

Bohemia Lies By The Sea

Even when houses around here are green, I'll still go inside.

When the bridges here are strong, I'll walk on fair ground.

If love's labour is lost forever, I'll happily lose it here.

If not me, then someone who might just as well be me.

When a word edges in on me here, I let it edge.

If Bohemia lies by the sea, I'll put my faith in seas again.

For when I believe in the sea, I hope for land.

If me, then anyone as much as me.

I want nothing more for myself. I have opted for ruin.

Ruin – that means the sea, that's where I'll find Bohemia again.

Ruined, I wake up calm.

A ruin I now know, and unlost.

Come hither, you Bohemians all, you sailors, harbour whores and ships
unanchored. Shouldn't you like to be Bohemians, you Illyrians, Veronese,
and Venetians. Acting the parts that make for laughter

And that are so pitiful. And get it wrong a hundred times,

err as I did, failing every audition,

though I did succeed every once in a while.

As Bohemia did and one fine day
was pardoned and now lies by the water.

I find myself edging in on a word, on another land,
edging in, however slightly, on everything, more and more,

a Bohemian, a vagrant, who has nothing, whom nothing holds,
whose only talent, drawn from the sea, arguably, is to correctly judge the
land of my choosing.

Source Text: Bachmann, Ingeborg, 1964. Böhmen Liegt am Meer. *Reclams Großes Buch der Deutschen Gedichte*, edited by Heinrich Detering, 2nd ed., Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co., Stuttgart, 2007, pp. 679-680.