

New Mexico Quarterly

Volume 16 | Issue 2

Article 22

1946

Black Cat

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Recommended Citation

Rilke, Rainer Maria. "Black Cat." *New Mexico Quarterly* 16, 2 (1946). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol16/iss2/22>

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If suns you long withstood,
 o bright fruit gaping wide,
 so filled, so swelled your pride,
 your bins of rubies flood,

and if dry gold of skin
 at word of force within
 bleeds in gems of juices,

this rupture, clear and pure,
 my soul to dream induces
 of her secret architecture.

PAUL VALÉRY

Translated by HERMAN SALINGER

BLACK CAT

A phantom still is something like a place
 against which your glance strikes with a sound;
 but here on this black fur in shadowed space
 your most intense fathoming gaze is drowned:

as a maniac, when he is in full
 frenzy, into blackness stamps, and then
 abruptly in the deadened padded cell
 the fury ceases — dies away — is gone.

All glances that upon her fall she keeps
 within herself, to hide thus and to hold,
 over them threatening, annoyed at last
 shivering — and then — and then she sleeps.
 But turning suddenly as if awaked,
 her face directly fronts upon your own:
 and there you meet your own glance in the gold
 amber of her widened round eye-stone
 unexpectedly again: enclosed, held fast,
 like an insect long ago extinct.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Translated by JESSIE LEMONT