



Poetry in  Translation

## Selected Poems

*Guillaume Apollinaire*

A Translation Into English by

*A. S. Kline*

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**Guillaume Apollinaire**

*A Translation into English*

*by A. S. KLINE*

*Published with Selected Illustrations*

***POETRY IN TRANSLATION***

[www.poetryintranslation.com](http://www.poetryintranslation.com)

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# The Mirabeau Bridge

(*Alcools: Le Pont Mirabeau*)

Under the Mirabeau flows the Seine

And our amours

Shall I remember it again

Joy always followed after Pain

Comes the night sounds the hour

The days go by I endure

Hand in hand rest face to face

While underneath

The bridge of our arms there races

So weary a wave of eternal gazes

Comes the night sounds the hour

The days go by I endure

Love vanishes like the water's flow

Love vanishes

How life is slow

And how Hope lives blow by blow

Comes the night sounds the hour

The days go by I endure

Let the hour pass the day the same

Time past returns

Nor love again

Under the Mirabeau flows the Seine

Comes the night sounds the hour

The days go by I endure

# Twilight

(*Alcools: Crépuscule*)

Brushed by the shadows of the dead  
On the grass where day expires  
Columbine strips bare admires  
her body in the pond instead

A charlatan of twilight formed  
Boasts of the tricks to be performed  
The sky without a stain unmarred  
Is studded with the milk-white stars

From the boards pale Harlequin  
First salutes the spectators  
Sorcerers from Bohemia  
Fairies sundry enchanters

Having unhooked a star  
He proffers it with outstretched hand  
While with his feet a hanging man  
Sounds the cymbals bar by bar

The blind man rocks a pretty child  
The doe with all her fauns slips by  
The dwarf observes with saddened pose  
How Harlequin magically grows

## **Clotilde**

(*Alcools: Clotilde*)

The anemone and flower that weeps  
have grown in the garden plain  
where Melancholy sleeps  
between Amor and Disdain

There our shadows linger too  
that the midnight will disperse  
the sun that makes them dark to view  
will with them in dark immerse

The deities of living dew  
Let their hair flow down entire  
It must be that you pursue  
That lovely shadow you desire

# The White Snow

(*Alcools: La blanche neige*)

The angels the angels in the sky  
One's dressed as an officer  
One's dressed as a chef today  
And the others sing

Fine sky-coloured officer  
Sweet Spring when Christmas is long gone  
Will deck you with a lovely sun  
A lovely sun

The chef plucks geese  
Ah! Snowfalls hiss  
Fall and how I miss  
My beloved in my arms

## The Farewell

(*Alcools: L'Adieu*)

I've gathered this sprig of heather  
Autumn is dead you will remember  
On earth we'll see no more of each other  
Fragrance of time sprig of heather  
Remember I wait for you forever

## **Acrobats**

(*Alcools: Saltimbanques*)

The strollers in the plain  
walk the length of gardens  
before the doors of grey inns  
through villages without churches

And the children gone before  
The others follow dreaming  
Each fruit tree resigns itself  
When they signal from afar

They have burdens round or square  
drums and golden tambourines  
Apes and bears wise animals  
gather coins as they progress

## The Bells

(*Alcools: Les Cloches*)

My gipsy beau my lover  
Hear the bells above us  
We loved passionately  
Thinking none could see us

But we so badly hidden  
All the bells in their song  
Saw from heights of heaven  
And told it everyone

Tomorrow Cyprien Henry  
Marie Ursule Catherine  
The baker's wife her husband  
and Gertrude that's my cousin

Will smile when I go by them  
I won't know where to hide  
You far and I'll be crying  
Perhaps I shall be dying

# The Gypsy

(*Alcools: La tzigane*)

The gypsy knew in advance  
Our two lives star-crossed by night  
We said farewell to her and then  
from that deep well Hope began

Love heavy a performing bear  
Danced upright when we wanted  
And the blue bird lost his plumes  
And the beggars lost their *Ave*

We knew quite well that we were damned  
But hope of love in the street  
Made us think hand in hand  
Of what the Gypsy did foresee

## The Sign

(*Alcools: Signe*)

I am bound to the King of the Sign of Autumn  
Parting I love the fruits I detest the flowers  
I regret every one of the kisses that I've given  
Such a bitter walnut tells his grief to the showers

My Autumn eternal O my spiritual season  
The hands of lost lovers juggle with your sun  
A spouse follows me it's my fatal shadow  
The doves take flight this evening their last one

# One Evening

(*Alcools: Un soir*)

An eagle descends from this sky white with archangels

And you sustain me

Let them tremble a long while all these lamps

Pray pray for me

The city's metallic and it's the only star

Drowned in your blue eyes

When the tramways run spurting pale fire

Over the twittering birds

And all that trembles in your eyes of my dreams

That a lonely man drinks

Under flames of gas red like a false dawn

O clothed your arm is lifted

See the speaker stick his tongue out at the listeners

A phantom has committed suicide

The apostle of the fig-tree hangs and slowly rots

Let us play this love out then to the end

Bells with clear chimes announce your birth

See

The streets are garlanded and the palms advance

Towards thee

# Moonlight

(*Alcools: Clair de Lune*)

Mellifluent moon on the lips of the maddened  
The orchards and towns are greedy tonight  
The stars appear like the image of bees  
Of this luminous honey that offends the vines  
For now all sweet in their fall from the sky  
Each ray of moonlight's a ray of honey  
Now hid I conceive the sweetest adventure  
I fear stings of fire from this Polar bee  
that sets these deceptive rays in my hands  
And takes its moon-honey to the rose of the winds

## Autumn III

(*Alcools: Automne malade*)

Autumn ill and adored  
You die when the hurricane blows in the rosaries  
When it has snowed  
In the orchard trees

Poor autumn  
Dead in whiteness and riches  
Of snow and ripe fruits  
Deep in the sky  
The sparrow hawks cry  
Over the sprites with green hair the dwarfs  
Who've never been loved

In the far tree-lines  
the stags are groaning

And how I love O season how I love your rumbling  
The falling fruits that no one gathers  
The wind the forest that are tumbling  
All their tears in autumn leaf by leaf  
The leaves  
You press  
A crowd  
That flows  
The life  
That goes

# **Hotels**

(*Alcools: Hôtels*)

The room is free  
Each for himself  
A new arrival  
Pays by the month

The boss is doubtful  
Whether you'll pay  
Like a top  
I spin on the way

The traffic noise  
My neighbour gross  
Who puffs an acrid  
English smoke

O La Vallière  
Who limps and smiles  
In my prayers  
The bedside table

And all the company  
in this hotel  
know the languages  
of Babel

Let's shut our doors  
With a double lock  
And each adore  
his lonely love

## Hunting Horns

(*Alcools: Cors de chasse*)

Our story's noble as its tragic  
like the grimace of a tyrant  
no drama's chance or magic  
no detail that's indifferent  
makes our great love pathetic

And Thomas de Quincey drinking  
Opium poison sweet and chaste  
Of his poor Anne went dreaming  
We pass we pass since all must pass  
Often I'll be returning

Memories are hunting horns alas  
whose note along the wind is dying

# Vitam Impendere Amori

(*Vitam Impendere Amori: To Threaten Life for Love*)

Love is dead within your arms  
Do you remember his encounter  
He's dead you restore the charms  
He returns at your encounter

Another spring of springs gone past  
I think of all its tenderness  
Farewell season done at last  
You'll return as tenderly



In the evening light that's faded  
Where our several loves brush by  
Your memory lies enchanted  
Far from our shades that die

O hands bound by memory  
Burning like a funeral pyre  
Where the last black Phoenix  
Perfection comes to respire

Link by link the chain wears thin  
Deriding us your memory  
Flies ah hear it you who rail  
I kneel again at your feet



You've not surprised my secret yet  
Already the cortège moves on  
But left to us is the regret  
of there being no connivance none

The rose floats at the water's edge  
The maskers have passed by in crowds  
It trembles in me like a bell  
This heavy secret you ask now



Evening falls and in the garden  
Women tell their histories  
to Night that not without disdain  
spills their dark hair's mysteries

Little children little children  
Your wings have flown away  
But you rose that defend yourself  
Throw your unrivalled scents away

For now's the hour of petty theft  
Of plumes of flowers and of tresses  
Gather the fountain jets so free  
Of whom the roses are mistresses



You descended through the water clear  
I drowned my self so in your glance  
The soldier passes she leans down  
Turns and breaks away a branch

You float on nocturnal waves  
The flame is my own heart reversed  
Coloured as that comb's tortoiseshell  
The wave that bathes you mirrors well



O my abandoned youth is dead  
Like a garland faded  
Here the season comes again  
Of suspicion and disdain

The landscape's formed of canvases  
A false stream of blood flows down  
And under the tree the stars glow fresh  
The only passer by's a clown

The glass in the frame has cracked  
An air defined uncertainly  
Hovers between sound and thought  
Between 'to be' and memory

O my abandoned youth is dead  
Like a garland faded  
Here the season comes again  
Of suspicion and disdain

# The Bestiary: or Orpheus's Procession

(*Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée*)

## Orpheus



'Orpheus, Making Music for the Animals'  
Adriaen Collaert, 1570 - 1618, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Admire the vital power  
And nobility of line:  
It's the voice that the light made us understand here  
That Hermes Trismegistus writes of in *Pimander*.

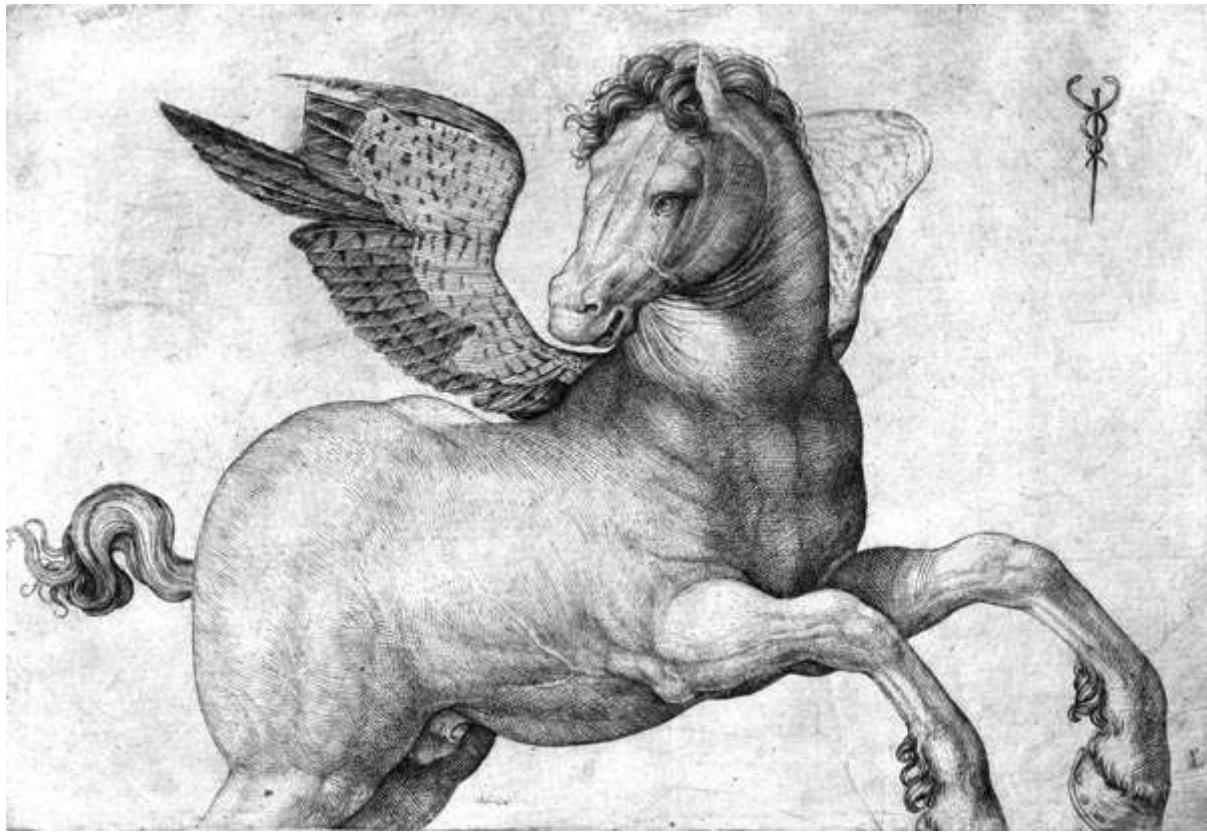
## The Tortoise



‘Feeling’  
Raphaël Sadeler (I), 1581, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

From magic Thrace, O delerium!  
My sure fingers sound the strings.  
The creatures pass to the sounds  
Of my tortoise, and the songs I sing.

## The Horse



'Pegasus'  
Jacopo de' Barbari, 1509 - 1516, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

My harsh dreams knew the riding of you  
My gold-charioted fate will be your lovely car  
That for reins will hold tight to frenzy,  
My verses, the patterns of all poetry.

## The Tibetan Goat

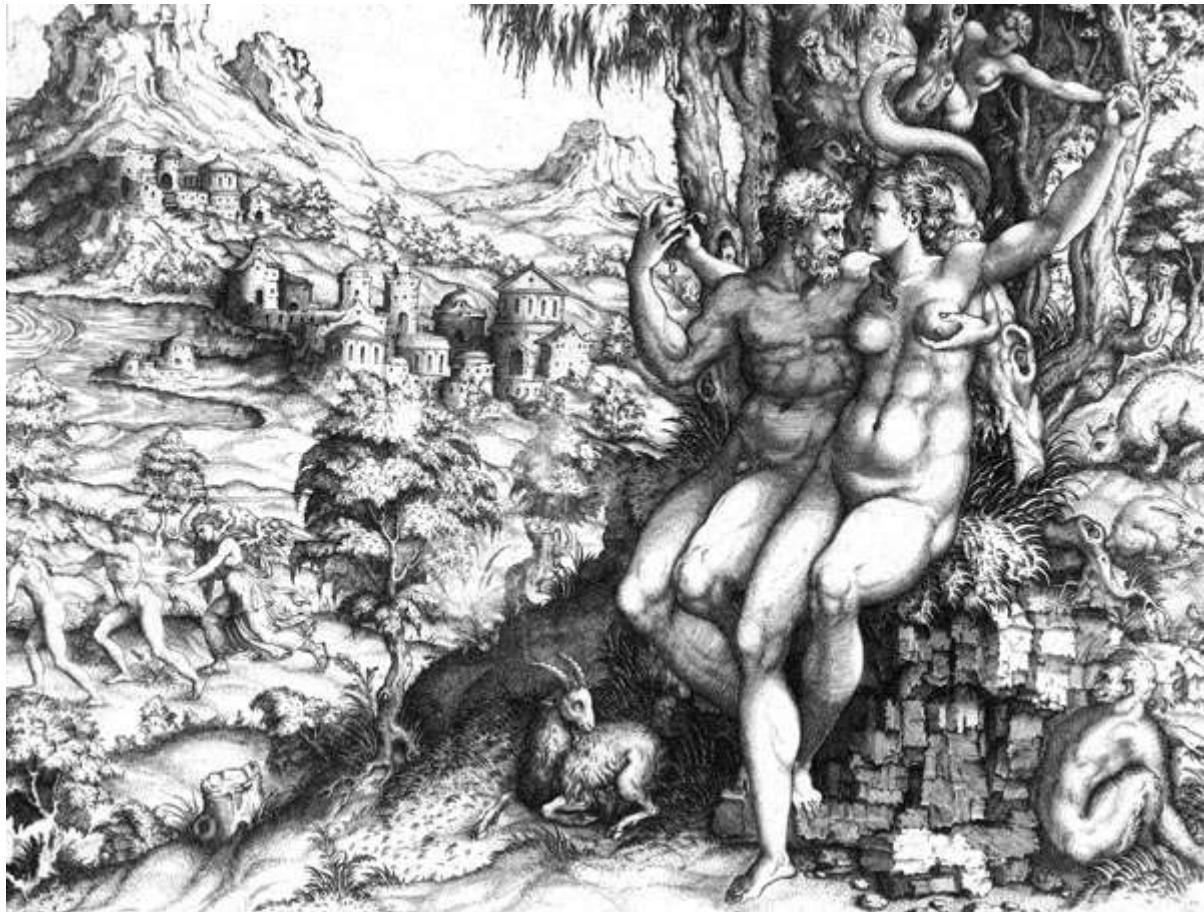


'Hilly Landscape with Two Goats'

Reinier van Persijn, Jacob Gerritsz Cuyp, Nicolaes Visscher (I), 1641, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

The fleece of this goat and even  
That gold one which cost such pain  
To Jason's not worth a *sou* towards  
The tresses with which I'm taken.

## The Serpent



'The Fall'

Anonymous, Hieronymus Cock, c. 1558 - c. 1570, [\*The Rijksmuseum\*](#)

You set yourself against beauty.  
And how many women have been  
victims of your cruelty!  
Eve, Eurydice, Cleopatra:  
I know three or four more after.

## The Cat



‘The Large Cat’  
Cornelis Visscher (II), 1657, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

I wish there to be in my house:  
A woman possessing reason,  
A cat among books passing by,  
Friends for every season  
Lacking whom I’m barely alive.

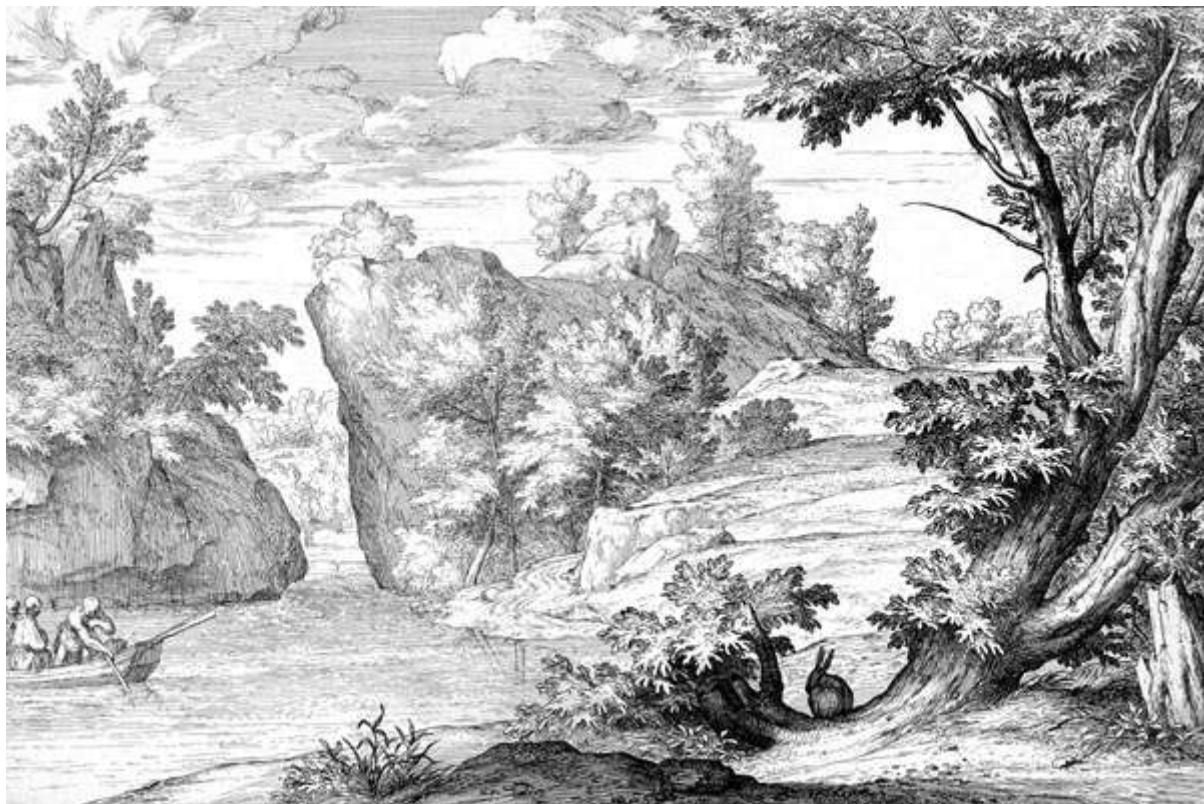
## The Lion



‘Wild Animals’  
Caspar Luyken, Christoph Weigel, 1695 - 1705, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

O lion, miserable image  
Of kings lamentably chosen,  
Now you’re only born in a cage  
In Hamburg, among the Germans.

## The Hare



‘River Landscape with Hare’

Abraham Genoels, Adam Frans van der Meulen, Lodewijk XIV, 1650 - 1690, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Don't be fearful and lascivious  
Like the hare and the amorous.  
But always let your brain weave  
The full form that conceives.

## The Rabbit

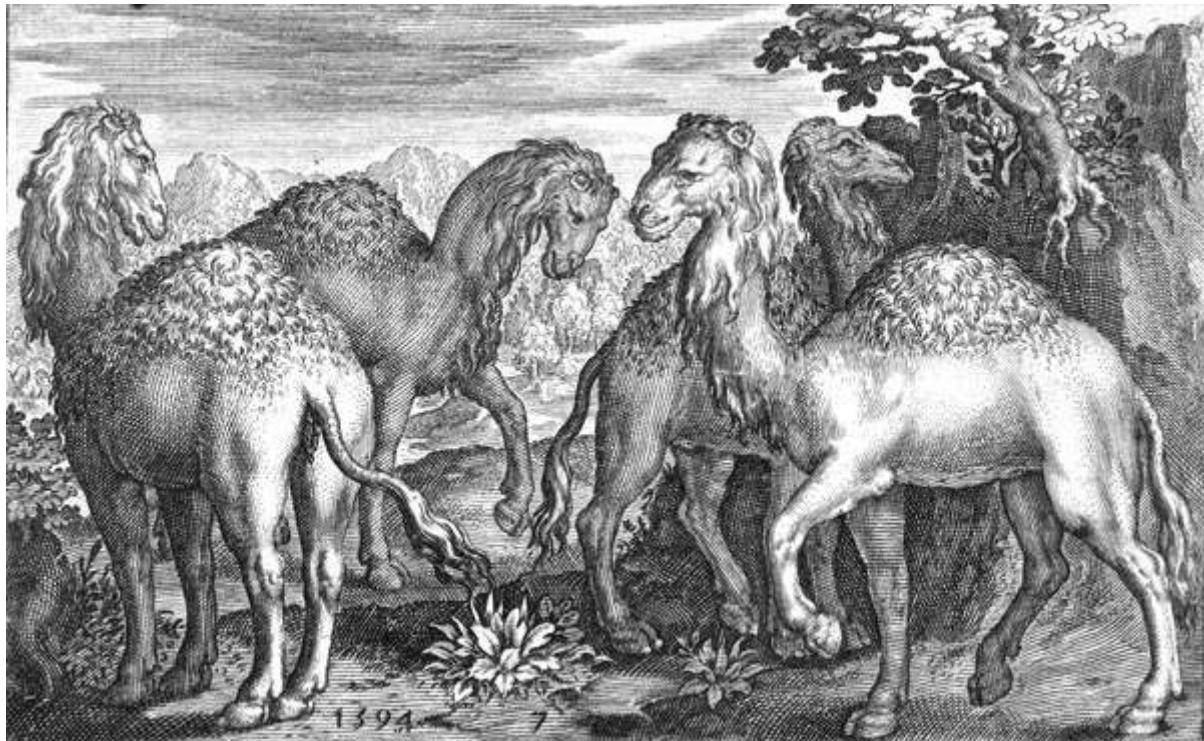


‘Rabbits’

Frederick Bloemaert, Abraham Bloemaert, Nicolaes Visscher (I), after 1635 - 1670, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

There's another cony I remember  
That I'd so like to take alive.  
Its haunt is there among the thyme  
In the valleys of the Land of Tender.

## The Dromedary



‘Four Dromedaries’  
Nicolaes de Bruyn, 1594, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

With his four dromedaries  
Don Pedro of Alfaroubeira  
Travels the world and admires her.  
He does what I would rather  
If I’d those four dromedaries.

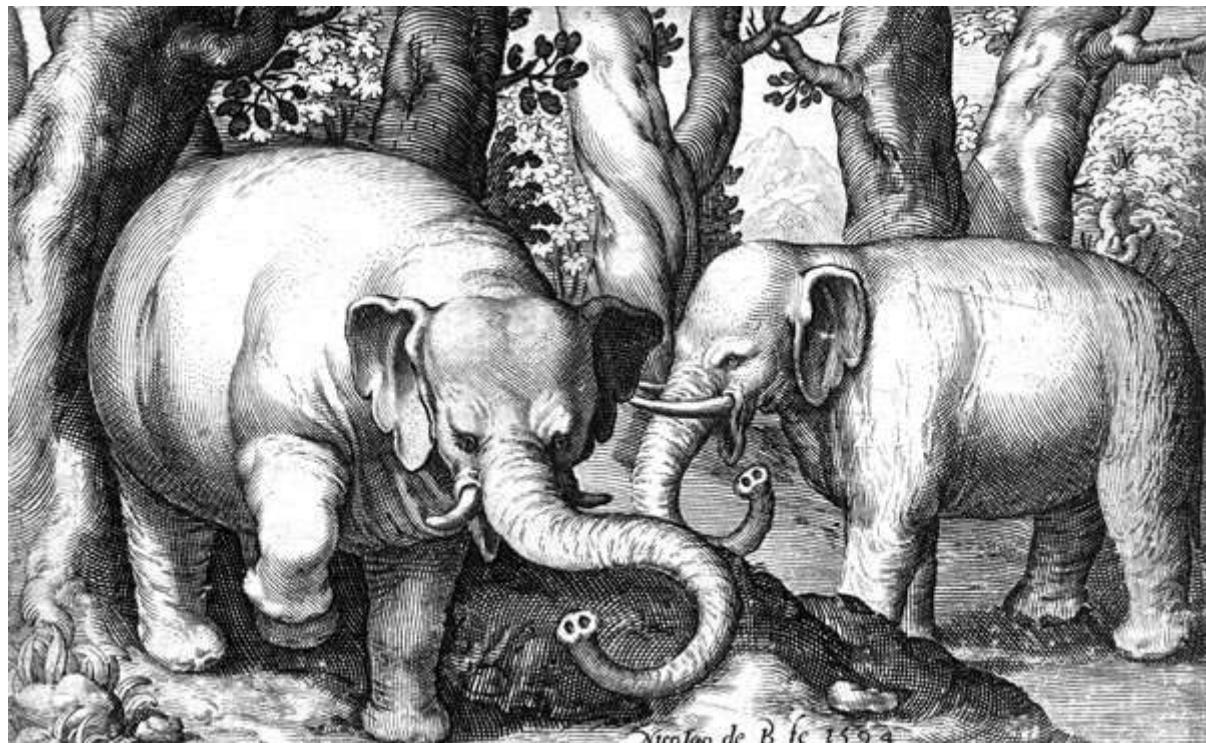
## The Mouse



'Flowers and a Mouse on an Apple'  
Assuerus van Londerseel, 1594, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Sweet days, the mice of time,  
You gnaw my life, moon by moon.  
God! I've twenty eight years soon,  
and badly spent ones I imagine.

## The Elephant



'Two Elephants'

Nicolaes de Bruyn, 1594, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

I carry treasure in my mouth,  
As an elephant his ivory.  
At the price of flowing words,  
Purple death!...I buy my glory.

## Orpheus



‘Orpheus and Eurydice’  
Etienne Baudet, Nicolas Poussin, 1648 - 1711, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Look at this pestilential tribe  
Its thousand feet, its hundred eyes:  
Beetles, insects, lice  
And microbes more amazing  
Than the world’s seventh wonder  
And the palace of Rosamunde!

## The Caterpillar



'Plants, Caterpillars and Insects'  
Jacob I' Admiral (II), Johannes Sluyter, 1710 - 1770, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Work leads us to riches.  
Poor poets, work on!  
The caterpillar's endless sigh  
Becomes the lovely butterfly.

## The Fly



'The Fable of the Ant and the Fly'

Aegidius Sadeler, Marcus Gheeraerts (I), Marcus Gheeraerts (II), 1608, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

The songs that our flies know  
Were taught to them in Norway  
By flies who are they say  
Divinities of snow.

## The Flea



'Old Woman Picking Flea's from a Child's Head'  
Jan Miel, 1599 - 1664, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Fleas, friends, lovers too,  
How cruel are those who love us!  
All our blood pours out for them.  
The well-beloved are wretched then.

## The Grasshopper

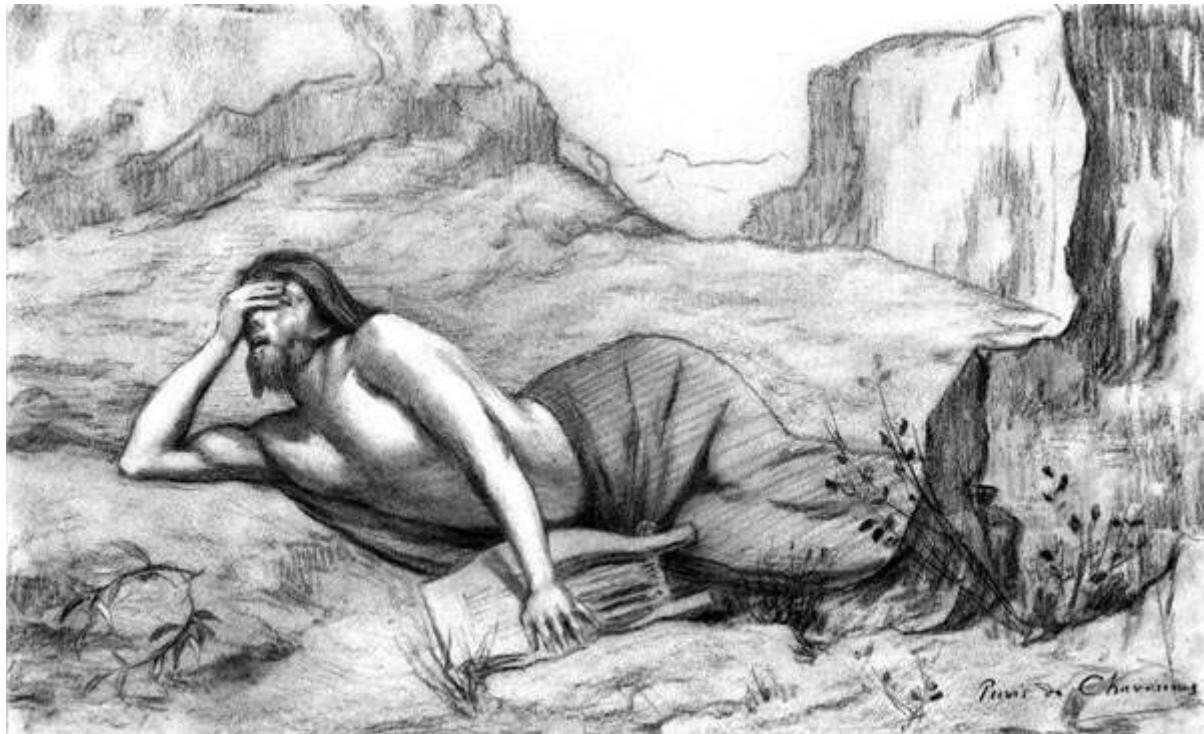


'The Plagues of Locusts and Water Turned to Blood'

Jan Miel, 1599 - 1664, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Here's the slender grasshopper  
The food that fed Saint John.  
May my verse be similar,  
A treat for the best of men.

## Orpheus



'Orpheus'

Pierre -Cécile Puvis de Chavannes, French, 1824 – 1898, [Yale University Art Gallery](#)

His heart was the bait: the heavens were the pond!  
For, fisherman, what fresh or seawater catch  
equals him, either in form or savour,  
that lovely divine fish, Jesus, My Saviour?

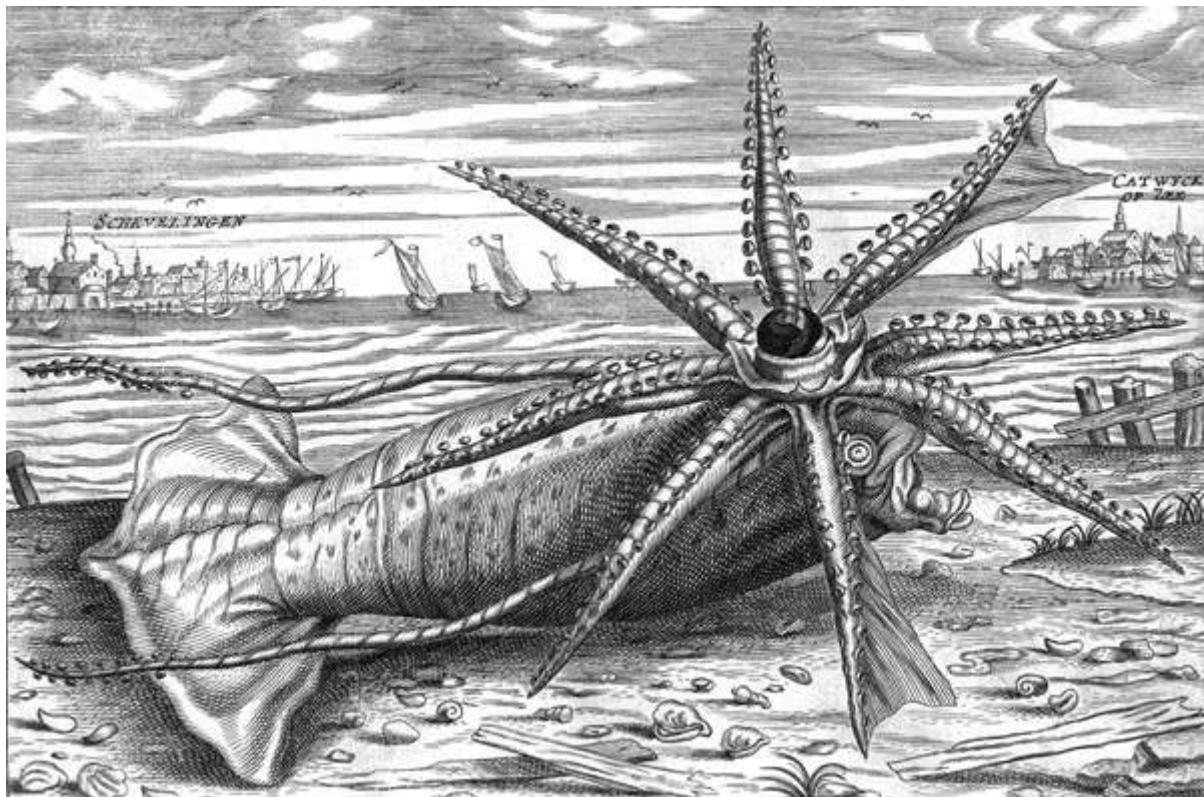
## The Dolphin



'Arion on the Dolphin'  
Jan Harmensz. Muller, Harmen Jansz Muller, 1589, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Dolphins, playing in the sea  
The wave is bitter gruel.  
Does my joy sometimes erupt?  
Yet life is still so cruel.

## The Octopus



'Sea Monster'  
Anonymous, 1661, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Hurling his ink at skies above,  
Sucking the blood of what he loves  
And finding it delicious,  
Is myself the monster, vicious.

## The Jellyfish

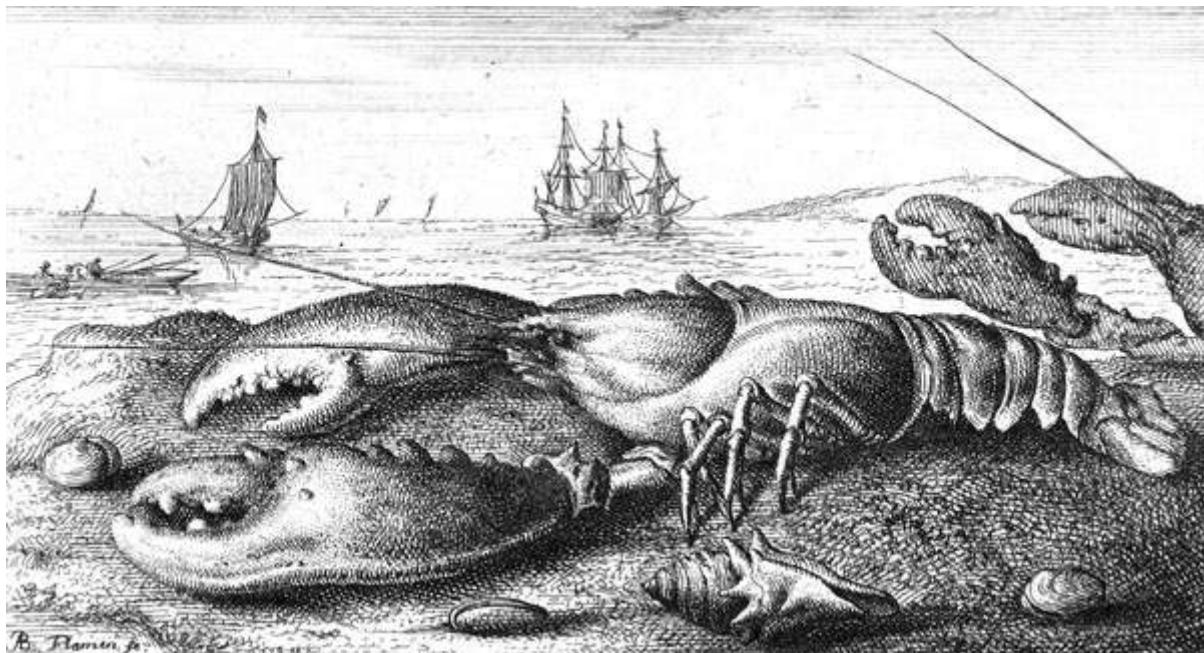


‘Medusæ’

Descriptive Catalogue of the Medusæ of the Australian Seas, Lendenfeld, R. von (Robert),  
p39 1887, [Internet Book Archive Images](#)

Medusas, miserable heads  
With hairs of violet  
You enjoy the hurricane  
And I enjoy the very same.

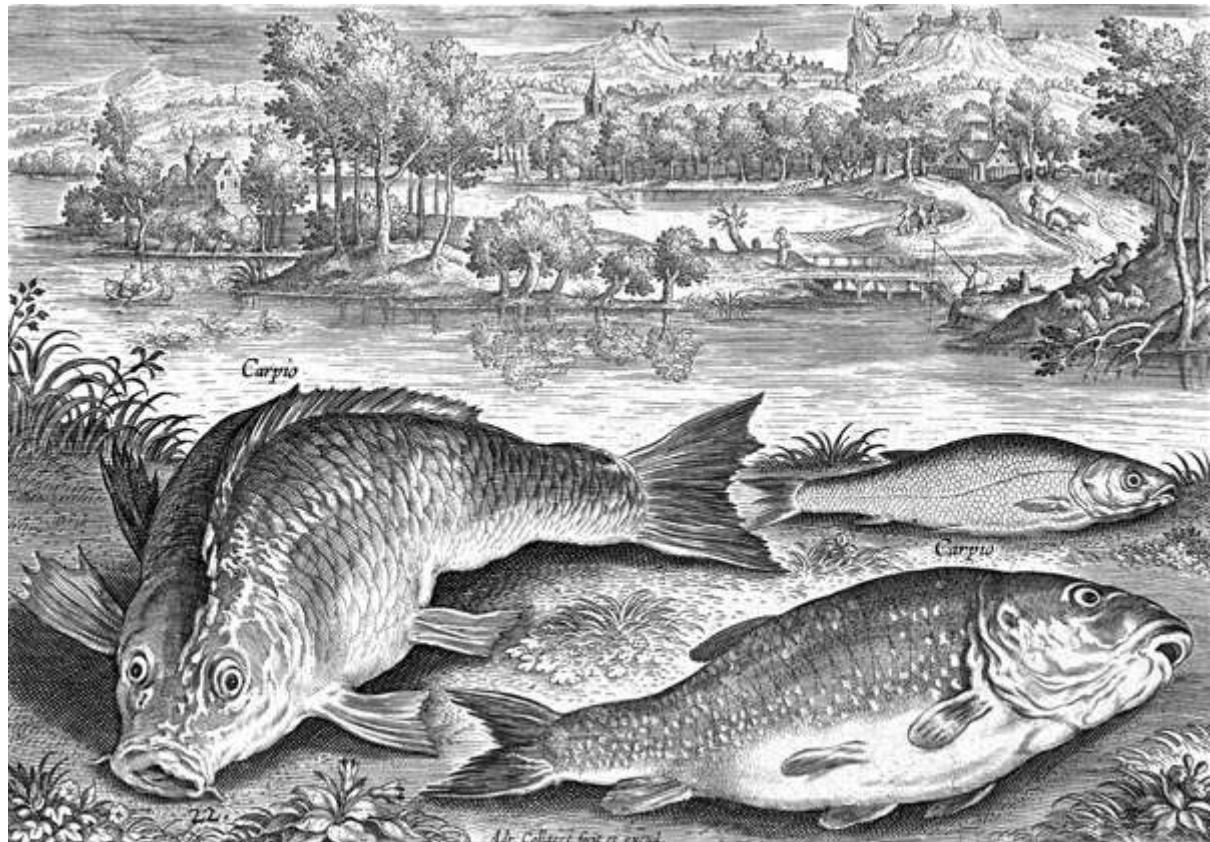
## The Lobster



'Lobster on the Beach'  
Albert Flamen, 1664, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Uncertainty, O my delights  
You and I we go  
As lobsters travel onwards, quite  
Backwards, Backwards, O.

## The Carp



'Three Carp on a Shore'  
Adriaen Collaert, after 1598 - 1618, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

In your pools, and in your ponds,  
Carp, you indeed live long!  
Is it that death forgets to free  
You fishes of melancholy?

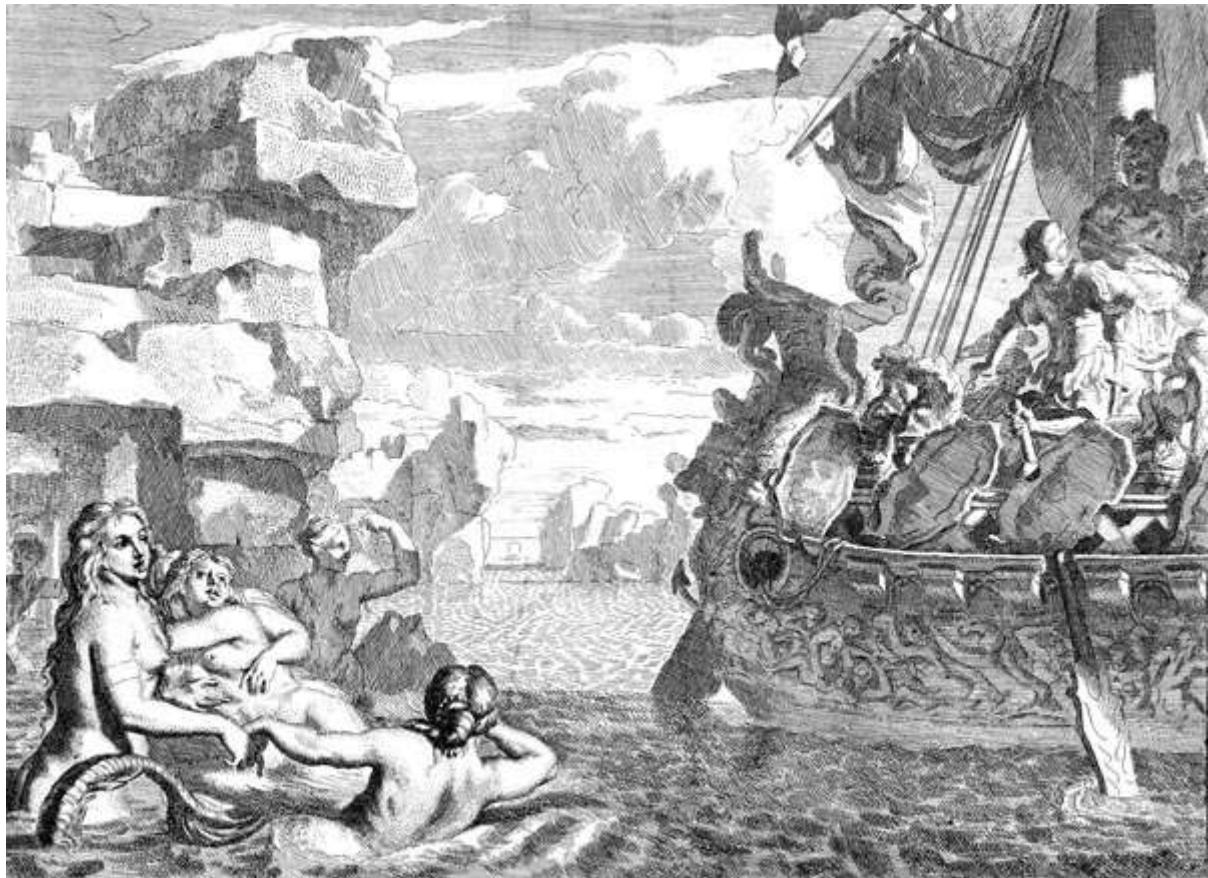
## Orpheus



‘The Death of Orpheus’  
Nicolaes de Bruyn, 1594, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

The female of the Halcyon,  
Love, the seductive Sirens,  
All know the fatal songs  
Dangerous and inhuman.  
Don’t listen to those cursed birds  
But Paradisial Angels’ words.

## The Sirens



'Odysseus and the Sirens'  
Johannes Glauber, Gerard de Lairesse, 1656 - 1726, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Do I know where your ennui's from, Sirens,  
When you grieve so widely under the stars?  
Sea, I am like you, filled with broken voices,  
And my ships, singing, give a name to the years.

## The Dove



‘Angels and Holy Spirit (Annunciation)’  
Nicolas Pitau (I), Philippe de Champaigne, 1642 - 1671, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Dove, both love and spirit  
Who engendered Jesus Christ,  
Like you I love a Mary.  
And so with her I marry.

## The Peacock



'Juno and the Peacock'

Magdalena van de Passe, Peter Paul Rubens, 1617 - 1634, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

In spreading out his fan, this bird,  
Whose plumage drags on earth, I fear,  
Appears more lovely than before,  
But makes his derrière appear.

## The Owl



‘Owls in a Cave’

Magdalena van de Passe, Peter Paul Rubens, 1617 - 1634, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

My poor heart's an owl  
One woos, un-woos, re-woos.  
Of blood, of ardour, he's the fowl.  
I praise those who love me, too.

## The Ibis



‘Storks in a Nest’

Magdalena van de Passe, Peter Paul Rubens, 1617 - 1634, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

Yes, I'll pass fearful shadows  
O certain death, let it be so!  
Latin mortal dreadful word,  
Ibis, Nile's native bird.

## The Ox



'Lucas and the Ox'  
Hieronymus Wierix, 1563 - before 1590, [The Rijksmuseum](#)

This cherubim sings the praises  
Of Paradise where, with Angels,  
We'll live once more, dear friends,  
When the good God intends.

## Apollinaire's Notes to the Bestiary

*Admire the vital power*

*And nobility of line:*

It praises the line that forms the images, marvellous ornaments to this poetic entertainment.

*It's the voice that the light made us understand here*

*That Hermes Trismegistus writes of in Pimander.*

'Soon' we read in the Pimander, 'they descend into the shadows....and an inarticulate cry rises from there that seems the voice of light.'

Is not this 'voice of light' the design, that is to say the line?

And where the light fully expresses all its colour. Painting is truly a luminous language.

*From magic Thrace*

Orpheus was a native of Thrace. That sublime poet played on a lyre that Mercury gave him. It was made from the shell of a tortoise, stuck round with leather, with two horns and a sounding board and strings made from sheep's gut. Mercury gave these lyres to both Apollo and Amphion. When Orpheus played and sang, the wild animals themselves came to hear his singing. Orpheus invented all the sciences, all the arts. Grounded in magic he knew the future and predicted the Christian coming of the Saviour.

*My harsh dreams knew the riding of you*

*My gold-charioted fate will be your lovely car*

Bellerephon was the first to ride Pegasus when he attacked the Chimaera. There are many chimaeras that exist today, and before combating one of them, the greatest enemies of poetry, it is necessary to bridle Pegasus and even yoke him. One knows well what I wish to say.

*The full form that conceives.*

In the lair (*the form*) of the female hare superfetation (*second conception during gestation*) is possible.

*With his four dromedaries  
Don Pedro of Alfaroubeira  
Travels the world and admires her.*

The celebrated travel book entitled: ‘History of Prince Don Pedro of Portugal, in which is told what happened to him on the way composed for Gomez of Santistevan when he had covered the seven regions of the globe, one of the twelve who bore the prince company’, reports that the Prince of Portugal, Don Pedro of Alfaroubeira, set out with twelve companions to visit the seven regions of the world. These travellers were mounted on four dromedaries, and having passed through Spain, they went to Norway and from there to Babylon and the Holy Land. The Portuguese prince even visited the Kingdoms of Prester John and returned to his own country after three years and four months.

*And the palace of Rosamunde.*

Here, regarding the palace, and a testimony of the love that the King of England possessed for his mistress, is this quatrain from a poem whose Author I do not know.

‘To shelter Rosamunde from hate  
borne her by the queen,  
the king had a palace made  
such as had ne’er been seen’.

*By the flies who are they say  
Divinities of snow.*

All have not appeared in the form of snowflakes but many have been tamed by the Finnish or Lapp sorcerers and obey them. The magicians pass them from father to son and keep them imprisoned in a box where they are invisible, ready to fly out in a swarm and torment thieves, sounding out magic words, so they themselves are immortal.

*Here’s the slender grasshopper  
The food that fed Saint John.*

‘And John was clothed with camel’s hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins: and he did eat locusts and wild honey.’ Mark 1.6

*The female of the Halcyon,  
Love, the seductive Sirens,  
All know the fatal songs  
Dangerous and inhuman.*

The sailors, hearing the female Halycon sing, prepared to die, safe however around mid-December, when these birds make their nests, and one knows that then the sea will be calm. Like Love and the Sirens, these birds sing so melodiously that even the life of those who hear them is not too great a price to pay for such music.

*This cherubim*

One may distinguish among the angelic hierarchies, vowed to the service and glory of the divine, beings with unknown forms and the most amazing beauty. The cherubim are winged oxen, but in no way monstrous.

*When the good God intends.*

Those who practice poetry search for and love only the perfection that is God Himself. And will this divine grace, this supreme perfection depart those for whom life exists only to discover and glorify them? That seems impossible, and, to my mind, poets have the right to hope after their death for the everlasting happiness that obtains complete knowledge of God, that is to say of the sublime beauty.

# Index of First Lines

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[The anemone and flower that weeps](#)  
[The angels the angels in the sky](#)  
[I've gathered this sprig of heather](#)  
[The strollers in the plain](#)  
[My gipsy beau my lover](#)  
[The gypsy knew in advance](#)  
[I am bound to the King of the Sign of Autumn](#)  
[An eagle descends from this sky white with archangels](#)  
[Mellifluent moon on the lips of the maddened](#)  
[Autumn ill and adored](#)  
[The room is free](#)  
[Our story's noble as its tragic](#)  
[Love is dead within your arms](#)  
[In the evening light that's faded](#)  
[You've not surprised my secret yet](#)  
[Evening falls and in the garden](#)  
[You descended through the water clear](#)  
[O my abandoned youth is dead](#)  
[Admire the vital power](#)  
[From magic Thrace, O delerium!](#)  
[My harsh dreams knew the riding of you](#)  
[The fleece of this goat and even](#)  
[You set yourself against beauty.](#)  
[I wish there to be in my house:](#)  
[O lion, miserable image](#)  
[Don't be fearful and lascivious](#)  
[There's another cony I remember](#)  
[With his four dromedaries](#)  
[Sweet days, the mice of time,](#)  
[I carry treasure in my mouth,](#)  
[Look at this pestilential tribe](#)

Work leads us to riches.

The songs that our flies know

Fleas, friends, lovers too,

Here's the slender grasshopper

His heart was the bait: the heavens were the pond!

Dolphins, playing in the sea

Hurling his ink at skies above,

Medusas, miserable heads

In your pools, and in your ponds,

The female of the Halcyon,

Do I know where your ennui's from, Sirens,

Dove, both love and spirit

In spreading out his fan, this bird,

My poor heart's an owl

Yes, I'll pass fearful shadows

This cherubim sings the praises