

TRANSLATIONS OF RAINER MARIA RILKE'S "HERBSTTAG"

Herbsttag

Herr: es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr gross.
Leg deinen Schatten auf die Sonnenuhren,
und auf den Fluren lass die Winde los.
Befiehl den letzten Fruchten voll zu sein;
gieb innen noch zwei sudlichere Tage,
drange sie zur Vollendung hin und jage
die letzte Susse in den schweren Wein.
Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr.
Wer jetzt allein ist, wird es lange bleiben,
wird wachen, lesen, lange Briefe schreiben
und wird in den Alleen hin und her
unruhig wandern, wenn die Blatter treiben.

– Rainer Maria Rilke

Autumn Day

Lord: it is time. The summer was immense.
Lay your shadow on the sundials
and let loose the wind in the fields.
Bid the last fruits to be full;
give them another two more southerly days,
press them to ripeness, and chase
the last sweetness into the heavy wine.
Whoever has no house now will not build one anymore.
Whoever is alone now will remain so for a long time,
will stay up, read, write long letters,
and wander the avenues, up and down,
restlessly, while the leaves are blowing.

– Galway Kinnell and Hannah Liebmann, "The Essential Rilke" (Ecco)

Autumn Day

Lord, it is time. The summer was too long.
Lay your shadow on the sundials now,
and through the meadow let the winds throng.
Ask the last fruits to ripen on the vine;
give them further two more summer days
to bring about perfection and to raise
the final sweetness in the heavy wine.
Whoever has no house now will establish none,
whoever lives alone now will live on long alone,
will waken, read, and write long letters,
wander up and down the barren paths
the parks expose when the leaves are blown.

– William Gass, "Reading Rilke: Reflections on the Problem of Translation" (Knopf)

Autumn Day

Lord: it is time. The huge summer has gone by.
Now overlap the sundials with your shadows,
and on the meadows let the wind go free.
Command the fruits to swell on tree and vine;
grant them a few more warm transparent days,
urge them on to fulfillment then, and press
the final sweetness into the heavy wine.
Whoever has no house now, will never have one.
Whoever is alone will stay alone,
will sit, read, write long letters through the evening,
and wander the boulevards, up and down,
restlessly, while the dry leaves are blowing.

– Stephen Mitchell, "The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke" (Random House)

Autumn Day

Lord, it is time now,
for the summer has gone on
and gone on.
Lay your shadow along the sun-
dials and in the field
let the great wind blow free.
Command the last fruit
be ripe:
let it bow down the vine --
with perhaps two sun-warm days
more to force the last
sweetness in the heavy wine.
He who has no home
will not build one now.
He who is alone
will stay long
alone, will wake up,
read, write long letters,
and walk in the streets,
walk by in the
streets when the leaves blow.

– John Logan, from "Homage to Rainer Maria Rilke," Collected Poems (BOA Editions)

Autumn Day

LORD, it's time. The summer overwhelmed us.
Allow your shadow fall on the sundials
and let the winds roam all over the fields.
Command the last fruits: they should fully ripen,
and give them two more southern sunny days,
to reach perfection gathering
the last nectar into the heavy grapes.
Who hasn't built his home yet, he will never build it.
Who maybe alone now, by himself he will be
without sleep, and reading, on long letters musing,
and aimlessly walking on paths nowhere leading
when in withered gardens the dead leaves are dancing.

– Dr. Gabriel Pinter

Autumn Day

Mister! It's time. Summer was awesome.
But now you've got to cast your shadow on the old clock.
So, let the wind blow in the fields.
Command the last fruits to ripen.
Grant them two more southern days.
Press them to perfection.
And chase the last sweetness into the strong wine.
Because whoever has no house now will build no more.
Whoever is alone now will remain long alone
to wake, read, write long letters,
and wander in the alleys, back and forth,
restless, as the leaves flutter.

– Steven Gerard Wagner

Autumn Day

Lord: it's time. The summer was magnificent.
Lay your shadows upon the sun-dials
and o'er the isles allow your winds to vent.
Command the final fruits to be full and fine;
give them two more days in the southern sun,
push them to completion and then run
the last sweetness through the heavy wine.
He who now has no house, will build one never.
He who is alone, will long so remain,
will awaken, read, lengthy letters pen
and in the lanes will forever
restlessly wander, when the leaves are driven.

– Doug Sutton

Autumn Day

Lord: it is time. The summer was great.
Lay your shadows onto the sundials
and let loose the winds upon the fields.
Command the last fruits to be full,
give them yet two more southern days,
urge them to perfection, and chase
the last sweetness into the heavy wine.
Who now has no house, builds no more.
Who is now alone, will long remain so,
will stay awake, read, write long letters
and will wander restlessly here and there
in the avenues, when the leaves drift.

– J. Mullen

Autumn Day

Lord: it is time. The summer was immense.
Lay your long shadows on the sundials,
and on the meadows let the winds go free.
Command the last fruits to be full;
give them just two more southern days,
urge them on to completion and chase
the last sweetness into the heavy wine.
Who has no house now, will never build one.
Who is alone now, will long remain so,
will stay awake, read, write long letters
and will wander restlessly up and down
the tree-lines streets, when the leaves are drifting.

– Edward Snow, 1991

October Day

Oh Lord, it's time, it's time. It was a great summer.
Lay your shadow now on the sundials,
and on the open fields let the winds go!
Give the tardy fruits the command to fill;
give them two more Mediterranean days,
drive them on into their greatness, and press
the final sweetness into the heavy wine.
Whoever has no house by now will not build.
Whoever is alone now, will remain alone,
will wait up, read, write long letters,
and walk along sidewalks under large trees,
not going home, as the leaves fall and blow away.

– Robert Bly

Autumn Day

Lord, it is time. The summer was very big.
Lay thy shadow on the sundials,
and on the meadows let the winds go loose.
Command the last fruits that they shall be full;
give them another two more southerly days,
urge them on to fulfillment and drive
the last sweetness into heavy wine.
Who has no house now, will build him one no more.
Who is alone now, long will so remain,
will wake, read, write long letters
and will in the avenues to and fro
restlessly wander, when the leaves are blowing.

– M. D. Herter Norton, 1938

Day in Autumn

After the summer's yield, Lord, it is time
to let your shadow lengthen on the sundials
and in the pastures let the rough winds fly.

As for the final fruits, coax them to roundness.
Direct on them two days of warmer light
to hale them golden toward their term, and harry
the last few drops of sweetness through the wine.

Whoever's homeless now, will build no shelter;
who lives alone will live indefinitely so,
waking up to read a little, draft long letters,
and, along the city's avenues,
fitfully wander, when the wild leaves loosen.

– Mary Kinzie, Poetry Magazine, April 2008