

ARMAND ROBIN

Illiterate

Faced with the woods, the wheatfields I was dazed struck
dumb:

I read what you can't read:
Clouds, the wind, rocks, the way the moon
Moved through the trees.

And the sky with its huge curved pond
Where all day long the sun grows in waves,
like a pebble, and the changes in the
Surging clouds had their way with me.

The trees turned slowly inside me
Their pages sometimes noisy, sometimes mute,
Sometimes thick and yellowed, the seasons
Taught me their lessons.

Translated from the French by Zack Rogow

Armand Robin (1912–1961) was a French poet and translator. Robin was born the youngest of eight children in a family of illiterate farmers in the village of Plouguernével in France's Celtic region of Brittany. During the Nazi occupation of France, Robin's ability to speak and translate many languages brought him to the attention of the Gestapo, which enlisted him to report on shortwave radio communications in several languages. Following World War II, Robin shifted to the opposite extreme and became a committed anarchist. At one point he renounced all literary activities.

Zack Rogow received the PEN/Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Award for his cotranslation of *Earthlight* by André Breton and the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award for his translation of *Horace* by George Sand. His translations include two books by Colette: *Shipwrecked on a Traffic Island and Other Previously Untranslated Gems* and the novel *Green Wheat*. He is a contributing editor of *Catamaran*.

HILARY BAKER

Night, Olympic Boulevard, 2017
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST
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