PARIS
A POEM

BY
HOPE MIRRLEES

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I want a holopause
NORD-SUD
ZIG-ZAG
LION NOIR
CACAO BLOOMER

Black-figured vases in Etruscan tombs
RUE DU BAC (DUBONNET)
SOLFERINO (DUBONNET)
CHAMBRE DES DEPUTES

Brekekeke we are passing under the Seine
DUBONNET

The Scarlet Woman shouting BYRRH and deafening
St John at Patmos

Vous descendez Madame?
QUI SOUVENT SE PSE 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 étoiment
Mais c'est logique.

The Esprit Français is leaning over him,
Whispering

(4)
Tortoises with gem-encrusted carapace
A Roman boy picking a thorn out of his foot
A flock of disalcedate 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 mi

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 voile,
Red roofs,
Blue smocks,
And jolly saints...

AU
BON MARCHE
ACTUELLEMENT
TOILETTES
PRINTANIÈRES

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,
   - Gilets,
Mantegna's Seven Deadly Sins,
   - The Chardins;
They arise, serene and unviolated, 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.

(8)

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 RAMBUILLET
ICI ON CONSULTE
LE BOTTIN
CHARCUTERIE
COMESTIBLES DE IRE CHOIX
APERITIFS
ALIMENTS DIABETIQUES
DEUIL EN 24 HEURES
Massieux et domes
Little temples of Mercury;
The circumference of their templum
A nice sense of scale,
A golden drop of Harpagon's blood,  
Preserve from impious widening.

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

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

At marble tables sit ouvriers in blue linen suits discussing:

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

Echoes of Bossuet chanting dead queens.

Méthodique  
bilitigants  
hebdomadaire  
immonde

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

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 guillards  
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 Messieursdames and their hearts are the ruined province  
of Picardie....  
They are not like us, who, ghoul-like, 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-er-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.

Ouionioi, c’est passionnant—on en a pour son argent.
Le fromage n’est pas un plat logique.
Aaaa aaaa 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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(12)
The Eiffel Tower is two dimensional, 
Etched on thick white paper.

Pouiss 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 Pyramids 
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 Princesse; 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,

(14)

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 towards the sea,
Ruminating on weeds and rain . . . 
If through his sluggish watery sleep come dreams 
They are the blue ghosts of king-fishers.

(15)
Hold holy bait,
Waxen Pandoras in white veils and ties of her own
    decking;
Catéchisme de Persévéranse,
The decrees of the Seven OEcumenical Councils re-
duced to the format of the Bibliothèque Rose,
    Première Communion,
(Prometheus has swallowed the bait)
    Petits Lycéens,
    Pornograpphie,
    Charmed 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.

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

(16)
Huss h

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

Houses with rows of impasive 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 chasting Masses
For the soul of a brother killed at Sebastopol...

Molière
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 leisuerly 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 wingéd 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.

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From the VIIme arrondissement
Night like a vampire
Sucks all colour, all sound.
The winds are sleeping in their Hyperborean 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 writh 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."

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(20)
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 de 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 Notre-Dame.

JE VOUS SALUE PARIS PLEIN DE GRACE.

NOTES
P.1. Nord-Sud, one of the underground railways of Paris. Dubonnet, Zig-zag, Lion Noir, Cacao Blocker 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 Mars, 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."
P.22. The Abbaye de Port-Royal is now a maternity hospital.

3 Rue de Beaune
Paris
Spring 1919