

## Twelve poems for Bruges by Lies Van Gasse

( Lies was in 2014 appointed free city poet of Bruges by the muzes of the Lappersfortwood.  
You can read more on [www.kantenstad.blogspot.be](http://www.kantenstad.blogspot.be) or [www.poeziebos.be](http://www.poeziebos.be) For the 2015 city poet of  
Bruges see [www.marcuscumberlege.com](http://www.marcuscumberlege.com) <http://www.lesvoyeursenroute.be/marcuscumberlege> )

### The flock

*Two messages cross each other. In Antwerp the Flemish government approves the BAM-tracé, thus lessening the load partially for the Antwerp ring, but it will also weigh on the air- and living quality of people living in neighbouring areas. In Bruges, on a smaller scale, the Flemish government has permission to turn the Vaartdijkstraat in a two way road with a separate path for cyclists. With the broader road, along the canal to Gent, between the city ring and the bridge of Steenbrugge, the city can alleviate the traffic on the busy Baron Ruzettelaan. The real occasion for this enlargement is the possible construction of a new fair hall on the Brugeoise site. Investors have been eying a place near the existing event location La Brugeoise, yet the accessibility of the site is less than optimal. People living in the neighbourhood, environmental organizations and the Fietsersbond (the cyclist organisation) are less happy with this decision. They fear a traffic overload and want to avoid that green is turned into asphalt.*

You are a flock that moves,  
but you want this flock  
walled in, encircled, road-rimmed

pushing on roads, lit up white,  
whizzing in impenetrable tunnels.

You are a knot.  
Cars dance into each other  
and round and round.

Nothing lays on flesh that trembles,  
nothing sleeps on wavering walls,  
the blindfold on, in stocking and collar.

You are two clamps  
embracing each other, against the tide,

yet flowing back as in endless  
revolving movement.

raging, clanging,  
the thunder at the lake of love

and back. The sea of light ablaze,  
the trail stalls, you lay out

a lane.

Men crawl backward,  
fall down in the mud

and cycle on.

## **A white poem**

*For Mikey Peeters*

<http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/989Binnenland/article/detail/1911849/2014/06/07/Emotional-farewel-from-Mikey-Peeters.dhtml>

It was midnight, a white poem:  
something with a knife, elbow room,

a life that was worn out,  
worn to the fibre of the night,

a dance, the limbs  
waving in all directions.

Thus dance in all directions,  
choose the limbs,  
write a white poem

and get stuck  
on the fibre of the night.

## Lost souls

*The city of Bruges, in cooperation with the café bosses in the entertainment centre and the police, wants to start an information network in order to quickly signal suspicious persons. Furthermore the city is going to give tips to the youngsters in order to digest a night on the town somewhat better, literally and figuratively. The measures come after a deadly stabbing on the Market which costs Mikey Peeters (19) his life.*

<http://www.hin.be/regio/nieuws-uit-brugge-/buurtinformatienetwerk-voor-cafebazen-na-dood-mikey-a1923734/>

[http://www.nieuwsblad.be/article/detail.aspx?articleid=dmf2014710\\_01174486&utm\\_medium=article&utm\\_source=standaard&utm\\_campaign=crosspromoreg&utm\\_term=feed](http://www.nieuwsblad.be/article/detail.aspx?articleid=dmf2014710_01174486&utm_medium=article&utm_source=standaard&utm_campaign=crosspromoreg&utm_term=feed)

Keep us informed of possible threats,  
don't be shady,

avoid violent situations,  
go safely back home

and report  
not only suspicious persons,  
but also party crashers, table scroungers  
and other vermin.

Drink less and wiser.  
Tell us what type you are

and we'll be glad to tell you  
how to improve your behaviour.

Avoid future dramas.  
Layer, maybe enjoy a bit longer

but preferably not at the counter, at least  
if you could actually avoid it.

Dance, skip a round  
and get rid of the flies,

Sing, but in doing so pay  
some attention to tune and words

and stay, as if it didn't have that swing.

## **Black swan**

*A black swan stirred up quite some commotion in Bruges at the beginning of the new school year. The city council wanted to get rid of the exotic bird since the bird could be sick, or threaten the ecological life in the Canals, yet thousands inhabitants of Bruges thought the swan should stay. Also experts of nature associations didn't see any problem with the black swimming bird staying. The swan was even named, Burilda Lanchals. The city council involved in the last weeks the fire department and the green service to catch Burilda, but came away empty handed. Finally the council hoped that the swan would disappear all by itself, which did happen in a somewhat mysterious way and was the source of many speculations.*

A glistening, an unceasing trembling of quills,  
skinny princesses, radiant with sallow skin,  
glazed as a dish for an apple. The swan

which as apartheid tears among the white,  
the canals wild and cheery  
and slow, fast and rhythmically repeating  
that motif hammering in my head –

What languages does she speak, how  
many diseases in her anthracite?

Sleeping, something that hides under a hand,  
under a wing; the bonsai stands in front  
next to a stripe of moss in the picture, hangs  
anyway almost straight at the camera; question marks,  
white and demanding, bobbing on the mirror.

Silence as an absence of light –

On the grass rests a layer of foam,  
in the trees the sun sleeps like an orange.

It is still warm  
and it thinks that all the bleeding has stopped.

More than this hangs through or body  
a strip of light; letters we don't form,  
but they steer us like a lamp.

a drop of water falls from the rock,  
something leaks within the warm fluid  
of the womb: a swamp in which  
frogs, toads, crickets.

A ghost of fog and lacking ringing of bells;  
almost mechanically the sun rises;  
a wrestling, and then the night –

## Nocturama

*The Italian Physiologist Lazzaro Spallanzani (1729-1799) noticed that bats in total darkness still could fly perfectly through wires. In order to discover how this was possible, he stuck out their eyes. Even then they could do so effortlessly. His next step was to clog up their ears. Then they did fly into obstacles. During my studies at Sint Lucas in Antwerp it was an often returning exercise to go to the Antwerp zoo and to draw what one saw there. On a rainy day I ended up in the 'nocturama'. In the darkness there I drew the bats.*

I wanted to leave behind almost everything:

pencil, pen and inner ear,  
light that always got smaller,  
unsubstantial vibrating points

and the slithering of a snake,  
the trembling of the smallest deer,  
the birth of an aardvark,  
the smart, slender lori, I wanted

to leave behind, almost everything,  
but not the pencil offering me lines,  
the room where I lost the light.

In blindness I learned to live,  
black as a sky gasping for breath,

dark filling itself with scraps,  
mossy twigs beating around them.

I made a tunnel in the night.

Something is fluttering under the brainpan:  
a fly skin, strongly veined,  
first as a bird, but then

like an animal, hand-winged,  
smooth nose, a horse shoe

under the roof, banished  
to the inside of the night.

A man stuck it out its eyes.  
Yet one heard how even bleeding  
it could fly between the wires,

and I, I kick like a blind one  
my pencil against window panes,

cry without light,  
stagger clumsily.

Almost everything I want to leave behind,  
but not the night.

## Vladslo

*The sculpting group "The mourning parents pair" has been conceived by the German sculptress Käthe Kollwitz. Käthe Schmidt, born in 1867 in Königsberg, was married to doctor Karl Kollwitz. Together they had two sons: Hans and Peter. Käthe Kollwitz would become one of the most important artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her youngest son Peter, who at the beginning of WW I had volunteered, had died in the night of 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1914 near Essen. His comrades buried him on the Roggeveld (the Reyefield). Only one month later Karl and Käthe learned about the death of their son. Already in 1914 Käthe conceived of the plan to make a memorial monument for her son. It took many years before she finally designed 'The parents'. Through her work of art, she not only wished to express her own sorrow, but was speaking for all parents whose sons had perished.*

This is about sorrow,  
but I say it differently,

like a fast, many footed wind,  
cold over the lanes,  
like a hasty, senseless thought.

This is about pain, but it sounds like  
the rustling of leaves.

weight by which one bows,  
the hands taut to the face.

Through the falling of the sun  
unexpectedly I was rearranged.  
Through my every noon gapes a vale.

In your sleep I lay slender twigs next to your face,  
found pebbles, cockles, moss.

Your limbs lay like soft coral on the bank,  
your letters I reread like a dragnet

unless, if I lay a reef  
between my two hands

and plane, but then black,  
until lines of kohl come out.

This isn't about much more.

White cries the walker,  
a thrush shakes its feathers.  
The bird bows and prays.

## Fireworks and birds

About the drastic beginning of the new year for many of Bruges' birds

*Now and then measuring of precipitation is disturbed by the sudden taking off by birds. So too, recently on New Years night. Until briefly before midnight it is "quiet" on the radar. Here and there one can see some stationary hotspots caused by wind turbines. Around midnight however all hell breaks loose and the birds fly massively through the airspace. The areas with most bird activity is the waterlogged area in and around the natural reserve "De Blankaert" and the polders between Bruges and Sea Bruges. Rest returns rather quickly, and good an half hour after midnight most birds are back on the ground. Not all birds however return safely. Here and there in the countryside dead birds fall down after an exhausting trip, just like the anonymous duckling from Bruges which lands in the garden of illustrator Kathy De Wit in Sint Pauwels. An ode.*

<http://www.meteo.be/view/nl/12816191-Radar+Jabbeke+registreert+vogels+tijdens+Nieuwjaarsnacht.html>

On New years night falls from the sky  
a baby duck.

Salt foams around her lips.  
Homeward is a forest,  
the arms of a lacy town.

Fogbanks lay on the land  
like a drifting island.

Deep under in the belly  
a braiding of twigs,  
a parade of dead poets,  
stone on which one would roll.

Earth plates shift.  
Rules reign our life.

I walk the hoop.  
We're stuffed in concrete boxes  
and long for the exit.

Docile I look, like a dog,  
to the tame fall,

her beak like a razor,  
the soft flesh of the night.

Since then I bite on glass.  
A wall of light falls,  
we must sleep in that plenitude.

## **Gifted carriages**

Pursuant to endowment principles the city can just like that proceed to a generalized neglect of endowed carriages.

The question is: can the carriage order the city to be sold?  
If a specified good however becomes the donor, then the sales by the city becomes a gift.

I donate an image to the city, movable good according to all actions,  
But relegate the donor to the right. It is possible.

## Nine trees

*(this poem is an ode to hero and tree lover Alain de de Coessemaeker the man who notwithstanding the protests of his neighbours housed big trees in his garden)*

Had these trees  
hands, crawling in the dirt,  
long, yet knotty paws,

they would stately go and stand out of the sun,  
be your refuge for rain.

Had these trees  
flowers, leaf or skin,  
they would adorn wide arms.

Were there wind, they stood straight, like a choir,  
singing, along with their open mouths,  
rooting in words

and were you in pain, and were there time,  
they would hunger.

Had these trees  
more than a veined skin,  
more than stiff roots,

they were deeper than foliage,  
they would relocate, resist.

## **302 CV & 60 CII is in Belgium 2 percent Yes**

“Shops disappeared notwithstanding takeovers  
of the small shops at real estate office Decler.”

This announces Het Nieuwsblad today.

Owners can to renters  
promote Bruges,  
a better quality of shops,

better for your local economy.  
Stupid that his offer is ordinary fish.

Since the wish of Decler you can thus  
in the inner-city of Bruges buy in discount shops.

Hilde De Waele wants to go and look at her inhabitants  
with a bridge of qualitative supply  
or encourage real estate firms  
to refuse a candidate.

“Whether that is realistic, remains to be seen, yeh.”

states a specialist in day-trippers.  
For this the city hopes to get help  
Of the real estate forms.

(one cannot ask them to  
rent their place  
for still a while no worries)

## **‘t Zand**

*(Remarkable when visiting Bruges in 2014 are the drastic works at ‘t Zand. The contractor has to renew the road and cycling paths. In the first phase they’ll work between the bus station and the crossroads with the Zuidzand street. Thus all traffic has to go to the inner city through the Katelijne street. In this phase also a section of the road till the North sea beach street will be broken up. From May 2<sup>nd</sup> the contractor starts on the side of the Friday market. That phase of the works must be ready by July 4<sup>th</sup>.)*

Thin and backwards, as in a  
driving basket full of sleep, thus we go  
through the tunnel: gray, like bodies of neon

brightly lit. Till paced out blocks  
go and stand in rows around us,

till a piece of granite  
smashes our sideward view.

We can’t find our way:  
road directions flash by,  
light sorts us in and out the walls,

yet without us the city.

Till then suddenly: a gleaming square,  
twittering of light, cackling of cobblestones.

Till you came up, your hand a glass,  
your sips tired, yet seamed on.

Heels are high and tottering.  
Tight they go  
into the sun.

We know it, we are there.  
A man chips here a bridge of stone,  
chimneys look land inward.

With one hand I cancel my language,  
the other kneads the sand.

## The twelfth day

*The Bollywood movie "PK" by Rajkumar Hirani is one of the most watched Indian movie of all times. The movie has only come in the movie theatres on December 19th and by now has already made 45,1 million dollar. "PK" has partly been shot in the Western Flemish capital Bruges.*

<http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws/cultuur%2Ben%2Bmedia/film/1.2199435>

There is a city in which the kings at night,  
but even in full daylight caress the skies  
with herbs, mango lassi, golden petals,

in which a man wades skirted over cobblestones  
and we chop holes in time,

in which one dances without connection,  
in big loose robes  
and a heartbeat as if diamond,

in which a body big with fear,  
as if it is being born,  
by a sudden caress is hidden,

in which unrequited love exchanges mudhra  
with lean canals, narrow boats,  
tottering from turban to baritone.

There is to much difference  
between the Yamuna and this Lake of Love

I don't believe in this poem  
resting deep in us,

where golden skins dance  
on pillows of the walkway.  
There is a city in which I sing  
As a prayer for love.

Translation: Annmarie Sauer  
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**PS. More translated poetry on Bruges ? See [A gift 4 the future of Bruges.](#)  
[City poems from free city poet Peter Theunynck.](#) Tanx to the translator  
[Annmarie Sauer.](#)**