The Works of Stefan George

Marx, Olga, Morwitz, Ernst

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

Marx, Olga and Ernst Morwitz.  
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AFTER THE HARVEST

Come to the park they say is dead, and you
Will see the glint of smiling shores beyond,
Pure clouds with rifts of unexpected blue
Diffuse a light on patterned path and pond.

Take the grey tinge of boxwood and the charm
Of burning-yellow birch. The wind is warm.
Late roses still have traces of their hue,
So kiss, and gather them, and wreath them too.

Do not forget the asters — last of all —
And not the scarlet on the twists of vine,
And what is left of living green, combine
To shape a weightless image of the fall.

O urges from the years of youth which sweep
Me on in quest of her beneath these boughs,
Before you I must bend denying brows,
In lands of light my love is chained in sleep.

But if you sent her back, who in the flame
Of summer and the whir of Cupids would
Have shyly borne me company, I should
Acknowledge her this time with glad acclaim.

In wooden vats the ripened grapes ferment,
But I shall heap before her lavishly
What precious shoots and seeds are left to me
Of all the lovely yield the season lent.

Oh, hail and thanks to you who eased my stress,
Who lulled the constant clamour in my veins
With the expectance, dear, of your caress,
In weeks the glow of dying summer stains.
You came, and closer each to each we clung,
I shall devise a gentle word for you,
And praise you on our sunny paths as though
You were the very one for whom I long.

Up to the gate and back again we wander
Between the beeches with their gold and gloom,
And glancing through the bars, we pause to ponder
The almond tree beyond, in second bloom.

We search for benches where there is no shade
And alien voices never fret. In dreams
Your arm in mine and mine in yours is laid,
And we are bathed in long and mellow beams,

And feel beholden when the sunflakes glisten
Around us from the leaves alive with sound,
And only lift our heads to look and listen
When fruit, too rich with ripeness, taps the ground.

Around the pond where runnels bring
Their silent waters, let us stroll,
You calmly try to plumb my soul,
A wind ensnares us, soft as spring.

The leaves that yellow on the mould,
Diffuse an odour new and frail,
Echoing me, you subtly told
What pleased me in this picture-tale.

But do you know of wordless sighs
And bliss on a sublimer stage?
Down from the bridge, with shaded eyes
You watch the swans in slow cortège.