

O dearest, shall we ever meet again?

Esperantists are as much attuned to separation as other people – in fact, probably more so. Their language community is global; friends, colleagues in the Esperanto movement, live many thousands of miles apart; meetings – at congresses and other events – are often all too brief, culminating in rushed farewells on the steps of conference halls or at airports, with promises to meet again the following year: separation is as much a part of the esperantist psyche as a sense of equality for all peoples and languages.

Perhaps it is this innate awareness of separation that informs the following poems, one of which – Kalocsay’s “Sunset” (below) – provides the title of this section.

Clarence Bicknell’s “La elmigrintoj” (“The Emigrants”) dates from an age long before jet travel, the internet and other electronic media. Developments in communication (and, more importantly, widening access to them) have helped remove much of the finality from emigration, the knowledge that loved ones left behind **might never** be seen again. Certainly, the world that Bicknell knew is considerably shrunken.

What is not diminished, however, is the hope for a new life, in a new land, so poignantly expressed in the poem – hope, of course, that through centuries of emigration, and irrespective of technological advance, is not always fulfilled.

The translation, with the original, was published in *La Brita Esperantisto (The British Esperantist)* in the May/June edition of 1998.

Clarence Bicknell

La elmigrintoj, **XXXX**

Li ŝin forlasis plena de espero.
(Ho, varme loga vento de somero!)
‘En la transmara land’ mi trovos riĉon,
kaj post alveno via la feliĉon.’

Li skribis: ‘Kruda lando, penaj provoj.’
(Ho, forta treno de l’ aŭtunaj blovoj!)
‘Sed mi laboras jam, mi trafos celon,
rapidu, portu al mi vian belon.’

Ŝi venis treme post danĝer’ vojaĝa.
(Ho, vento vintra, frosta kaj sovaĝa!)
Kaj havis ŝi revidon ĉe tombrando,
feliĉon en la Nekonata Lando.

Translation (William Auld)

The Emigrants, **XXXX**

He went off, hopeful, leaving her behind
(Oh, breeze of summer, bountiful and kind!)
'Over the ocean I'll make wealth to spare,
and when you join me we'll be happy there.'

He wrote: 'This land is cruel, times are hard.'
(Oh, how the winds of autumn tugged and jarred!)
'But I have work, and will be justified,
come quickly, bring your beauty to my side.'

A-tremble, she endured the journey's ravage.
(Oh, winter wind so bitter and so savage!)
And greeted him by standing at his grave:
this was the happiness the New Land gave.

The opening stanza of this poem is a tease. The reader might believe the poem to be taking a particular direction, until realising the description is metaphorical.

The poem was published in the collection *Streĉita kordo (Taut String)* published in 1931. The translation appeared in *Ten Esperanto Poets in English Translation* (1991) and later in *La Brita Esperantisto (The British Esperantist)* in the November/December edition of 1998.

Kálmán Kalocsay

Sunsubiro, 1931

Jam iĝis kupro la tagmeza or'.
Ĉe l' horizont' la sun' adiaŭluma,
Okul' ĝigante granda, plorbruluma
Rerigardante pasas drone for.

Kaj kvazaŭ sang' fluinta ĵus el kor',
Jen arda ruĝo sur fenestro doma.
Moment' ... kaj estingiĝas ruĝ' fantoma,
Kaj jen la dom', rabite pri l' trezor'.

Malluma domo. Lumon lamp' ne ŝutas.
Ĉu l' mastro dormas, aŭ eterne mutas,
Plu lin ne vekos la maten' radia?

Mallum', mallum', mallum', tra l' domo tuta.
Rigardas nokton la fenestro muta
Kun ros-malseka vitro apatia ...

Ĉu mi revidos vin, ho kara mia?

Translation (Katelina Halo)

Sunset, 1931

The gold of noon takes on a copper stain.

Low in the sky the sun with farewell rays,
Like a gigantic eye, with backward gaze,
Reddened with tears, sinks drowning in the main.

As if the blood were ebbing from a vein,
The windows of the house all crimson blaze.
A moment – and the ghostly hue decays,
And the house stands, robbed of its golden gain.

A lightless house. No lamp sheds any light.
The master is asleep? or lying stark,
No longer to be roused when night shall wane?

Throughout the house is night, is night, is night.
The silent window looks upon the dark,
All wet with dew its apathetic pane.

O dearest, shall we ever meet again?

As in the previous poem, the setting sun casts its fading light on this more melancholic parting. The translation, with the original, was published in *La Brita Esperantisto (The British Esperantist)* in the January/February edition of 1995.

Karolo Piĉ

Rememoro post vi, XXXX

La suno ĵus sin liten tiris ...
Ĝi iris, kiel vi foriris
antaŭ dek tagoj, Georgino,
kaj ĝi eĉ ne adiaŭdiris ...

Kaj nun nur ĝia postsereno
Pendas ankoraŭ sur ĝardeno,
kie Venus' Venuson vidas
sur la spegulo de baseno.

Sed baldaŭ eĉ ĝi, kiel fumo,
disiĝos ie en mallumo
kaj ĝi formortos, kiel mortis
nia malgaja amindumo ...

Translation (Roy McDonald)

Remembrance of you, XXXX

Just now the sun to bed withdrew
with step reluctant, just as you
departed ten days since, Miranda,
nor did it pause to bid adieu ...

Now only twilight's tranquil rule
lingers about the garden cool,
where Venus looks at Venus in
the mirror of the fountain's pool.

Yet soon it, too, will be abating,
like smoke in darkness dissipating,
and it shall fade, as faded once
our sweet and melancholy mating ...

More acute than the separation from one person is the sense of isolation from all. The poet's plight is all the more painful because the contact for which he yearns – one lonely soul reaching out to another – is so close, yet so distant.

Critics have described Lajos Tárkony as master of the sonnet, of polished verse, and perhaps the most musical poet in Esperanto. "Evening on a Balcony" is regarded as one of his three most accomplished poems.

The sonnet dates from Tárkony's early period. It was published in *Dekdu poetoj (Twelve Poets)* in 1934 and was written in Abbazia, Italy. The poem was republished in the collection *Soifo (Thirst)* in 1964. The translation, with the original, appeared in *La Brita Esperantisto (The British Esperantist)* in the edition of May/June 1996.

Lajos Tárkony

Balkona vespero, 1934

Lit-seĝo. Lankovriiloj. Dua etaĝ'. Balkono.
Siajn vualojn densajn faligas jam vespero.
Sonorilvoĉo velke traŝvebas en l' aero.
Torpor' postfebra. Kape vaganta pensĉifono.

Sur transa bord' de l' golfo, en fee fora fono
ekbrilas lumserpento: vibranta koliero
sur kolo de l' mallumo. Anoncas ĝi pri tero,
pri urbo kaj loĝantoj, pri homo kaj pri ŝtono.

Ho stranga pens': ĉi urbe, kies stratetojn plande
ankoraŭ mi ne tuŝis kaj kien mia febre
sopira okulparo rigardas lace, lante,

ĉi urbe eble homo – same soleca, trista –
algapas nun la maron, niaj rigardoj eble
sin krucas en saluto, ho ve, senpove dista ...

Translation (W. Auld)

Evening on a Balcony, 1934

A balcony. Two-up. Some rugs. A bed.
Evening has now let down, opaque, its veils,

floats through the air a wilting voice of bells.
Sloth after fever. Thought-scraps in my head.

Across the gulf a snake of light illumines
A far-off fairy realm: a sparkling band
adorns the neck of darkness, tells of land,
a city and its dwellers, stones and humans.

How strange to think: there where my feet have never
trod narrow streets and where my eyes now look,
tired and reluctant, with a longing fever,

perhaps, there, someone – sad and lonely – may
be staring at the sea, our glances hook
in greeting, but, alas, too far away ...
