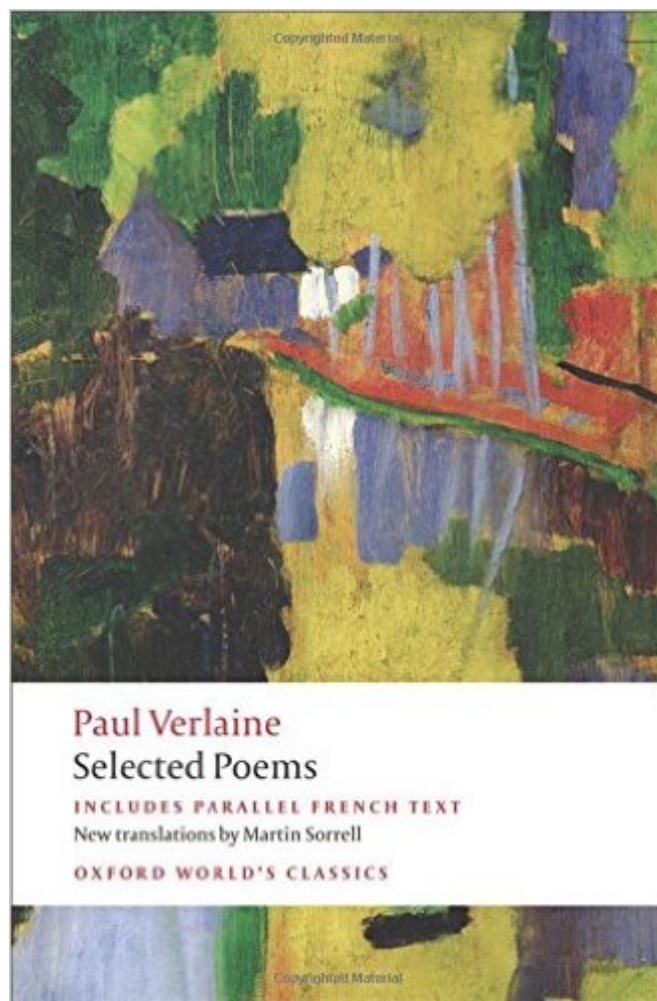


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Paul Verlaine: Selected Poems (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

Verlaine ranks alongside Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Rimbaud as one of the most influential poets of late nineteenth-century France. Remarkable not only for his exquisitely crafted verse, Verlaine is also the poet of strong emotions and appetites, with an unrivalled gift for the sheer music of poetry, and an inventive approach to its technique. This bilingual edition provides the most comprehensive selection of his poetry yet, offering some 170 poems in lively and fresh translations. It also offers a lucid introduction which illuminates Verlaine's poetic form within the context of French Impressionism and the poetry of sensation.

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Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the poem in the original French: Une aube affaiblie
Verse par les champs
La mélancolie
Des soleils couchants.
La mélancolie
Berce de doux chants
Mon coeur qui s'oublie
Aux soleils couchants.
Et d'étranges rêves
Comme des soleils
Couchants sur les grèves,
Fantômes
vermeils, défilent sans trêves,
Défilent, pareils à des grands soleils
Couchants sur les grèves.

This is Martin Sorrell's English translation for this Oxford World Classics edition: Setting

Suns
A sickly dawn
Spreads over the fields
The sadnesses
Lull with soft songs
My heart lost in
The setting suns.
And then strange dreams
Which seem like suns
That set on shores
Vermilion ghosts
Drift endlessly
Reminding me
Of mighty suns
That set on shores.

This translation, to my mind, goes a fair way to destroying the poem. The four stars are for Verlaine's poems, given in the original French here, and emphatically not for Sorrell's translations. In his introductory "Note On The Text And Translation", Sorrell states that other translations suffer from an "over-reverence for the original" and seem "stuck in the past" whereas he seeks to produce "poems appropriate to the climate of late twentieth-century English-language writing."

When I first heard this poem, it was in Paris in 2005, sung by a Sorbonne student to a guitar. Every subsequent time I heard the poem whilst in France it was in a song, often accompanied by a guitar, piano or, one time, a synthesizer. All of these versions showed a deep "over-reverence?"

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