

2007

Terzinen

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Recommended Citation

Gerken, Danielle; Herrick, Ryan; Jacoby, Sarah; Kopko, Catherine; Kuhlman, Greta; Orłowski, Sadie; Sellers, Emily; von Gersdorff, Katharina; and Webster, Ben (2007) "Terzinen," *Collage*: Vol. 3 : No. 1 , Article 36. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/collage/vol3/iss1/36>

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Hugo von Hofmannsthal

I

On the nature of the transitory

I still feel her breath on my cheek:
How can it be that these last days are gone,
Gone forever and completely passed on?

How can one fully comprehend,
It is much too grim to lament:
Everything passes and slips away.

I am myself, restrained by nothing,
Having grown from a small child
Who, like a strange dog, is eerily silent.

I also existed a hundred years ago
And my ancestors, in shrouds,
Are part of me,
One with me like my own hair.

II

The hours, while we gaze upon the sea
As it turns light blue, and we contemplate death
So light and solemn yet without horror

Resembling little girls, with white faces,
With big eyes, and who are always cold,
This evening, silently looking on

Sensing the life now flowing quietly
From their drowsy limbs
Into tree and grass, with dull smiles
Like saints, sacrificing their blood.

*Translated by Danielle Gerken, Ryan Herrick, Sarah Jacoby,
Catherine Kopko, Greta Kuhlman, Sadie Orlovski, Emily Sellers,
Katharina von Gersdorff, Ben Webster.*