**Stéphane Mallarmé**

***The Afternoon of a Faun***

These nymphs, I would perpetuate them.

So clear

Their light carnation, that it turns in the air,

drowsy with dense slumbers.

Did I love a dream?

My doubt, hoard of ancient night, seems

a subtle tracery of branches grown the true woods—

proving, alas, that all alone I offered myself

as triumph the false ideal of roses.

Reflect….

or if those women you note

bodied forth your fabulous senses’ desire!

Faun, illusion escapes from the blue eye,

Cold, like a fount of tears, of the most chaste:

The other, sighing, passioning, is she

the breeze, warm in your fleece at noon?

But No! Through this quiet, when a weary swoon

crushes and chokes the last last faint essay

Of morning, cool against the encroaching day

There murmurs no water save that which my flute pours

On the grove sprinkled with harmonies: and the only wind

Prompt to exhale from the twin pipes before

it scatters the sound in an arid rain,

is, on the horizon unstirred by a wrinkle,

the visible and serene artificial breath

of inspiration returning to heights unseen.

O Sicilian shores of a tranquil marsh

that my vanity, rivalling the sun, plunders,

Silent beneath scintillating flowers, RELATE

‘*That I was cutting here hollow reeds tamed*

*By talent: when, on the glaucous gold*

*of distant* *Verdures offering their vines to the fountains,*

*An animal whiteness languorously sways:*

*And to the slow prelude whence the pipes are born*

*this flight of swans—no, of Naiads—flees*

*Or dives…*’

Inert, all burns in the tawny hour

without marking the art whereby this desired excess

hymen fled entire from he who seeks the true *A*

Then I will awaken to the primal fervor,

Erect, alone, under an ancient wave of light

O Lilies! And the one among you all in artlessness.

Besides this sweet nothing by their lips disclosed,

the kiss, which hushed assures the faithless,

My breast, virgin of proof, vouches a mysterious

Bite, from some illustrious tooth;

But enough! Such Arcanum chose as confidant

The vast twin reed played beneath the azure:

which, diverting to itself the cheek’s turmoil,

Dreams, in a long solo, that we may divert

The environing beauty by false confusions

between itself and our credulous song;

And, as high as love can modulate, to efface

From the banal dream of pure flank

or back followed by my shuttered glances,

a sonorous, empty and monotonous line.

Try then, instrument of flights, O malign Syrinx

To bloom again by the lake where you await me!

I, proud of my clamour, intend to speak at length

of goddesses: and with idolatrous paintings

to remove again from shadow their waists’ bindings:

So, when I’ve sucked the brightness out of grapes,

to banish a regret that my pretence discarded,

Laughing, I raise the empty cluster to the summer sky

And, blowing into its luminous skins, craving

drunkenness, until evening I gaze through them.

O nymphs, let us swell with divers MEMORIES

‘*My eye, piercing the reeds, speared each immortal*

*Neck that drowns its burning in the wave*

*with a cry of rage flung to the forest sky;*

*And the splendid wash of tresses disappears*

*In radiances and shudders, O jewels!*

*I rush there: when, at my feet, entwine (bruised*

*by the languor tasted in this harm of being two)*

*girls sleeping in nothing but each other’s perilous arms:*

*I seize them, not untangling, and fly up*

*to these heights, hated by the frivolous shade*

*of roses draining all their scent from the sun,*

*where our frolics should be like the day, spent*.’

I adore you, wrath of virgins, O fierce delight

of the naked burden that slips to flee

my fire-drinking lip, like lightning

shudders! The secret fright of the flesh:

From the feet of the inhuman one to the heart of the shy

Abandoned at once by an innocence, moist

With mad tears or vapours less sad.

‘*My crime, happy at conquering these treacherous fears*

*is to have parted the dishevelled tuft*

*of kisses that the gods had so well ravelled;*

*For, as I was about to hide an ardent laugh*

*in the happy folds of one alone (holding*

*With only a finger—so that her feathery candour*

*should be stained by the ardour of her burning sister,*

*the little one, naïve and unblushing:)*

*from my arms, loosened by vague deaths,*

*This prey, ungrateful to the end, frees itself*

*with no pity for the sob that still intoxicated me.*’

No matter! Others will lead me towards happiness

Their tresses knotted to the horns on my brow;

You, my passion, know, how ripe and purple already

every pomegranate bursts, murmuring with bees:

And our blood, taken with the one who will seize it,

Flows for all the eternal swarm of desire.

When these woods are awash with gold and ashes

At that hour a feast exults among the spent leaves:

Etna! It’s on your slopes, visited by Venus

setting her artless heels upon your lava,

as a sad slumber thunders or the flame expires.

I hold the queen!

O sure punishment…

No, but the soul,

Void of words, and this body grown heavier,

to noon’s proud silence at last succumb:

At once we must sleep, forgetting this blasphemy,

stretched on the thirsty sand, and how I love to open

my mouth to the stellar efficacy of wines!

Couple, Farewell: I go to see the shadow you have become.