**Songs of Francis Poulenc**

**Solo Recital: Rachel Evangeline Barham, soprano, Jeremy Filsell, piano – May 15, 2018**

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Much has been made of the dual nature of the music of Francis Poulenc (1899–1963). Always joking, always deathly serious. Perhaps his reputation as a composer of lighter, “charming” music during most of his lifetime was a reflection of a society in a time and place so sick of war that they couldn’t stomach anything on the heavier side. Maybe his fans chose the lighter works again and again, wishing to be entertained, wishing to forget, rather than wanting to resonate with a fellow sufferer. But later in his life and certainly now, he has come to be appreciated for his serious and even political side, not only in his music but in his choice of writers whose words he set. Poulenc came of age during the War to End All Wars, and in his prime years of creative activity was profoundly affected by WWII, when the ruling government in France surrendered and then began collaborating with the Nazis and their vile policies that sought to purge the world of people representing any sort of “other.” At several points in his life, he experienced periods of depression that hindered his ability to compose. He was what we would now call gender nonconforming, and rather openly so for the time – and therefore a person the Nazis wanted to destroy. In his mid-30s, he had a reawakening of the Roman Catholic faith of his childhood when a good friend of about the same age was killed in a car accident. Having come from a wealthy family, he didn’t have a lot of money worries and didn’t seem to care what critics thought of him. That fact, along with the reluctance of his family to let him go to a conservatory and study music formally, may have worked in his favor as he developed his own compositional voice, one that is unique and immediately recognizable across all genres of his music, but also somehow never clichéd. One of the gifts that Poulenc has left to us is the championing of the poets who were his contemporaries, making Éluard, Apollinaire, Jacob, Vilmorin, and Aragon familiar to music lovers outside of France. In his many songs, he preferred to set the poetry of his friends. Poulenc was a brilliant pianist and learned how to write for the voice through his longtime collaborations with Pierre Bernac and Denise Duval. We are fortunate that he devoted so much of his time and effort to writing songs, since critics in the twentieth century demanded music for bigger forces than just voice and piano in order for a composer to be taken seriously.

***Airs Chantés***(Songs for Singing)

These songs, composed from 1927-28, were among Poulenc’s least favorite, though he was happy with his piano writing; he especially despised “Air grave,” thinking it excessive. As a favor to a friend, he set these poems of Jean Moréas (1856-1910), who was born Greek but wrote in French; he started out as a Symbolist poet but later changed to a retrospective style centered on Ancient Roman and Greek themes. Poulenc much preferred setting texts of living poets whom he knew personally. In his writing, he speaks of these poets, as well as other composers, as if they were the only creatives ever to live. Poulenc, as an irreverence to what he considered the subpar poetry of Moréas, even split the word “mousse” in “Air champêtre” and intended these four songs to be self-parodies. No one got his little joke, though, and the composer groaned as *Airs Chantés* became very popular during his lifetime and have remained so.

**Air romantique Romantic song**

 J’allais dans la campagne avec le vent d’orage, I went about the countryside in a windy storm,

Sous le pâle matin, sous les nuages bas; Under the stormclouds of the pale morning,

Un corbeau ténébreux escortait mon voyage, A dark gloomy crow escorted me,

Et dans les flaques d’eau retentissaient mes pas. And the puddles of water hindered my footsteps.

 La foudre à l’horizon faisait courir sa flamme The lightning flared up on the horizon

Et l’Aquilon doublait ses longs gémissements; And the North Wind doubled its wailing;

Mais la tempête était trop faible pour mon âme, But the storm was no match for my heartbeat,

Qui couvrait le tonnerre avec ses battements. Which covered up the thunder with its pounding.

 De la dépouille d’or du frêne et de l'érable From the golden booty of the ash and maple,

L’Automne composait son éclatant butin, Autumn gathered its lustrous harvest,

Et le corbeau toujours, d’un vol inexorable, And that crow, always, from some inexplicable will,

M’accompagnait sans rien changer à mon destin. Stuck with me without any change in my path.

**Air champêtre** **Country song**

 Belle source, belle source, Beautiful fountain,

Je veux me rappeler sans cesse, I want to recall forever,

Qu’un jour, guidé par l’amitié How one day, guided by friendship,

Ravi, j’ai contemplé ton visage, ô déesse, Ravished, I contemplated your visage, o goddess,

Perdu sous la mou-, sous la mousse à moitié. Half concealed in the moss.

 Que n’est-il demeuré, cet ami que je pleure, If only my friend whom I lament were here again,

O nymphe, à ton culte attaché, O nymph, drawn in to your cult,

Pour se mêler encore au souffle qui t’effleure, To mingle again with the breeze that glides over you,

Et répondre à ton flot caché. And to respond to your hidden stream.

**Air grave**  **Somber song**

 Ah! fuyez à présent, Ah! Flee from this moment,

Malheureuses pensées! Unhappy thoughts!

O! colère, o! remords! O rage, o remorse!

Souvenirs qui m’avez Memories which have

Les deux tempes pressées, Pressed against my temples,

De l’étreinte des morts. Like a death grip.

 Sentiers de mousse pleins, Paths fraught with mosses,

Vaporeuses fontaines, Misty fountains,

Grottes profondes, voix Deep hidden places, voices

Des oiseaux et du vent Of birds and of wind

Lumières incertaines Uncertain luminescence

Des sauvages sous-bois, Of wild underthickets,

Insectes, animaux, Insects, animals,

Beauté future, Beauty of the future,

 Ne me repousse pas, Do not reproach me,

Ô divine nature O divine nature;

Je suis ton suppliant. I am your supplicant.

Ah! fuyez à présent, Ah! Flee from this moment,

Colère, remords! Rage, remorse!

**Air vif**  **Lively song**

 Le trésor du verger et le jardin en fête, Treasures of the orchard and the garden arrayed;

Les fleurs des champs, des bois, éclatent de plaisir, Flowers of field and wood burst with pleasure,

Hélas! hélas! Et sur leur tête le vent enfle sa voix. Alas! And over their heads the wind lifts its voice.

 Mais toi noble océan que l’assaut des tourmentes But you, noble ocean, the assault of storms

Ne saurait ravager Will never ravage you;

Certes plus dignement, lorsque tu te lamentes, Certainly with more dignity, though you lament,

Tu te prends à songer. You take to dreaming.

- Jean Moréas (1856-1910) - Translations © 2008 R.E.B.

***La courte paille* (The short straw) 1960**

After living with these songs, I think that it’s worth learning French just to read work by the Belgian children’s book author Maurice Carême (1899-1978). He perfectly captures a child’s world, full of wonder and magic, reverence and rebellion, but sometimes scary. Poulenc dedicated the cycle to his frequent collaborator Denise Duval, the singing actor of opéra-comique who premiered his *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. He meant for her to sing these songs to her young son. Poulenc compiled these poems from two poetry collections, one from 1959 and one from 1960. Poulenc and Carême both lived through what was known as the War to End All Wars, and then saw the escalation of tensions turn into the second World War. These songs, which timidly venture with a child’s understanding into dark places, are reflections of two creatives for whom the horrors of the second World War were less distant in memory than the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks are for us. Theirs was a fragile time of rebuilding cities, social circles, institutions, and trust after a world blown apart and weary of destruction, including the unspeakable horrors of nuclear weapons. The lines between scary and inviting; humor and sadness; life and death; dreams and reality – do not exist for children. Some of us call that innocence, but isn’t it really more like wisdom? I would like to dedicate this set to Jamahri Sydnor (1999-2017) and all of the young people whose lives have been cut short by a bullet. Donate to a scholarship fund in her memory at https://www.youcaring.com/JamahriRomeWallaceSydnor-906542

**Sleep**

 Sleep has gone on a trip

Oh, my! – where has it gone?

In vain I rocked my little one

But he’s crying in his crib

He’s been crying since noon.

 Where has the Sandman hidden away

His sand and his wise dreams?

In vain I rocked my little one

But he’s tossing and turning, all sweaty,

Sobbing in his bed.

 Ah, come back, come back, sleep –

On your handsome racehorse!

In the black sky, the Great Bear (*Big Dipper*)

Has buried the sun

And lit up his bees. (*Milky Way*)

 If my child doesn’t sleep well,

He won’t say hello,

He won’t say anything all day,

Not to his fingers, the milk,

The bread, that greet him in the coming day.

**Le sommeil**

 Le sommeil est en voyage,

Mon Dieu! où est-il parti?

J’ai beau bercer mon petit;

Il pleure dans son lit-cage,

Il pleure depuis midi.

 Où le sommeil a-t-il mis

Son sable et ses rêves sages?

J’ai beau bercer mon petit;

Il se tourne tout en nage,

Il sanglote dans son lit.

 Ah! reviens, reviens, sommeil,

Sur ton beau cheval de course!

Dans le ciel noir, la Grand Ourse

A enterré le soleil

Et ralumé ses abeilles.

 Si l’enfant ne dort pas bien,

Il ne dira pas bonjour,

Il ne dira rien demain

A ses doigts, au lait, au pain

Qui l’accueillent dans le jour.

**What a big adventure!**

 A flea in her car

Was driving a little elephant,

Looking into the shop windows

Where the diamonds glimmer

Oh my –

what a big adventure!

Who’s going to believe me if they hear it?

 The baby elephant absentmindedly

Licked away at a pot of jam

But the flea didn’t notice –

She kept on driving with a smile.

Oh my –

if this keeps up,

I think I’ll go crazy.

 Suddenly, along a fence

The flea was blown away in the wind

And I saw the young elephant

Save himself by crashing through walls.

Oh, my!

I’m sure of what I saw!

But how will I tell Mom?

**Quelle aventure!**

 Une puce dans sa voiture,

Tirait un petit éléphant

En regardant les devantures

Où scintillaient les diamants.

Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!

quelle aventure!

Qui va me croire, s’il m’entend?

 L’éléphaneau, d’un air absent,

Suçait un pot de confiture.

Mais la puce n’en avait cure,

Elle tirait en souriant.

Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!

que cela dure

Et je vais me croire dément!

 Soudain, le long d’une clôture,

La puce fondit dans le vent

Et je vis le jeune éléphant

Se sauver en fendant les murs.

Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!

la chose est sure,

Mais comment le dire à maman?

**The Queen of Hearts**

 Leaning gently

At the panes of her moon-windows,

The Queen welcomes all of you

With an almond flower.

 She’s the Queen of Hearts;

She will, if she desires,

Lead you secretly

Toward strange dwellings

 Where there aren’t any more doors

Or rooms or towers,

And where the deceased young women

Come to talk about love.

 The Queen welcomes you;

Hurry to follow her

Into her Frost Castle

With soft stained-glass moon windows.

**La reine de cœur**

 Mollement accoudée

A ses vitres de lune,

La reine vous salue

D’une fleur d’amandier.

 C’est la reine de cœur.

Elle peut, s’il lui plait,

Vous mener en secret

Vers d’étranges demeures

 Où il n’est plus de portes,

De salles ni de tours

Et où les jeune mortes

Viennent parler d’amour.

 La reine vous salue;

Hâtez-vous de la suivre

Dans son château de givre

Aux doux vitraux de lune.

**Puss in Boots**

 *Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, bé!*

The cat has put on his boots

He goes from door to door

Playing, dancing,

Dancing, singing –

Pou, chou, genou, hibou.

 “You must learn to read,

To count, to write,”

Everyone screams at him.

But *rikketikketau*

The cat starts to guffaw

Retreating to his castle:

He is the Puss in Boots!

**Ba, Be, Bi, Bo, Bu**

 *Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, bé!*

Le chat a mis ses bottes,

Il va de porte en porte

Jouer, danser,

Danser, chanter -

Pou, chou, genou, hibou.\*

 “Tu dois apprendre à lire,

A compter, à écrire,”

Lui crie-t-on de partout.

Mais *rikketikketau*,

Le chat de s’esclaffer

En rentrant au château:

Il est le Chat Botté!

 *\*Nouns with the plural* -oux *ending*

**The angel musicians**

 On the strands of rain,

The Thursday angels

Play perpetually on the harp.

And under their fingers, Mozart

Is played deliciously

In drops of blue joy.

 Because it is always Mozart

That is played without end

By the angel musicians

Who, all Thursday long,

Make their harps sing

The sweetness of the rain.

**Les anges musiciens**

 Sur les fils de la pluie,

Les anges du jeudi

Jouent longtemps de la harpe.

Et sous leurs doigts, Mozart

Tinte, délicieux,

En gouttes de joie bleue

 Car c’est toujours Mozart

Que reprennent sans fin

Les anges musiciens

Qui, au long du jeudi,

Font chanter sur la harpe

La douceur de la pluie.

**Le carafon**

**The baby carafe**

 “Why,” complained the carafe,

Can’t I have a baby carafe?

At the zoo, doesn’t Mrs. Giraffe

Have a baby giraffe of her own?”

 A sorcerer who was passing by

Riding a phonograph record,

Recorded the beautiful soprano voice

Of the carafe

And had Merlin listen to the recording.

 “Very well,” he said, “Very well.”

He clapped his hands three times,

And the lady of the house,

To this day, wonders why

She found, that very morning,

 A pretty little baby carafe

Snuggled up against the big carafe

Just as, at the zoo, the baby giraffe

Lays his long, fragile neck

On the smooth flank of the giraffe.

 “Pourquoi,” se plaignait la carafe,

“N’aurais-je pas un carafon?

Au zoo, madame la giraffe

N’a-t-elle pas un girafon?”

 Un sorcier qui passait par là,

A cheval sur un phonographe,

Enregistra la belle voix

De soprano de la carafe

Et la fit entendre à Merlin.

 “Fort bien,” dit celui-ci, “fort bien!”

Il frappa trois fois dans les mains

Et la dame de la maison

Se demande encore pourquoi

Elle trouva, ce matin-là

 Un joli petit carafon

Blotti tout contre la carafe

Ainsi qu’au zoo le girafon

Pose son cou fragile et long

Sur le flanc clair de la girafe.

**April moon**

 Moon, beautiful moon, April moon,

Give me visions as I sleep

Of the peach tree with the heart made of saffron,

The fish that laughs at sleet

And the bird that, like a distant horn,

Gently wakes the dead.

 And most especially, show me that land

Where there is joy, where everything makes sense,

Where, resplendent with primroses,

They’ve destroyed all the guns.

Moon, beautiful moon, April moon.

Moon...

- Translations © 2018 R.E.B.

**Lune d’Avril**

 Lune, belle lune, lune d’Avril,

Faites-moi voir en mon dormant

Le pêcher au cœur de safran,

Le poisson qui rit du grésil,

L’oiseau qui, lointain comme un cor,

Doucement réveille les morts

 Et surtout, surtout le pays

Où il fait joie, où il fait clair,

Où, soleilleux de primevères,

On a brisé tous les fusils.

Lune, belle lune, lune d’avril,

Lune.

- Maurice Carême

***Fiançailles pour rire* (Light-hearted betrothal)**

Poulenc said himself that he valued melody over any other element of music. *Fiançailles pour rire* of 1939 sets poetry of Poulenc’s friend Louise de Vilmorin – a very interesting character who played the field of romance during the waning years of the European nobility structure. Poulenc said that he would not have written this set if it hadn’t been for the war, as his bonne vivante friend was “imprisoned in her castle in Hungary”: Vilmorin was married at the time – briefly – to Count Paul Pálffy ab Erdöd and had restricted her movement because of the escalating tensions between nations. Before that marriage, though, she had been married to Henry Leigh Hunt, heir to a real estate fortune, and had lived with him in Las Vegas. She was known as a gardener (her family’s fortune was made in the trade of seeds) as well as a poet, journalist, and novelist, and one of her later works was adapted into the film *The Earrings of Madame de...* (1953). This song set provides a challenge for the interpreter in switching narrative voices for each song, from a sexually frustrated woman to one recently deceased to a lover burning the relics of a failed relationship. Translation Note: In the third song, “Il vole,” the verb *voler* in French means both “to fly” and “to steal,” leaving the play on words untranslatable. The tag “Il vole” (he steals, he flies, it flies…) at the end of each stanza is left to the listener’s imagination; other instances are translated to the closest meaning according to their contexts.

**André’s Lady**

 André doesn’t know the lady

whose hand he takes today

Does she have a heart for tomorrows,

and does she have a soul for the evening?

 Returning from a country ball,

Did she go in her sheer dress

to search in the haystacks

for the ring of random betrothal?

 Was she afraid, when night came,

Watched by yesterday’s phantoms,

In her garden, when winter

came in on the grand avenue?

 He liked her for her color,

For her Sunday good humor.

Will she pale on the blank pages

of his album of better times?

**La dame d’André**

 André ne connais pas la dame

Qu’il prend aujourd’hui par la main.

A-t-elle un cœur à lendemains,

Et pour le soir a-t-elle une âme?

 Au retour d’un bal campagnard

S’en allait-elle en robe vague

Chercher dans les meules la bague

Des fiançailles du hasard?

 A-t-elle eu peur, la nuit venue,

Guettée par les ombres d’hier,

Dans son jardin, lorsque l’hiver

Entrait par la grande avenue?

 Il l’a aimée pour sa couleur,

Pour sa bonne humeur de Dimanche.

Pâlira-t-elle aux feuilles blanches

De son album des temps meilleurs?

**In the Grass**

I cannot say anything else

Nor do anything else for him.

He died of his beloved

He died a natural death

Outside

under the tree of the Law

in complete silence

in open countryside

In the grass.

He died unnoticed

Crying out as he passed

Calling,

Calling me

But since I was far from him

And because his voice no longer carried

He died alone in the woods

Under his childhood tree

And I cannot say anything else

Nor do anything else for him.

**Dans l’herbe**

Je ne peut plus rien dire

Ni rien faire pour lui.

Il est mort de sa belle

Il est mort de sa mort belle

Dehors

Sous l’arbre de la Loi

En plein silence

En plein paysage

Dans l’herbe.

Il est mort inaperçu

En criant son passage

En appelant

En m’appelant.

Mais comme j’étais loin de lui

Et que sa voix ne portait plus

Il est mort seul dans les bois

Sous son arbre d’enfance.

Et je ne peux plus rien dire

Ni rien faire pour lui.

**Il vole**

***Il vole***

 As is going down, the sun

reflects in the varnish of my table.

It’s the round cheese from the fable,

in the beak of my silver scissors.

 But where is the crow? *Il vole.*

I would like to sew, but a magnet

is attracting all my needles to itself.

On the square, the skittle players

Pass the time with game after game.

 But where is my lover? *Il vole.*

It’s a thief I have for a lover.

The crow steals away; my lover steals away.

The stealer of hearts goes back on his word,

And the stealer of cheese isn’t here.

 But where is happiness? *Il vole.*

I weep beneath the weeping willow;

I mingle my tears with its leaves.

I cry because I want someone to want me

And I am not pleasing to my thief.

 But where is love? *Il vole.*

Find the rhyme in my raving

And on the country roads,

Return my fled lover back to me,

Who captures hearts and makes me lose my mind.

 I want my thief to steal me.

 En allant se coucher le soleil

Se reflète au vernis de ma table:

C’est le fromage rond de la fable

Au bec de mes ciseaux de vermeil.

 Mais ou est le corbeau? Il vole.

Je voudrais coudre mais un aimant

Attire à lui toutes mes aiguilles.

Sur la place les joueurs de quilles

De belle en belle passent le temps.

 Mais où est mon amant? Il vole.

C’est un voleur que j’ai pour amant,

Le corbeau vole et mon amant vole,

Voleur de cœur manque sa parole

Et le voleur de fromage est absent.

 Mais où est le bonheur? Il vole.

Je pleure sous le saule pleureur

Je mêle mes larmes à ses feuilles

Je pleure car je veux qu’on me veuille

Et je ne plais pas à mon voleur.

 Mais où donc est l’amour? Il vole.

Trouvez la rime à ma déraison

Et par les routes du paysage

Ramenez-moi mon amant volage

Qui prend les cœurs et perd ma raison.

 Je veux que mon voleur me vole.

**My corpse is limp like a glove**

 My corpse is limp like a glove,

Limp like a glazed kid leather glove.

And my eclipsed pupils

Make two white pebbles in my eyes.

 Two white pebbles in my face,

In the silence, two mutes

Shadowed still by a secret

And weighed down with the dead weight of things seen.

 My fingers, so recently straying,

Are joined in a saintly pose.

Resting on the hollow of my laments

In the core of my arrested heart.

 And my two feet are mountains

The last two hills I saw

at the minute when I lost

the race that the years always win.

 The memory you have of me is true,

Children, take it away quickly.

Go, go; my life’s story is told.

My corpse is limp as a glove.

**Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant...**

 Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant

Doux comme un gant de peau glaçée

Et mes prunelles effacées

Font de mes yeux des cailloux blancs.

 Deux cailloux blancs dans mon visage,

Dans le silence deux muets

Ombrés encore d’un secret

Et lourds du poids mort des images.

 Mes doigts tant de fois égarés

Sont joints en attitude saint

Appuyées au creux de mes plaintes

Au nœud de mon cœur arrêté.

 Et mes deux pieds sont les montagnes,

Les deux derniers monts que j’ai vus

A la minute où j’ai perdu

La course que les années gagnent.

 Mon souvenir est ressemblant,

Enfants emportez-le bien vite,

Allez, allez ma vie est dite.

Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant.

**Violon**

**Violin**

Couple in love, in foreign accents,

The violin and its player please me.

Ah! I love these wails

stretched on the cord of uneasiness.

In chords on the suspended cords

At the hour when the Law is silent,

The heart, shaped like a strawberry,

Offers itself to love like an unknown fruit.

Couple amoureux aux accents méconnus

Le violon et son joueur me plaisent.

Ah! j’aime ces gémissements tendus

Sur la corde des malaises.

Aux accords sur les cordes des pendus

A l’heure où les Lois se taise

Le cœur, en forme de fraise,

S’offre à l’amour comme un fruit inconnu.

**Flowers**

Flowers that were promised, Flowers held in your arms,

Flowers growing out of the parentheses of footprints.

Who brought you these flowers in the winter,

dusted with the sea’s sand?

Sand of your kisses, flowers of withered love

Your beautiful eyes are ashes, and in the fireplace,

a heart bound in ribbons of lament

Burns along with its sacred images.

- Translations © 2004 R.E.B.

**Fleurs**

Fleurs promises, fleurs tenues dans tes bras,

Fleurs sorties des parenthèses d’un pas,

Qui t’apportait ces fleurs l’hiver

Saupourdées du sable des mers?

Sable de tes baisers, fleurs des amours fanées

Les beaux yeux sont de cendre et dans la cheminée

Un cœur enrubanné de plaintes

Brûle avec ses images saintes.

- Louise de Vilmorin (1902-1969)

The final two songs, “C” and “Chemins de l’amour,” are two sides to one coin, summing up the darker and lighter sides of Poulenc’s personality within a space of a few months of composition. “C” is a heartbreaking setting of a 1942 poem by Louis Aragon, who like many of Poulenc’s friends and fellow creatives in the French Resistance, was working underground, for fear of his life, during the years of the Nazi occupation of France. Les Ponts-de-Cé (Cé’s Bridges) is an area on the Loire River near Angers which was the site of several historic battles and at the time of the poem’s writing had recently been used as a route for French people escaping the encroaching German armies. Poulenc, writing from relative safety in his country home in Noizay (also on the Loire), felt a sense of guilt and helplessness about his friends left behind in his beloved Paris where swastikas were flying. Though I chose to do a literal translation rather than a rhyming one, the recurring sound of the “cé” rhyme importantly provides a sort of heartbeat for the song. The lack of punctuation suggests the voice of one on the verge of tears. “Chemins de l’amour,” an over-the-top waltz dripping with regretful nostalgia, was written as incidental music for the 1940 play *Léocadia*, by Jean Anouilh (1910-1987). Each work in its own way bewails a place that has great history and great promise but can no longer be viewed with blind patriotism and unconditional love.

**C**

I’ve crossed the bridges of C

The place where everything started

A ballad of olden times

Speaks of a wounded knight

Of a rose on the pathway

And of an unlaced corsage

Of a palace of an insane duke

And of swans in the moats

Of the meadow where

An eternal fiancé comes to dance

And I have drunk, like icy milk

The long lay of fake glories

The Loire carries away my thoughts

Along with the overturned vehicles

And the defused weapons

And the tears not very well wiped away

Oh, my France, Oh, my forsaken France

I have crossed the bridges of C

- Translation © 2018 R.E.B.

**Cé**

J’ai traversé les ponts de Cé

C’est là que tout a commencé

Une chanson du temps passé

Parle d’un chevalier blessé

D’une rose sur la chaussée

Et d’un corsage délacé

Du château d’un duc insensé

Et des cygnes dans les fossés

De la prairie où vient danser

Une éternelle fiancée

Et j’ai bu comme un lait glacé

Le long lai des gloires faussées

La Loire emporte mes pensées

Avec les voitures versées

Et les armes désamorcées

Et les larmes mal effacées

Oh ma France, ô ma délaissée

J’ai traversé les ponts de Cé

- Louis Aragon (1897–1982)

**Les chemins de l’amour**

**Pathways of love**

 The pathways that lead to the sea

Have kept, from the time we passed,

Flowers with the petals gone

And the echo under their arbors

Of our two clear laughs.

Alas, of the days of happiness,

Radiant joys now fled,

I can’t find a trace

In my heart.

 Pathways of my love,

I will always search for you.

Lost paths, you aren’t there anymore,

And your echoes are empty.

Pathways of despair,

Pathways of memory,

Paths of our first time,

Divine pathways of love.

 If I have to forget sometime,

Since life obliterates everything,

I want in my heart a lasting memory,

Stronger than the other love:

The memory of the path where,

Trembling and all bewildered,

One day I felt on my body

The burning of your hands.

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 Les chemins qui vont à la mer

Ont gardé de notre passage,

Des fleurs effeuillées

Et l’écho sous leurs arbres

De nos deux rires clairs.

Hélas! des jours de bonheur,

Radieuses joies envolées,

Je vais sans retrouver traces

Dans mon cœur.

 Chemins de mon amour,

Je vous cherche toujours,

Chemins perdus, vous n’êtes plus

Et vos échos sont sourds.

Chemins du désespoir,

Chemins du souvenir,

Chemins du premier jour,

Divins chemins d’amour.

 Si je dois l’oublier un jour,

La vie effaçant toute chose,

Je veut, dans mon cœur, qu’un souvenir repose,

Plus fort que l’autre amour.

Le souvenir du chemin,

Où tremblante et toute éperdue,

Un jour j’ai senti sur moi

Brûler tes mains.

- Jean Anouilh (1910-1987)

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