



Ned Balbo

Georg Trakl

Ned Balbo Translates Georg Trakl

Poetry in Translation Issue
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Before Daybreak

A variation on Trakl's "Das Grauen" ["The Horror"]

I see myself alone in empty rooms—
the sky's blue screen behind uncharted stars,
dogs barking in far fields, a wind that tears
through trees like someone's scream. Nobody comes.

Abruptly: silence. Flushed with sweat and fever,
I imagine fatal flowers spilling
from my mouth. I see the bright dew falling—
Blood from wounds. Blood it will be forever.

A mirror's just a lie that's full of nothing.
Whose face does it show us? Rising, seething
to the surface, half in darkness: Cain—

That's *my* face. Curtains move as if they're breathing—
Moon, come closer: tell me everything...
It's time to meet my murderer, alone.

Das Grauen

Ich sah mich durch verlass'ne Zimmer gehn.
—Die Sterne tanzten irr auf blauem Grunde,
Und auf den Feldern heulten laut die Hunde,
Und in den Wipfeln wühlte wild der Föhn.

Doch plötzlich: Stille! Dumpfe Fieberglut
Läßt giftige Blumen blühn aus meinem Munde,
Aus dem Geäst fällt wie aus einer Wunde
Blaß schimmernd Tau, und fällt, und fällt wie Blut.

Aus eines Spiegels trügerischer Leere
Hebt langsam sich, und wie ins Ungefähre
Aus Graun und Finsternis ein Antlitz: Kain!

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online literary journal and
resource bank that
originated in Washington,
DC and the surrounding
Mid-Atlantic region. We are
now a global beltway,
encircling the epicenters of
major metropolises
everywhere.

Washington...was still
a vastly overgrown
small Southern town
in a stagnant hollow
between the Potomac
River and Anacostia
Creek.

— *John Dos Passos*

Sehr leise rauscht die samtene Portiere,
Durchs Fenster schaut der Mond gleichwie ins Leere,
Da bin mit meinem Mörder ich allein.

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Ned Balbo's *The Trials of Edgar Poe and Other Poems* (Story Line Press, 2010) received the Donald Justice Prize and the 2012 Poets' Prize. His previous books are *Lives of the Sleepers*, winner of the Ernest Sandeen Prize and *ForeWord* Book of the Year Gold Medal (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005) and *Galileo's Banquet*, co-winner of the Towson University Prize (WWPH, 1998). Co-winner of the 2013 Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, he currently teaches in the MFA program in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State University in Ames, IA.

Austrian by birth, **Georg Trakl** (1887-1914) is noted for his unmistakable voice, his facility in both meter and free verse, and the unsettling quality of poems that occupy a liminal space between dream and nightmare. Both pharmacist and drug-user, he served as a medical officer during World War I. Emotionally devastated after struggling to care for over ninety wounded soldiers after the Battle of Grodek, he died of a drug overdose while under psychiatric care. *Gedichte*, published in 1913, was the only collection that Trakl published in his lifetime. Other volumes appeared posthumously.