cincinnati
SONG INITIATIVE

NORTHERN LIGHTS

texts & translations

Træet og Jenten
Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910)

Træet stod færdigt med blad og med knop.
Skal jeg ta dem? sa' frosten og pustede op.
Nej kære, lad dem stå, til blomster sidder på! —
bad træet og skalv ifra rod og til top.

Træet fik blomster, så fuglene sang.
Skal jeg ta dem?, sa' vinden og vifted og svang.
Nej kære, lad dem stå, til bæret sidder på! —
bad træet, i vinden det dirrende hang.

Og træet fik bær under soløjets glød.
Skal jeg ta dem? sa' jenten, så ung og så rød.
Ja kære, du kan ta', så mange du vil ha'!
sa' træet, og grenen, den bugnende bød.

The Tree and The Girl
Translation by Alisa Jordheim

The tree stood ready with leaf and with bud.
"Shall I take them?" said the frost, puffing up.
"No, dear, let them be until blossoms appear!"
pleaded the tree, trembling from root to the top.

The tree bore blossoms, and the birds sang.
"Shall I take them?" said the wind, swirling and
sweeping. "No dear, let them be until berries appear!"
pleaded the tree, hanging and quivering in the wind.

And the tree bore berries beneath the sun's warm
glow. "Shall I take them?" said the girl, so young and
rosy-cheeked. "Yes dear, you may take as many as you
like!" said the tree, offering its laden, bending
boughs..

Arnes Sang
Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910)

Ørnen løfter med stærke slag over de høje
fjelde, ror i den unge, kraftfulde dag,
mætter mod i det vilde jag, sænker sig, hvor den
lyster, ser mod de fremmede kyster!

Skal jeg da aldrig, aldrig nå over de høje
fjelde! Skal denne mur mine tanker slå,
sådan med sneis og rædsel stå stængende der til
det sidste, blive min dødningekiste?

Ud vil jeg, ud! — o, så langt, langt, langt
over de høje fjelde! Her er så knugende, tærende
trangt, og mit mod er så ungt og så rankt,
lad det få stigningen friste, ikke mod murkanten
briste!

Arne's Song
Translation by Alisa Jordheim

The eagle ascends with powerful strokes of its wings
over the high mountains, glides through the
invigorating day, gathering courage in the wild hunt,
dives where it pleases, looking toward foreign shores!

Shall I then never, never reach over the high
mountains! Shall this wall strike down my thoughts,
standing there, frozen with horror, which in the end,
will become my coffin?

Out, I must get out! —oh, so far, far, far over the high
mountains! Here, it is so oppressive, so confined, and
my courage is so young and so upright - let it try to rise
without shattering against the enclosing walls!

Engang, jeg ved, vil det række frem over de høje fjelde. Kanske du alt har din dør på klem?
Herre min Gud! godt er dit hjem, lad det dog endnu stænges, og jeg få lov til at længes!

One day, I know, it will succeed in crossing over the high mountains. Perhaps you have left your door ajar?
Lord, my God! How good it is within your house - yet, let it remain closed a while longer, and allow me to yearn!

Det enda
Ebba Lindqvist (1908 – 1995)

Såsom man flyr från den älskade,
inte orkar förtäras och förnyas i ett, i ett,
så har jag flytt från havet.
Men snart kommer tiden,
då jag måste dit igen,
sitta vid havet och veta,
att det är det enda på jorden.
Och såsom till sist allt liv är förgäves
som man lever allena utan den älskade,
så vet jag, att dessa soliga dagar i skogen
och denna fågelsång, som jag lyssnar till,
skall jag genast ge upp för ett stråkdrag av vinden
från havet.

The only thing
Translation by Anna Hersey

As one flees from the loved one,
unable to be devoured and reborn time and again,
so have I fled from the sea.
But soon comes the time,
when I must return,
to sit by the sea and to know,
that it is the only thing on earth.
And so in the end it is in vain,
that one lives without the loved one,
so I know, that these sunny days in the forest
and this birdsong that I listen to,
I would give up
for a stroke of wind from the sea.

Skogen sover
Ernest Jacques Thiel (1859 – 1947)

Skogen sover. Strimman på fästet flämtar matt.
Dagen vakar i juninatt.
Tystnat har nyss hennes muntra skratt,
redan hon sover.
Till hennes sida jag stum mig statt.
Kärleken vakar över sin skatt,
kärleken vakar i juninatt.

The forest sleeps
Translation by Kathleen Roland-Silverstein

The forest sleeps, a ray of sunlight
flickers in the firmament.
Day stands guard through the June night.
Her merry laughter has just fallen silent.
Already she is asleep. I sat down silent at her side.
Love watches over its treasure,
love watches in the June night.

Illalle
A.V. Forsman-Koskimies (1856-1929)

Oi, terve! Tumma, vieno tähti-ilta,
Sun haaveellista hartauttas' lemmin
Ja suortuvaisi yötä sorjaa hemmin,
Mi hulmuaapi kulmais' kuulamilta?
Kun oisit, ilta, oi, se tenhosilta,
Mi sielun multa siirtäis' lentoisemmin
Pois aatteen maille itse kun mä emmin,
Ja siip' ei kanna aineen kahlehilta!

Ja itse oisin miekkoinen se päivä,
Mi uupuneena saisin luokses' liitää,
Kun tauonnut on työ ja puuha räivä,
Kun mustasiipi yö jo silmään siitää
Ja laaksot, vuoret verhoo harmaa häivä
Oi, ilta armas, silloin luokses kiitää!

To evening
Translation by Kathleen Roland-Silverstein

Come gentle evening, come in starlit splendor!
Your fragrant hair, so soft and darkly gleaming!
Oh, let me feel it round my forehead streaming!
Let me be wrapped in silence, warm and tender!
Across your bridge of magic, smooth and slender,
my soul would travel towards a land of dreaming,
no longer burdened, sad or heavy seeming,
the cares of life I'd willingly surrender!

The light itself whose bonds you daily sever
Would flee, exhausted, seeking out those places
Where your soft hand all toil and strain erases.
And, weary of life's clamor and endeavor
I, too, have greatly yearned for your embraces.
Oh, quiet evening, let me rest forever.

För vilsna fötter sjunger græset
Hjalmar Gullberg (1898 – 1961)

För vilsna fötter sjunger græset
jag är din matta var du går –
räds ej, att natten förestår!
För vilsna fötter sjunger gräset:
Mot hemmet styr jag dina spår.
För vilsna fötter sjunger gräset:
under mitt täcke sänks din bår -
räds ej, att natten förestår!
För vilsna fötter sjunger gräset:
du går mot hemmet var du går.

Smärtan II
Edith Södergran (1892 – 1923)

Känner du smärtan?
Hon är stark och stor med hemligt knutna nävar.
Känner du smärtan?
Hon är hoppfult leende med förgråtna ögon.
Smärtan ger oss allt vad vi behöva
hon ger oss nycklarna till dödens rike,
hon skjuter oss in genom porten,
då vi ännu tveka.
Känner du smärtan?

Trur du på lyng?

Helge Torvund (b. 1951)

I.
Det finst ei stille
som fråværet av bier i januar
Lyden av det
som ikkje tek plass
Songen av det
som aldri vert sagt
Det finst ein pause
når folk snakkar saman
fem hundre millisekund
før neste replikk frå den andre
Det finst noko uhøyrleg
som omgir steinane
ute på det frosne jordet
og det utstoppa ekornet
bak glaset i skapet i gangen
i den store skulebygningen
Det finst ein stad
der alle desse lydlause stundene
er samla til ei overdøyvande
fruktbar stille
som ventar på oss

The grass sings to lost feet
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

The grass sings to lost feet:
I am your carpet wherever you walk -
Do not fear the imminent night!
The grass sings to lost feet:
Toward home I place your tracks.
The grass sings to lost feet:
Under my blanket your coffin is lowered.
Do not fear the imminent night!
The grass sings to lost feet:
You walk toward home wherever you go.

The Pain II
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

Do you know pain?
She is strong and massive with secretly clenched fists.
Do you know pain?
She has a hopeful smile with tear-stained eyes.
Pain gives us all that we need –
she gives us the keys to death's kingdom,
she pushes us in through the gate,
because we still hesitate.
Do you know pain?

Do you believe in heather?

English versions by Helge Torvund, with help from
Micheal O'Siadhail and Jeanie Shaterian

I.
There is a silence
like the absence of bees in January
The sound of that
which doesn't occupy any space
The song of that
which has never been said
There is a pause
when people are talking together
five hundred milliseconds
before the next remark from another
There is something inaudible
that surrounds the stones
out on the frozen field
and the stuffed squirrel
behind the glass in the cupboard
in the corridor of the great school building
There is a place
where all these soundless moments
are gathered As a deafening
fertile silence
waiting for us

II.
Eg bar ei sorg gjennom vintergatene
Ein uutsletteleg flamme
som brann for henne
som bar meg
Så leverte eg frå meg bokstavane
og sette meg inn i eit stort fly
og langt om lenge
kom eg fram til kvinnene si øy
Eg senka meg stilt inn i det salte
varme vatnet
Halve verda var
ei tåre

III.
Eg sat i eit rom som var fylt av liding
og så av lys
Eg gjekk på ein veg som vart til ei bru
og så til eit liv
Eg visste ikkje kvar eg skulle
Likevel kom eg hit
Jo meir kjærleik eg opnar for
Jo meir liding
Jo meir
Lys

IV.
Trøytt av mange slags skuffa stemmer
søkte eg trøyst på den stille sletta
Å trekkja pusten og ta imot eit heilt
univers
krev nesten meir enn ein
er i stand til
Men brått ser ein rødstrupe på deg
og så kikkar eit ekorn fram
bak ein furustamme
Eit rådyr kjem ut av krattet for å drikka
seg utøyrst i elva
og blikket ditt flyg inn i dette
og du vert til
verda
og hendingane og
alt som pustar i deg
livnar til i tillit
til noko ein aldri heilt
har ord for

II.
I was carrying a sorrow through winter streets
An indelible flame
that burnt for her
who bore me
Then I delivered my words
and entered a large aeroplane
and at long last
I arrived at the island of women
I let myself sink quietly into salt
warm water
Half of the world was
a tear

III.
I was sitting in a room filled with suffering
and then with light
I walked on a road that became a bridge
and then a life
I didn't know where I was headed
Still I came here
The more love I'm open for
The more suffering
The more
Light

IV.
Tired of so many kinds of disappointed voices
I sought consolation out in the open field
To draw one's breath and accept a whole
universe
is almost more than one
can take
But suddenly a robin looks at you
and then a squirrel is peeping out
behind a pine trunk
A roe deer emerges from the brushwood
to quench its thirst in the river
and your gaze flies into this
and you become
the world
and the incidents and
all that breathes in you
come confidently alive
as something you never quite
know how to put into words

Genrebillede
Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847 – 1885)

Pagen højt på Tårnet sad
stirred' ud så vide
digted' på et Elskovskvad
om sin Elskovskvide,
kunde ikke få det samled
sad og famled' sad og famled'
nu med Stjerner, nu med Roser --
Intet rimed' sig på Roser --
satte fortvivlet så Hornet for Mund,
knugede vredt sit Værge
Blaeste så sin Elskov ud
over alle Bjærge.

Genre painting/Period piece
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

High in a tower sits the page boy,
gazing far around him;
he tried to write a love song about
his heartache,
but he could not get it together.
He sat and fumbled…
Now with the stars, then with the roses –
nothing rhymed too well with roses –
In despair, he put his horn to his mouth,
angrily clutching his sword;
he then sent out his love song
by sounding the horn all over the hills.

Æbleblomst
Ludvig Holstein (1815 – 1892)

Du fine hvide Æbleblomst!
Hvem gav dig dette Lykkeskær!
Ak, jeg er Solens Hjertenskær!

Hvor fik du denne Purpurglød,
Som brænder i din fine Hud?
Ak, jeg er Solens Foråsbrud!

Velsignet af min Brudgoms Kys
jeg lever i hans Åndedrag
en kort lyksalig Forårsdag.

Og naar hans sidste varme Kys
i Aftenrøden strejfer mig
så hvisker jeg: jeg elsker dig!

Og lukker mig og bøjer mig
og drysser over Græsset ud
mit hvide Flor, mit Bryllupsskrud.

Apple blossom
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

You fine white apple blossom,
Who gave you this happy glow?
Ah, I am the sun's sweetheart!

Where did you get this purple glow,
burning in your delicate skin?
Ah, I am the sun's spring bride!

Blessed by my groom's kiss,
I live in his breath
for a short blissful spring.

And when his last warm kiss
in the evening's red glow touches me,
so I whisper: I love you!

And I close myself and bend myself
and sprinkle over the grass
my white bloom, my wedding gown.

Lykken mellom to mennesker
Viggo Stuckenberg (1863 – 1905)

Lykken mellom to mennesker
er hverken hu! Eller hej!
Snarest er den et ensomt græs,
der grønnes på stenet vej.

Lykken mellom to mennesker
er hverken kys eller klap,
snarest er den et skumringssus,
der ånder, hvor dagen slap.

Happiness between two people
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

Happiness between two people
is neither hah! Nor ho!
Rather, it is a lonely blade of grass,
which grows green on a stony road.

Happiness between two people
is neither kiss nor caress;
rather, it becomes the whisper of twilight
that breathes when the day has ended.

Lykken mellom to mennesker
er som den dunkle nat,
stille, men med de tusinde, tause stjerner besat.

Happiness between two people
is like the dark night;
quiet, but occupied by thousands of silent stars.

Nordlys
Theodor Caspari (1853 – 1948)

Et glimt i nattens øie,
i luftens bølger blå,
et morilddrys av stemning,
som tanken ei kan nå.

En længsel, som luer og lyner og fylder

de mægtige haller med sang uden ord,
et mylder av drømme som stiger og hyller
i skiftende farver den sovende jord.

Et glimt i nattens øie,
som ei til dagen når,
et morilddrys av stemning,
som funkler og forgår.

Northern lights
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

A glimmer in the night's eye
in the waves of the air,
an atmosphere of phosphorescent sparks
unreachable by thought.

A longing, which blazes and bolts (like lightning) and fills

the mighty halls with songs without words,
a myriad of dreams which rises and wraps around
the changing colors of the sleeping earth.

A glimmer in the night's eye
that does not last until the day,
an atmosphere of phosphorescent sparks
that sparkles and dies.

Solsik
Vilhelm Krag (1871 – 1933)

Solsik, solsik står i græsset,
vugger langsomt, guldbelæsset,
kruset guldhår, gylden tröie,
og et stort og solblankt øie,
solsik, solsik står i græsset,
vugger langsomt, guldbelæsset.

Solsik, solsik, blomsten min,
jomfru slank og jomfru fin,
hvorfor er dit hoved bøiet,
og hvi skjælver gråd i øiet?

Solsik, solsik står i græsset,
vugger langsomt, guldbelæsset.

Sunflower
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

Sunflower, sunflower standing in the grass,
rocking slowly, laden with gold,
curly golden hair, golden clothing
and a large and sun-shining eye.
Sunflower, sunflower standing in the grass,
rocking slowly, laden with gold.

Sunflower, sunflower flower mine,
slim and beautiful as a maiden,
why is your head bowed,
and why is a tear trembling in your eye?

Sunflower, sunflower standing in the grass,
rocking slowly, laden with gold.

Kløvereng
Theodor Caspari (1853 – 1948)

Kløvereng! Urskog med de tusind Stier
hvor i Løn Serissen gnider Silkestreng!

Tusind lette, fløielsklædte
Sommerfugles solomskyldte Brudeseng!

Kløvereng! Lyse, lubne, lune Vover,
Gjøkens Messetone over rødbrunt Hæng!
Tusind tause, stille, søde, hjertevarme
Blomsters bløde Barneseng!

Kløvereng! Duftopfyldte Dal, hvor Erler,
drømmer under Duggens Perler,
Himmelseng, svøbt i Junidæmrings Floret,
himlet ind af Nattens store Stjerneseng!

Kløvereng! Tusind tause søde Blomsters Barneseng!
Kløver, Kløvereng!

Clover field
Translated by Alisa Jordheim

Clover field! Native forest with a thousand paths,
where among the maple trees the crickets rub their silk string!
A thousand lights, velvet-covered
butterflies' bridal bed enveloped by the sun!

Clover field! Bright, ample, whimsical waves,
cuckoo's chant over the auburn cliff!
A thousand silent quiet, sweet heartwarming
flowers' soft child bed!

Clover field! Fragrance-filled valley,
where sparrows dream under pearls of dew,
heavenly bed, wrapped in the dawn's bloom of June
embraced by the vast night's starry bed.

Clover field, a thousand soft sweet flowers' child bed!
Clover, clover field!