

You know little about him

(from the poem cycle "Man and the Forest")

Translated by Freda Hodge (2015)

You know little about the distant forest.

But sometimes, after the summer sun sings as it sets

it happens that you find him, as you lie beside the wall

wearied, by the search for bread, the cramped quarters and the stench.

In the fore-room of the house, near the broken steps and the cats

you throw down a cushion, fall asleep and you see him.

He leans towards you, with the tops of the trees

he smiles with the warm wind and you stroke him.

He is so large and you are so small.

But a tree grows tall, he plaits heaven and earth together.

His sap drips nourishment through your skin and bone,

your tender love makes his trunk seem slimmer.

You stroke him and all the birds awake

and singing, they fall upon his neck .

Then the cat by the steps springs onto your chest;

opening an eye you feel oppressed by heat and stench.

Now you are separated. And over the lonely forest
the moon stands, pale as the face of a mother
who seeks her beloved children, and has become old from the search.
From this comes the pain which makes the tree trunks shudder.

(1938)