

**Gold autumn, in its coat of rain-drenched grays:  
Four German poets translated by William Ruleman**



Today, we're delighted to feature new translations of seasonal poems by four German poets—Paul Boldt, Alfons Petzold, Georg Heym, and Hedwig Lachmann—by William Ruleman. The autumnal theme unifies this selection, highlighting the poets' individual voices.

And remember, in September and beyond: read, share, and spread the word about your favorite works in translation using #NTM2017. Now more than ever, it's important to make your voice heard.

—*Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman*

## **OCTOBER NIGHT**

*By Paul Boldt*

Too soon the earth with all its lovely trees  
Meets winter, which guzzles everything that is green.  
October turns our heads from every scene  
Of clear and blushing summer reveries.

We minor planets . . . Gloomy mysteries  
Foam forth toward November. Frozen, mean,  
Earth covers before the moon, from which a sheen  
Of white light gleams on the clouds' peripheries.

Gold autumn, in its coat of rain-drenched grays,  
Comes out of the wood, a butcher blighted red.  
Leaves lie like blood on erstwhile sunny ways.

Then it may be that one of the cattle moans  
Long at the moon, which shines with a light half-dead  
In the dark amid the shorn trees' creaks and groans.

## **AUTUMN 1915**

*By Alfons Petzold*

Archangels cry out; molten star-balls roll  
In flames above earth's flaring flash and din;  
Disease erupts in every muddy hole,  
While war and hunger dice for one last win.

Stones and clouds have found fit tongues to speak;  
In burning thickets, screaming curses race;  
Prostrate in pews, their hearts and minds grown weak,  
The faithful clutch at every scrap of grace.

Again an autumn when whole seas of blood  
Will wash against the harvest's healthy yield,  
Though dreams of peace still cry out in some wood  
Far from the madness of the battlefield.

In the garden, see how autumn's asters—  
With their tortured, burning faces—glow;  
They bloom this year for graves that mark disasters  
Met by boys in lands we'll never know.

**THE SWANS ALL KNOW . . .**

*By Georg Heym*

The swans all know, their roaming time in sight,  
No rest. And then the flock collects for days  
On their appointed hill. And there they raise  
Their heavy wings and test them for the flight.

The morning comes when they feel tired no more.  
With noisy rustling, they draw up and fly.  
Their free wings wave in winds of endless sky  
As homewards toward the sunny south they soar.

A swan's impatience makes each moment years.  
Likewise, I count my time sans you as love's eclipse,  
Whose tiresome course I measure with my tears.

Ah, would the day but come to fly back south  
With that proud flock! My thoughts forever flee

Toward you, my love, and toward your lovely lips.

**LATE IN THE YEAR**

*By Hedwig Lachmann*

Autumn has flown. The first frost's carvings glare  
Upon the fields, now long past harvest time.  
The forest floor is drained of hue and bare,  
The path rim cracked and crusted now with rime.

High above the horizon, where the clear airs are,  
Their wings spread wide, at rest, there soar the crows;  
The world is sun-lit only from afar,  
And now one feels: not long before it snows.

In seas of grayish mist, the spent day wanders  
Toward the dark; the long night has begun;  
It seems that life now settles down and ponders  
Like some mother whose day of work is done

And who, now old, thinks just of her children and  
Who feeds only on the bliss a good life brings—  
Who, lost in thoughts of some far future land  
Is yet alone, remote from earthly things.

**About the authors:**

**Paul Boldt (1885-1921)** one of the German Expressionist poets, was given to frolicsome and sometimes bawdy depictions of life, love, and sex in Berlin during the years preceding the First World War. Though drafted into the army, he was discharged in 1916, being declared psychologically unfit to serve. He died at the age of 35 from complications resulting from hernia surgery.



**Alfons Petzold (1882-1923)** was well-known for his prose and verse during his lifetime, but since then, he has suffered neglect. During the Nazi era, his work was tolerated for his championship of the working classes, from which he emerged; yet his socialistic tendencies, and the sympathetic treatment of Jews in his writings, were suppressed. Afflicted with tuberculosis, Alfonso Petzold did not see active duty in the Austro-Hungarian military during World War I, yet he imagined it vividly in his verse.



**Georg Heym (1887-1912)**, one of the most famous of the German Expressionist poets, is best known for his nightmarish visions of cultural collapse, which foreshadow the horrors of the First World War; but he was also a sensitive and romantic observer of nature. His poetic output before his accidental death by drowning at the age of 24 was amazing.



**Hedwig Lachmann (1865-1918)** translated many authors, including Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde, into German. Of Jewish descent, she was also married to the German revolutionary Gustav Landau, who published her collected poems in book form after her death from pneumonia in her 53<sup>rd</sup> year.

#### About the translator:

**William Ruleman** (the translator) is Professor of English at Tennessee Wesleyan University. His latest books include his translations of Hermann Hesse's verse up to 1902, entitled *Early Poems* (Cedar Springs Books, 2017) and of Stefan Zweig's unfinished novel *Clarissa* (Ariadne Press, also 2017). See more of his work [here](#).

