

# Three Ways of Seeing the Muse

Translations by Evelyn Hooven (November 2017)



*The Muses*, Maurice Denis, 1893

A Poet of Century XIII

*Un Poeta del Siglo XIII* by Jorge Luis Borges (translated from Spanish)

He turns to look at the arduous drafts

of the very first (not yet named) sonnet,  
the improvised page on which are jumbled  
tercets and quatrains, all of them faulty.

He smooths his efforts with a gentle pen  
and pauses. Perhaps it has come forth  
from the future, from its sacred horror  
a murmur of remote nightingales.

Has he sensed that he is not alone  
and that the arcane, the incredible Apollo  
has revealed to him an archetype,

an avid crystal that presses towards  
whatever night shuts down or day pries open:  
the maze, labyrinth, enigma, Oedipus?

A Dream of Stone

*La Beauté* by Charles Baudelaire (translated from French)

Mortals, I'm beautiful as a dream of stone,  
And my breast, where each one is bruised in his turn,  
Exists to inspire a love in poets

Towards stone, eternal and mute.

Like a sphinx, I hold court in the air,  
I join a snow-heart to pallor of swans,  
I hate a movement that displaces lines,  
I don't laugh, I don't cry—not ever.

Poets before my grand stances  
That seem to be lent by monuments  
Consume their days in strictest labor,

For to enthrall these docile lovers  
I have mirrors that make all beautiful:  
My eyes, large and pure, their brilliance—eternal.

Bread Poetry

*Pampoesía* by Pablo Neruda (translated from Spanish)

Poetry, starred patrimony,  
it was necessary,  
hungry and guideless,  
to keep on discovering  
your earthy heritage,

lunar light, secret wheat.

From solitude to multitudes, the key  
kept getting lost in streets and forest,  
beneath stones and in trains. . . .

The first stamp's an obscure condition,  
utter transport with one glass,  
the body's surfeit not having eaten,  
heart beggared in a pride all its own.

And so much more that's not said in books,  
(the ones replete with joyless splendors):  
go on chipping at the stone that pulls you down,  
go on dissolving the soul's mineral,  
'til you *become* the one who's reading,  
'til the water chants through your own mouth.

And this is easier than that tomorrow's Thursday  
and more difficult than to go on being born  
and it's a foreign post that seeks you out  
and hides when you go out seeking,  
and it's a shadow with the roof torn apart,

but in the ruptures there are stars.

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Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French have appeared in *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

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