

E VON LIEBE

ES CORNETS

TOPH RILKE

ANNE TERESA

DE KEERSMAEKER

MICHAËL POMERO

CHRYSSI DIMITRIOU

**DIE WEISE VON LIEBE UND TOD DES CORNETS
CHRISTOPH RILKE**

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Of the Way of Loving and Living

Rainer Maria Rilke and the “Cornet”

By Vasco Boenisch

Rainer Maria Rilke knew from a young age that writing was his calling, but throughout his life he was uncomfortable with his early piece titled “Cornet”—this “short, naive work of youth”—becoming his most successful. And it has remained his most successful piece to this day. He even coquettishly asserted from the literary Olympus that he should apologize for it as a youthful misdeed. But perhaps he did so also because he feared the critical judgement of others and himself. Rilke was as sensitive as he was ambitious, and he liked to be in control of what we would today call image. He wove legends about the origin of “Cornet,” and even about his own background. He went so far as to change his name. He meticulously instructed his first publisher to demonstrate the quality of the printing paper, the font, the heraldic design, and his initials (“But it’s clear, isn’t it, that we must not scrimp and that plainly we must make something immaculate?”)—and that for a print run of just three hundred copies.

This was in 1906. Later Rilke would castigate his “verse-infected prose” so much that he would lose touch with his loyal audience. His public loved “Cornet.” Columnist Fritz J. Raddatz’s comment only a few short years ago rings true: “Had Rilke written just these pages, which don’t even add up to twenty, he would be a giant.”

After Goethe, Rilke is today the most-read German-language poet in the world. He was born in Prague in 1875, and as a citizen he would remain Austrian until the end, but as an author he had no home. He worked in Germany, Spain, Scandinavia, Austria, Italy, France, and Switzerland. He also traveled through Tunisia and Egypt and in

the 1890s took several trips to Russia with Lou Andreas-Salomé, who had developed a strong loathing for Friedrich Nietzsche and was Rilke's lover for a brief period. In 1899, during a hiatus in his travels, he wrote "Cornet" and used the trips he'd taken to Russia as a source of inspiration for his collection of poetry *Das Stundenbuch* (The Book of Hours), in which he saw the effective beginning of his career as a poet.

Rilke shied away from commitment but yearned for affection. He married the young artist Clara Westhoff, but the marriage broke down following the birth of their daughter, Ruth. Rilke lived in the German artists' colony Worpswede for a while, then moved to Paris in 1902 to write a book about the sculptor Auguste Rodin, for whom he did secretarial work—yet another relationship that would break down because of disputes related to mutual disappointments. In Paris, the fragment "Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge" (The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge, 1910) was published. The demands that this fragment made on him were so great that he suffered a writer's block that lasted years. In 1922 Rilke achieved the pinnacle of his success with the ten-part metaphysical poetry cycle *Duineser Elegien* (Duino Elegies). He died in a Swiss sanatorium in 1926.

"Always on the move" is how Stefan Zweig concludes concisely. Rilke could be described as exhibiting inner and outer restlessness, which had already flowed forth as "Cornet" at scarcely twenty-four years of age: suspense and breathlessness, a swelling and an ebbing of yearning, seeking, drifting, driving.

A young, eighteen-year-old officer rode out with his army troops. It's the middle of the seventeenth century at the time of the Ottoman wars in Europe. The soldier discovers male camaraderie, even friendship, is promoted to cornet, standard bearer, and learns about life at the front: dead bodies, rape, drunks, prostitutes—and, finally, first love, passion, the exhilaration of a night of love. Still wrapped in ecstasy, there is an attack. Shining, now with the flag, Cornet plunges onto the battlefield. And dies, dreamlike, a hero's death.

In twenty-six snapshots, an entire lifetime surges past. The child grows into a youth, the youth into a man (into a soldier, into a

lover), the man into a hero. An initiation. Man turns from the mother's bosom to a woman's breast and finds, scarcely awake from the night of love, the sleep of death. The circle of life closes. Early and swiftly, too swiftly—senselessly, as one might say today. But what more can humans achieve if not love and honor? What should come next? Not a question, an observation. At least in Rilke's time.

Little wonder, then, that "Cornet" found its way into soldiers' backpacks in the First and even in the Second World War. Rilke as romantic devotional literature? As intellectual warmonger? Statements from that time make for alarming reading. As the author Alfred Hein, who volunteered in the First World War, tells us: "So to read it in 'Cornet,' so it was given us to experience it (almost blissfully!). We still took the war like the fulfilment of a little Rilke dream construction." While the author Wolfgang Paul bitterly noted in 1952: "So many took 'Cornet' with them onto the field, and so many thin tomes lay rotting on the battlefield amid the bones of those who were compelled to follow the dark calls: 'and then the enemy...'"

That, too, is "Cornet." It is the story of soldiers who place their fatherland above all else, above love (Cornet left the countess behind in the burning castle) and above their own lives. Seventy years after World War II came to an end, we believe such veiled heroism to have been vanquished. Nevertheless, it comes to us again in the suicidal ideologies of fundamentalists and terrorists. Only Rilke's poem is essentially aimed at something in addition to the superficial subjects of warfare: "War was not what was meant, inasmuch as I wrote this / in one night. Destiny was scarcely meant, / only youth, crowds, attack, pure drive / and destruction, it burns and denies itself."

The origin. Rilke insisted on having committed the "Cornet" legend to paper in just "one dream-inducing night ... in one go by the light of two candles flickering in the night breeze; it was brought about by the clouds drifting over the moon." He gladly hid the fact that after 1899 he reworked the text many times before allowing it to be printed.

He drew inspiration from an old seventeenth-century war chronicle as well as from a note from the Dresden state archives that he'd found among his uncle Jaroslav's documents. He had carried out extensive research into aristocratic ancestors and believed he had

found one in an Otto Rülcke zu Linda. Rilke added parts of the file notes to his poem and added a “von” to the Otto Rülcke or Rilke—thereby creating the next myth.

Rilke lived in Berlin-Schmargendorf, close to his beloved but married Lou Andreas-Salomé. She had also given him his new first name: Rainer (originally René). One year later he met Clara Westhoff, to whom he sent his new poem (with the instruction “Read it on one of your beautiful moonlit evenings”), and because it was his only written record, he said that he had to ask for it to be returned, in case he would one day want to have it printed—“but that won’t be soon.”

The work didn’t appear in print until 1904 as a new, edited version under the title “Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Otto Rilke” (The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Otto Rilke)—Otto had not yet been changed to Christoph—in the Prague magazine *Deutsche Arbeit* and again two years later as a book, a version that had clearly been amended and that remains in print today. The publisher advertised the work as a private print run with just three hundred numbered copies costing 3 marks each and added the precautionary note that the book would “undoubtedly be out of print before it was published.” Out of print it was, too, but only two years later. The publisher was contrite: “A new edition is completely pointless, since there is no interest in the material.” One of the greatest mistakes in literary history.

This mistake would be corrected in 1912: Rilke’s publisher sold the rights to the publishing house Insel Verlag for 400 marks (a bargain, as would soon become clear). Insel Verlag published “Cornet” as volume 1 of the so-called Insel-Bücherei (Insel Library). The purchase price was 50 pfennig and there were ten thousand copies in the first print run. A sensational success: in three weeks, eight thousand copies were sold and the publisher immediately fired off another twenty thousand. At the beginning of 1914, approximately forty thousand copies of “Cornet” went out, “incidentally noticed,” as his publisher wrote taciturnly (he’d paid the author a flat rate of 400 marks). In 1917, the total print run had already risen to 140,000 copies. In 1995, the volume of circulation reached 1.2 million, not including reprints in anthologies or editions.

“Cornet’s” long ride is unstoppable: “Through the day, through the night, through the day...”

Rilke rejected his own work as “tacky,” “such a mixture of attempts at prose and poetry,” and this is precisely what readers today find fascinating. From the very first lines—verses, in fact—the reader is suggestively drawn into the tableau. Constant, delayed riding. These first words also depict a weariness of the era—a weariness of a generation that, on the threshold between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, was tired of waiting for a new time, one against which it would like to ride.

According to Rilke, he united—blended lyrically—thus offering a vivid reflection of the soldiers’ inner world through epics, through which he maintained a general distance from the dramatic, thereby allowing the actors to speak directly to each other. It is the purest image that can be conjured by the mind’s eye, what would today be described as loosely based on a true story. Well, very loosely. Rilke cleverly suggests authentic timeline adherence and still leaves through a great parable of youth with the free play of the imagination.

He wrote like a composer. There’s no shortage of leitmotifs, variations, repetitions: the eyes, the hands, the light as sun or as fire—or as both in one. And the rose: the woman, saintliness. She gets broken like communion bread. For Rilke, who incidentally was a passionate rose breeder, the rose is always a double metaphor: for the uncanny nature of beauty and for death. Neither Mary nor the rose can protect Cornet.

All of “Cornet” is a great binding and releasing between man and woman, a pulling-close and a pushing-away, a uniting and a deserting. The woman here is a girl, a mother, Madonna, the Virgin Mary, a lover, a prostitute—and very often a personification of danger, even when she disguises herself as a promise. The person writing this was himself unsure in sexual contact and afraid of amorous assimilation. The strong presence of the mother figure in “Cornet,” culminating in the analogy with death in chapter 22, should delight every amateur Freudian. And the “stronger sex”? Rilke spent his whole life yearning for androgyny. He describes the chivalrous marquis as having “soft” hair.

Manhood and womanhood shimmer here, the flank penetrating the military war zone and at the same time being confronted with feminine dominance. Fifty years before the word “gender” saw the light of day, Rilke threw out male and female stereotypes and depicted soldiers as flower girls and countesses as active seducers who take whomever they please.

Rilke may be forgiven his postpubescent metaphor for loins (“his flag is erect”), which was again taken up in his “phallic hymns”: “A new tree raises its abundant crown / and rises toward you.” Man, woman, war, and sex are united in “Cornet.” The flag is sacrificed to the phallus, to the woman, to the symbol of war with which Cornet is fearless and longs for death. His death on the battlefield, the garden of pleasures, by sixteen sabers, “flash for flash”: an orgasm.

Rilke is a poetry-writing musician. He calls the narrative a “lay” and emphasizes the folksong style. Lyrical and epic passages speak, even sing, in rhythms. Rilke writes like this, too: places a full stop where others would continue writing, uses colons like evocations, and starts chapters with “And” and “But” as though one had been wrenched from a dream.

“We are tempted,” the literary scholar Harry Maync once said of Rilke’s poetry, “to give them, phrase for phrase, preliminary musical sketches over tonality and beat, and musical expression marks; here a crescendo, there a presto or ritardando, a moderato or con fuoco.” Precisely because it is like music.

On that score, Rilke was very suspicious of the many attempts to set “Cornet” to music. In 1915, Casimir von Pászthory was the first to compose a piece inspired by Rilke. The composition was performed in Leipzig, along with a recitation of the “Cornet” text. Rilke was *not amused*. The public, in contrast, was. Very much so. And soon there were more promoters and composers jumping on the bandwagon. “If, heaven forbid, ‘Cornet’ the musical is free without further ado,” Rilke wrote to his publisher that same year, “then this winter we’ll be able to see the hip ‘Rilke Circus’ full from Kottbus to Kötzschenbroda; voilà une admirable perspective!”

Rilke feared melodrama; he opposed the seductive nature of music. It exists in his “Cornet” only for timekeeping purposes. Onomatopoeia experiments with words, images, tonal colors: like the successive advances of an army, Rilke alternated pausing and urging chapters, rest and restlessness. Right down the middle, after the thirteenth scene, Cornet appears to have arrived with the troops, calm restored, a moment of happiness. Nevertheless it continues for an entire nine chapters. Then, ripped out by the nocturnal raid, the rhythm whips itself up into an unexpected, breathless pace only to, in the final lines (the ambivalent ones), find peace.

What remains is a more sober swan song. Chronicler’s duty: “There he saw an old woman weep.” Maync calls it “a peaceful, faintly emotional conclusion on a long quivering note that slowly fades away.” Rilke had decided only shortly before going to press that the “melody” should end this way. In earlier drafts, the countess was rescued and even bore Cornet’s child. In 1906, the young aspiring author, Rilke, found such a Happy Ending to be manifestly suspicious.

And nevertheless it is worthwhile to examine the first version of the poem from 1899 that came fresh from the heart. Rilke ended chapter 26 of that version as follows: “Cornet is laughing there, his lips ready to drink: Is this life? And then surrenders himself.” He’s mad—and is in no way wrong. Since if one knew nothing about the warlike scenery, it would be difficult not to take this for youthful passion for life, as it should be: the purpose of all striving. Fulfillment.

Dance Theatre and Literature Dance

Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker Draws Nearer to Rilke's "Cornet"

By Vasco Boenisch

In the beginning was the word. It's a credo one rarely expects to hear when talking about a dance production. To be precise: the written word, by Rainer Maria Rilke. For a very long time, the Belgian dancer and choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker has wanted to create a choreography based on Rilke's early short novel entitled "Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke" (The Lay of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke). A choreography? Perhaps we should first stick with the word "performance." The way in which we approach material during a work process is also the way in which the performance approaches Rilke's work.

After the prologue: the written word. The read word. Self-paced tempo, free association, mind's-eye images, audiovisual imagery, too, in light of the highly melodic language.

Then: music. Chaotic music by Salvatore Sciarrino, one of the leading contemporary composers for the flute. Notes flying, cascades darting, arches of sound gently expanding, then falling abruptly. Breathing music. Breathless music.

"The high flames flared," Rilke writes. "Voices whirred, tangled songs jangled out of glass and glitter, and at last from the ripegrown measures: forth sprang the dance." Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker and Michaël Pomero are now moving toward Chryssi Dimitriou, the quiet flute virtuoso; in pairs, the dance begins—in confrontation with the heard, the read, the sensed.

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And now the spoken word also begins: the narrated, the reported, what's passed on. The word as meaning *and* the word as music. That's how it is with Rilke. Here, it becomes "literature dance."

Several years ago, Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker had already completed work with a few fellow choreographers based on epic and dramatic texts, some from Heiner Müller (with *Quartett* for the first time in 1987 and again in 1999) or Peter Handke (*I said I*, 1999). After these choreographies, De Keersmaecker focused her attention on music as the starting point for her performances. And eventually, years later, the word returned again in her music: initially as a libretto as in Gustav Mahler's "Lied von der Erde" in the 2010 *3Abschied* production, or through selected songs from the performances *En Attendant* (2010) and *Cesena* (2011). Dancers sing, singers dance. What happens when someone does both at the same time?

Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker raises this question in *Die Weise* when she herself is on stage. Rilke's text is many things at once: poem, story, song. "Just like in Bach's music," De Keersmaecker notes, "Rilke's phrases seem already to possess something dancelike. It is very present, plastic, palpable. We want to seize it and hold on to it." In doing so, this movement is reflected in the text as two counterpoints: movement and rest. Permanent alternation: masculinity stands opposite femininity, or, that is to say, the feminine within the masculine and vice versa. Day and night, sun and moon, watch-fire and conflagration—antipodes everywhere, opposing currents. Not least: love and death.

From the choreographic point of view, these oppositions are reflected in horizontal and vertical movements. In recent years, Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker has developed a principle of movement: movement in perfectly geometric trajectories of very minimalistic moves, often called the "tenor line," which spreads out in wider orbits and physical freedom. These movements have their logic. They follow the impulses of the text, stress it, comment on it, wean themselves off it. De Keersmaecker asks: what was the very first, originating impulse to move?

Before the dance and before the word is air. Breath. Breathing. Just as with the music by Sciarrino. "In the far Eastern idea of 'breath of

life' there are three levels," De Keersmaecker tells us. "First the intention, then energy, and finally form. This means the concept is the first to come into being. Then it uses energy, which takes care of thought. And finally one has to find the expression for this." This is precisely how it will happen on stage. The text finds "expression" in different ways, ultimately literally embodied in dance.

And in the spoken: De Keersmaecker speaks Rilke. She follows both the tones he set and her own voice, a very personal approach and account. During the rehearsals, she also listened to recordings of "Cornet" by the Austrian actor Oskar Werner, a confirmed pacifist who recorded Rilke's narration twice in the space of nearly thirty years.

It's not easy today to have an unencumbered relationship with some of the trails Rilke sets out in his text. Take for example the hero's death at the end, celebrated almost euphorically. It was not for nothing that the "Cornet" nurtured military propaganda in the time of the World Wars (against Rilke's will). "As a result, Cornet is no war hero in the classic sense," De Keersmaecker explains. "It is not victories he wins, but rather a fairly naive defeat." He even leaves the woman he loves in a burning castle. And one can certainly also read that the blindness, into which Cornet is plunged in the final lines, is a hidden warning.

Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker has had many discussions about the religious allusions in the text, about the male and female images, about words and expressions such as "Turkish" and "pagan dogs," about "blond boys," "blond girls," and "to be a new generation for each other." Some passages read almost like a handbook for Fascist aesthetics. Even though Rilke was far from a racist. "It is striking," De Keersmaecker states, "how we encounter in Rilke at once militaristic diction and great romanticism." What relevance can this kind of romantic poem have in times of extreme brutality? De Keersmaecker keeps coming back to the importance of the body: love, death, violence—nearly every storyline in "Cornet" is experienced physically. That is something very modern. "Why was there such a huge outcry around the world when, in early September 2015, a photograph was published of the body of a drowned boy on the Turkish coast?" she asks. "We had long since learned of the plight, but it was the body that moved everyone." The "Cornet"

offers an opportunity to think about the hotbeds of war fever, even if this question arises from the history of the reception of “Cornet” rather than from the text itself.

In essence, “Die Weise” recounts an initiation—a fatal one from today’s perspective, but also a stormy, immediate one. An ambivalence, torn between speed and hesitation, joy and grief. Antitheses and basic principles. And the fact that everything emerges only from the mind and finally returns there, until our dying breath.

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It's a Gift to Be with This Text

Interview with Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

By Vasco Boenisch

Your work on *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke* is a very personal involvement. Can you remember when you first read Rilke's work?

I've had the text for a very long time, more than twenty-five years. I discovered it when I was doing a production based on a play by Heiner Müller. Since then it has been on the rehearsal lineup many times. But then "Cornet" had to be put on the back burner, so to speak, for quite a while.

As you just said, you have a long tradition of working on and with texts.

Yes, texts have long played a big role in my work. I used texts for *Elena's Aria* (1984) and *Bartók/Aantekeningen* (1986). Then there was a period when I produced some performances with my sister Jolente De Keersmaeker and tg STAN. For example *Quartett* (1999) involves an actor and a dancer. I was struck by how spoken word and formal movement stimulate each other. But I was soon seeking a higher level of abstraction, so I started to focus on abstract dancing and stopped using texts.

You came back to texts, after some time, through productions where you focused on the human voice. How important is the voice in your work today?

Singing is the simplest and most natural way to make music. The voice exposes. Maybe singing relates to speaking in the same way that dancing relates to walking. So I started looking into how language can lead to dancing, and conversely how movement can convey meaning. What is the possible physicality of the spoken

word, and how can the abstract form of a dance move influence the content of a spoken text? In *Golden Hours (As you like it)* (2015), which uses the Shakespearean play *As You Like It* as a starting point, the challenge was to explore the differences between representing language with the body versus with the voice.

Why did you feel like it had to be you, on your own, performing *Die Weise*?

As I said, I've been carrying the text with me for a very long time. I've developed a very personal relationship with it. After several attempts with various actors and dancers, I decided to take the advice of my dance partner, Michaël Pomero, and perform the text myself. It was a great challenge but it seemed the most honest approach.

What did you experience, or even learn, in this production?

The most important task was to develop a kind of language whereby a logic of movement is combined with a logic of a text. As far as the movement is concerned, you know I am a formalist. But then there is the logic of the text, which has a very specific structure and various layers: formal, musical, historical. It's unclear how to categorize the text's genre: is it poetry? prose? song?

The historical context is a huge question.

Yes, it is. The time in which Rilke wrote "Cornet," how it was then recycled as war propaganda for each of the two World Wars, how it can be viewed against a broader historical background, and how it can be seen in the context of what is happening today—this all raises questions about the relevance of the text, what kind of political statement you're making when performing it. The intention is for the music and the dance to underline, contradict, and comment on the texts.

You wanted to avoid the cliché image of Michaël being the young, virile Cornet and you being the elderly countess.

Yes, that would not have been interesting. The challenge was to avoid a one-to-one identification.

How did Salvatore Sciarrino's music filter into the project?

The Sciarrino works we chose have a strong physical nature that removes melody and reduces music to sound and breath. Knowing

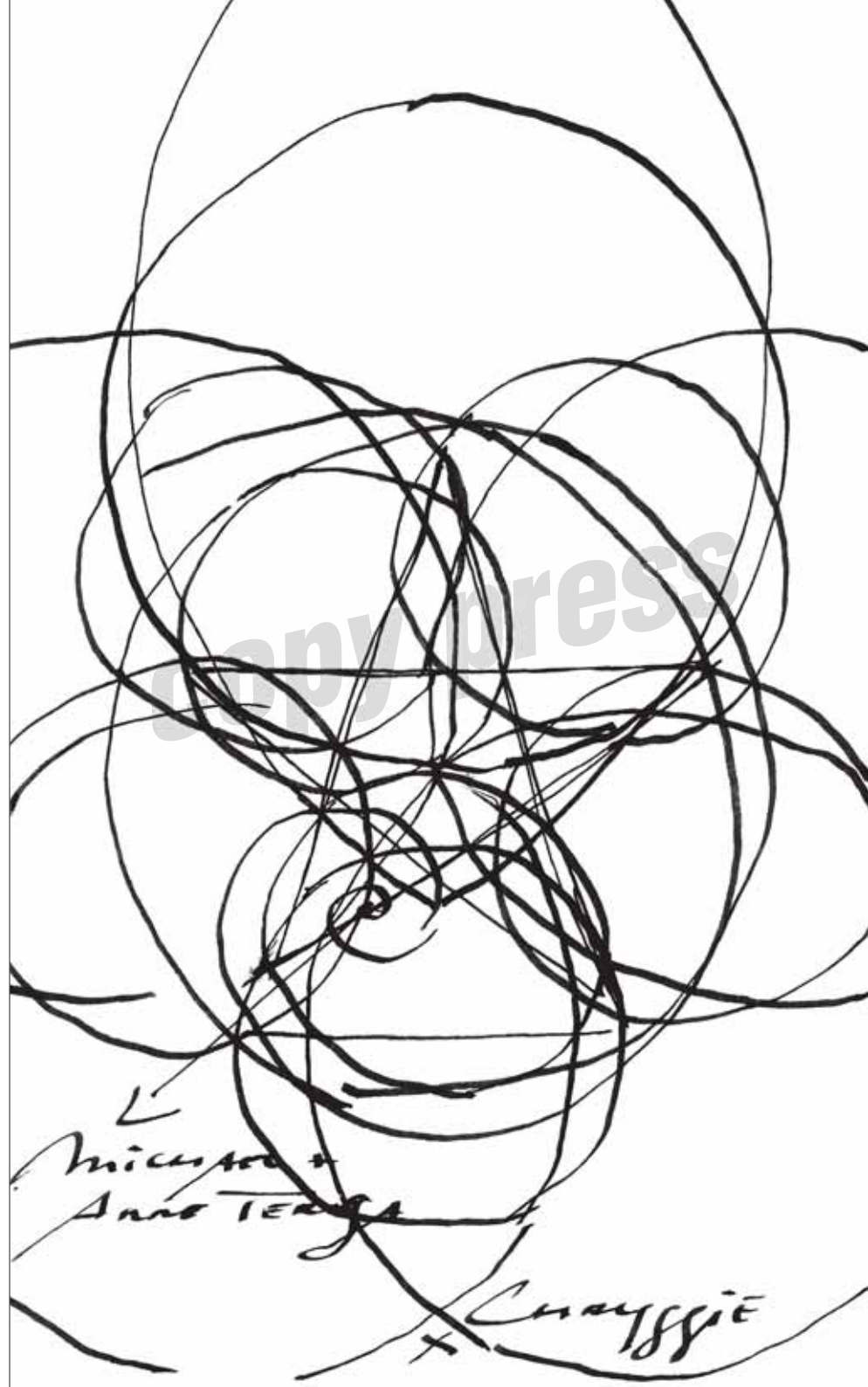
that Rilke disliked all attempts at adding music to his "Cornet," I didn't want to work with melody.

The title of the first piece, "Immagine fenicia," refers to the image of Phoenix rising from the flames. Fire is an important image in the "Cornet" story.

The music is extremely sensual. The flutist Chryssi Dimitriou may look like she was taken directly out of Botticelli's *Primavera*, but she plays the devil (*laughs*). The physicality and Chryssi's playing and her Madonna-like look have something vital, combative, erotic, maybe even orgasmic about them.

Not all audiences understand German. But a translation will be projected onto a screen, and those who do not understand the spoken language will experience the words as sounds or as music. It is a very musical text indeed. And I think there will be a very direct experience of the splendor or the concrete matter of the text without having to understand every word. I believe Rainer Maria Rilke is one of the best poets in the history of literature. It's a gift to be with this text.

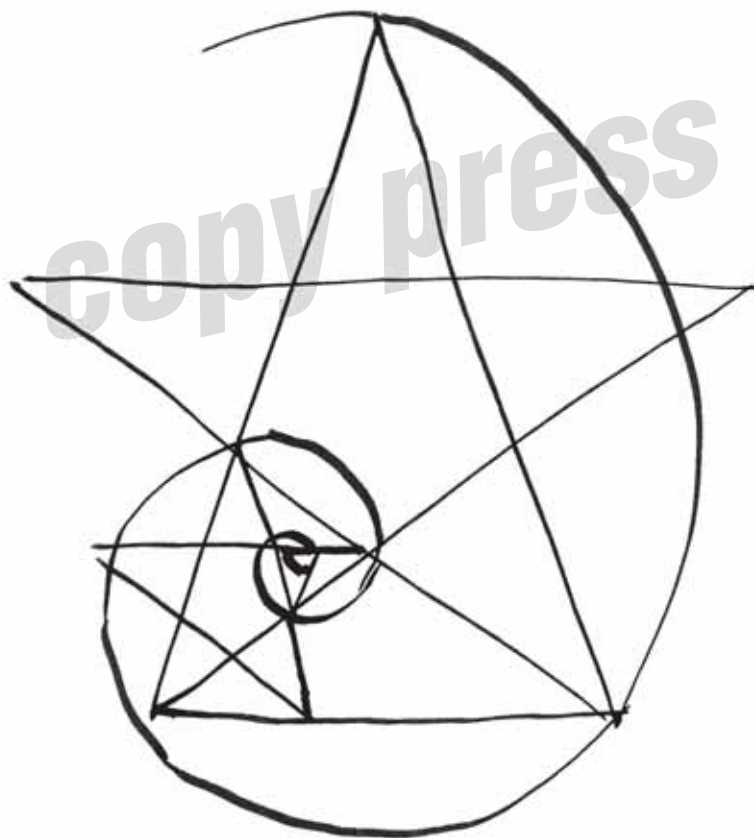
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Floor pattern with names of the performers assigned to pentagon circles and superimposed spiral; drawing by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

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— Kipneri
PENTAGON



With Rainer

Observations of Friends

“The Very Young”

Despite the surprising volume of work Rainer had completed and published, it was not predominantly in his essence to evolve into the promising great poet he should have been. Rather, it came completely from his special human nature.... When for example one of his friends, Ernst von Wolzogen, jokingly addressed him once as “Pure Rainer, immaculate Mary,” there were no feminine-childlike expectations in Rainer’s internal situation, but rather his own kind of manliness, what to him was a sacredly tender masculine earnestness.... Something one would call “masculine grace” was thus appropriated by Rainer to a great extent, delicately straightforward and irrepressibly harmonious with every expression of its nature. At the time, he could still laugh—could still know that he remained innocent and unsuspecting of life in its delights.

Lou Andreas-Salomé

“Sense of Completion”

Order, cleanliness, and silence were real physical necessities to him, and so was moderate behavior. Having to travel in an overcrowded tram or sitting in a noisy bar could upset him for hours. He could not bear vulgarity of any kind, and although he lived in straitened circumstances, he always dressed with the utmost care, cleanliness, and good taste. His clothing itself was a masterpiece of well-thought-out and carefully composed discretion, and there was always some unobtrusive but very personal touch about it, some little thing that secretly gave him pleasure, such as a thin silver bracelet around his wrist, for his aesthetic sense of perfection and symmetry extended to the most intimate personal details. I once saw him in his rooms packing his case before leaving—he rightly declined my help as irrelevant—and it was like a mosaic, every single item lovingly lowered into the place carefully left free for it. It would have been sacrilege to destroy that almost floral arrangement by lending a helping hand. And he applied his fundamental sense of beauty to the most insignificant details. Not only did he write his manuscripts carefully on the finest paper in his rounded calligraphic hand, so that line matched line as if drawn with a ruler, but he chose good paper for even the most unimportant letter, and that calligraphic handwriting, pure and round, covered it regularly right up to the margin. He never, even in the most hastily written note, allowed himself to cross out a word. Once he felt that some sentence or expression was not quite right, he would rewrite the whole letter with the utmost patience. Rilke never let anything that was less than perfect leave

his hands.... If you lent him a book that he had not yet read, it would be returned to you wrapped in smooth tissue paper and tied with a colored ribbon, like a present. I still remember how he brought the manuscript of his “Die Weise von Liebe und Tod” to my room, a precious gift, and to this day I have the ribbon that was tied around it.

Stefan Zweig

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“The Mother”

Early on, Rainer was looking in vain for futile salvation in the assumption that he was who he was, “predestined,” molded forevermore in all the losses that changed him despite his intense objection. He attached this most intensively to his mother. He worded this almost lifelong agony most strongly in a letter to me dated April 15, 1904, after one of the ever-widening intervals between mother-and-son reunions. In the middle of it he wrote:

My mother has come to Rome and is still here. I see her very rarely, but—as you know—every time we do meet there is a kind of regression. If I have to see this lost, illusory, disconnected woman, who cannot grow old, then I feel like a small child who's been trying to escape her and I'm profoundly frightened that I, after years of running and moving, have still not put enough distance between us, that internally I still have stirrings somewhere that are the antipode of her atrophied airs, parts of memories in pieces that she carries around with her; then I am horrified by her scattered piety, her obstinate beliefs, particularly these contortions and distortions onto which she has latched herself like an empty dress, ghostly and terrifying. And that I am nevertheless her child; that, concealed in this faded wall that belongs to nothing, there is a scarcely recognizable door through which I entered the world—if any such entrance can even lead into the world...)!

Lou Andreas-Salomé

“War Is Always a Prison”

One day there was a knock on my door, and there stood a soldier, looking hesitant. Next moment I started up in alarm. It was Rilke—Rainer Maria Rilke in military disguise! He looked pathetically clumsy, his collar constricting him, upset by the thought of having to salute any officer by clicking the heels of his boots. And as in his urge for perfectionism he wanted to carry out even this pointless formality precisely in accordance with the rules, he was in a state of constant dismay. “I’ve had this uniform since I was at cadet school,” he told me in his quiet voice. “I thought I’d said goodbye to it for ever. And now I’m wearing it again forty years on!” Luckily there were helping hands to protect him, and thanks to a kindly medical examiner he was soon discharged. He came back to my room once, in civilian clothes again, to say goodbye to me. I might almost say that the wind blew him in, he always moved so very quietly. He wanted to thank me for trying, through Rolland, to save his library in Paris, where it had been confiscated. For the first time he no longer looked young; it was as if the idea of the horrors of war had exhausted him. “Ah, to go abroad!” he said. “If only one could go abroad! War is always a prison.” Then he left.

Stefan Zweig

Biographies

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

In 1980, after studying dance at Mudra School in Brussels and Tisch School of the Arts in New York, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker created *Asch*, her first choreographic work. Two years later came the premiere of *Fase, Four Movements to the Music of Steve Reich*. De Keersmaeker established the dance company Rosas in Brussels in 1983, while creating the work *Rosas danst Rosas*. Since these breakthrough pieces, her choreography has been grounded in a rigorous and prolific exploration of the relationship between dance and music. She has created with Rosas a wide-ranging body of work engaging the musical structures and scores of several periods, from early music to contemporary and popular idioms. Her choreographic practice also draws formal principles from geometry, numerical patterns, the natural world, and social structures to offer a unique perspective on the body's articulation in space and time. In 1995 De Keersmaeker established the school P.A.R.T.S. (Performing Arts Research and Training Studios) in Brussels in association with De Munt/La Monnaie.

Chryssi Dimitriou

Born in Athens, Chryssi Dimitriou studied the flute with Stella Gadedi at the Athenaeum Conservatory, where she received her professional diploma with first prize and the Athenaeum gold medal. As a scholar with the Alexandra Trianti scholarship and the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, she pursued postgraduate studies at the RNCM with Peter Lloyd and Anders Ljungar-Chapelon, the École Normale de Musique with Pierre-Yves Artaud, the Conservatoire National de Région de Strasbourg with Mario Caroli, and the Hogeschool Gent Conservatorium, where she received tuition and guidance from Michael Schmid. Her postgraduate degrees include an MMus in performance with merit, a diploma in professional performance-PPRNCM, an MPhil in performance, and a Diplôme Supérieur de Concertiste and a Diplôme de Spécialisation, both unanimously and with the congratulations of the jury, as well as a Master en Meester of arts soloist with honors. Dimitriou currently lives in Brussels and works as a freelancer in contemporary music, notably with Ictus ensemble and Rosas dance company, and is a PhD in arts candidate at the Conservatorium/Vrije Universiteit Brussels, as a scholar of the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation.

Michel François

Michel François has never restricted himself to one single discipline, but uses all sorts of materials and media and combines industrial and natural objects, photographs, videos, sculptures, and installations. He is interested in “signs of life” such as gestures, sounds, images, and everyday customs and habits. He also uses space and tries to make it into a visual resource. Spatial modifications are at the heart of his work, and the relationships between work and space, and images and architecture, play an emphatic part in it. For Rosas François has created the set designs for *The Song* (2009), *En Atendant* (2010), and *Partita 2* (2013).

Anne-Catherine Kunz

Anne-Catherine Kunz is a costume designer who has also participated in video, documentary, and multimedia productions. She was the costume director for Rosas

between 2000 and 2013 and created costumes for *Small hands (out of the lie of no)* (2001), *Zeitung* (2008), *The Song* (2009), *En Atendant* (2010), *Cesena* (2011), *Partita 2* (2013), *Vortex Temporum* (2013), and *Work/Travail/Arbeid* (2015). She was the costume designer for *Nine Finger* by Fumiyo Ikeda, Alain Platel, and Benjamin Verdonck, and she has worked in productions by Josse De Pauw, Vincent Dunoyer, Deufert & Plischke, Mark Lorimer and Cynthia Loemij, Bettina Oberli, Joachim Koester, Étienne Guilloteau, Claire Croizé, Manu Riche, and Heine Avdal and Yukiko Shinozaki.

Michaël Pomero

Michaël Pomero studied at the Rudra Béjart Workshop School in Lausanne, Switzerland. He started his professional career in 1999, at the Béjart Ballet Lausanne. In 2001 he joined the Lyon Opera Ballet, where he performed work by John Jasperse, Angelin Preljocaj, Dominique Boivin, Russell Maliphant, and others. The year 2003 saw the beginning of his freelance career and a move to London, where he participated in two creations by Russell Maliphant and worked on different projects in the United Kingdom and Switzerland. In 2005 he cofounded the collective Loge 22 in Lyon. Since then he has danced in the following productions by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker: *Bartók/Beethoven/Schönberg: Repertory Evening* (2006), *The Song* (2009), *Cesena* (2011), *Vortex Temporum* (2013), and *Work/Travail/Arbeid* (2015). Throughout, he stayed involved in the projects of Loge 22. He is also active in SPIDER, an international creative collaborative that organizes artistic gatherings.

Luc Schaltin

Luc Schaltin was educated as a photographer. His photographic work centers on theater and dance photography, and travel photography. Usually he works as a lighting designer for theater, dance, and music. He learned the techniques of the theater at the STUK arts center and during the international dance festival Klapstuk. He worked there for five years, including three years as technical director. Since 1999 he has worked for Kaaitheater as a lighting and sound technician. He combines this part-time job with freelance lighting design for various artists. He has created lighting designs for Rosas, Jan Decorte, Raimund Hoghe, 't Barre Land, Blindman, Kris Verdonck (A Two Dogs Company), Tine Van Aerschot, P.A.R.T.S – Mia Lawrence, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Andros Zins-Browne, Zita Swoon Group, and Needcompany as well as for performances with Sato Endo, Riina Saastamoinen, Stefaan Quix, Kate Macintosh, Meg Stuart and Damaged Goods, and Christine De Smedt.

Performance

Choreography Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker

Created with and performed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Michaël Pomero, Chryssi Dimitriou

Text “Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke,” Rainer Maria Rilke

Music *Opera per flauto*, Salvatore Sciarrino

— Immagine fenicia

— All'aure in una lontananza

Lighting design Luc Schaltin

Costumes Anne-Catherine Kunz

Graphic design Casier/Fieuids

Artistic assistant Femke Gyselinck

Dramaturgy Vasco Boenisch

German language coach Roswitha Dierck

Artistic advisor scenography Michel François

Sound Alban Moraud

Costumes coordinator Heide Vanderieck

Artistic coordination and planning Anne Van Aerschot

Technical director Joris Erven

Production Rosas

Coproduction De Munt/La Monnaie (Brussels/Bruxelles), Ruhrtriennale, Concertgebouw Brugge, Le Théâtre de Gennevilliers avec le Festival d'Automne à Paris, Sadler's Wells (London), Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg

Première 24/09/2015, Ruhrtriennale

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Rosas is supported by the Flemish Community



Michaël Pomero

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Chryssi Dimitriou, Michaël Pomero, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker
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den Brief zu sich in den
die heimlichste Stelle neben
Und denkt: Er wird bald
Und denkt: Vielleicht findet
er ... Und denkt:
d ist nah.

Then he puts the letter away inside his tunic,
in the most secret place, beside the roseleaf.
And thinks: It will soon take on that
fragrance. And thinks: Perhaps someone
will find it someday ... And thinks:
For the enemy is near.

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Strogen: voll alle: half: fiam: half: mado: von
Kanten: in: fiam: von: fiam: in: fiam: und
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DIE WEISE VON LIEBE
UND TOD
DES CORNETS CHRISTOPH RILKE

RAINER MARIA RILKE

THE WAY OF LOVE
AND DEATH
OF CORNET CHRISTOPH RILKE

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„ ...den 24. November 1663 wurde Otto von Rilke / auf Langenau / Gränitz und Ziegra / zu Linda mit seines in Ungarn gefallenen Bruders Christoph hinterlassenem Antheile am Gute Linda beliehen; doch musste er einen Revers ausstellen / nach welchem die Lehensreichung null und nichtig sein sollte / im Falle sein Bruder Christoph (der nach beigebrachtem Totenschein als Cornet in der Compagnie des Freiherrn von Pirovano des kaiserl. oesterr. Heysterschen Regiments zu Ross verstorben war) zurückkehrt ...“

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“... the 24th of November 1663 Otto von Rilke / of Langenau / Gränitz and Ziegra / at Linda was enfeoffed with the share of the Linda estate left by his brother Christoph, fallen in Hungary; but he had to make out a reversion / by which the feudal tenure would become null and void / in case his brother Christoph (who according to the death certificate presented had died as Cornet in the Baron of Pirovano's Company of the Imperial Austrian Heyster Regiment of Horse) should return ...”

Reiten, reiten, reiten, durch den Tag, durch die Nacht, durch den Tag.
Reiten, reiten, reiten.

Und der Mut ist so müde geworden und die Sehnsucht so groß.
Es gibt keine Berge mehr, kaum einen Baum. Nichts wagt
aufzustehen. Fremde Hütten hocken durstig an versumpften
Brunnen. Nirgends ein Turm. Und immer das gleiche Bild. Man
hat zwei Augen zuviel. Nur in der Nacht manchmal glaubt man
den Weg zu kennen. Vielleicht kehren wir nächstens immer wieder
das Stück zurück, das wir in der fremden Sonne mühsam
gewonnen haben? Es kann sein. Die Sonne ist schwer, wie bei uns
tief im Sommer. Aber wir haben im Sommer Abschied
genommen. Die Kleider der Frauen leuchteten lang aus dem
Grün. Und nun reiten wir lang. Es muss also Herbst sein.
Wenigstens dort, wo traurige Frauen von uns wissen.

Riding, riding, riding, through the day, through the night, through the day.

Riding, riding, riding.

**And courage is grown so weary, and longing so great. There are no hills any more, hardly
a tree. Nothing dares stand up. Alien huts crouch thirstily by mired springs. Nowhere a
tower. And always the same picture. One has two eyes too many. Only in the night
sometimes one seems to know the road. Perhaps we always retrace by night the stretch
we have won laboriously in the foreign sun? Maybe. The sun is heavy, as with us deep
in summer at home. But we took our leave in summer. The women's dresses shone long
out of the green. And we have been riding long.**

So it must be autumn. At least there, where sorrowful women know of us.

Der von Langenau rückt im Sattel und sagt: „Herr Marquis ...“
 Sein Nachbar, der kleine feine Franzose, hat erst drei Tage lang
 gesprochen und gelacht. Jetzt weiß er nichts mehr. Er ist wie ein
 Kind, das schlafen möchte. Staub bleibt auf seinem feinen weißen
 Spitzenkragen liegen; er merkt es nicht. Er wird langsam welk in
 seinem samtenen Sattel.

Aber der von Langenau lächelt und sagt: „Ihr habt seltsame
 Augen, Herr Marquis. Gewiss seht Ihr Eurer Mutter ähnlich –“
 Da blüht der Kleine noch einmal auf und stäubt seinen Kragen
 ab und ist wie neu.

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**He of Langenau shifts in his saddle and says: “Marquis ...”
 His neighbor, the little fine Frenchman, has been talking and laughing these three days.
 Now he has nothing more to say. He is like a child that wants to sleep. Dust settles on
 his fine white lace collar; he does not notice it. He is slowly wilting in his velvet saddle.
 But von Langenau smiles and says: “You have strange eyes, Marquis. Surely you must
 look like your mother –”
 At that the little fellow blossoms out again and dusts his collar off and is like new.**

Jemand erzählt von seiner Mutter. Ein Deutscher offenbar.
 Laut und langsam setzt er seine Worte. Wie ein Mädchen, das
 Blumen bindet, nachdenklich Blume um Blume probt und noch
 nicht weiß, was aus dem Ganzen wird –: so fügt er seine Worte.
 Zu Lust? Zu Leide? Alle lauschen. Sogar das Spucken hört auf.
 Denn es sind lauter Herren, die wissen, was sich gehört. Und wer
 das Deutsche nicht kann in dem Haufen, der versteht es auf
 einmal, fühlt einzelne Worte: „Abends“ ... „Klein war ...“

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**Someone is telling of his mother. A German, evidently. Loud and slow he sets his words.
 As a girl, binding flowers, thoughtfully tests flower after flower, not yet knowing what
 the whole will come to –: so he fits his words. For joy? For sorrow? All listen. Even the
 spitting stops. For these are gentlemen every one, who know what is proper. And
 whoever speaks no German in the crowd suddenly understands it, feels individual words:
 “At evening” ... “was little ...”**

Da sind sie alle einander nah, diese Herren, die aus Frankreich kommen und aus Burgund, aus den Niederlanden, aus Kärntens Tälern, von den böhmischen Burgen und vom Kaiser Leopold. Denn was der Eine erzählt, das haben auch sie erfahren und gerade so. Als ob es nur *eine* Mutter gäbe ...

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Now are they all close to one another, these gentlemen who come out of France and out of Burgundy, out of the Netherlands, out of Carinthia's valleys, from the castles of Bohemia and from the Emperor Leopold. For what this one tells they too have experienced, and just as he has. As though there were but one mother ...

So reitet man in den Abend hinein, in irgend einen Abend. Man schweigt wieder, aber man hat die lichten Worte mit. Da hebt der Marquis den Helm ab. Seine dunklen Haare sind weich und, wie er das Haupt senkt, dehnen sie sich frauenhaft auf seinem Nacken. Jetzt erkennt auch der von Langenau: Fern ragt etwas in den Glanz hinein, etwas Schlankes, Dunkles. Eine einsame Säule, halbverfallen. Und wie sie lange vorüber sind, später, fällt ihm ein, dass das eine Madonna war.

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So they ride into the evening, into any evening. They are silent again, but they have the bright words with them. The Marquis doffs his helmet. His dark hair is soft, and, as he bows his head, it spreads like a woman's about his neck. Now von Langenau too is aware: Far off something rises into the radiance, something slender, dark. A lonely column, half ruined. And when they are long past, later, it occurs to him that that was a Madonna.

Wachtfeuer. Man sitzt rundumher und wartet. Wartet, dass einer singt. Aber man ist so müd. Das rote Licht ist schwer. Es liegt auf den staubigen Schuh. Es kriecht bis an die Kniee, es schaut in die gefalteten Hände hinein. Es hat keine Flügel. Die Gesichter sind dunkel. Dennoch leuchten eine Weile die Augen des kleinen Franzosen mit eigenem Licht. Er hat eine kleine Rose geküsst, und nun darf sie weiterwelken an seiner Brust. Der von Langenau hat es gesehen, weil er nicht schlafen kann. Er denkt: Ich habe keine Rose, keine.

Dann singt er. Und das ist ein altes trauriges Lied, das zu Hause die Mädchen auf den Feldern singen, im Herbst, wenn die Ernten zu Ende gehen.

Watch-fire. They sit round about and wait. Wait for someone to sing. But they are so tired. The red light is heavy. It lies on the dusty boots. It crawls up to the knees, it peers into the folded hands. It has no wings. The faces are dark. Even so, the eyes of the little Frenchman glow for a while with a light of their own. He has kissed a little rose, and now it may wither on upon his breast. Von Langenau has seen it, because he cannot sleep. He thinks: I have no rose, none. Then he sings. And it is an old, sad song that at home the girls in the fields sing, in the fall, when the harvests are coming to an end.

Sagt der kleine Marquis: „Ihr seid sehr jung, Herr?“

Und der von Langenau, in Trauer halb und halb im Trotz: „Achtzehn.“ Dann schweigen sie.

Später fragt der Franzose: „Habt Ihr auch eine Braut daheim, Herr Junker?“

„Ihr?“ gibt der von Langenau zurück.

„Sie ist blond wie Ihr.“

Und sie schweigen wieder, bis der Deutsche ruft: „Aber zum Teufel, warum sitzt Ihr denn dann im Sattel und reitet durch dieses giftige Land den türkischen Hunden entgegen?“

Der Marquis lächelt: „Um wiederzukehren.“

Und der von Langenau wird traurig. Er denkt an ein blondes Mädchen, mit dem er spielte. Wilde Spiele. Und er möchte nach Hause, für einen Augenblick nur, nur für so lange, als es braucht, um die Worte zu sagen: „Magdalena, – dass ich immer *so war*, verzeih!“
Wie – war? denkt der junge Herr. – Und sie sind weit.

Says the little Marquis: “You are very young, sir?”

And von Langenau, in sorrow half and half defiant: “Eighteen.” Then they are silent.

Later the Frenchman asks: “Have you too a bride at home, Junker?”

“You?” returns von Langenau.

“She is blond like you.”

And they are silent again until the German cries: “But then why the devil do you sit in the saddle and ride through this poisonous country to meet the Turkish dogs?”

The Marquis smiles: “In order to come back again.”

And von Langenau grows sad. He thinks of a blond girl with whom he played. Wild games. And he would like to go home, for an instant only, only for so long as it takes to say the words: “Magdalena – my having always been like that, forgive!”

What – been? thinks the young man. – And they are far away.

Einmal, am Morgen, ist ein Reiter da, und dann ein zweiter, vier, zehn. Ganz in Eisen, groß. Dann tausend dahinter: Das Heer. Man muss sich trennen.

„Kehrt glücklich heim, Herr Marquis. –“

„Die Maria schützt Euch, Herr Junker.“

Und sie können nicht voneinander. Sie sind Freunde auf einmal, Brüder. Haben einander mehr zu vertrauen; denn sie wissen schon so viel Einer vom Andern. Sie zögern. Und ist Hast und Hufschlag um sie. Da streift der Marquis den großen rechten Handschuh ab. Er holt die kleine Rose hervor, nimmt ihr ein Blatt. Als ob man eine Hostie bricht.

„Das wird Euch beschirmen. Lebt wohl.“

Der von Langenau staunt. Lange schaut er dem Franzosen nach. Dann schiebt er das fremde Blatt unter den Waffenrock. Und es treibt auf und ab auf den Wellen seines Herzens. Hornruf. Er reitet zum Heer, der Junker. Er lächelt traurig: ihn schützt eine fremde Frau.

One day, at morning, a horseman appears, and then a second, four, ten. All in iron, huge. Then a thousand behind: the army.

One must separate.

“Return safely home, Marquis. –”

“The Virgin protects you, Junker.”

And they cannot part. They are friends of a sudden, brothers. Have more to confide in each other; for they already know so much each of the other. They linger. And there's haste and hoofbeat about them. Then the Marquis strips off his great right glove. He fetches out the little rose, takes a petal from it. As one would break a host.

“That will safeguard you. Fare well.”

Von Langenau is surprised. He gazes long after the Frenchman. Then he shoves the foreign petal under his tunic. And it rises and falls on the waves of his heart. Bugle-call. He rides to the army, the Junker. He smiles sadly: an unknown woman protects him.

Ein Tag durch den Tross. Flüche, Farben, Lachen –: davon blendet das Land. Kommen bunte Buben gelaufen. Raufen und Rufen. Kommen Dirnen mit purpurnen Hüten im flutenden Haar. Winken. Kommen Knechte, schwarzeisern wie wandernde Nacht. Packen die Dirnen heiß, dass ihnen die Kleider zerreißen. Drücken sie an den Trommelrand. Und von der wilderen Gegenwehr hastiger Hände werden die Trommeln wach, wie im Traum poltern sie, poltern –. Und Abends halten sie ihm Laternen her, seltsame: Wein, leuchtend in eisernen Hauben. Wein? Oder Blut? – Wer kann unterscheiden?

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A day through the baggage-train. Curses, colors, laughter –: the countryside is dazzling with it. Come colorful boys a-running. Brawling and calling. Come wenches with crimson hats amid their full-flowing hair. Beckonings. Come men-at-arms, black-iron as wandering night. Seize the hussies hotly, that their clothes tear. Press them against the drum's edge. And at the wilder struggling of hasty hands the drums awake; as in a dream they rumble, rumble –. And at evening they hold out lanterns to him, strange ones: wine, gleaming in iron headpieces. Wine? Or blood? – Who can distinguish?

Endlich vor Spork. Neben seinem Schimmel ragt der Graf. Sein langes Haar hat den Glanz des Eisens.

Der von Langenau hat nicht gefragt. Er erkennt den General, schwingt sich vom Ross und verneigt sich in einer Wolke Staub. Er bringt ein Schreiben mit, das ihn empfehlen soll beim Grafen. Der aber befiehlt: „Lies mir den Wisch.“ Und seine Lippen haben sich nicht bewegt. Er braucht sie nicht dazu; sind zum Fluchen gerade gut genug. Was drüber hinaus ist, redet die Rechte. Punktum. Und man sieht es ihr an. Der junge Herr ist längst zu Ende. Er weiß nicht mehr, wo er steht. Der Spork ist vor Allem. Sogar der Himmel ist fort. Da sagt Spork, der große General: „Cornet.“
Und das ist viel.

At last with Spork. Beside his white horse the Count towers. His long hair has the gleam of iron.

Von Langenau has not asked. He recognizes the General, swings from his horse and bows in a cloud of dust. He brings a letter commending him to the Count's favor. But the Count commands: "Read me the scrawl." And his lips have not moved. He does not need them for this; they're just good enough for cursing. Anything further his right hand says. Period. And one can tell by the look of it. The young man has finished long ago. He no longer knows where he is standing. Spork is in front of everything. Even the sky is gone. Then Spork, the great General, says:

"Cornet."

And that is much.

Die Kompagnie liegt jenseits der Raab. Der von Langenau reitet hin, allein. Ebene. Abend. Der Beschlag vorn am Sattel glänzt durch den Staub. Und dann steigt der Mond. Er sieht es an seinen Händen. Er träumt.

Aber da schreit es ihn an.

Schreit, schreit,
zerreißt ihm den Traum.

Das ist keine Eule. Barmherzigkeit:

der einzige Baum

schreit ihn an:

Mann!

Und er schaut: es bäumt sich. Es bäumt sich ein Leib den Baum entlang, und ein junges Weib,
blutig und bloß,

fällt ihn an: Mach mich los!

Und er springt hinab in das schwarze Grün

und durchhaut die heißen Stricke;

und er sieht ihre Blicke glühn

und ihre Zähne beißen.

Lacht sie?

Ihn graust.

Und er sitzt schon zu Ross

und jagt in die Nacht. Blutige Schnüre fest in der Faust.

The company is lying beyond the Raab. Langenau rides toward it, alone. Level land. Evening. The studdings of his saddle-bow gleam through the dust. And then the moon rises. He sees that by his hands.

He dreams. But then something shrieks at him.

Shrieks, shrieks, rends his dream.

That is no owl. Mercy: the only tree shrieks at him: man!

And he looks: something rears – a body rears itself against the tree, and a young woman, bloody and bare, assails him: Let me loose!

And down he springs into the black green and hews the hot ropes through; and he sees her glances glow and her teeth bite.

Is she laughing?

He shudders.

And already he has mounted his horse and chases into the night. Bloody ties fast in his fist.

Der von Langenau schreibt einen Brief, ganz in Gedanken.
Langsam malt er mit großen, ernsten, aufrechten Lettern:

„Meine gute Mutter,
seid stolz: Ich trage die Fahne,
seid ohne Sorge: Ich trage die Fahne,
habt mich lieb: Ich trage die Fahne –“

Dann steckt er den Brief zu sich in den Waffenrock, an die heimlichste Stelle, neben das Rosenblatt. Und denkt: Er wird bald duften davon. Und denkt: Vielleicht findet ihn einmal Einer ... Und denkt:
Denn der Feind ist nah.

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Von Langenau is writing a letter, deep in thought. Slowly he traces in great, earnest, upright letters:

**“My good mother,
be proud: I carry the flag,
be free of care: I carry the flag,
love me: I carry the flag –”**

Then he puts the letter away inside his tunic, in the most secret place, beside the roseleaf. And thinks: It will soon take on that fragrance. And thinks: Perhaps someone will find it someday ... And thinks: For the enemy is near.

Sie reiten über einen erschlagenen Bauer. Er hat die Augen weit offen und Etwas spiegelt sich drin; kein Himmel. Später heulen Hunde. Es kommt also ein Dorf, endlich. Und über den Hütten steigt steinern ein Schloss. Breit hält sich ihnen die Brücke hin. Groß wird das Tor. Hoch willkommt das Horn. Horch: Poltern, Klirren und Hundegebell! Wiehern im Hof, Hufschlag und Ruf.

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They ride over a slain peasant. His eyes are wide open and something is mirrored in them; no heaven. Later, hounds howl. So a village is coming, at last. And above the hovels stonily rises a castle. Broad the bridge presents itself before them. Great grows the gate. High welcomes the horn. Hark: rumble, clatter, and barking of dogs! Neighing in the courtyard, hoof-beat and hailing.

Rast! Gast sein einmal. Nicht immer selbst seine Wünsche bewirten mit kärglicher Kost. Nicht immer feindlich nach allem fassen; einmal sich alles geschehen lassen und wissen: was geschieht, ist gut. Auch der Mut muss einmal sich strecken und sich am Saume seidener Decken in sich selber überschlagen. Nicht immer Soldat sein. Einmal die Locken offen tragen und den weiten offenen Kragen und in seidenen Sesseln sitzen und bis in die Fingerspitzen so: nach dem Bad sein. Und wieder erst lernen, was Frauen sind. Und wie die weißen tun und wie die blauen sind; was für Hände sie haben, wie sie ihr Lachen singen, wenn blonde Knaben die schönen Schalen bringen, von saftigen Früchten schwer.

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Rest! To be a guest for once. Not always oneself to supply one's wishes with scanty fare. Not always to seize things, enemy-like; for once to let things happen to one and to know: what happens is good. Courage too must stretch out for once and at the hem of silken covers turn over on itself. Not always to be a soldier. For once to wear one's hair loose and the broad open collar and to sit upon silken settles and be to the very fingertips as ... after the bath. And to begin again learning what women are. And how the white ones do and how the blue ones are; what sort of hands they have, how they sing their laughter, when blond boys bring the beautiful bowls weighted with juice-laden fruits.

Als Mahl begann. Und ist ein Fest geworden, kaum weiß man wie. Die hohen Flammen flackten, die Stimmen schwirrten, wirre Lieder klirrten aus Glas und Glanz, und endlich aus den reifgewordenen Takten: entsprang der Tanz. Und alle riss er hin. Das war ein Wellenschlagen in den Sälen, ein Sich-Beegnen und ein Sich-Erwählen, ein Abschiednehmen und ein Wiederfinden, ein Glanzgenießen und ein Lichterblinden und ein Sich-Wiegen in den Sommerwinden, die in den Kleidern warmer Frauen sind. Aus dunklem Wein und tausend Rosen rinnt die Stunde rauschend in den Traum der Nacht.

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It began as a supper. And became a feast, one hardly knows how. The high flames flared, voices whirred, tangled songs jangled out of glass and glitter, and at last from the ripe-grown measures: forth sprang the dance. And swept them all away. That was a beating of waves in the halls, a meeting together and a choosing of each other, a parting with each other and a finding again, a rejoicing in the radiance and a blinding in the light and a swaying in the summer winds that are in the costumes of warm women. Out of dark wine and a thousand roses runs the hour rushing into the dream of night.

Und Einer steht und staunt in diese Pracht. Und er ist so geartet, dass er wartet, ob er erwacht. Denn nur im Schlafe schaut man solchen Staat und solche Feste solcher Frauen: ihre kleinste Geste ist eine Falte, fallend in Brokat. Sie bauen Stunden auf aus silbernen Gesprächen, und manchmal heben sie die Hände so –, und du musst meinen, dass sie irgendwo, wo du nicht hinreichst, sanfte Rosen brächen, die du nicht siehst. Und da träumst du: Geschmückt sein mit ihnen und anders beglückt sein und dir eine Krone verdienen für deine Stirne, die leer ist.

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And one there is who stands and stares at this splendor. And he is so made that he waits whether to come awake. Because in sleep alone one sees such state and such feasts of such women: their slightest gesture is a fold falling in brocade. They build up hours out of silvery discourses, and sometimes lift their hands up: so –, and you must think that somewhere whither you cannot reach, they break soft roses that you do not see. And then you dream: to be adorn'd with these and be elsewhere blest, and earning a crown for your brow that is empty.

Einer, der weiße Seide trägt, erkennt, dass er nicht erwachen kann; denn er ist wach und verwirrt von Wirklichkeit. So flieht er bange in den Traum und steht im Park, einsam im schwarzen Park. Und das Fest ist fern. Und das Licht lügt. Und die Nacht ist nahe um ihn und kühl. Und er fragt eine Frau, die sich zu ihm neigt:

„Bist Du die Nacht?“

Sie lächelt.

Und da schämt er sich für sein weißes Kleid.

Und möchte weit und allein und in Waffen sein.

Ganz in Waffen.

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One, who wears white silk, now knows that he cannot wake; for he is awake and bewildered with reality. So he flees fearfully into the dream and stands in the park, lonely in the black park. And the feast is far. And the light lies. And the night is near about him and cool. And he asks a woman, who leans to him:

“Are you the night?”

She smiles.

And at that he is ashamed for his white dress.

And wants to be far and alone and in armor.

All in armor.

„Hast Du vergessen, dass Du mein Page bist für diesen Tag? Verlässest Du mich? Wo gehst Du hin? Dein weißes Kleid gibt mir Dein Recht –.“

„Sehnt es Dich nach Deinem rauhen Rock?“

„Frierst Du? – Hast Du Heimweh?“

Die Gräfin lächelt.

Nein. Aber das ist nur, weil das Kindsein ihm von den Schultern gefallen ist, dieses sanfte dunkle Kleid. Wer hat es fortgenommen?

„Du?“ fragt er mit einer Stimme, die er noch nicht gehört hat.

„Du!“

Und nun ist nichts an ihm. Und er ist nackt wie ein Heiliger. Hell und schlank.

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“Have you forgotten that you are my page for this day? Are you leaving me? Where are you going? Your white dress gives me right over you –.”

“Do you long for your coarse coat?”

“Are you cold? – Are you homesick?”

The Countess smiles.

No. But that is only because the being a child has fallen from his shoulders, that soft dark dress. Who has taken it away? “You?” he asks in a voice he has not yet heard.

“You!”

And now he has nothing on. And he is naked as a saint. Bright and slender.

Langsam lischt das Schloss aus. Alle sind schwer: müde oder verliebt oder trunken. Nach so vielen leeren, langen Feldnächten: Betten. Breite eichene Betten. Da betet sich's anders als in der lumpigen Furche unterwegs, die, wenn man einschlafen will, wie ein Grab wird.

„Herrgot, wie Du willst!“

Kürzer sind die Gebete im Bett.

Aber inniger.

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Slowly the castle lights go out. Everyone is heavy: tired or in love or drunk. After so many empty, long nights in the field: beds. Broad oaken beds. Here one prays otherwise than in a wretched furrow on the way, which, as one falls asleep, becomes like a grave.

“Lord God, as thou willest!”

Shorter are the prayers in bed.

But more heartfelt.

Die Turmstube ist dunkel.

Aber sie leuchten sich ins Gesicht mit ihrem Lächeln. Sie tasten vor sich her wie Blinde und finden den Andern wie eine Tür. Fast wie Kinder, die sich vor der Nacht ängstigen, drängen sie sich in einander ein. Und doch fürchten sie sich nicht. Da ist nichts, was gegen sie wäre: kein Gestern, kein Morgen; denn die Zeit ist eingestürzt. Und sie blühen aus ihren Trümmern.

Er fragt nicht: „Dein Gemahl?“

Sie fragt nicht: „Dein Namen?“

Sie haben sich ja gefunden, um einander ein neues Geschlecht zu sein.

Sie werden sich hundert neue Namen geben und einander alle wieder abnehmen, leise, wie man einen Ohrring abnimmt.

copy press

The tower room is dark.

But they light each other's faces with their smiles. They grope before them like blind people and find each the other as they would a door. Almost like children who dread the night, they press close into each other. And yet they are not afraid. There is nothing that might be against them: no yesterday, no morrow; for time is shattered. And they flower from its ruins.

He does not ask: "Your husband?"

She does not ask: "Your name?"

For indeed they have found each other, to be unto themselves a new generation.

They will give each other a hundred new names and take them all off again, gently, as one takes an ear-ring off.

Im Vorsaal über einem Sessel hängt der Waffenrock, das Banelier und der Mantel von dem von Langenau. Seine Handschuhe liegen auf dem Fußboden. Seine Fahne steht steil, gelehnt an das Fensterkreuz. Sie ist schwarz und schlank. Draußen jagt ein Sturm über den Himmel hin und macht Stücke aus der Nacht, weiße und schwarze. Der Mondschein geht wie ein langer Blitz vorbei, und die reglose Fahne hat unruhige Schatten. Sie träumt.

copy press

In the antechamber over a settle hangs the tunic, the bandolier, and the cloak of him of Langenau. His gloves lie on the floor. His flag stands steeply, leaned against the window-cross. It is black and slender. Outside a storm drives over the sky, making pieces of the night, white ones and black ones. The moonlight goes by like a long lightning-flash, and the unstirring flag has restless shadows. It dreams.

War ein Fenster offen? Ist der Sturm im Haus? Wer schlägt die Türen zu? Wer geht durch die Zimmer? – Lass. Wer es auch sei. Ins Turmgemach findet er nicht. Wie hinter hundert Türen ist dieser große Schlaf, den zwei Menschen gemeinsam haben; so gemeinsam wie *eine* Mutter oder *einen* Tod.

copy press

Was a window open? Is the storm in the house? Who is slamming the doors? Who goes through the rooms? – Let be. No matter who. Into the tower room he will not find his way. As behind a hundred doors is this great sleep two people have in common; as much in common as one mother or one death.

Ist das der Morgen? Welche Sonne geht auf? Wie groß ist die Sonne. Sind das Vögel? Ihre Stimmen sind überall.
 Alles ist hell, aber es ist kein Tag.
 Alles ist laut, aber es sind nicht Vogelstimmen.
 Das sind die Balken, die leuchten. Das sind die Fenster, die schrein. Und sie schrein, rot, in die Feinde hinein, die draußen stehn im flackernden Land, schrein: Brand.
 Und mit zerrissenem Schlaf im Gesicht drängen sich alle, halb Eisen, halb nackt, von Zimmer zu Zimmer, von Trakt zu Trakt und suchen die Treppe.
 Und mit verschlagenem Atem stammeln Hörner im Hof:
 Sammeln, sammeln!
 Und bebende Trommeln.

copy press

Is this the morning? What sun is rising? How big is the sun? Are those birds? Their voices are everywhere.

All is bright, but it is not day.

All is loud, but not with the voices of birds.

It is the timbers that shine. It is the windows that scream. And they scream, red, into the foes that stand outside in the flickering land, scream: Fire!

And with torn sleep in their faces they all throng through, half iron, half naked, from room to room, from wing to wing, and seek the stair.

And with broken breath horns stammer in the court:

Muster, muster!

And quaking drums.

Aber die Fahne ist nicht dabei.

Rufe: Cornet!

Rasende Pferde, Gebete, Geschrei,

Flüche: Cornet!

Eisen an Eisen, Befehl und Signal;

Stille: Cornet!

Und noch ein Mal: Cornet!

Und heraus mit der brausenden Reiterei.

Aber die Fahne ist nicht dabei.

copy press

But the flag is not there.

Cries: Cornet!

Careering horses, prayers, shouts,

Curses: Cornet!

Iron on iron, signal, command;

Stillness: Cornet!

And once again: Cornet!

And away with the thundering cavalcade.

But the flag is not there.

Er läuft um die Wette mit brennenden Gängen, durch Türen, die ihn glühend umdrängen, über Treppen, die ihn versengen, bricht er aus dem rasenden Bau. Auf seinen Armen trägt er die Fahne wie eine weiße, bewusstlose Frau. Und er findet ein Pferd und es ist wie ein Schrei: über alles dahin und an allem vorbei, auch an den Seinen. Und da kommt auch die Fahne wieder zu sich und niemals war sie so königlich; und jetzt sehn sie sie alle, fern voran, und erkennen den hellen, helmlosen Mann und erkennen die Fahne ... Aber da fängt sie zu scheinen an, wirft sich hinaus und wird groß und rot ...

Da brennt ihre Fahne mitten im Feind und sie jagen ihr nach.

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He is running a race with burning halls, through doors that press him close, red-hot, over stairs that scorch him, he breaks forth out of the raging pile. Upon his arms he carries the flag like a white, insensible woman. And he finds a horse, and it's like a cry: away over all, passing everything by, even his own men. And then the flag comes to itself again, and it has never been so kingly; and now they all see it, far ahead, and know the shining, helmetless man and know the flag ...

But, behold, it begins to glow, flings itself out and grows wide and red ...

Their flag is aflame in the enemy's midst, and they gallop after.

Der von Langenau ist tief im Feind, aber ganz allein. Der Schrecken hat um ihn einen runden Raum gemacht, und er hält, mitten drin, unter seiner langsam verlodernden Fahne.

Langsam, fast nachdenklich, schaut er um sich. Es ist viel Fremdes, Buntes vor ihm. Gärten – denkt er und lächelt. Aber da fühlt er, dass Augen ihn halten und erkennt Männer und weiss, dass es die heidnischen Hunde sind –: und wirft sein Pferd mitten hinein.

Aber, als es jetzt hinter ihm zusammenschlägt, sind es doch wieder Gärten, und die sechzehn runden Säbel, die auf ihn zuspringen, Strahl um Strahl, sind ein Fest.

Eine lachende Wasserkunst.

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He of Langenau is deep in the enemy, but all alone. Terror has ringed a space around him, and he halts, in the very middle, under the slowly dying flare of his flag.

Slowly, almost reflectively, he gazes about him. There is much that is strange, motley, before him. Gardens – he thinks and smiles. But then he feels that eyes are holding him and is aware of men and knows that these are the heathen dogs –: and casts his horse into their midst.

But, as he is now closed in on from behind, they are indeed gardens again, and the sixteen curved sabres that leap upon him, flash on flash, are a party.

A laughing fountain.

Der Waffenrock ist im Schlosse verbrannt, der Brief und das Rosenblatt einer fremden Frau. –

Im nächsten Frühjahr (es kam traurig und kalt) ritt ein Kurier des Freiherrn von Pirovano langsam in Langenau ein. Dort hat er eine alte Frau weinen sehen.

copy press

The tunic was burnt in the castle, the letter and the roseleaf of an unknown woman. –

In the spring of the next year (it came sad and cold) a courier of the Baron of Pirovano rode slowly into Langenau. There he saw an old woman weep.

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**DIE WEISE
UND TOD DER
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