

I, like a river,
Have been turned aside by this harsh age.
I am a substitute. My life has flowed
Into another channel
And I do not recognise my shores.
O, how many fine sights I have missed,
How many curtains have risen without me
And fallen too. How many of my friends
I have not met even once in my life,
How many city skylines
Could have drawn tears from my eyes,
I who know only the one city
And by touch, in my sleep, I could find it ...
And how many poems I have not written,
Whose secret chorus swells around my head
And possibly one day
Will stifle me ...
I know the beginnings and the ends of things,
And life after the end, and something
It isn't necessary to remember now.
And another woman has usurped
The place that ought to have been mine,

And bears my rightful name,
Leaving me a nickname, with which I've done,
I like to think, all that was possible.
But I, alas, won't lie in my own grave.

But sometimes a madcap air in spring,
Or a combination of words in a chance book
Or somebody's smile, suddenly
Draws me into that non-existent life.
In such a year would such have taken place,
Something else in another: travelling, seeing,
Thinking, remembering, entering a new love
Like entering a mirror, with a dull sense
Of treason, and a wrinkle that only yesterday
Was absent ...

But if, from that life, I could step aside,
And see my life such as it is, today,
Then at last I'd know what envy means ...