

D A N N Y W I L L I A M S / R E - T R O U V A I L L E S

RE-TROUVAILLES. (ruh-troov-eyes). plural, feminine.

1. A French noun referring to the experience of encountering someone after long separation.
2. The emotions of recovering something believed altogether lost.
3. The zeal of rediscovering one's way.

The library of Alexandria was never burned down.

There are things that will no longer be
we think but we're wrong.

Life comes back

in even brighter colors

than with awe we once discovered.

We are scribes. We note everything.

We keep our private library of Alexandria,

Shelves and shelves and shelves up to the sky.

Richelle Dassin



Phoenix

An ancient mythological creature capable of fiery self-emulation. Reduced to ashes it re-emerges youthful, eagle-like, dressed by red and gold plumage. This transformation was seen by numerous ancient historians as prophetic of cyclical Apocalyptic events.

“Even thus by the great sages tis confessed
The Phoenix dies, and then is born again,
When it approaches its five-hundredth year.”

Dante, Inferno, Canto XXIV

“Phoenix”; German film by Christian Petzold, 2014



Ladakh

The Khan and Marco Polo spend night after night discussing the adventurer's many travels. Their conversations search the amazing varieties of cities that exist, these many strange and inexplicable manifestations of human nature. Has Polo come to understand anything universal in this wanderings? The idea emerges that perhaps Polo has always journeyed in the same endless city--it is only the seeker himself who has changed. Permutations of the traveler's inner world over time and with age have raised up these visions of countless cityscapes, unfathomable gods, impenetrable customs and laws.

Précis from Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino



Return of Spring

X I V

All cities plains and people
Reach upwards to the affirming sun,
All that's vertical and shining,
Lives well lived,
Deeds perfectly done,
Reach upwards to the royal pure
Affirming sun.

Cities, Plains and People

L. Durrell, 1946



Dos Gardenias

Two gardenias for you
With them I want to say
I love you, I adore you my life
Give them all of your attention
Because they are your heart and mine.

But if one day at dusk
the flowers of my love are dying.
It is because they have sensed
I have been betrayed
and you have another love.

Vocals by Ibrahim Ferrer, Buena Vista
Social Club, 1997

"When she smiles the wrinkles around her eyes
Are fitting, the royal marks of the tiger.
The royal lines of noble conduct."

L. Durrell, "Buried Alive"



Chanson

"So, with my shield on my neck , mid storm and rain,
With visor blinding me, and shortened rein,
With stirrups far too long , so may I ride;
So may my trotting charger give me pain,
So may the ostler treat me with disdain,
As they who tell these tales have grossly lied!

Or prisoner to some noble , may I fill,
Together with three more , some dungeon chill,
Unto each other odious company ;—
Let master, servants , porters , try their skill,
And use me for a target if they will,
If ever I have loved aught else but thee!

So many another knight make love to you,
And so may I be puzzled what to do;
So may I be becalm'd 'mid oceans wide;
May the king's porter beat me black and blue,
And may I fly ere I the battle view,
As they that slander me have grossly lied!"

Stanzas from "True Love",
Bertram de Born, 1140- 1214
Troubadour



Gyre

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away ; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing ,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Oh hammered gold and gold enameling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing , or to come.

W.B. Yates, stanzas from "Sailing to Byzantium"



Na Audiart

Ezra Pound

Though thou well dost wish me ill
Audiart, Audiart,
Where thy bodice laces start
As ivy fingers clutching through
Its crevices,
Audiart, Audiart,
Stately, tall and lovely tender
Who shall render
Audiart, Audiart
Praises meet unto thy fashion?
Here a word kiss!
Pass I on
Unto Lady "Miels-de-Ben,"
Having praised thy girdle's scope
How the stays ply back from it;
I breathe no hope
That thou shouldst....
Nay no whit
Bespeak thyself for anything.
Just a word in thy praise, girl,
Just for the swirl
Thy satins make upon the stair,
'Cause never a flaw was there
Where thy torse and limbs are met:
Though thou hate me, read it set
In rose and gold.
Or when the minstrel, tale half told,
Shall burst to liting at the phrase
"Audiart, Audiart"....

Bertrans, master of his lays,
Bertrans of Aultaforte thy praise
Sets forth, and though thou hate me well,
Yea though thou wish me ill
Audiart, Audiart.
Thy loveliness is here writ till,
Audiart,
Oh, till thou come again.
And being bent and wrinkled, in a form
That hath no perfect limning, when the warm
Youth dew is cold
Upon thy hands, and thy old soul
Scorning a new, wry'd casement
Churlish at seemed misplacement
Finds the earth as bitter
As now seems it sweet,
Being so young and fair
As then only in dreams,
Being then young and wry'd,
Broken of ancient pride,
Thou shalt then soften,
Knowing I know not how
Thou wert once she
Audiart, Audiart
For whose fairness one forgave
Audiart, Audiart
Que be-m vols mal.

Ezra Pound, 1908.



Alexander Reaches India

In 324 B.C. after the costly victory at Hydaspes, Alexander 's army crossed the Indus River Valley into India. Wearing by years of march and battle the men could go no further, and Alexander would not turn back. The question of conquest had become irrelevant. What might Alexander, a god himself, have sought in this ancient land? Had he arrived at the end of the world? Had he exceeded even the limits of his own imagination, and reached an ultimate destination?



Pallet on Your Floor

“Make me one pallet on your floor,
Make it where your man was before.
Make me one pallet on your floor,
Make it where your man will never know.

I’m going away for to leave you,
Never comin’ back no more,
When I ever see you again,
Your hair will be white as snow.”

Furry Lewis 1971



In Atlanta, Georgia, spring 1950, Blind Willie McTell sang:

"I got to cross that River Jordan
I got to cross old Jordan by myself,
Nobody else can cross it for me,
I got to cross that Jordan by myself"

"That Jordan River is cold and chilly,
Lord I got to cross it by myself ,
Nobody here can cross it for me,
I got to cross the chilly Jordan by myself."

In Hades the River Lethe flowed around around the grotto
of Hypnos inducing a state of oblivion for all who drank.

"Oh Death divine, at whose recall
Returneth all
To fade in thy embrace,
Gather thy children to thy bosom starred,
Free us from time, from number, and from space,
And give us back the rest that life hath marred."

Alfred de Vigny



Bonnes Vacances!

Excuse me, I am a French man
And I'm afraid I don't speak very well English, but
I think you are the most pretty little girl
I ever knew.

For a French man, it's very difficult to explain,
But, uh, what can I do?
I like your body, your eyes
Baby blue.

I'm a French man and I am used to saying "Je t'aime"
How old are you?
You look 16 but your smile
22.

Anyway, I would like
To make love with you.

Sea, sex and sun
Sea, sex and sun
Sea, sex and sun.

"Sea, Sex and Sun"
Serge Gainsbourg, 1978.



Alexandria

It is written by the Greek historian Plutarch that the god Pan was believed to have died during the reign of Emperor Tiberius (A.D 14- 37). Plutarch records that an Egyptian sailed named Thamus was sailing on the Aegean Sea in route to Italy when a mysterious and God-like voice carried across the waters hailing him by name. The strange summons then announced, "The Great God Pan is dead!". Thamus and his shipmates were dumbfounded and fearful of making any reply. But having been commanded to make this news known, and following an inauspicious period of motionless sea, Thamus cried out the message. His call was immediately met by a frightful lament of many voices. After reaching Italy the story spread rapidly, and Thamus was ordered to Rome to appear before Tiberius.

There is an ancient Greek folk tale that holds that Alexander the Great's sister Thessalonike was transformed into a mermaid upon her death in 295 B.C. In her Aegean Sea realm Thessalonike would sometimes appear to astonished sailors demanding..." Is King Alexander alive?", or " Does he still live...?". An affirmative answer promised fair sailing, a doubtful reply brought storms and destruction.



Timbuktu

Timbuktu; a 1,000-year-old city in central Mali situated 13k. north of the Niger River. For centuries Timbuktu was an important trading post on Saharan caravan routes. Treacherous to reach without experienced guides, the early city became a legendary African El Dorado. Salt came from the north, gold from the south, and slave traders from the Ivory Coast—all made Timbuktu rich. During the 15th and 16th centuries African kings, Islamic scholars, adventurers from Europe to the Middle East made their way to the fabled city. Universities, mosques, and madrasas flourished. The learning tradition of griots was widespread, and despite increasing West African conflicts ancient teachings and rare documents were preserved. In the modern era decades of internal warfare have severely damaged historic Timbuktu and reduced its population to less than 50,000 citizens.



Invisible Rahu

A shadow entity in Vedic astrology. This unseen force shapes the world, and is more powerful than even the sun, the moon, and the planets. It is glimpsed in the shadow of eclipses and observed in the inevitable course of the stars. Along with its counterpart Ketu, Rahu is deemed the "dark matter" of cosmic order.

The search to find something complete in itself, like a shadow moving ahead of its owner.



Banquet Years

(Apollinaire meets Picasso, 1903/1906?)

"The friend was a Spaniard, aged twenty-three, on his fourth trip to Paris -- this one to last thirty years. The two unknown young men became friends that day. The next meeting Picasso brought along the mystico-humorist poet Max Jacob, whom he had met in 1901 at the time of his first Paris show at Vollard's gallery. Jacob's impression of Apollinaire at this first meeting was vivid."

"He was an imposing young man with a deep chest and heavy limbs... ..he changed in an instant from child-like laughter to pale gravity. The three of us left together and Guillaume carried us off for a stroll which never came to an end...Here began the best days of my life."

Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years, 1968

Le Pont Mirabeau

Love leaves us like this flowing stream
Love flows away
How slow life is and mild
And oh how Hope can suddenly run wild

Darius Milhaud, "Le Boeuf sur le Toit", 1919-1920, a "Surrealist Ballet" written to accompany Charlie Chaplin silent films.
Remembering Howard Rogovin, artist, teacher, and friend.



Vesuvius

Pliny the Elder—Renowned Roman author, procurator of Spain, and fleet commander of the Bay of Naples. In late August of A.D. 79, observing the towering, fiery clouds gathering above Pompey he sailed toward the mainland. Disembarking well south of Herculaneum, Pliny searched for and found friends sheltering in Stabiae. Hours later, while leading the survivors to his waiting boat he was asphyxiated by toxic gas issuing from the Vesuvius eruption.



Lighthouse Among the Stars

The Voyager 1 spacecraft was launched in August 1977, its mission the study of outer planets and space beyond. On board was the Golden Record, a 12-inch, gold-plated copper disc encoded with sounds and images selected to depict life and culture on Earth.

Music from different eras and places was chosen, including works by Bach, Mozart, Javanese gamelan songs, Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode", Stravinsky, Beethoven, Navajo chants, and Texas' own gospel great Blind Willie Johnson. Johnson's "Dark Was the night, Cold Was the Ground" (recorded in Dallas, 1927) was the song selected. "Dark Was the Night" has since been the inspiration for numerous re-recordings as well as the film score of Wim Winder's film "Paris, Texas", (1984).

The eight discs inscribed on the Golden Record bear this dedication; "To the makers of music all worlds, all times".



Summer Afternoon

"Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language."

Henry James

"...bearing a fragile, precious reality: the image. It detaches itself from the fabric of Proust's sentences in the same way as, in Balbec, under Françoise's hands, the summer's day emerges immemorially ancient, mummy-like, from the net curtains."

Walter Benjamin, "Picturing Proust", 1929



Gold Coast

"...the merry dance of death and trade..."

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Gold Coast—a name for the former British Crown Colonies lining the Gulf of Guinea. Early regional contacts with European explorers occurred during the late 1400's as Portuguese mariners navigated the coastal waters. During following centuries the region became a center of international trade, with ivory, gems, gold, and slaves the focus of exchange. The notorious rule of King Leopold II began in 1885 and ravaged the territories for nearly 50 years. Joseph Conrad piloted a boat on the Congo River in 1890, and wrote *Heart of Darkness* in 1899.

"The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remain sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell. The dawns were heralded by the descent of a chill stillness; the woodcutters slept, their fires burned low, the snapping of a twig would make you start. We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and excessive toil."

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*



April Showers

"There is joy,
hello, hello swallows
There is joy
In the sky, above the roofs
There is joy
And sun in the alleyways
There is joy,
Everywhere there is joy..."

All day long my heart
beats, capsizes, and staggers..."

Music: "Y'a d'la joie", Charles Trenet



Douce France

I have known marvelous landscapes and suns during distant journeys,
Far away under other skies,
But how I do prefer these, my blue sky, my horizon,
My country road and my river , my meadow and my home.

Sweet France,
Dear land of my childhood,
Fond and carefree my heart still hums your lullaby,
My village with its bell tower and its well kept houses,
Where the children of my own age shared my happiness.

Yes I love you,
And I give you this poem ,
Yes I love you
In joy and in sorrow .
Sweet France
Dear land of my childhood,
Fond and carefree I still hum your lullaby
Within my heart.

Charles Trenet and Leo Chauliac, 1947

With fond remembrance and gratitude to Mad. Mugette Guingand.



Devil Got My Woman

In 1964 Dallas art specialist Murray Smither was mightily struck by a work he juried in the Huntsville State Prison Art Exhibition. The curious drawing was made by a prisoner who had served over twenty years in the pen, a 64-year-old Texan named Frank Jones. Murray bought the piece and took it back to Dallas to show gallerist Chapman Kelly. Kelly also was much impressed by the work, and presented Jones' drawings in an exhibition soon after. The show was widely admired, and in following years Frank Jones' drawings were included in many regional and national exhibits, including a show at the National Folk Art Museum in New York City. His work is now known internationally.

Frank Albert Jones was born with a "caul" or "veil" over one eye, a physical abnormality associated in folk tales with unusual powers. Jones considered himself a person of "double sight", capable of seeing and communicating with ghosts and "haints". His drawings frequently depict "Devil Houses" with strange horned creatures contained in structures of "brambles and thorns". During one prison visit with the artist Murray asked him why the devilish figures are always smiling. Frank Jones replied, "....he's smiling ... because he's glad to see you....." .

As related by Barry Whistler

"Devil Got My Woman", Skip James, Paramount Records, 1931.

"Trouble i love, peace I do despise/ I whup the Devil
every morning, just to get my exercise....."

Johnny Shines



Delft

“On the sad and most miserable Death
of the most famous and most
artful painter, Carel Fabritus.
Thus did this Phoenix, to our loss expire,
At his mistand at the height of his powers,
But happily there arose out of this fire
Vermeer, who masterfully trod in his path.”

Arnold Bon, 1667

The enchantment of craft, the sorcery of skill.



Oblivion Seekers

'There are limits to every domain, and laws to govern every organized power. But the vagrant owns the whole vast earth that ends only at the nonexistent horizon, and his empire is an intangible one, for his domination and enjoyment of it are things of the spirit.'

'The seekers of oblivion sing and clap their hands lazily; their dream voices ring out late into the night, in the dim light of the mica-paned lantern. Then little by little the voices fall, grow muffled, the words are slower. Finally the smokers are quiet, and merely stare at the flowers in ecstasy. They are epicureans, voluptuaries, perhaps they are sages. Even in the darkest purlieu of Morocco's underworld such men can reach the magic horizon where they are free to build their dream-palaces of delight.'

Isabelle Eberhardt, [The Oblivion Seekers](#)



Bombay Central

On a heavy, heated Bombay night I walk with friends toward Bombay Central Railway Station. We join the converging streets and merge with increasing crowds of people out at evening. Near the railway station activity further intensifies. Businessmen in white shirts and with brief cases hurry past, families holding hands walk together as the children eye sweet stands. Chai hawkers call out for customers, bent street sweepers struggle to angle their straw brushes into the dirty gutters, a few gaunt animals wander amidst the forest of human legs. Just outside Bombay Central there is a seeming melee—bicycle rickshaws struggle to squeeze between honking taxis, porters rush forward with luggage balanced on their heads as anxious train passengers hurry past. Indecipherable announcements blare out simultaneously from various suspended horns. Everyone sweats.

Everywhere bright lights in shops and on building fronts blink and swirl. There is the rush of car lights, taxis with swags of colored bulbs, small shrines shine with votive candles and shimmering metal strips. The hot night air is filled with the sounds of car horns, merchants calling, train whistles, many human voices. And then, unthinkingly, I focus on something —something startling amidst the clamor, something rare. Above, below? in between? the chaos I hear music, a high, child-like voice singing slowly to swerving accompaniment. I am struck by this song with its simplicity, intensity, and passionate expression. I stop and listen, and suddenly feel I am being granted a gift—a brief glimpse into the hearts of millions and millions of Indian citizens, their hopes, their desires, their truest loves. I am spellbound and listen for what seems a long while. My friends stop, and patiently wait. I listen a while longer, changed. When I ask they tell me the singer is the great Lata Mangeskhar. “Nightingale of India”.

Music: “Tere Bina Zindagi Se Koi”, 1975.
Lata Mangeskhar



Damask

A distinctive textile weaving technique prized for its graceful patterns and use of dense, luxuriant fabrics. Thought to have originated in China 2,500 years ago, damask was traded on the Silk Road, and particularly valued in Medieval Byzantium. Trade secrets of Damascus manufacturers were introduced into Europe during the early Crusades, and damask was produced in France during the 13th century, and in Flanders by the 1400's. Ornate, subtly patterned damask fabrics are depicted in the marvelous "Lady and the Unicorn" tapestries, and many Renaissance paintings feature images of richly colored damask carpets and draperies.

"Long, listless summer hours when the noon
Being enamored of a damask rose
Forgets to journey westward, till the moon
The pale usurper of its tribute grows
From a thin sickle to a silver shield."

Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros"

"Behold the meeting of incarnate
spirits ---
Behold the lost souls bearing tapers
in rags of rich damask,
Down Thomas --the saint of
unbelievers --down the road the to bliss
Down to the red house....."

Obi Nwakanma



Fly Away Home painting*

Departure

My friend, I have to go.
Do you want to see
The place on the map? It is a black dot.

But if it turns out
Well, then in me
It will be a spot of rose
In a green country.

R.M. Rilke



Garden of Small Pleasures

By night my garden is o'erhung with gems
Fixed in an onyx setting. Fireflies
Flicker their lanterns in my dazzled eyes.
In serried rows I guess the straight, stiff stems
Of hollyhocks
against the rocks.

So far and still is that, listening,
I hear the flowers talking in the dawn;
And where a sunken basin cuts the lawn,
Cinctured with iris pale and glistening,
The sudden swish
Of a waking fish.

"Behind a Wall", Amy Lowell, 1912



Euclidean Nights

"Nights blue and geometric, endearing and seducing moon; the sky's curvature like an impress of an embrace while she rises -- as if in one's throat, so pure and glittering. When you have stared at her until she chills you, the human proportions of your world are reasserted suddenly. Suddenly the man crosses the orchard to the seawall. Helen walks with a lighted candle across the grass to tend to the goat. Abstract from the balcony Bach begins to play--absorbed in his science of unknown relations, and only hurting us because he implies experience he cannot state. And because paint and words are useless to fill the gap you lean forward and blow out the lamp, and sit listening, smelling the dense pure odor of the wick, and watching the silver rings play on the ceiling. And so, to bed, two enviable subjects of the Wheel."

L. Durrell, "Ionian Profiles"