

## Expressionist Poetry

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Stefan George (1868-1933), *Entrückung (Rapture, 1907)*

I feel air from another planet.  
I faintly through the darkness see faces  
Friendly even now, turning toward me.  
And trees and paths that I loved fade  
So I can scarcely know them and you bright  
Beloved shadow—summoner of my anguish—  
Are only extinguished completely in a deep  
glowing  
In the frenzy of the fight  
With a pious show of reason.  
I lose myself in tones, circling, weaving,  
With unfathomable thanks and unnamed praise,  
Bereft of desire, I surrender myself to the great  
breath.

A violent wind passes over me  
In the thrill of consecration where ardent cries  
In dust flung by women on the ground:  
Then I see a filmy mist rising  
In a sun-filled, open expanse  
That includes only the farthest mountain  
hatches.  
The land looks white and smooth like whey,  
I climb over enormous canyons.  
I feel as if above the last cloud  
Swimming in a sea of crystal radiance—  
I am only a spark of the holy fire  
I am only a whisper of the holy voice.

Ernst Stadler (1883-1914), *Fahrt über die Kölner Rheinbrücke bei Nacht (On Crossing the Rhine Bridge at Cologne by Night, 1913)*

The express train gropes and thrusts its way through darkness. Not a star is out.  
The whole world's nothing but a mine-road the night has railed about  
In which at times conveyors of blue light tear sudden horizons; fiery sphere  
Of arc-lamps, roofs and chimneys, steaming, streaming—for seconds only clear,  
And all is black again. As though we drove into night's entrails to the seam.  
Now lights real into view . . . astray, disconsolate and lonely . . . more . . . and gather . . . and  
densely gleam.  
Skeletons of gray housefronts are laid bare, grow pale in the twilight, dead—something must  
happen . . . O heavily  
I feel it weight on my brain. An oppression sings in the blood. Then all at once the ground  
resounds like the sea:  
All royally upborne we fly through the air from darkness wrested high up above the river. O  
curve of the million lights mute guard at the sight  
Of whose flashing parade the waters go roaring down. Endless line presenting arms by night!  
Surging on like torches! Joyful! Salute of ships over the blue sea! Star-jeweled, festive array!  
Teeming, bright-eyes urged on! Till where the town with its last houses sees its guests away.  
And then the long solitudes. Bare banks. And silence. Night. Reflection. Self-questioning.  
Communion. And ardor outward-flowing  
To the end that blesses. To conception's rite. To pleasure's consummation. To prayer. To the sea.  
To self's undoing.

George Grosz (1893-1959), *Lied (Song, c. 1919)*

We contain all the passions  
and all the vices  
and all the suns and stars,  
chasms and heights,  
trees, animals, forests, streams.  
This is what we are.  
Our experience lies  
in our veins,  
in our nerves.

We stagger.  
Burning  
between grey blocks of houses.  
On bridges of steel.  
Light from a thousand tubes  
flows around us,  
and a thousand violet nights  
etch sharp wrinkles  
in our faces.

René Schickele (1883-1940), *Lobsprüche XVIII (Eulogies, n.d.)*

They had buried me. I heard them say  
I was dead.  
But as the shiver of resurrection went through the earth  
and the floods of the eternity reached me  
with their starless blue days  
I woke up in the light of your eyes and called,  
called your name soundlessly.  
You kissed me, and I became like your lips:  
somewhat pale, turning a bloody dark in kiss  
and merrily curved, became a high rose, your mouth in the wind,  
to which this rose, shining from its purple depths,  
bent down, weighted down, to open for a kiss.