousand years ago, it ['the nameless love']
was one of the roots from which the in so many ways unrivalled
culture of a people, the most thirsty for beauty and drunk on
beauty that the world has ever known, drew its best nourishment.
Health, strength and greatness blossomed from the love of a
man for a youth, of a youth for a man, a love prized by its
thinkers and sung by its poets. A brightness was over it -
the brightness of understanding and freedom.

Then came the night, and it came with Christianity and its
monstrous falsification of all our natural feelings of optimism
and joy in life. For centuries this love, which the Greeks set
in its beauty and nobility in the bright sunshine and before
the eyes of the world, was buried.

John Henry Mackay.

[Note: more information on anarchist and boy-lover John Henry Mackay
(Scotland/Germany, 1864-1933) can be found in 'Paidika - Journal of
Pedophilia' Issue 3 (Review of 'John Henry Mackay als Mensch' by
Friedrich Dobe), and in Paidika Issue 7 ('Hiding in the Open - John
Henry Mackay's "A Farewell"', by Hubert Kennedy).]

The 19th century queer (re)appropriation of the cultural remains of
Greece and Crete was as glittering as it is virtually invisible in
the twilight of today's ignorance of such things. The
(re)appropriation served as effective 'legitimisation' for literary
and artistic expressions of queer desires - both adult-adult,
boy-loving and (to a much lesser extent) girl-loving. For more
information, see the following:

Cooper, Emmanuel. The Sexual Perspective - homosexuality and art
in the last 100 years in the West. (2nd Edition). London.
Routledge, 1994.

Dowling, Linda. Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford.
Cornell University Press, 1994.

Lauritsen, J. and Thorstad, D. The Early Homosexual Rights Movement,

1864-1935. New York. Times Change Press, 1974.

Smith, Timothy D'Arch. Love In Earnest; some notes on the lives and writings of English 'Uranian' poets from 1889 to 1930. London. Routledge, Keegan and Paul, 1970.

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Well, after last week's girl-loving incest fest. and this week's boy-love history-lesson, the 'Poems of the Week' will be back to normal 'balance' again next week, I hope !

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'Whatever happens, I shall never be alone  
I shall always have a boy, a railway fare, a revolution.'

Sir Stephen Spender, (England, 1909-1995) who died a few weeks ago.

'Perverting the young ! As if initiation in sexual pleasure was  
in itself an act of perversion ! In general it is quite the opposite !'

Andre Gide; awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1947.

ends.