

une seule femme endormie program note

Une seule femme endormie was written very quickly after a long period of consideration of the brooding text of Jouve's poem. Formally the work is very free and responds dramatically to the emotional nuances of the text. The work unfolds from a fragment of the opening 'cello line which recurs in varied forms throughout the work. The unusual aspect of the 'cellist being called upon to hum and sing was a response to the dense ambiguity of time and space evoked by the poem. Beyond this, however, the vocal contributions of the instrumentalist lend an added depth to the vocal line itself, while at the same time projecting a sense of mystery and longing that is also inherent in Jouve's moving poem.

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UNE SEULE FEMME ENDORMIE

Par un temps humide et profond tu étais plus belle
Par une pluie désespérée tu étais plus chaude
Par un jour de désert tu me semblais plus humide
Quand les arbres sont dans l'aquarium du temps
Quand la mauvaise colère du monde est dans les coeurs
Quand le malheur est las de tonner sur les feuilles
Tu étais douce
Douce comme le dents de l'ivoire des morts
Et pure comme le caillot de sang
Qui sortait en riant des lèvres de ton âme.
Par un temps humide et profond le monde est plus noir
Par un jour de désert le coeur est plus humide.

—*Pierre Jean Jouve*

A LONE WOMAN ASLEEP

When there came days sunk deep in damp your beauty seemed increased
And ever warmer grew your glow when rain fell in despair
And when days came that were like deserts you
Grew moister than the trees in the aquarium of time
And when the ugly anger of the world raged in our hearts
And sadness lisped exhausted through the leaves
You became as sweet as death
Sweet as teeth in the ivory skull-box of the dead
And pure as the skein of blood
Your laughter made to trickle down from your soul's parted lips.
When there come days deep-sunk and damp the world grows still more dark
When days like deserts come, the heart is drenched with tears.

[*David Gascoyne*]