



Sonnets: by Walter Benjamin

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Did you ever lose someone you loved, forever? Walter Benjamin did, and wrote 80 sonnets to remember him by.

As the Third Reich advanced on Paris, Walter Benjamin entrusted his unpublished writings to George Bataille. Eighty fervent, mystical, lyric sonnets, produced over ten years in a sustained response to the suicide of his college friend in protest of the First World War, were among those writings, and were discovered in Benjamin's archives in the 1980s. This first English translation, a bilingual edition, features extensive context and commentary by the translator, as well as a foreword by poet and translator Donna Stonecipher.

Waking were his glances my sole light
For errant traces and the starlight
Of his eyes the only beam
Bestowed upon my sleeping places

Now such companions are no more
Mute did the mirrors of all Spirit shatter
In these heavens which their glistening laugh
More blessedly transfigured with each morrow

Even when they wept they stood as pools
Themselves to nourish by the fall of heavy drops
Whose fragrance would outlast the shower

And in the fullness of their tears
Would those things speak which yet lacked names
Much as leaves may speak in gardens.

This queer text weaves the deeply personal materials of longing and loss together with Benjamin's evolving religious and philosophical perspectives in ways both mysterious and recognizably Benjaminian—shedding new light on the emergence of the man and the thinker.

Carl Skoggard lives in Ghent, New York, and is a former editor and contributor to *Nest: A Quarterly of Interiors*, an influential magazine of design and style.

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