Nobel Prize Winner
Vicente Aleixandre

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Poems by Vicente Aleixandre

For the first time *Mundus Artium* dedicates a larger section of one issue to the poems of one single poet. The Spanish poet Vicente Aleixandre is relatively unknown in the English speaking world, but together with Jorge Guillén, Rafael Alberti, Pedro Salinas and García Lorca, he influenced and shaped the development of modern Spanish poetry. Only the works of Aleixandre and Salinas have not yet been translated into English. Now *Mundus Artium* presents a larger number of Aleixandre’s poems on the following pages.
Born in 1900, Aleixandre spent his youth in Malaga. He started writing at the age of eighteen. His first poems were published in the Revista de Occidente in 1926 and his first book of poems appeared in 1928. Currently Aleixandre lives in Madrid.

The selection of poems appearing in this issue was made by Aleixandre himself. With the exception of one poem, all were chosen from Aleixandre’s Obras Completas published by Aguilar in 1968. The poem “Rain” is included in Aleixandre’s latest book of poems, Poemas de la Consumación published after the Aguilar edition. Aleixandre chose poems from all periods of his literary production. The chronological arrangement of these poems was abandoned in this issue in favor of a presentation according to translators.

Unfortunately, Carlos Bousoño’s perceptive introduction to Aleixandre’s complete works was too long to be reproduced with the poems. Bousoño divides Aleixandre’s poetic production into two distinct periods. The first one ends with the publication of Nacimiento Ultimo (Last Birth), 1944, and the second one begins with Historia del Corazón (History of the Heart) in 1954. The most important book of his first period is La Destrucción o El Amor (Destruction or Love). The poems “Lightless,” “Come, Come Always,” “They Loved,” “Song to a Dead Girl,” and “Unity in Her” are taken from that edition. The title of his collection could be misleading. Aleixandre does not conceive of destruction and love as two opposites. The “or” in the title does not separate the two but unifies them. Love is destruction. Yet, the destruction has to be seen in positive terms and does not end in a nihilistic death experience as in Pablo Neruda’s Residencia en La Tierra. Death constitutes the ultimate birth.

The poems of Aleixandre’s second period move towards a simpler, less metaphorical style. The concept of the cosmos prevalent in his earlier poems is replaced by a strong concern for the individual human being. Whereas the earlier Aleixandre shares certain poetic and aesthetic characteristics with Lorca, Guillén and Alberti, he comes close to the unique audacity of Luis Cernuda in his later works.

The following poems cannot impart the total impact of Aleixandre’s vast poetic production. Still needed, however, is a book of Aleixandre’s poems in English.
Para quién escribo?, me preguntaba el cronista, el periodista o simplemente el curioso.

No escribo para el señor de la estirada chaqueta, ni para su bigote enfadado, ni siquiera para su alzado índice admonitorio entre las tristes ondas de música.

Tampoco para el carruaje, ni para su oculta señora (entre vidrios, como un rayo frío, el brillo de los impertinentes).

Escribo acaso para los que no me leen. Esa mujer que corre por la calle como si fuera a abrir las puertas a la aurora.

O ese viejo que se aduerme en el banco de esa plaza chiquita, mientras el sol poniente con amor le toma, le rodea y le deslie suavemente en sus luces.

Para todos los que no me leen, los que no se cuidan de mí, pero de mí se cuidan (aunque me ignoren).

Esa niña que al pasar me mira, compañera de mi aventura, viviendo en el mundo.

Y esa vieja que sentada a su puerta ha visto vida, paridora de muchas vidas, y manos cansadas.

Escribo para el enamorado; para el que pasó con su angustia en los ojos; para el que le oyó; para el que al pasar no miró; para el que finalmente cayó cuando preguntó y no le oyeron.

Para todos escribo. Para los que no me leen sobre todo escribo. Uno a uno, y la muchedumbre. Y para los pechos y para las bocas y para los oídos donde, sin oírme,

está mi palabra.
I For whom do I write? the historian asked, the reporter, or the merely
inquisitive.

Not for the crackle of the jacketed gentleman, nor his choleric mustache,
not for his lifted forefinger, admonishing us in the sad tides of
music.

Still less for his carriage and its hidden señora (caught behind window­
panes, like a cold coruscation, a flashing impertinence.)

I write, it may be, for those who never will read me. For the woman who
strides up the streets, as if to open the doors of the morning.

Or the old guy asleep on the bench of the minuscule plaza, as the sunset
takes him with love, circles him there, serenely unbinds him with
lights.

For those who never will read me, who couldn’t care less, yet care, none
the less (not having known me.)

For the girl who flashed me a glance as she passed, my fellow-adven­
turess at large in the world.

For that hag who has seen all of life from her bench in the doorway—
delivered up life after life with her wearying hands.

I write for the lover, whose anguish looked out of his eyes as he passed:
for this one who heard him; for that one who never looked up as
he passed; for that one who dropped in his tracks when he asked
and nobody answered.

I write for them all. But above all, for those who never will read me.
Singly, or crowded together. For the breasts, the mouths, the ears
where, without once having heard me,

My word none the less lives.
II

Pero escribo también para el asesino. Para el que con los ojos cerrados se arrojó sobre un pecho y comió muerte y se alimentó, y se levantó enloquecido.

Para el que se irguió como torre de indignación, y se desplomó sobre el mundo.

Y para las mujeres muertas y para los niños muertos, y para los hombres agonizantes.

Y para el que sigilosamente abrió las llaves del gas y la ciudad entera pereció, y amaneció un montón de cadáveres.

Y para la muchacha inocente, con su sonrisa, su corazón, su tierna medalla, y por allí pasó un ejército de depredadores.

Y para el ejército de depredadores, que en una galopada final fue a hundirse en las aguas.

Y para esas aguas, para el mar infinito.

Oh, no para el infinito. Para el finito mar, con su limitación casi humana, como un pecho vivido.

(Un niño ahora entra, un niño se baña, y el mar, el corazón del mar, está en ese pulso.)

Y para la mirada final, para la limitadísima Mirada Final, en cuyo seno alguien duerme.

Todos duermen. El asesino y el injusticiado, el regulador y el naciente, el finado y el húmedo, el seco de voluntad y el hispido como torre.

Para el amenazador y el amenazado, para el bueno y el triste, para la voz sin materia y para toda la materia del mundo.

Para ti, hombre sin deificación que, sin quererlas mirar, estás leyendo estas letras.

Para ti y todo lo que en ti vive yo estoy escribiendo.
Yet I write for the murderer, too. For the man who slammed his eyes tight, flung himself at a breast, ate death, sated his hunger, and rose up a madman.

For him who lashed out like a tower of resentment and toppled himself on the world.

For all dead women and children, and all death-rattled men.

For him who cautiously turned on the gas-jets, while a whole city perished, and awoke to a mountain of corpses.

For the innocent girl with the heart and the smile and a tender medallion, where an army of predators passed.

And the army of predators who spurred themselves to a gallop and were drowned in the waters.

And I write for those waters, for their infinite sea.

No, not for the infinite. For the sea in its finitude, with its half-human limits like a breast with its breathing.

(A boy enters it now, a boy bathes, and the sea, the heart of the sea, passes into his pulses.)

For that last look of all, the Apocalyptic Last, in whose breast somebody slept.

For we all sleep so. The murderer, the unjustly accused, the mentor, the emergent, the finished, the drenched and the dry-of-will, those covered with hair like a tower.

For the menaced, the menacer, the benign, the sad, the immaterial voice and the substantive world.

For you, the undeified man, who without caring to see them at all, are scanning these letters.

For you, for all who live on in your name, I write, I keep writing.
Vicente Aleixandre

EL POETA

Para ti, que conoces cómo la piedra canta,
y cuya delicada pupila sabe ya del peso de una montaña sobre un ojo
dulce,
y cómo el resonante clamor de los bosques se aduerme suave un día
en nuestras venas;

para ti, poeta, que sentiste en tu aliento
la embestida brutal de las aves celestes,
y en cuyas palabras tan pronto vuelan las poderosas alas de las águilas
como se ve brillar el lomo de los calientes peces sin sonido:

oye este libro que a tus manos envío
con ademán de selva,
pero donde de repente una gota fresquisima de rocío brilla sobre una
rosa,
o se ve batir el deseo del mundo,
la tristeza que como párpado doloroso
cierra el poniente y oculta el sol como una lágrima oscurecida,
mientras la inmensa frente fatigada
siente un beso sin luz, un beso largo,
unas palabras mudas que habla el mundo finando.

Sí, poeta: el amor y el dolor son tu reino.
Carne mortal la tuya, que, arrebatada por el espíritu,
arde en la noche o se eleva en el mediodía poderoso,
immensa lengua profética que lamiendo los cielos
ilumina palabras que dan muerte a los hombres.

La juventud de tu corazón no es una playa
donde la mar embiste con sus espumas rotas,
dientes de amor que mordiendo los bordes de la tierra,
braman dulce a los seres.
For you, who know how stone sings,  
whose delicate pupil interprets the mountain’s weight for the eye’s  
pleasure,  
the forest’s clamor that will some day drowse in our veins:

poet, for you, whose breathing intuits  
the brutal assault of the bird in its heaven  
in whose words wheel the powerful wings of the eagle, in sudden  
arousal,  
like the fish’s heat in the slime, quietly flashing.

hear this book I give to your hands  
with a forest’s gesture,  
where dew glitters out, all at once, refreshing the rose,  
or desire batters the world,  
grief’s eyelid  
that shuts out the west and the sun, like a darkening tear;  
where the great forehead’s exhaustion  
is kissed, feels a deliberate kiss, dumb  
words with no light, that speak for the death of the world.

Poet: grief and love are your kingdom.  
The flesh’s mortality, assailed by the spirit,  
burns in the night or ascends in the power of the noon,  
enormous, prophetic, a tongue grazing the sky,  
revealing the words that destroy us.

The heart’s youth was never a shore  
lashed by the sea and the foam’s devastation—  
love’s tooth gnawing away at the world  
or lowing away at the living.
No es ese rayo velador que súbitamente te amenaza, iluminando un instante tu frente desnuda, para hundirse en tus ojos e incendiarte, abrasando los espacios con tu vida que de amor se consume.

No. Esa luz que en el mundo no es ceniza última, luz que nunca se abate como polvo en los labios, eres tú, poeta, cuya mano y no luna yo vi en los cielos una noche brillando.

Un pecho robusto que reposa atravesado por el mar respira como la inmensa marea celeste y abre sus brazos yacentes y toca, acaricia los extremos límites de la tierra.

¿Entonces?

Sí, poeta; arroja este libro que pretende encerrar en sus páginas un destello del sol, y mira a la luz cara a cara, apoyada la cabeza en la roca, mientras tus pies remotos sienten el beso postrero del poniente y tus manos alzadas tocan dulce la luna, y tu cabellera colgante deja estela en los astros.
No watchtower's beam, grown suddenly sinister,
lighting your forehead a moment, undefended,
wounding the eyes and kindling you there, scorching
space with your lifetime, the waste of your love.

No. The light of the world that
lives in the cinder,
unabated, a dust on your lips,
is you, poet: it was your hand I saw in the sky,
making night brilliant; not the moon.

A breast through which courses the repose of the sea,
a pulse in the heaven's immensity that breathes with well-being: its arms
open wide, touching, caressing,
exploring the uttermost verge of a world.

What then?

Poet: look past this book, whose pages would hold a whole sun-burst.
Look into the light, face to face, rest your head on this stone,
feel the west's benediction to the tips of your toes,
raise your hands, touch the moon softly,
till your hair fills the sky, leaving its wake in the stars.
Sobre esa arena yace todavía. Es la playa de Benalmádena.
Allí Torrequebrada. Rocas al fondo y el mar, el mar inmarcesible.

Holocausto en azul, todo es luz libre.
Aquí la arena fuego no es, pues si arde y quema,
el agua pasa suave y la enardece
de otros húmedos brillos. Y aquí en espumas cede
el mar algo que es suyo, por derecho de posesión
durable: siglos.
La estatua es bella. Quizá desde la costa del sur de Italia
salió, cuando los Flavios, en un barco ligero
cargado de tesoros: mosaicos y marfiles, arcas de gruesa especie, már-
moles, piedras, brillos... Todo pesado y bello, peligroso en la cava, cuando el tablero es frágil.

Atravesó el soberbio Mediterráneo en calma: todo poder, en olas.
Y ya aquí junto a esta costa, rumbo ¿a dónde? en la Bética, la mar irguióse.

Acaso fue su cólera, quizá el desdén: el barco
tragado fue en las minas azules y hubo un grito
armónico, y las ondas hermosas prevalecen.
Todo quietud el mar, el “mar nuestro” reposa.
Y guarda. Veinte siglos sin alterar su lento
conocimiento: nave, tesoros, piedras, luces,
veladas suavemente por una arena en calma,
son un silencio antiguo, sin tiempo, entre las ondas.
Hasta que nuevas sombras, humanas, ay —delfines—
desnudas irrumpieron, rompiendo el ser constante.
¿Hay algo más constante que el mar? Sus salas únicas
en majestad se esparcen, otorgan, y nadie pisa el ámbito.
Vicente Aleixandre

CHILD OF THE SEA

tr. BEN BELITT

Forever, outstretched on the sand. Here is the beach of Benalmádena. Here, Torrequebrada. Rocks in the depths, and the sea, the unwithering sea.

A holocaust in the blue, all is limitless light. Here the sand blazes and burns, but is never aflame, the sleek water passes and kindles its moist scintillations. Here in the foam, the sea gives back something it owned, by right of enduring possession: the centuries.

The statue is beautiful. It came from a seacoast in Italy, maybe— in the Flavios' time in a delicate ship bearing treasure: marbles, mosaics, arches of massy design, brilliants, ivories, stones...

All is weighted and beautiful, dangerous now in the hold, where the timbers are fragile.

Calmly it crossed the superb Mediterranean: power incarnate in waves. Now it veers to our coastline—going, who knows where?—Andalusian, on a freshening sea.

Was it disdain or anger, perhaps?: the ship was engulfed in blue mines of water, a harmonious uproar was heard, and a beauty of billows prevailed.

The sea that is "Our Sea" rests in its whole taciturnity. It is wary. Twenty centuries, without changing its slow apprehension of things: ships, treasures, boulders, lights, deferentially watched by the peace of the dunes, silent, a timeless antiquity there in the waves.

Till all erupted again: shadowy newcomers—human or dolphin?—the naked ones, jarring existence's fixity.

What is so fixed as the sea? Its corridors open on majesty, matchless, amenable, and no one can pace off its limits.
Y los delgados peces —no; fueron hombres—, ligeros, heridores, hendieron las paredes del agua dura, eterna más que inmortal, y abrieronse cortinas, y violaron la majestad que suma despojos, ofrecidos, votivos para siempre, ardiendo en luces húmedas. Oh, fuego sin cenizas bajo la mar, sin dioses.

Y los que allí bajaron, rompiendo espeso el muro del mar, luego emergieron con el precioso resto intacto: la piedra bella en orden. La forma: el dios vacío.

Aquí está: es la presea del mar. Justa. Dionisos quizá, o su sombra infausta. La yerta luz, su peso. Su misterioso peso, como un rayo ofendido que ahí se agolpó y deslumbra. La mar, la mar ahí erguida.

Es tiempo, porque humana. Es obra. Ahí en la arena levanta el brazo en arco sobre la testa libre. Los pampanos, el torso desnudo; a la cintura vese la piel salvaje. El tronco sostiene el cuello y alzase en fin un rostro joven de veinte siglos puros de mar, de mar sin horas.

No es mármol su materia confusa. Azul la piedra: mar, mar, es un pedazo de mar, y, en pie, una ola. Que nunca rompe y abre sus ojos para el hombre cual si lo reclamara para su origen: aguas, arenas, viento hondísimo.

Playa de Benalmádena... Se ven brazos morenos, pies trabajados, piernas, visicitud, esfuerzo. Y estos hoy andaluces que con su pelo oscuro, real, hoy congregados, miran con ciertos ojos la forma intacta, el tiempo petrificado, pasan efímeros y acaso señalan: “¿Y es un hombre?” No, no es un hombre, ved: Mitad mar, mitad tiempo, parece piedra. Y dura. Como en la mar, las olas.
Sleek fish—is it men, rather? lithe wondurers and piercers, strike through the walls of hard water, eternal, though not yet immortal; they fling wide the curtains, and ravish the majesty, the relics, the offerings, votaries, drowning in light, forever ablaze in the wet. A fire underseas, without ashes or deities.

And those who go under, breaking the ponderous sea-wall, come back to us with a precious reminder intact; the beautiful block in its order. The form: the uninhabited god.

Here it is: the jewel in the sea. The decorous thing. Dionysus perhaps, or his star-crossed illusion. In its tension of light, and its mass. A mysterious weight, like a god's angry thunderbolt, smashing down to us here, dazzling and puzzling. The sea, the sea freshening there.

It is time, it is human. An artifact. There in the sand it raises the arc of its arm on a head still untrammeled. Tendrils, the nude of the torso; the skin shows itself there at the waist, tameless as ever. The trunk holds the weight of the neck, lifts itself to the face of a youth, incorruptible, twenty sea-centuries, a sea unmarred by an hour.

Not marble, that medley of substances. Blue is the stone: the sea, the sea, a potsherd of ocean—and over it always, a wave. It will never break open its eyes for a man, however we call to it now to speak out: sands, waters, the wind's uttermost reaches.

Benalmádena's beaches. All is seen: the burnt arms, the laboring feet and the legs, vicissitudes, powers. All the live Andalusians in the dark of their skins, actual, massed, immediate, looking out with unwavering eyes at the form in its wholeness, petrified time in its passing, ephemeral, pointing and calling, perhaps: "Is that really a man?" No, not a man; look again: half time and half ocean, it is more like a stone. And it stays. As the waves in the sea.
El bailarín.

Es demasiado ligero. No sé, difícil es optar
qué está más escondido, si el puñal o la rosa.
Algo embriaga el aire. ¿Plata sólo? O aromas
de los pétalos que machacados por unos pies desnudos
llegan a mis sentidos, los descubren e incitan.
Rompen más poderosamente los enigmas
y al fin se ven los montes, como cuerpos tumbados,
allí en el horizonte, mientras sigue el misterio.

El director de escena.

Si quieres decir que la bambalina oscila,
no cuidas las palabras. Tu pie en el aire imita
la irrupción de la aurora, pero cuán pobremente.
¿La orquesta? Mientras ensaya la madera a dormirse,
el són a su mudez y el farol a crujir cada vez más rosado,
yo duermo o leo, y me despierto y callo.
La ciencia es un dominio donde el hombre se pierde.
Un bosque que levanto con mis órdenes puede
a los espectadores darles verdor, no vida.
Por eso me sonrió cuando el telón se alza
y el bailarín ondea como un árbol y aduzco
su pie, su pie en sigilo como una duda intensa.

El bailarín.

Yo soy quien soy, pero quien soy es sólo
una proposición concreta en sus colores.
Nunca un concepto. Bailo, vacilo, a veces puedo
afirmarme hecho un arco, con mi cuerpo, y los aires
bajo él cruzan como deseos. No los siento. La piedra
del puente nunca siente
a las aguas velozes, como a las quietas: sueño,
y el soñar no hace ruido.
Mi cuerpo es la ballesta en que la piedra yérguese;
y el arco, y soy la flecha: un pensamiento huyendo.
Vicente Aleixandre
THEY WHO DANCE ARE CONSUMED

tr. Ben Belitt

The Dancer
All is too volatile here. The choices are hard. I don’t know which is more secretive, the dagger’s point or the rose? Something debauches the air. Is it silver? Or the aroma of petals trampled under nude feet, that strikes at the senses and incites and discovers them. The enigmas gather power and break open, and at last we see plainly: mountains like burial mounds on the distant horizon; but the mystery stays.

The Stage Designer
Say that the scenery shakes in the flies, if you wish; don’t mince your words. Your foot in mid-air imitates daybreak—but how shabbily! The orchestra? Though the wood wishes sleep, a sound breaks the silence, the lamp crackles more rosily now. I sleep or I read, I wake or am silent. Our science is only a kingdom where man wanders lost. A forest, evoked at my bidding, brings the onlookers verdure, but not life. So I smile when the curtain is lifted and the dancer ripples out like a tree: I conjure his foot, his foot’s ambiguity there, intense as a doubt.

The Dancer
I am what I am—a mere proposition concrete in its colors, at best. Not a concept. I dance and I dawdle: at times I affirm myself with the arc of my body, while the air intersects underneath, like a wish. But I feel nothing. No more than the stone in the bridge feels the water’s velocity, or its calms: I dream and my dream makes no sound. My body waits like a crossbow where a pebble strains to be cast; an arc whose arrow I am: a fugitive thought.
El director de escena.

Solo estoy y no confío en lo que hice, ni hago mención de lo que puse o propuse: una idea.
La escena es una idea, y el pensamiento abrasa.
Con colores o turnos de ira o fe ergúi tu nombre.
En lienzo el bermellón, el amarillo híspido, la rosa, el pie desnudo y todo el cuerpo erguido del bailarín creciente,
pura mentira o veste, mas la verdad ahí arde.
Bajo la malla un grito corporal es el ritmo
y con mi mano tomo la forma y ahí se quema para todos. Y todos, consumados, aplauden.

El bailarín.

Suena la música y ondea como una mar salobre donde mi cuerpo indaga temeroso y brillante.
Soy la espuma primera que entre las ondas álzase y en la cresta aquí irísase, revelándoos un mundo.
Su nombre, o son sus hechos, en los labios ardidos.
Mientras cantan las cuerdas y los oboes se quejan como oscuros principios frustrados, y hay la flauta como una lengua fina por una piel huyendo.

El director de escena.

No es el son, son mis manos. ¡Basta! Todo el mundo ahí erguido.
Concebir nunca es fácil. Coro o tristeza inmunda que cual rosas marchitas desfila sordamente.
¿Aún bailan o aún engañan? Una onda a aromas pútridos que divaga y oscila mientras callan las liras.
Rostros para esa ardiente juventud que es un hombre.
La perdición completa yo la vi y la presento.
Los negros gemebundos, los amarillos glaucos, los finales más grises, como cuerpos dormidos.
Un montón de lujuria, pero extinto, en la sombra.
O es un vals lastimero que en polvo lento absuélvase.

El bailarín.

Es el fin. Yo he dormido mientras bailaba, o sueño.
Soy leve como un ángel que unos labios pronuncian.
Con la rosa en la mano adelanto mi vida y lo que ofrezco es oro o es un puñal, o un muerto.
The Stage Designer

I am my own man. Nothing I did is believable, I ignore what I posed and proposed: it was just an idea.
The background is just an idea, though the thought of it blazes.
I erected your name with colors and turns of my rage and credulity.
The canvas vermilions, the bristling yellows, the rose, the bared foot and the body’s whole rigor upraised in a dancer’s extension, the deceits and the draperies, all burn more candidly here.
Under the meshes, the physical cry of the rhythms:
I hold all the forms in my hand and I set them ablaze for the world. All are consumed, and applaud.

The Dancer

The music sways forward. The sound of it ripples like sea-water, as my body questions the world, dazzling and fearful.
I am the burst of primordial foam that broke from the wave, the rainbow riding the crest, revealing your world.
Your name, or your history, a pillar of fire on your lips.
The strings sing away, the oboes complain of some baffled beginning seen darkly, the flute’s sound is heard, like a delicate tongue in a flickering skin.

The Stage Designer

No, not sound, but my hands! Enough! The world is aroused.
Creation was never so simple. Chorus or shameless nostalgia, all file soundlessly by, a procession of withering roses.
Do they dance or delude us? A wave of putrescent aromas trembles and wavers as the lyres go silent.
Faces look up toward the burning juvenescence of man.
I present what I saw: the damnation, from beginning to end.
Black of the mourners, yellow-greens, the grayer conclusions, like bodies asleep.
Lust’s pandemonium burnt out in the shadow.
Or a pitiful waltz running down like a gradual sand.

The Dancer

It is done. I slept as I danced, O my dream!
All is light as a spirit that lips invoke in the sky.
I press on with my life, a rose I extend with my hand.
All is gold that I offer you now, a dagger’s point or a death.
Vicente Aleixandre

SIN LUZ

El pez espada, cuyo cansancio se atribuye ante todo a la imposibilidad de horadar a la sombra, de sentir en su carne la frialdad del fondo de los mares donde el negror no ama, donde faltan aquellas frescas algas amarillas que el sol dora en las primeras aguas.

La tristeza gemebunda de ese inmóvil pez espada cuyo ojo no gira, cuya fijeza quieta lastima su pupila, cuya lágrima resbala entre las aguas mismas sin que en ellas se note su amarillo tristísimo.

El fondo de ese mar donde el inmóvil pez respira con sus branquias un barro, ese agua como un aire, ese polvillo fino que se alborota mintiendo la fantasía de un sueño, que se aplaca monótono cubriendo el lecho quieto donde gravita el monte altísimo, cuyas crestas se agitan como penacho—sí—de un sueño oscuro.

Arriba las espumas, cabelleras difusas, ignoran los profundos pies de fango, esa imposibilidad de desarraigarse del abismo, de alzarse con unas alas verdes sobre lo seco abisal y escaparse ligero sin miedo al sol ardiente.
Vicente Aleixandre

LIGHTLESS

tr. Ben Belitt

The swordfish, tired of his fruitless assaults (it is said), his longing to bore through the dark, and feel in his flesh the chill of the sea-floor, the unpitying blackness where sun yellowed the algae, freshened the primitive water, and failed.

The brooding gloom of the motionless fish whose eye never turns in its head, whose fixity grinds down the pupil and loosens a tear, salt water in salt water, with no trace of its yellow despair in the depths.

The underseas floor where the motionless fish breathes the silt through his gills in water like air, the exquisite particle stirred up in clouds to give the lie to our fantasy and sink to its level again, the stilled floor's monotony that bears the whole weight of the summit and flutters its crest like a feather—yes—a panache to darken a dream.

Up above, in the spray, that unbinding of hair, with no thought for the depth's muddy bottom, the impossible wish to unmire oneself from the pit, to heave up on green wings over the meagre abyss and escape toward the blaze of the sun, unfearful and volatile.
Las blancas cabelleras, las juveniles dichas, pugnan hirvientes, pobladas por los peces —por la creciente vida que ahora empieza—, por elevar su voz al aire joven, donde un sol fulgurante hace plata el amor y oro los abrazos, las pieles conjugadas, ese unirse los pechos como las fortalezas que se aplacan fundiéndose.

Pero el fondo palpita como un solo pez abandonado.
De nada sirve que una frente gozosa se incruste en el azul como un sol que se da, como amor que visita a humanas criaturas.

De nada sirve que un mar inmenso entero sienta sus peces entre espumas como si fueran pájaros.

El calor que le roba el quieto fondo opaco, la base inmovible de la milenaria columna que aplasta un ala de ruiseñor ahogado, un pico que cantaba la evasión del amor, gozoso entre unas plumas templadas a un sol nuevo.

Ese profundo oscuro donde no existe el llanto, donde un ojo no gira en su cuévana seco, pez espada que no puede horadar a la sombra, donde aplacado el limo no imita un sueño agotado.
That spate of white hair, the juvenile pleasures,
contending and boiling together, peopled by fishes
—in the widening life just begun—
cries aloud in young air;
the sun at its midday
turns love into silver, makes the arms golden,
conjoins all the skins,
a phalanx of breasts, like fortresses raised on a peaceable kingdom.

But a spasm still lives in the depths, like a fish thrown back in the sea.
To no purpose, the engaging facade
packs itself over the blue, like sunlight expending itself,
love's comings and goings in the creaturely world of the human.

All to no purpose, the sea's whole immensity
feels the fish in the bubble of spray, like a bird.

Heat robs the depths of their peaceful opacity,
the immovable plinth that holds up the millennial column
in a crush of drowned nightingales' feathers,
the beak that once sang the evasions of love,
the plumage's joy tempered anew in the sun.

There at the darkness's heart where nothing laments,
the eye never rolls back from the drouth of its covert,
nor swordfish pierces the shadow,
there in the slime that no longer repeats a dream's dissipation, at peace.
No, no es eso. No miro
del otro lado del horizonte un cielo.
No contemplo unos ojos tranquilos, poderosos,
que aquietan a las aguas feroces que aquí braman.
No miro esa cascada de luces que descienden
de una boca hasta un pecho, hasta unas manos blandas,
finitas, que a este mundo contienen, atesoran.

Por todas partes veo cuerpos desnudos, fieles
al cansancio del mundo. Carne fugaz que acaso
nació para ser chispa de luz, para abrasarse
de amor y ser la nada sin memoria, la hermosa
redondez de la luz.
Y que aquí está, aquí está, marchitamente eterna,
sucesiva, constante, siempre, siempre cansada.

Es inútil que un viento remoto, con forma vegetal, o una lengua,
lama despacio y largo su volumen, lo afile,
lo pula, lo acaricie, lo exalte.
Cuerpos humanos, rocas cansadas, grises bultos
que a la orilla del mar conciencia siempre
tenéis de que la vida no acaba, no, heredándose.
Cuerpos que mañana repetidos, infinitos, rodáis
como una espuma lenta, desenganada, siempre.
¡Siempre carne del hombre, sin luz! Siempre rodados
desde allá, de un océano sin origen que envía
ondas, ondas, espumas, cuerpos cansados, bordes
de un mar que no se acaba y que siempre jadea en sus orillas.
Vicente Aleixandre

A FATE OF FLESH

tr. Ben Belitt

No, it's not that. I see
no sky from the horizon's opposite side.
I don't think of the strenuous calm of the eyes
that temper the water's ferocity boiling out of this place.
The cascade of lights pouring down
from a mouth to a breast, to the delicate hands,
finite, withholding and hoarding a world, is not for my eyes.

I see nude bodies everywhere pledged
to the world's weariness. Fugitive flesh born
to scintillate light, perhaps, to bum itself out,
out of love, an obvious nullity, light's
lovely rotundity.
It is now, here you have it, eternity's withering away,
successive and constant forever, failing forever.

Useless, that faraway wind with its vegetal forms, its long tongue
slowly lapping the volume, honing it down,
caressing it, cleaning it, lifting it up.
Forms of the human, tired rocks, grey bulks
on the sea's edge—you were always aware
life never is done with us, never, that all is a trust.
Bodies repeated tomorrow, infinite, you spin on forever
undeceived, like a gradual spray.
Always the flesh of the human, the darkness! Always circling us
there, the sea whose beginning was nowhere, sending out
waves, sending foam on the waves, tired bodies, the sea's
edges, the unfinishing sea, panting up to the beaches forever.
Todos, multiplicados, repetidos, sucesivos, amontonáis la carne,
la vida, sin esperanza, monótonamente iguales bajo los cielos hoscos
que imposibles se heredan.
Sobre ese mar de cuerpos que aquí vierten sin tregua, que aquí rompen
redondamente y quedan mortales en las playas,
no se ve, no, ese rápido esquife, ágil velero
que con quilla de acero, rasgue, sesgue,
abra sangre de luz y raudo escape
hacia el hondo horizonte, hacia el origen
último de la vida, al confín del océano eterno
que humanos desparrama
sus grises cuerpos. Hacia la luz, hacia esa escala ascendente de brillos
que de un pecho benigno hacia una boca sube,
hacia unos ojos grandes, totales que contemplan,
hacia unas manos mudas, finitas, que aprisionan,
donde cansados siempre, vitales, aún nacemos.

Vicente Aleixandre
COMEMOS SOMBRA

Todo tú, fuerza desconocida que jamás te explicas.
Fuerza que a veces tentamos por un cabo del amor.
Allí tocamos un nudo. Tanto así es tentar un cuerpo,
un alma, y rodearla y decir: “Aqui está.” Y repasamos despaciosamente,
morosamente, complacidamente, los accidentes de una verdad que
únicamente por ellos se nos denuncia.
Y aquí está la cabeza, y aquí el pecho, y aquí el talle y su huída,
y el engolfamiento repentino y la fuga, las dos largas piernas dulces
que parecen infinitamente fluir, acabarse.
Y estrechamos un momento el bulto vivo.
Y hemos reconocido entonces la verdad en nuestros brazos, el cuerpo
querido, el alma escuchada,
el alma avariciosamente aspirada.
All of us repeated, multiplied, successive: you heap the flesh high, 
life with no reason to hope, monotonous equals, under a glowering sky, 
a listless inheritance.

Here, on an ocean of overturned bodies, unstinting, enormously 
broken, yet mortally there on the beaches, 
no one has seen the skiff scudding away, the sailboat's dexterity 
whose prow rakes its steel on the sea, yaws over, 
opens blood in the light, and escapes 
toward the deepest horizon, full-speed—toward life's 
last beginning, old ocean's last seamark 
spilling humanly over 
with bodily grays. Looking for light, ascending a radiant spectrum, 
it mounts to a mouth from a bosom's benignity, 
climbs toward the widening eyes that look out on everything 
toward the infinite, dumb hands that imprison, 
where, vital and weary as always, again we are born.

Vicente Aleixandre

WE EAT SHADOW

tr. Ben Belitt

The whole of you, unknowable power that never discloses itself. 
Power that we sometimes invite with the thrust of our loving. 
There, we come on a knot. We finger a body, 
a spirit, we encircle it so, and we say: “Now I have you!” Morosely, 
complacently, at leisure, we explore all the trials of the chance for 
whose sake we were warned. 
Here is the head, here the breast, here the profile and flight, 
the swift inundation, the escape, the ripe legs in their sweetness, that 
appear to flow out and still still eternally. 
And we narrow our living tumescence a moment. 
We acknowledge the truth in our arms, the desirable body, 
the overheard spirit, 
the spirit so avidly coveted.
¿Dónde la fuerza entonces del amor? ¿Dónde la réplica que nos
diese un Dios respondiente,
un Dios que no se nos negase y que no se limitase a arrojarnos un
cuerpo, un alma que por él nos acallase?
Lo mismo que un perro con el mendrugo en la boca calla y se obstina,
así nosotros, encarnizados con el duro resplandor, absorbidos,
estrechamos aquello que una mano arrojara.
Pero ¿dónde tú, mano sola que haría
el don supremo de suavidad con tu piel infinita,
con tu sola verdad, única caricia que, en el jadeo, sin términos nos
callase?

Alzamos unos ojos casi moribundos. Mendrugos,
panes, azotes, cólera, vida, muerte:
todo lo derramas como una compasión que nos dieras,
como una sombra que nos lanzarás, y entre los dientes nos brilla
un eco de un resplandor, el eco de un eco de un eco del resplandor,
y comemos.
Comemos sombra, y devoramos el sueño o su sombra, y callamos.

Pero luego los grandes ojos húmedos se levantan. La mano no está.
Ni el roce
de una veste se escucha.
Sólo el largo gemido, o el silencio apresado.
El silencio que sólo nos acompaña
cuando, en los dientes la sombra desvanecida, famélicamente de nuevo
ehchamos a andar.
But where does it come from—love’s power, the similitude given us here with a god’s reciprocity, A God who begrudges us nothing, sets no limits on loving, plucks us out, spirit and body, to solace us here in his name? We stand with the crumb in our mouths and are quiet, like dogs, we go on, we incarnate ourselves in the obdurate splendor, intent on our hunger, we strain toward whatever is flung to us here by a hand. But where does it come from, the singular hand that would offer its great gifts of suavity, your infinite skin, your singular truth, the caress that can quiet our breathing, that stays on, without end?

Half-dead, we look upward. Table-scraps, bread-crusts, the whiplash, our rages, our living and dying: you scatter them out to all sides, as if you would deal us your pity, you fling us a shadow, while the glitter glows under our teeth, an echo’s resplendence, an echo’s re-echo re-echoed: a splendor; and we eat what is given. We eat shadow, we gorge on the dream or the shadow, and are quiet. We are struck with an awe: and we sing. Love is your name.

But later, the eyes, humid and huge, lift up. The hand is no more. Not so much as a rustle of cloth can be heard. Only a great sound of weeping, or the silence’s tension. The silence that is all we can take with us when, in the teeth of the vanishing shadow, now grown ravenous, we launch ourselves onward again.
DORMIDA sobre el tigre,
su leve trenza yace.
Mirad su bulto. Alienta
sobre la piel hermosa,
tranquila, soberana.
¿Quién puede osar, quién sólo
sus labios hoy pondría
sobre la luz dichosa
que, humana apenas, sueña?
Miradla allí. ¡Cuán sola!
¡Cuán intacta! ¿Tangible?
Casi divina, leve
el seno se alza, cesa,
se yergue, abate; gime
como el amor. Y un tigre
soberbio la sostiene
como la mar hircana,
donde flotase extensa,
feliz, nunca ofrecida.

¡Ah, mortales! No, nunca;
desnuda, nunca vuestra.
Sobre la piel hoy ígnea
miradla, exenta: es diosa.
Asleep on the tiger,
her light braid extended.
See the mass of her there. She breathes
on the beautiful skin,
sovereign and tranquil.
Who would presume, who with so much
as a touch of his lips would encroach
on that bounty of light
now asleep on the verge of the human?
Look at her there! How alone in herself!
How intact! And tangible, too?
Very nearly divine, her breast
lifted ever so lightly, subsides,
tightens, releases; she moans
as with love. And the pride
of a tiger sustains her,
a Hyrcanian sea
where she floats at her length,
uncommitted and happy.

No one shall have her, though naked,
O mortal onlookers, she shall never be yours.
Today, on the skin of the tiger she burns
outstretched, a goddess. Look at her well.
VEN SIEMPRE, VEN

No te acerques. Tu frente, tu ardiente frente, tu encendida frente, las huellas de unos besos,
ese resplandor que aun de día se siente si te acercas,
ese resplandor contagioso que me queda en las manos,
ese río luminoso en que hundo mis brazos,
en el que casi no me atrevo a beber, por temor después a ya una dura vida de lucero.

No quiero que vivas en mí como vive la luz,
con ese ya aislamiento de estrella que se une con su luz,
a quien el amor se niega a través del espacio duro y azul que separa y no une,
donde cada lucero inaccesible es una soledad que, gemebunda, envía su tristeza.

La soledad destella en el mundo sin amor.
La vida es una vivida corteza,
una rugosa piel inmóvil
donde el hombre no puede encontrar su descanso,
por más que aplique su sueño contra un astro apagado.

Pero tú no te acerques. Tu frente destellante, carbón encendido que me arrebata a la propia conciencia,
duelo fulguréo en que de pronto siento la tentación de morir,
de quemarme los labios con tu roce indeleble,
de sentir mi carne deshacerse contra tu diamante abrasador.

No te acerques, porque tu beso se prolonga como el choque imposible de las estrellas,
como el espacio que súbitamente se incendia,
éter propagador donde la destrucción de los mundos es un único corazón que totalmente se abrasa.
Vicente Aleixandre

COME, COME ALWAYS

tr. ALAN BRILLIANT

Don’t come close. Your forehead, your burning forehead,
your inflamed forehead,
the traces of some kisses,
this radiance that even the day feels if you are near,
this contagious radiance that settles in my hands,
this luminous river in which I plunge my arms,
I almost don’t dare drink in it, fearing to the end
a hard life of splendor.

I don’t want you to live in me the way light lives,
with this isolation of star one with its own light,
to whom love is denied throughout
the hard and blue space that separates and doesn’t unite,
where each inaccessible splendor
is a solitude that, gem-bearing, dispatches its sorrow.

A lonely flicker in world without love.
Life is a vivid crust,
a dried-up motionless skin
where man finds no relief,
as much as he applies his dream against an extinguished meteor.

But don’t you get near me. Your beaming forehead,
incendiary coal that seduces me to my own consciousness,
flashing duel in which I immediately feel the temptation to die,
of burning my lips on your indelible rubbing
of feeling my flesh consumed by your scalding diamond.

Don’t you get near me, because your kiss is prolonged
like an impossible collision of the stars,
like space set ablaze suddenly,
fertile ether where worlds’ destruction
is the last heart totally extinguished.
Ven, ven, ven como el carbón extinto oscuro que encierra una muerte; ven como la noche ciega que me acerca su rostro; ven como los dos labios marcados por el rojo, por esa línea larga que funde los metales.

Ven, ven, amor mío; ven, hermética frente, redondez casi rodante que luces como una órbita que va a morir en mis brazos; ven como dos ojos o dos profundas soledades, dos imperiosas llamadas de una hondura que no conozco.

¡Ven, ven, muerte, amor; ven pronto, te destruyo; ven, que quiero matar o amar o morir o darte todo; ven, que ruedas como liviana piedra, confundida como una luna que me pide mis rayos!

Vicente Aleixandre

UNIDAD EN ELLA

Cuerpo feliz que fluye entre mis manos, rostro amado donde contemplo el mundo, donde graciosos pájaros se copian fugitivos, volando a la región donde nada se olvida.

Tu forma externa, diamante o rubí duro, brillo de un sol que entre mis manos deslumbra, cráter que me convoca con su música íntima, con esa indescifrable llamada de tus dientes.

Muero porque me arrojo, porque quiero morir, porque quiero vivir en el fuego, porque este aire de fuera no es mío, sino el caliente aliento que si me acerco quema y dora mis labios desde un fondo.
Come, come, come like the dark extinct coal
that imprisons death;
come like blind night that brings me a vision of you;
come like two lips branded with red,
through this long line that forges metals.

Come, come my love; come, sealed forehead,
roundness nearly rolling
that glows like an orbit that comes to die in my arms;
come like two eyes or two profound solitudes,
two imperious summonses from an unknown depth.

Come, come, death, love; come quickly, I destroy you;
come, I wish to kill or love or die or give you everything;
come, rolling like a fickle stone
confounded like a moon that desires my rays!

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Vicente Aleixandre

UNITY IN HER

tr. Alan Brilliant

Happy body that flows between my hands,
loved face where I contemplate the world,
where graceful fugitive birds are mirrored
flying to that place where nothing is forgotten.

Your external form, diamond or hard ruby
brilliance of a sun that glows in my hands
crater that lures me with its intimate music
with that undecipherable summons from your teeth.

I die because I dared, because I want to die,
because I want to live in fire, because this foreign air
isn’t mine, but the hot breath
if I approach burns and illumes my lips from its depths.
Deja, deja que mire, teñido del amor,
enrojecido el rostro por tu purpúrea vida,
déjame que mire el hondo clamor de tus entrañas
donde muero y renuncio a vivir para siempre.

Quiero amor o la muerte, quiero morir del todo,
quiero ser tú, tu sangre, esa lava rugiente
que regando encerrada bellos miembros extremos
siente así los hermosos límites de la vida.

Este beso en tus labios como una lenta espina,
como un mar que voló hecho un espejo,
como el brillo de un ala,
es todavía unas manos, un repasar de tu crujiente pelo,
un crepitar de la luz vengadora,
luz o espada mortal que sobre mi cuello amenaza,
pero que nunca podrá destruir la unidad de este mundo.

Vicente Aleixandre

CANCION A UNA MUCHACHA MUERTA

Dime, dime el secreto de tu corazón virgen,
dime el secreto de tu cuerpo bajo tierra,
quiero saber por qué ahora eres un agua,
esas orillas frescas donde unos pies desnudos se bañan con espuma.

Dime por qué sobre tu pelo suelto,
sobre tu dulce hierba acariciada,
cae, resbala, acaricia, se va.
un sol ardiente o reposado que te toca
como un viento que lleva sólo un pájaro o mano.

Dime por qué tu corazón como una selva diminuta
espera bajo tierra los imposibles pájaros,
esa canción total que por encima de los ojos
hacen los sueños cuando pasan sin ruido.
Let me, let me keep looking, stained by love,  
my face branded by your purple life,  
let me keep looking at the deep clamour of your innards  
where I die and I renounce living forever.

I want love or death, to be dead to everything,  
I want to be you, your blood, this roaring lava  
that engulfing beautiful extended imprisoned limbs  
experiences the charming limits of life.

This kiss in your lips like a sluggish thorn  
like a sea that flew made a mirror  
like the glow of a wing  
is still some hands, a review of your rustling hair,  
a rustle of the avenging light,  
light or, poised above my neck, the fatal sword  
that still can’t sever the unity of this world.

**Vicente Aleixandre**

**SONG TO A DEAD GIRL**

tr. **ALAN BRILLIANT**

Tell me, tell me the secret of your heart, virgin,  
tell me the secret of your body under ground,  
I wish to know why you are now water,  
those fresh shores where some naked feet bathe in foam.

Tell me why above your loose hair  
above your caressed sweet grass  
falls, slides, caresses, fades  
an ardent or peaceful sun that touches you  
as a wind that carries only a bird or hand.

Tell me why, like a diminutive forest, your heart  
awaits impossible birds underground,  
this universal song that regardless of the eyes  
made dreams when they pass without noise.
Oh tú, canción que a un cuerpo muerto o vivo,
que a un ser hermoso que bajo el suelo duerme,
cantas color de piedra, color de beso o labio,
cantas como si el nácar durmiera o respirara.

Esa cintura, ese débil volumen de un pecho triste,
ese rizo voluble que ignora el viento,
esos ojos por donde sólo boga el silencio,
esos dientes que son de marfil resguardado,
ese aire que no mueve unas hojas no verdes...

¡Oh tú, cielo riente que pasas como nube;
oh pájaro feliz que sobre un hombro ríes;
fuente que, chorro fresco, te enredas con la luna;
césped blando que pisan unos pies adorados!

Vicente Aleixandre
TORO

Esa mentira o casta.
Aquí, mastines, pronto; paloma, vuela; salta, toro,
toro de luna o miel que no despega.
Aquí, pronto; escapad, escapad; sólo quiero,
sólo quiero los bordes de la lucha.

Oh tú, toro hermosísimo, piel sorprendida,
ciega suavidad como un mar hacia adentro,
quietud, caricia, toro, toro de cien poderes,
frente a un bosque parado de espanto al borde.

Toro o'mundo que no,
que no muge. Silencio;
vastedad de esta hora. Cuerno o cielo ostentoso,
toro negro que aguanta caricia, seda, mano.

Ternura delicada sobre una piel de mar,
mar brillante y caliente, anca pujante y dulce,
abandono asombroso del bulto que deshace
sus fuerzas casi cósmicas como leche de estrellas.
Mano inmensa que cubre celeste toro en tierra.
Oh this song that sings to a dead or living body,
that sings to a handsome being sleeping under the earth,
sings color of stone, color of kiss or lip,
sings as if the pearl were sleeping or breathing.

This waist, this feeble volume of a sad breast,
this flowing curl that ignores the wind
these eyes through which only silence rows
these teeth made of impermeable ivory
this air that doesn’t move petals not green . . .

You, mocking heaven that passes like a cloud!
Oh, happy bird that laughs on my shoulder
fountain that, fresh spurt, ensnares the moon
soft turf that trample some adored feet!

Vicente Aleixandre

THE BULL

tr. ALAN BRILLIANT

That lie or caste.
Here, mastiffs, quick! dove, fly! bull, leap!
Bull of moon or honey that won’t spread.
Here, quick! escape, escape! I want only
want only the borders of the fight.

Oh you, magnificent bull, astonished hide
blind ease like a sea from within
serene, caress, bull, bull of a hundred potentialities,
stopped, facing a woods, haunted at its border.

Bull or world that doesn’t
that doesn’t bellow. Silence;
vastness of this hour. Horn or magnificent heaven
black bull that endures caress, silk, hand.

Delicate tenderness over a sea-hide
brilliant and sweating sea, powerful and sweet rump,
mysterious unleashing of the hulk that unloosens
its forces as if cosmic like the stars’ milk.

Immense hand that spreads celestial bull on earth.
Vicente Aleixandre

EL MORIBUNDO

I

PALABRAS

El decía palabras.
Quiero decir palabras, todavía palabras.
Y decía palabras,
miértes su mano ligeramente débil sobre el lienzo aún vivía.
Palabras que fueron alegres, que fueron tristes, que fueron soberanas.
Decía moviendo los labios, quería decir el signo aquél,
el olvidado, ése que saben decir mejor dos labios,
no, dos bocas que fundidas en soledad pronuncian.
Decía apenas un signo leve como un suspiro, decía un aliento,
uma burbuja; decía un gemido y enmudecían los labios,
miéntes las letras teñidas de un carmín en su boca
destellaban muy débiles, hasta que al fin cesaban.

Entonces alguien, no sé, alguien no humano,
alguien puso unos labios en los suyos.
Y alzó una boca donde sólo quedó el calor prestado,
las letras tristes de un beso nunca dicho.

II

SILENCIO

Miró, miró por último y quiso hablar.
Unas borrosas letras sobre sus labios aparecieron.
Alzó su mano débil, su mano sagaz, y un pájaro
voló súbito en la alcoba, Amé mucho, el aliento aún decía.
Por la ventana negra de la noche las luces daban su claridad
sobre una boca, que no bebía ya de un sentido agotado.
Abrió los ojos. Llevó su mano al pecho y dijo:
Oídme.
Nadie oyó nada. Una sonrisa oscura veladamente puso su dulce máscara
sobre el rostro, borrándolo.
Un soplo sonó. Oídme. Todos, todos pusieron su delicado oído.
Oídme. Y se oyó puro, cristalino, el silencio.
Vicente Aleixandre

THE DYING MAN

tr. Donald A. Yates

I

To Alfonso Costafreda

WORDS

He said words
I mean words, but still, words.
And he said words
while his faintly weakened hand on the linen kept living.
Words that were gay, that were sad, that were supreme.
He said moving his lips, wanted to say that sign,
the forgotten one, the one said best by two lips,
no, pronounced by two mouths blended in solitude.
He said scarcely so faint a sign as a sigh, he said a breath,
a bubble; he said a moan and his lips stilled
while the carmine-tinted letters in his mouth
glimmered very faintly, until at last they ceased.

Then someone, I don’t know, someone not human,
someone placed lips on his.
And he lifted a mouth that held only borrowed warmth,
the sad letters of a never said kiss.

II

SILENCE

He looked, looked at last and tried to speak.
A few blurred letters on his lips appeared.
Love. Yes, I loved. I have loved. I loved. I did love.
He raised his weak hand, his sage hand, and a bird
darted quickly in the bedroom. I did love, his breath was saying still.
Through the window black with night the lights shone their brightness
on a mouth that drank no longer from an exhausted sense.
He opened his eyes. He lifted his hand to his breast and said:
Hear me.
No one heard a thing. A dark smile like a veil drew its sweet mask
over the face, hiding it.
A breath sounded. Hear me. Everyone, everyone strained his ear.
Hear me. And they heard—pure, crystalline—silence.
Vicente Aleixandre

SE QUERIÁN

Se querían.
Sufrian por la luz, labios azules en la madrugada,
labios saliendo de la noche dura,
labios partidos, sangre, ¿sangre dónde?
Se querían en un lecho navío, mitad noche, mitad luz.

Se querían como las flores a las espinas hondas,
a esa amorosa gema del amarillo nuevo,
cuando los rostros giran melancólicamente,
giralunas que brillan recibiendo aquel beso.

Se querían de noche, cuando los perros hondos
laten bajo la tierra y los valles se estiran
como lomos arcaicos que se sienten repasados:
caricia, seda, mano, luna que llega y toca.

Se querían de amor entre la madrugada,
entre las duras piedras cerradas de la noche,
duras como los cuerpos helados por las horas,
duras como los besos de diente a diente sólo.

Se querían de día, playa que va creciendo,
ondas que por los pies acarician los muslos,
cuerpos que se levantan de la tierra y flotando...
Se querían de día, sobre el mar, bajo el cielo.

Mediodía perfecto, se querían tan íntimos,
mar altísimo y joven, intimidad extensa,
soledad de lo vivo, horizontes remotos
ligados como cuerpos en soledad cantando.

Amando. Se querían como la luna lúcida,
como ese mar redondo que se aplica a ese rostro,
dulce eclipse de agua, mejilla oscurecida,
donde los peces rojos van y vienen sin música.
They loved.
They suffered the light, blue lips at early dawn,
lips emerging from the pressing night,
lips cracked, blood. Where blood?
They loved on a ship-bed, half darkness, half light.

They loved as flowers love the deep thorns,
the amorous gem of new yellow,
when faces turn in melancholy,
moonflowers that shine receiving that kiss.

They loved by night, when the deep dogs
throb beneath the earth and valleys stretch
like archaic backs that feel themselves stroked:
caress, silk, hand, moon that arrives and touches.

They loved with love amid the gathering dawn,
amid the hard, secretive stones of the night,
hard as bodies chilled by the hours,
hard as kisses tooth on tooth.

They loved by day, broadening beach,
waves that move from feet to thighs, caressing,
odies that rise from the ground and floating . . .
They loved by day, on the sea, under the sky.

Perfect midday, they loved so intimately,
Sea most high and young, vast privacy,
solitude of the living, remote horizons
linked the bodies in solitude singing.

Loving. They loved like the lucid moon,
like that round sea that shines on that face,
soft, watery eclipse, cheek darkened,
where red fish come and go without music.
Día, noche, ponientes, madrugadas, espacios,
ondas nuevas, antiguas, fugitivas, perpetuas,
mar o tierra, navío, lecho, pluma, cristal,
metal, música, labio, silencio, vegetal,
mundo, quietud, su forma. Se querían, sabedlo.

Vicente Aleixandre

BOMBA EN LA ÓPERA

Toda descote, la platea brilla;
brilla o bulle, es igual, gira y contembla
el do de pecho que en la glotis grande
—escenario y telón— vibra, retiembra,
rebota en las paredes, sube en aguas
y anega a todos, a los felicísimos
que piensan mientras tragan, tragan, tragan,
que un bel morir tutta una vita onora.
Agua o música, o no: puro perfume,
y el perfume no ahoga.
Sobreviven, conversan, abanican.
La mano muerta mueve las varillas,
el nácar decorado. “Oh, conde, estalle,
rompa ese peto de su camisola
y no me mire así. Tiemblan mis pechos
como globos de luz . . .” Petróleo hermoso
o gas hermoso, o, ya electrificados,
globos de luz modernos en la noche.
Noche de ópera azul, o amarillenta,
mientras los caballeros enfrascados
en la dulce emoción de las danseuses
mienten a las condesas sus amores
lánguidamente verdes en la sombra.
Tarde, ¡qué tarde! Ya los terciopelos,
todo granate, sofocados ciñen
Day, night, sunsets, dawning, spaces
new, ancient, fleeting, perpetual waves,
land or sea, ship, bed, feather, crystal,
metal, music, lip, silence, vegetable,
world, stillness, their shape. They loved, know this.

Vicente Aleixandre

BOMB AT THE OPERA

tr. Donald A. Yates

Low-cut necklines abounding, the down-front rows glisten;
glisten or bustle, all the same, turn about, contemplate
the deep-toned do that vibrates, quivers
in the grand glottis—stage and curtain—
rebounds on walls, overflows
and floods over everyone, the most happy
who are thinking as they gulp, gulp, gulp
that un bel morir tutta una vita onora.
Water or music, but no: pure perfume,
and perfume does not drown.
They survive, converse, fan the air.
The dead hand flutters the tiny ribs,
the ornate nacre. “Oh, Count, shatter,
rip the armor-like bosom of your shirt
and do not look at me that way. My breasts tremble
like bulbs of light…” Handsome kerosene,
or handsome gas or, now electrified,
modern light bulbs in the night.
Night of blue or yellowish opera,
as gentlemen entangled
in the sweet emotion of the danseuses
speak deceitfully in the shadows to countesses
of their languidly budding loves.
Late, so late! Now the velvets,
garnet all, in suffocation encircle
esculturales torsos destiñidos,
mientras el escenario ha congregado
a la carne mortal, veraz que canta.
Todos suspensos en la tiple. ¡Cómó!
¿Es la voz? ¡Es la bomba! ¿Qué se escucha?
Oh, qué dulce petardo allí ha estallado.
Rotos muñecos en los antepalcos.
Carnes mentidas cuelgan en barandas.
Y una cabeza rueda allá en el foso
con espantados ojos. ¡Luces, luces!
Gritos de los muñecos que vacían
su serrín doloroso. ¡Luces, luces!
La gran araña viva se ha apagado.
Algo imita la sangre. Roja corre
por entre pies de trapo. Y una dama
muerta, aún más muerta, con su brazo alzado
acusa. ¿A quién? La música aún se escucha.
Sigue sonando sola. Nadie la oye,
y un inmenso ataúd boga en lo oscuro.

Vicente Aleixandre

ADOLESCENCIA

Vinieras y te fueras dulcemente,
de otro camino
a otro camino. Verte,
y ya otra vez no verte.
Pasar por un puente a otro puente.
—El pie breve,
la luz vencida alegre—.

Muchacho que sería yo mirando
aguas abajo la corriente,
y en el espejo tu pasaje
fluir, desvanecerse.
torsos, statuesque, faded,
while the stage has brought together
veracious, mortal flesh that sings.
Everyone intent on the soprano. What!
Is that a voice? It is a bomb! What a sound!
Oh, how gentle a charge is there exploded.
Shattered manikins behind the boxes,
Dissimulated flesh hangs on railings.
And in the orchestra pit a wild-eyed
head rolls. Lights, lights!
Cries of the manikins who spill out
their painful sawdust. Lights, lights!
The great bright chandelier has gone out.
Something imitates blood. Red, it trickles
amid staggering feet. And a dead woman,
even more dead, accuses with raised hand.
Whom? The music is still heard.
It continues alone. No one listens to it,
and an immense casket floats in the shadows.

Vicente Aleixandre

ADOLESCENCE

tr. Donald A. Yates

Were you to come and go gently
from another road
to another road. To see you
and once more not see you.
To pass over a bridge to another bridge.
—The brief foot,
the gay, defeated light.

I would be boy looking
downstream at the current,
and in the mirror your passage,
flowing, vanishing from sight.
Vicente Aleixandre

EL FUEGO

Todo el fuego suspende
la pasión, ¡Luz es sola!
Mirad cuán puro se alza
hasta lamer los cielos,
mientras las aves todas
por él vuelan, ¡No abrasa!
¿Y el hombre? Nunca. Libre
todavía de ti,
humano, está ese fuego.
Luz es, luz inocente.
¡Humano: nunca nazcas!

Vicente Aleixandre

CIUDAD DEL PARAÍSO

A mi ciudad de Málaga.

Siempre te ven mis ojos, ciudad de mis días marinos.
Colgada del imponente monte, apenas detenida
en tu vertical caída a las ondas azules,
pareces reinar bajo el cielo, sobre las aguas,
intermedia en los aires, como si una mano dichosa
te hubiera retenido, un momento de gloria, antes de hundirte para
siempre en las olas amantes.

Pero tú duras, nunca desciendes, y el mar suspira
o brama por ti, ciudad de mis días alegres,
ciudad madre y blanquísima donde viví y recuerdo,
angélica ciudad que, más alta que el mar, presides sus espumas.
Vicente Aleixandre

FIRE

tr. Muriel Rukeyser

The fire entire withholds passion. Light alone!
Look—it leaps up pure to lick at heaven,
while all the wings fly through. It won’t burn!
And man? Never. This fire is still free of you, man.
Light, innocent light.
And you, human: better never be born.

Vicente Aleixandre

CITY OF PARADISE

To my city of Malaga

tr. Muriel Rukeyser

You before my eyes forever, city of my sea-filled days.
Curtain huge in the mind, the mountain held but barely held in its vertical drop to the blue ocean;
you seem sovereign under sky and over waters,
midway in the reaches of air; a bright hand has caught you up, one moment of glory, it will sink you forever in the desiring wave.

But you stay, you never descend, and the sea sighs or bellows for you, city of my glad days, city most-white, mother, I lived there, I remember, angelic city, foam-presiding and taller than the sea.
Calles apenas, leves, musicales. Jardines
donde flores tropicales elevan sus juveniles palmas gruesas.
Palmas de luz que sobre las cabezas, aladas,
mece el brillo de la brisa y suspenden
por un instante labios celestiales que cruzan
con destino a las islas remotísimas, mágicas,
que allá en el azul índigo, libertadas, navegán.

Allí también viví, allí, ciudad graciosá, ciudad honda.
Allí, donde los jóvenes resbalan sobre la piedra amable,
y donde las rutilantes paredes besan siempre
a quienes siempre cruzan, hervidores, en brillos.

Allí fui conducido por una mano materna.
Acaso de una reja florida una guitarra triste
cantaba la súbita canción suspendida en el tiempo;
quieta la noche, más quieto el amante,
bajo la luna eterna que instantánea transcurre.

Un soplo de eternidad pudo destruirte,
ciudad prodigiosa, momento que en la mente de un Dios emergiste.
Los hombres por un sueño vivieron, no vivieron,
eternamente fúlgidos como un soplo divino.

Jardines, flores. Mar alentando como un brazo que anhela
a la ciudad voladora entre monte y abismo,
blanca en los aires, con calidad de pájaro suspenso
que nunca arriba. ¡Oh ciudad no en la tierra!

Por aquella mano materna fui llevado ligero
por tus calles ingravidas. Pie desnudo en el día.
Pie desnudo en la noche. Luna grande. Sol puro.
Allí el cielo eras tú, ciudad que en él morabas.
Ciudad que en él volabas con tus alas abiertas.
Sketchy streets, slight and musical. Gardens of tropical flowers erecting their young fleshy palms. Palm-crowns of light that being wings over all heads swing the glitter of breezes and bear high celestial lips for an instant; they cross over fatefully to the magic farthest islands which there in deep indigo are freed and sail.

I also, I lived there, city of wit, deep city, There where the children slide on the kind stones, and where the walls glow gold and kiss forever those who forever glittering pass.

There was I led by a maternal hand. Accident of flowering grillwork, that sad guitar singing a song abruptly held in time; the night went quiet, more quieted the lover, the moon forever, in interrupted light.

One breath of eternity could destroy you, prodigious city, moment emerged from a God’s mind. According to a dream man lives and does not live, eternally gleaming like a breath of heaven.

Gardens, flowers. The sea breathing, someone’s arm stretched gasping to the city swinging from peak to gulf, white in air, have you seen birds in the wind held by gusts and not rising in flight? O city not of earth!

By what maternal hand was I borne lightly along your weightless streets. Barefoot by day. Barefoot by night. Big moon. Pure sun. The sky was you, city who lived in the sky. You took flight in the sky with open wings.
Vicente Aleixandre

VIDA

Un pájaro de papel en el pecho
dice que el tiempo de los besos no ha llegado;
vivir, vivir, el sol cruje invisible,
besos o pájaros, tarde o pronto o nunca.
Para morir basta un ruidillo,
el de otro corazón al callarse,
o ese regazo ajeno que en la tierra
es un navío dorado para los pelos rubios.
Cabeza dolorida, sienes de oro, sol que va a ponerse;
aquí en la sombra sueño con un río,
juncos de verde sangre que ahora nace,
sueño apoyando en ti calor o vida.

Vicente Aleixandre

MI VOZ

He nacido una noche de verano
entre dos pausas. Háblame: te escucho.
He nacido. Si vieras que agonía
representa la luna sin esfuerzo.
He nacido. Tu nombre era la dicha;
bajo un fulgor una esperanza, un ave.
Llegar, llegar. El mar era un latido,
el hueco de una mano, una medalla tibia.
Entonces son posibles ya las luces, las caricias, la piel, el
horizonte,
ese decir palabras sin sentido
que ruedan como oídos, caracoles,
como un lóbulo abierto que amanece
(escucha, escucha) entre la luz pisada.
Vicente Aleixandre

LIFE

tr. Willis Barnstone

A bird of paper in my chest
says the time of kisses has not come.
To live, live, the sun slides invisibly,
kisses or birds, late or soon or never
To die a tiny noise will do
as when another heart is silenced
or that foreign lap on the earth
that is a gold ship for blond hairs.
Aching head, its gold temples, sun about to set,
here darkly I dream of a river,
reeds of green blood being born,
I dream leaning on you, heat or life.

Vicente Aleixandre

MY VOICE

tr. Willis Barnstone

I was born one summer night
between two pauses. Speak to me: I hear you.
I was born. If you could see what agony
is in the easy moon.
I was born. Your name was the joy;
under a radiance a hope, a bird.
To arrive, arrive. The sea was a pulsing heart,
hollow in a hand, a warm metal.
Then, at last, lights can be—caresses, flesh,
    horizon—
that is, meaningless words
turning like ears, snails,
like an open lobe dawning
(listen, listen) amid the trampled light.
En esta tarde llueve, y llueve pura
  tu imagen. En mi recuerdo el día se abre.
  Entraste.
No oigo. La memoria me da tu imagen sólo.
Sólo tu beso o lluvia cae en recuerdo.
Llueve tu voz, y llueve el beso triste,
el beso hondo,
beso mojado en lluvia. El labio es húmedo.
Húmedo de recuerdo el beso llora
desde unos cielos grises
delicados.
Llueve tu amor mojando mi memoria,
y cae y cae. El beso
al hondo cae. Y gris aún cae
la lluvia.
Raining this afternoon and your image
rains purely. The day opens up in my memory.
You came in.
I don’t hear. Memory gives me only your image.
Only your kiss or rain falls into my remembrance.
Your voice rains, and a sad kiss rains,
a profound kiss,
kiss drenched with rain. Moist lip.
Moist with memory the kiss cries
from gray delicate
skies.
Your love rains wetting my memory
and falls and falls. A kiss
falls into depth. And gray rain, still gray,
is falling.
Every spectator of Miró’s painting is belligerent, which is a clear sign of the painting’s life; it acts incisively. Like all painting, but more urgently, it needs the spectator’s involvement. Contemplation is not enough. This involvement is an emotional or a mental act or, ideally, both. Via the emotions we discover the artist’s intentions, recognize them and perhaps identify with them; via the thought process we grasp their meaning, their relation to the finished work. The will to get involved is indispensible: we like something only when we want to.

A spectator enriches a work, detects things which the artist may not see. Each generation and breed of spectators finds something different in, say, Velázquez’s Meninas or El Greco’s Burial of the Count of Orgaz. New spectators mean new thoughts to be incorporated in the stock of reflections left by our predecessors, who gave us a perspective on complexities which one era alone cannot grasp. Judgment is inconsistent, and when it lacks the security which a traditional background provides, it tends to act vehemently; the perspectiveless gap must be
filled, and it is, with an intensified involvement, a more aggressive critical attitude. This partly explains why modern art elicits enthusiasms as well as aversions. Once he is attracted to the orbit of a work, to its "radiation zone," the spectator may feel an enthusiasm for the artist which was unknown in the past. The intensity of involvement is just as evident in his exalted enthusiasm as it is in the overdeveloped hostility of his counterparts, the detractors of modern art.

Miro’s painting may not now show the interest in reproducing details which marked his first realistic stage, but neither does it proceed from a man who has turned his back on the world or stayed on the sidelines. To get some idea of his outlook and the connections between his painted objects and real objects, let us think of the lyric poet, whose attitude coincides with Miro’s on a number of points. Miro, like a lyric poet, replaces description with references to personal feelings, spiritual murmurs. He doesn’t say, he sings, and leaves the traces of his private contact with reality on his canvases. After several years of devoting himself to nature (La Riera, 1918, is among the admirable results) he lost interest in the reality around him; he wanted to express intimate realities, drawn from his own burning spring of images. The desire—or need—to affirm an internal truth demands that the real be deformed and the laws of internal truth be respected, superimposed on the world’s laws not scornfully but naturally. After all, knowledge and communication of the world’s laws takes place inside, in deep strata of the artist’s soul where private laws develop as they feed on the influx from the outer world. The raw products of this process are images, images the artist transfers onto his paintings, where he explores and ultimately defines them. Naturally, reality influences these images: no part of what man is or feels exists or can be felt if it is detached from its context in the universe, its “circumstance,” as Ortega so concisely put it. From the outside in flows a current of influences which circulate and then settle in the spirit’s vast shadows, where they wait for the right time to flow out, transformed, into the work of art.

From 1922 on, reality may be said to underlie Miró’s paintings. Having assimilated real objects, Miró now begins to display his versions of them, and so the presence of reality—filtered, not altered—becomes neither direct nor indirect, but rather, secondary. The representation of objects is still authentic, even though it does disfigure and sometimes practically dissolves them in the screening process. For Miró, appearances are the least important part of reality. But can we seriously discuss “internal reality,” reality transformed and yoked into service by the artist? I think so. If we do, we must dispense with the usual and
superficial means of communication based on the artist’s and the spectator’s mutual but hazy reference to a neutral area: exterior reality. We cut the moorings and leap into the painting alone without the help of stray objects or readymade ideas. Instead of judging the work with our sights set on reality, we go straight into the work and try to perceive another world in its synthesis. Changing the way we look at a painting surprises us at first, but if we manage to adjust ourselves to the new perspectives we discover that this interior world nourished by the exterior world is as beautiful as it is rich. Artists who copy nature lag behind with their optical tricks and half-truths; they are overcome by the artist who has seen and put onto cloth an ultrareality which they never even dreamed of.

Refusing to copy, Miró starts his paintings in absolute freedom. And inspiration comes, as we might expect, from the working hand. (Naturally the Muses sleep when their painter does.) The first signs, flames of an inner fire like peculiarly devastated life-forms, appear on the canvas hinting at allusions to reality just enough so as not to sacrifice it to purely personal echoes. Color acquires meaning because as Malraux says, “in a great many modern paintings, things are signified by their colors, just as things are signified by their lines in a Chinese gesture, a Persian flower, a Gothic eye.” As his work progresses, Miró discovers what is behind the painting: the intuitions that gave him the impulse to start. Strange forms surge to the surface, and our searching fantasy gradually finds them easier to recognize and compare with familiar images. In Miró’s world, varia, chimeras and dwarves spring up, quickly working into the main subject of the painting; Miró’s skill at integrating vastly diverse elements without robbing them of their peculiar essence reveals his human gift for empathizing, for embracing everything yet respecting differences.

Miró’s paintings attract us for their simplicity and happy vitality. They are never affected or overdone. Their objects are arranged in a profoundly natural order. And by “profoundly” I mean exactly what I say: the natural order of things at an instinctive level is much more like Miró’s version of order than external reality’s version. Miró has declared that when he begins a picture he has no “idea” of what he will do: he lets himself be led along by what we could call “instinct.” Slowly, he gains awareness of his possibilities. His gift for accepting intuitions as they come, without deforming or disguising them (to make them seem like or unlike the real) can be seen even in his first paintings, but when it really begins to show is in the work he did in 1924 or 1925, when his great personality first expresses itself in paint.
The Evolution of his Painting

Until The Farm (1921-22) his art is realistic, inspired in a meticulous observation of nature; it is primitive art, slightly reminiscent of Rousseau's. From then on, one after another, come the delightful oils, imaginative and translucent, every one of them affirming and confirming Miró's evolution towards expressive freedom. The Harlequin's Carnival (1924-25), housed in an American museum now, reproduces an extraordinarily rich personal vision, interestingly different from the minute realism of The Farm. Painted with the same skill and fervor, both are bewitching. The first still incites us to compare; the second, to imagine. The lyricism is as genuine in the first as it is in the second, even though this may not be apparent at first sight. Reality has been manoeuvred so skilfully in The Farm that it seems intact; actually it has been transformed, endowed with a soul and secret which others had perhaps intuited, but none had yet expressed so sharply.

In what I will call “the transitional oils,” those done between 1923 and 1928, Miró’s imagination seems to feed on itself (although as I have said, he never stopped receiving what Gide called “terrestrial nourishments” deep in his soul, directly, without any intervening awareness, as befits creative souls). He was loyal to his own style, but he also took his place in line with the other great artists of the day. The Carnival, the recognized prototype of this period, is packed with surprises, overrun with inventiveness and humor. The picture achieves an arrangement of diverse elements into a strangely homogeneous unit and fantasy triumphs in the painting’s multiplicity of images. In 1926, we find Miró’s painting carefully contained, the flight of his imagination severely curtailed, and after The Carnival, subdued into the lenten gloom of discipline. Uncovered spaces are larger in the 1926 paintings. Where we once found swarms of masks and figures we now see—as in Dog Barking at the Moon (in the Gallatin Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art)—two vast zones of clear and open color, slashed almost vertically by a ladder on the left, while two notchy spots of color on the right unconsciously evoke the moon and a barking dog. We will discover that same ladder (and in different contexts the dog and the moon too) in other paintings connecting the land and the sky or the land and the sea, the fertile fields of poetic imagination revealed untiringly by Miró.

The above taken liberty of referring to the evocations suggested by some of his images will, I hope, be excused. Signs in Miró’s art have their own meaning. They are put into a picture to be understood in the same language in which they were captured and recorded and that language, which is extremely plastic, cannot be successfully translated into
the language of real objects. To be acquitted of my semi-invented approximations, I allege that Miró has roots underground in strata where reality takes shape. Being rooted this deeply, his objects lend themselves to unprecedented transformations. At the bottom of this creativity lies a seething lyric ferment which gives his works a power of irradiation comparable to Rembrandt’s and (albeit in a different way) Velázquez’s. Poetic feelings infuse the image with a free suggestivity, an easiness which allows every spectator to transform them as his own eyes and fantasy wish.

Besides being a poet Miró is a master of pictorial techniques, a craftsman of quality for whom color is a secretless language and lines are words. The lyric impulse is balanced by the worker’s skill, and on his canvases the two are so vibrantly joined that it is impossible to tell which is which.

The Trip to Holland

In 1928 Miró went to Holland. According to the French critic Zervos, the result of the trip was a return to the observation of things. But there was no such return nor, strictly speaking, was such a return possible, for Miró had never moved away from them; he had listened to suggestions from reality all along, and we can see proof of this in each painting in the way stray, irregular pieces of things which surround him assemble on the surface. At the start, his work obeys inner dictates and those “pieces of things” appear mixed with frayed dreams, remnants of an infra-conscious life. Then the task becomes one of composition: making a harmonious whole from those incomplete, unharmonic reminiscences varying in origin but related in form. What Miró discovered in Vermeer’s admirable “realism” was not, in my opinion, a renewed vision of things. If the Dutchman’s art (and the same might be true of Velázquez’s art) led him to meditate on the eventual advantages of solemnly elaborating reality, those meditations ended in two conclusions of singular interest: that his own painting was at one extreme (extremes meet; here they are like the ends of a rope meeting and making a circle), while Vermeer’s was at the other; that it was possible to find a soul behind reality. Earlier, he had had a premonition of these conclusions; the trip made him understand them more explicitly; it converted an intuition into a conviction.

I shall be more specific about what may so far sound like a rash opinion. What Miró experienced standing in front of Vermeer’s work was the shock of recognition: as painters, they were links at opposite ends of the same chain; they were both within the boundaries of classical art. This could be refuted. It could be said that Miró’s attitude
toward the problem of artistic creation is not without its "romantic" ingredients. But since this is not the time to analyze the classical-romantic antithesis, I shall concentrate on showing that while Miró's art is romantic in some respects, it may be considered "classical" if we use Lafuente Ferrari's definition of classical: "that which we propose as a model for our admiration and activity." And, he adds, "whatever is considered perfect, enthuses and arouses us, is classical." The differences in techniques, inspiration and style between Vermeer and Miró are considerable, but the two artists share this inciting perfection.

The generically entitled Dutch Interiors of 1928 constitute a homogeneous series of great beauty. In them Miró's genius goes so far that it touches the limits of his inner universe. The structured depth of Vermeer's works endowed this series spontaneously (or at least without any conscious control on Miró's part) with a new organization of space based on a contrast between the radiant luminosity of some zones and the reflected luminosity of others. Imagine the painter in front of a virgin canvas applying color instinctively, with no scheme in mind: before long forms and colors which seem to have appeared by chance begin to articulate something, to take on meaning. As the artist establishes connections and differences among the spots of color, forms begin to mean. The Dutch Interiors are all laid out like maps on which contrasts are achieved not from a perspectivized distribution but from the varying intensities of light issued by different areas.

The Role of the Imagination

Miró's art ignores, or practically ignores, perspective. Every bit of a Miró surface is equidistant from the spectator, and it is probably precisely this which gives us the impression that different parts of a Miró painting are equally important. There are no heroes or protagonists as there usually are, even in the most unassuming still lifes or auxiliary areas serving the "main" ones on which the spectator's attention focuses like a spotlight. Dispensing with perspective is like painting with heart in hand, repudiating a convention based on deception. It is not scorning reality; it is aspiring to a certain decisive truth, in this case one which reflects a rare mixture of fantasy, common sense and poetic imagination. And in respect to "common sense," I should like to point out how healthy this artist's digressions are; they are never contaminated by the extravagance of fads or the disease of the times. Even in his collages, fantasy has the earthiness of pure peasant reminiscence (a painting in the Kahn Collection has a rooster and a weathervane). "Cosmopolitan" airs never conquered this taciturn Iberian; the secret of his strength may lie
in his ancestral wisdom, which kept him open to the legends and interpretations that live in the imagination of all Spanish peasants. Like any good villager, he knows incantations and magic formulas, and from time to time we notice traces of strange exorcisms in his works, brilliant hints of highly unusual adventures.

His painting has the stability and equilibrium of a mobile in movement. The dynamism results from the freedom and ease with which he displaces his imagination. His mind is hostile to all ties. First, he tries to become totally uninhibited, to lose himself, and then reinforce the initial impulse. In his Self-Portrait (1938) matter moves, fuses, pulls away in different directions, as if Miró had not decided on a final solution, but if we keep on looking, we notice that under the fluid volumes there is a clearly achieved tension and a solid harmony of the parts. The painting is an ensemble of warring movements, but it cannot be interpreted as mere fragments because the parts do integrate, and the debating forces are resolved in this integration. Imaginative freedom and pictorial dynamism bear the unexpected fruit: a unified plasticity a la Velázquez, exactly the classical accent mentioned earlier.

In his recent paintings Miró continues to display the wealth of his interior world; his art is still revelation, joy, communication. In the last thirty years he has been completing and complementing. Singly, his works are glimpses of his soul; as a whole, they are a panorama of an extraordinarily rich pictorial universe—rich in invention, yet following coherent (I avoid saying logical because of the connotations) lines. The coherence is that of an imagination developing without rational norms, yet not lawlessly: the “terrestrial nourishments” provide a basis for the imagination’s own laws. I am aware of the shortcomings of these explanations, but it is not easy to avoid them. Herbert Read has said (precisely in connection with Miró) that modern art cannot be discussed with exactness because “criticism has not yet invented an exact vocabulary; it took centuries of philosophical speculation to arrive at an aesthetic of rational apprehension and it will be a long time before we can talk with something like certainty about the aesthetic meaning of subconscious modes of apprehension and expression.”

This brings up a problem which is irrelevant to the matter at hand but one I should like to note, even if only in passing: the need for a critical vocabulary which would be “dense” and meaningful, concrete and flexible, capable of really coming to grips with works of art. The English and the Italians, who are more concerned about this problem, are closer to a solution than we Spaniards are. There is a term which when talking about modern art should be used, yet it is one of the most misunderstood and most abused: “dehumanization.” Some day the term
will have to be reconsidered, but for now, even at the risk of misinterpreting, I would like to point out why Miró’s paintings may be deemed full of humanity and how it is “humanized” by its chief source, the imagination.

What we obviously will not find in Miró’s painting are what Ortega calls the “too human” elements that predominate in naturalistic and romantic productions. What we will find is an instinctive curbing of any sentimental wandering and an involuntary irony which place Miró at the antipodes of romanticism, even though he did display vaguely romantic tendencies in his surrealist moments. As far apart as they are, Velázquez and Miró nevertheless work along the same lines or, if you prefer, on the same level: restraint is strong in both whereas it never is in the romantics. Miró scorns grandiloquence. Any hint of sentimentality that creeps into his work he cuts. What could be easier than eliciting the applause which always accompanies a stoop to banality? Stooping flatters the sentimentalism of spectators who relish finding their mediocre concerns where they can embellish them and believe they are transcendental: in a work of art cut down to their size.

**Reality and Poetry**

Reminiscences of reality populate Miró’s painting. Whoever assumes that this artist’s intentions are to deform and disfigure the outlines of real objects might bear in mind that accepting such an assumption is as good as refusing to look for the code in his painting, whose similarity with the real results from the enriching thrust of nature in the artist’s spirit. The so-called deformations come from Miró’s artistic honesty, from his inability to arbitrarily reconstruct real details; they are blurred in his imagination. A canvas of his is like a print of a photograph smudged by water or a chemical reagent: it offers surprising glimpses of a distant world.

Miró does not prevent these reminiscences from coming out in his paintings. In fact he may not consciously distinguish them until he has finished. In connection with this, I would like to stress a truth which is often doubted: an artist is fully aware of his work only when he sees it finished. At first it is a question of intuitions, flashes that light up the surrounding darkness. Now more than ever, artists are anxious, as the late Spanish sculptor Angel Ferrant explained, to control the unconscious. Perhaps the best overall description of the artists who have characterized this century so far is that they are conscious of the unconscious; conscious of the secret forces in themselves and aware that these
forces are an integral part of them; hence they let these forces express themselves freely.

In Miró’s case, free expression caused the birth of a world which lives in and for poetry. His communicability and contagiability derive from that same freedom. Miró’s art embodies poetry because it is filled with its creator’s lyrical confidences and transmits them intact, in their own personal shape, to the spectator. Thanks to his structural techniques, his universe soon becomes accessible, and we perceive him in its depths, yet near to us. Is this abstract art? Perhaps, but let us remember what the painter Bazaine said: “Abstracted, extracted from... all art is; if it is not, it does not exist. It is abstract insofar as it is not nature but rather a contradiction of the real in its totality.”

When Miró became consciously interested in reality again (1938-40), his painting did not register a change as it did during the twenties when he abandoned realism. During the months he lived in Mallorca in 1940 he spent long hours contemplating the sea, listening to the organ in the Cathedral of Palma, reading at home—Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa, Mallarmé, Rimbaud... (works like The Nightingale’s Song at Midnight and Morning Rain were certainly created under the influences of these solicitudes). Hours of isolation were followed by avalanches of creativity in which inspiration and discipline again allied in fertile union, with an important peculiarity pointed out by Miró himself: the first suggestions generally came from the material he was using. The return to his country had strengthened his artistic personality and immunized him against fruitless experiments. He felt the need to work with the soil itself, and yielding to the urge, he created such intriguing sculptures as Bird (1945) and ceramics in collaboration with José Llorens Artigas. Also from 1945 is Woman in the Night, where he obsessively reproduces the blood-stained hand of the Paleolithic painter he had seen printed so many times on the walls of Altamira.

Who knows how many “influences” clever critics will detect in his painting? Let us leave the job to them. Miró’s master, Pascó, urged him to take as many liberties as he wanted in his work and he did exactly that. Never as a whim; as a necessity. So one could rightly point out Urgell’s romanticism, the cubist lesson, Rimbaud’s and St. John of the Cross’ poetry... “influences.” But the list does not say anything about the sea crashing against the cliffs or running onto the Mediterranean beaches, the song from his homeland, stories he heard as a child... These, plus thousands of other things make a soul. And yet with all this it is still impossible to know how Miró—or any other artist—finds the road to invention.

Miró’s painting is one of sensations and intuitions: a poetic plastis-
city. His initial indeterminateness reflects the incomplete nature of intuitions and his willingness to work with them as they come, no matter how they come. It is a question of sensitivity which Miró handles with an equilibrium he maintains throughout the creative process. With rigorous control, thanks to which he interrupts his work when he does not feel entirely free, when he does not feel he is in a state of pictorial and poetic grace, he waits for the near or distant day when he is able to finish the painting without forcing his hand. An involuntary mirror of nature, his imaginative work surprises us more than once with its revelational quality.

Has Miró arrived at the limits of his power to evoke and transfigure? I pose the question to anticipate the reader's probable curiosity, though I realize that phrasing it like this may confuse the issue. Miró is not exactly an experimenter or a "dissenter;" he is a simple and sincere man whose illuminations have created a magic aura around him. He never presumed to be a prophet or a wizard. For him, painting is a way of life. And precisely because his outlook is so essential he has avoided schoolish dogmatism; the limitations of his paintings are not those of a school but those of the man Miró. His creative independence is tightly related to his loyalty to feelings and forms, and his refusal to mold his work to ideological dictates guarantees the authenticity of his efforts. His unleashed lyric strength obeys only one law: its own rhythms, which come from secret forces which are responsible for some of the most impressive canvases of this century. Among so many other things, Miró has invented a way to reduce confusion to a vast order of colors and forms. Without destroying the rich complexity of inner ferment he manages to organize them simply, and because of this and his deftly expressed spontaneity, he achieves greatness. But one must remember this: imagination alone is not enough; what makes Miró's work rise above that of his surrealist and abstract associates is, besides discipline, its ultimately aesthetic goals. Miró's paintings are not documents. They are simply works of art.
Karl Krolow

NÄHE

Blind für das Büschel
der Geraden in der Ebene,
solang man
von zu nahe sieht,
zu nahe Fläche mit
Gegenständen, die auf sich
bestehen, ohne Abnahme
der Grösse, ohne Krümmung
zur Ferne, nichts als
eine absolut gelungene
Strasse, eine
Reihe Gärten mit
vollkommen unveränderbaren
Pflanzen, kein Blickfeld
dahinter.
Blind
für die ebene Zeichenfläche,
in der Körper räumlich
werden, nur diese Nelken,
willkürlich geordnet
in der zylindrischen Flasche,
Äpfel dabei, unprojektiv
und übertrieben vorn —
ein Stilleben, das
Perspektive tötet.
Karl Krolow

CLOSENESS

tr. Michael Bullock

Blind to the cluster
of straight lines in the plane
as long as we
look from too close,
too close a surface
with objects that insist
upon themselves, without reduction
of magnitude, without curving
into the distance, nothing but
an absolutely successful
road, a
row of gardens with
completely unalterable
plants, no field of vision
beyond.
Blind
to the flat surface of signs
in which bodies become spatial,
only these carnations
arbitrarily arranged
in the cylindrical bottle,
apples too, unprojective
and exaggerated in the foreground —
a still-life that
kills perspectives.
EIN EINFACH EMPFINDENDER MENSCH

Einem einfach empfindenden Menschen
gelingt manches
unter der Hand, herzhaft,
in praktischer Beschäftigung.
Auf gutem Fuss steht er
mit den Dingen,
Veilchen, Fische, auch
Zusammenhänge sind einfach da
wie tägliches Allerlei
bei Trennung und Wiederfinden.
Er lässt ihm die Wahl
und bleibt am Leben
ohne Beunruhigung.
Weiter lebt er, natürlich sprechend.
Gewöhnte Worte
kommen ihm auf die Lippen.
Er spricht in dieser Art.
Eine leere Stelle
ist für ihn kein Verlust.
Es ist nicht gedankenlos,
gut von ihm zu denken.
A man who feels simply
succeeds in many things
on the quiet, courageously,
in practical activity.
He is on good terms with things,
with violets, with fishes, also
connexions simply exist
like everyday occurrences
during parting and meeting again.
He leaves the choice to them
and stays alive
without disquiet.
He lives on, speaking naturally.
Accustomed words
come to his lips.
He speaks this way.
To him an empty space
is no loss.
It isn’t thoughtless
to think well of him.


Karl Krolow

DER REST

Der Versuch,  
Körperstellen zu beschreiben.  
Die Luft ist  
ohne Bewegung.  
Die Sätze  
rühren sich nicht.  
Eine selbständige Hand  
ruht auf einer fremden  
Hautfläche.  
Ein Torso ist  
ohne Gedächtnis für ein  
an den Leib gezogenes Bein.  
Mit meiner Linken oder  
Rechten suche ich  
nach dem verlorenen  
Zusammenhalt.  
Langsam verschwinden  
im heissen Zimmer  
an den Wänden die Bilder.  
Die wortlose Berichtigung  
von Beziehungen  
begnügt sich mit einem  
Rest an Aufmerksamkeit.
Karl Krolow

THE RESIDUE

tr. Michael Bullock

The attempt
to describe parts of the body.
The air is
without movement.
The sentences
do not stir.
An independent hand
rests on the surface
of an alien skin.
A torso has
no recollection of a
leg drawn up to the body.
With my left hand or
with my right I seek
for the lost
unity.
In the hot room
the pictures
slowly vanish from the walls.
The wordless correction
of relationships
is content with a
residue of attention.
Ich komme gern wieder.
Es ist wirklich nicht nötig,
aus dem Fenster zu winken,
Die Entfernung macht ohnehin alles undeutlich.
Allmählich verschwinde ich aus dem Bild,
das der Rahmen absteckt.
Eine Weile lässt der Horizont mich noch auf dem Land spazierengehen,
während ich mir darüber klar werde, dass inzwischen das Fenster geschlossen wurde hinter mir und Gedächtnis aussetzt.
Fortgang ist ein paar Redewendungen wert wie die Rückkehr, bei der es heissen wird: da bin ich also.
Karl Krolow

ON LEAVING

tr. Michael Bullock

I like coming back.
It is
really not necessary
to wave out of the window.
In any case the distance
makes everything indistinct.
Gradually I disappear
from the picture
marked out by the frame.
For a while the horizon
still lets me stroll
in the landscape
while it becomes clear to me
that meanwhile
the window has been closed
behind me and memory
is fading away.
Leaving is worth
a few phrases,
like coming back,
when the words will be:
well, here I am.
Karl Krolow

UNTERWEGS

Die täglich schöne
Naturanschauung unterwegs,
wen man zu gehen glaubt,
aber durch den stillen Fleiss
des Horizonts voran kommt,
der zurück weicht. Er gibt
die Illustration
eines Hügels mit Bäumen,
erläutert als Ferne
Türme einer Stadt,
Häuser, so hoch
wie der Gesichtskreis
sie zulässt.
Im Vordergrund wehende Blätter
sorgen für wirkliche Landschaft,
die mit Händen zu greifen ist.
Karl Krolow

ON THE WAY

tr. Michael Bullock

The everyday, beautiful
view of nature on the way
when we think we are walking
but are merely moving forward
through the silent diligence of the horizon
that is backing away. It presents
the illustration
of a hill with trees,
demonstrates as distant
towers of a town,
houses as tall
as the range of vision
permits.
In the foreground fluttering leaves
provide for a real landscape
that can be grasped with hands.
Beckett's plays can be considered poetic visions, challenging reader or spectator by their total impact, demanding his participation in each aspect of the performance. Contrary to Racine's or Shakespeare's no less visionary and poetically coherent tragedies, Beckett's theater never attains those moments of extreme furor or despair that reveal the irremediable disintegration of character or situation. These twentieth century plays which evoke by their stagnant atmosphere man's situation in the universe preclude any form of dramatic climax. In Waiting for Godot the change from a lonely, barren tree in Act One to the same tree sprouting a few leaves in the second and final act bears witness to an ironically limited change within an inextricable situation. Sameness rather than catastrophe provides the ultimate revelation of a theater where the characters never give direct expression to any clearly definable emotion or thought. Beckett's plays, in respect to characterization, plot, situation, decor and rhetoric, imply or suggest rather than exemplify or signify. This may be the essence of all great theater, but it is rarely as pronounced as in Beckett's. Consequently, silence somehow corresponds to the very nature of a play which must consistently avoid direct communication through particular incidents or moments. The reader or spectator must bridge the distance between various words, establish connections, strengthen blurred contours, render at least semi-audible what remains muted without, however, making the unsaid or the inef-
fable explicit to the point of betrayal. Silence thus refers to the perpetually unstated meaning, the unformulated conception, the mute perplexity of man in a given situation or the lack of response on the part of the creator or creation.

Beckett's characters frequently find it impossible to derive a meaning from either word or silence or a combination of both. If they were to probe deeply into their inner world, they would encounter a wide zone of silence, mainly because they have so much trouble in remembering their own past. In fact, they would be incapable of giving any sort of coherent account of themselves or of evoking anything more than echoes of the past. For instance Winnie, the main character of *Happy Days*, typically exclaims out of context: "Golden you called it that day when the last guest was gone." Her words encounter a threefold silence. Willie, her partner, does not reply at all, for to begin with he is deaf and insensitive. In the second place, he has not truly been Winnie's partner in the past. Finally, Winnie, by her words, does not arouse any true memories of her own past. Nell and Nagg, the parents in *Endgame*, in their attempt to recall their honeymoon on Lake Como, seem to communicate better, for the words uttered by one create a response in the other and appear to refer to the same event. But by further scrutiny we detect how specious these memories are. They do not correspond to any event or voice in the past.

Nagg: You were in such fits that we capsized. By rights we should have been drowned.

Nell: It was because I felt happy.

Nagg: (indifferent) It was not, it was not, it was my story and nothing else. Happy! Do you not laugh at it still. Every time I tell it. Happy!

By constant re-enactments of imagined scenes of the past, Nell and Nagg have not only reduced bygone experiences to silence, they have tried to elude an empty and threatening present through performing. The prolonged silence to which they have to submit when Hamm orders that each parent be sealed in his trash can, is broken only by words which reaffirm their separation. The very words which I have quoted indicate how ironically superfluous it was to put Nell and Nagg into separate bins; a meaningful exchange has never occurred between them, nor is it possible in Beckett's work.

*Krapp's Last Tape* shows how painful silence can become. Krapp's silence, when he listens to the tape, is the very opposite of the lyrical outbursts prevalent during the Romantic period. Often the Romantic
“hero” would triumph over the silence of the world thanks to the powerful and universal voice emerging from his own past. Krapp’s past is irretrievable; for an authentic voice to emerge he might even have to wait longer than Vladimir and Estragon for Godot to appear in person. Moreover, he must confront an empty solitary present. He has to talk back on a tape which replaces the inner voice of the past and fills the void of the present. It is a mechanical device which peoples with words a realm of maddening silence. It reproduces or makes sonorous Krapp’s purported past to which he has no natural access. He does not move away from his recorder, from his cubicle delineating the narrow margin of the present and the even slimmer prospect of the future. Within the confined horizon of his experience wherein the play unfolds, no other voice can enter. Krapp has no memories: he is alone and he cannot possibly sustain a meaningful monologue. At best he can interrupt with a few comments the mechanical device bereft of feeling or reflection which echoes the hollowness of an earlier and no less meaningless present. Krapp is alone with himself, with his nothingness which no other sound can enliven and to which no other voice can give resonance. The very act of listening to the voice of his past, as played by the tape, merely becomes a new variety of silence. Krapp does not truly recognize himself. The past, which he is powerless to recapture and consequently to understand, remains no less alien in a recording. Once the tape has run its course, Krapp is confronted with ultimate silence.

Krapp and practically all of Beckett’s characters have barely any memories. Their voice in the present, into which so little is channelled from the past, is thereby weakened. In the first two plays, Waiting for Godot and Endgame, the characters have partners with whom they can converse. The scenes between Vladimir and Estragon are dialogues of a sort, which serve to make the pervasiveness of silence less acute. Furthermore, this semblance of communication in the present can provide a substitute for memory. Didi and Gogo’s dialogues can indeed be considered a mere masquerade of silence, for their replies form a succession rather than a sequence. More often than not, one speaker misunderstands the other, even in the rare instances when he has actually listened. A reply by Didi or Gogo is less an answer than an addition to his own previous remarks:

Estragon: (chewing) I asked you a question.
Vladimir: Ah.
Estragon: Did you reply?
Vladimir: How’s the carrot?
Estragon: It’s a carrot.
Vladimir: So much the better, so much the better. (Pause.) What was it you wanted to know?

Estragon: I've forgotten. (Chews) That's what annoys me. (He looks at the carrot appreciatively, dangles it between finger and thumb.) I'll never forget this carrot. (He sucks the end of it meditatively.) Ah yes, now I remember.

To Estragon's statement: "I asked you a question" Vladimir answers "Ah." This indicates that even prior to the two statements just quoted Vladimir has replied to Estragon's question by silence. By saying "Ah!" he avoids taking the question into account and thus reinstates the silence. Later in the passage, Estragon's second and more direct return to the question: "Did you reply?" goes unanswered, thus renewing the silence, for Vladimir says: "How is the carrot?" and not "What was your question?" or "I have answered it" or "The answer to your question is . . . ." When finally Vladimir shows willingness to acknowledge the question, it is Estragon's turn to perpetuate the silence, for to Vladimir's: "What is it you wanted to know" he answers, "I have forgotten." He will remember only after he sucks the carrot or rather because he sucks the carrot. Each character's thought follows to a large extent its own set pattern, its inner rhythm and is scarcely modified by the words of the other speaker. The refusal or incapacity to acknowledge a question represents a way of reducing an interlocutor to silence, but the belated acknowledging of a question is a hollow form of self assertion and, as it were, a double interruption. Each character utters words that are pregnant with silence. As they fail to communicate there can only be one reason why they should speak one after the other rather than simultaneously: their lack of fluency, all the more so since Vladimir and Estragon do not pass with the same ease from pause to word and from word to pause. Thus silence and words are by no means opposites.

In Waiting for Godot scenic interplay bordering on slapstick plays an important part, i.e. taking off shoes, putting on repeatedly the partner's hat. This is to a certain extent a device to avoid boredom, to fill a void, to make a masquerade of silence. It can even be considered a grotesque version of what Pascal called "divertissement." Vladimir and Estragon do nothing and say nothing of consequence: they cover up silence by words. They play at fragmenting silence which otherwise would assume unbearable dimensions (for themselves as well as for the spectator). Time, represented by two days or evenings, is endless in a barren landscape reduced to a tree not strong enough to hold a man who might wish to hang himself. Vladimir and Estragon do their best
to distract one another from the “metaphysical dimensions” of their existence, identifiable with this awe-inspiring and ineffable silence.

Vladimir and Estragon try to entertain each other. When one performs, the other as spectator is by his very function reduced to silence. With the appearance of Pozzo and Lucky both Vladimir and Estragon are turned into an audience. Lucky’s speech—which in spite of its suggestive power gushes forth as if produced by a machine—forces the other characters to listen in silence. For Pozzo this is a repeat performance but for Vladimir and Estragon it represents a new show which they greet with amazement. In the second act, when Pozzo and Lucky return and when a reiteration of Lucky’s speech is expected, the servant’s verbal outburst is replaced by silence. He has become mute. This muteness, paralleling Pozzo’s blindness, is part of the degenerating process of man’s faculties which befalls many of Beckett’s characters. But the physical element cannot be isolated. Even when Lucky could speak, he did not utter truly human words in an acceptable human voice. The artificially provoked and artificially sounding flow of words, whatever it might reveal about man’s condition, does not really put a stop to silence. It can never be mistaken for Lucky’s real voice or an expression of his true being. He has never communicated with anyone, but merely reacted to a cruel stimulant and, for that reason, when he must perform, remains silent. The muteness which afflicts him in the second act does not imply any basic change.

Compared to Waiting for Godot, Endgame has a markedly slower rhythm. Everything reveals an ebbing out. As the sleeping pills or tranquilizers run out for Hamm and the biscuits for Nell and Nagg, the spectator or reader has every right to expect that even the fountain of words is bound to dry up:

It will be the end and there I’ll be, wondering what can have brought it on and wondering what can have . . . why it was so long coming. There I’ll be, in the old shelter, alone against the silence and . . . the stillness. If I can hold my peace, and sit quiet, it will be all over with sound, and motion, all over and done with. The play opens on a prolonged silence: Hamm, still asleep, barely possesses the energy to wake up; and the curtain falls after another prolonged stretch of silence: Hamm covers up his face expecting to go to sleep again, perhaps forever. A Racinian tragedy, Bérénice, stresses in a rather similar way the theme of silence. Antiachus, at the beginning of the play, wishes to express his love to Bérénice and thereby interrupt five years of silence. At the end of the play each of the three characters will live in splendid isolation, reduced, in regard to the other two, to

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eternal, self-imposed silence. This situation increases the dramatic intensity of the single day during which the five acts of the tragedy unfold. Nonetheless, the function of silence stretching into eternity differs from that of Endgame. The Beckett play suggests circularity: it begins again and again as though to express an endless weakening, infinitely close, but not identical to death. In Racine, on the contrary, tragedy arises from the complete separation between silence and words, and the survival of the protagonists in an absolute solitude and exile.

As Hamm's passage from sleep to awakening is progressive, so his passage from silence to words is slow and punctuated. For most characters in Endgame silence makes up a larger portion of their role than do words. Nell and Nagg, each in a dustbin, are rarely heard. When they emerge for a few minutes from their confinement they do not burst forth into endless tirades. If they are allowed to emerge, it is not primarily to give them the opportunity to speak, but to listen to their son whose words must be heard. If Clov, his most steady listener, should depart, the threat to Hamm's performance would be too great for the play to continue. He tries hard to dominate his listeners, and his most energetic gesture is to blow a whistle. Since he remains motionless and blind at the center of the stage, words, effective and meaningful by convention, provide him with his only source of power. But to Hamm, whose speeches take up so much time that the play resembles a monologue, words come with considerable difficulty. He pauses at such great length between words, sentences or clauses, that words appear to be mere breaks in a continuum of silence. His lack of fluency reveals physical weakness, but it shows even more strongly that he must overcome an inner obstacle. The itinerary from perception or thought to word is a difficult one, for Beckett's characters are alienated not only from the world, but also from themselves. They have scarcely any grip on their own reality. Hamm struggles against silence, which he considers a mere nothingness. Fragmentary expression is better, he believes, than the threat of a soundless world. The more difficulty he experiences in overcoming silence, the more essential the audience becomes.

Hamm, as we have stated, needs his parents as listeners. One parent dies, and Clov threatens to leave. The long awaited child may or may not arrive from the outside world. If Clov were to depart no one could look anymore through the little window. Hamm, the sole survivor, would be reduced to the darkness of his inner world without any visual or verbal communication from anyone or anywhere. Hamm's world would become at once silence and darkness, the world metaphorically represented by the room he occupies. Silence in Endgame reveals
difficulty in communication, distance between self and self, as well as self and others, and by forcing man to affirm his being against the ebbing of life, it assumes an importance at least equal to words and dialogue. In the performance, silence should emerge everywhere making the spectator aware of its almost physical presence to the point that he would sense it as pertaining to no given character or moment, but as the very essence of human existence. Through the suggestive power of silence more than through the inadequate and painful formulation of words, the reader or spectator bridges the distance that normally separates him from the characters merely by saying to himself words which they fail to utter.

In *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, the human voice can be compared to a modulated murmur resounding in a twilight setting. In *Happy Days*, under a strong stage sun, Winnie, alerted by a bell, delivers a shattering monologue. She solicits little response from her only partner, Willie. She attempts to sing a song of praise, but her clichés do not add up to a melodious sequence. Her long pauses, far from suggesting expectancy of someone else’s reaction, afford her necessary breathing spells. Winnie, who lacks the ability to utter words and make gestures, is simultaneously woman approaching death. Buried to her waist in Act One and to her shoulder in Act Two, she barely comments on her gradual entombment. By a series of banal statements, she escapes from silence, which would more closely express her condition of solitude and paralysis. Winnie’s words are analogous to the falsity that characterizes the scorching stage sun, deprived of life-giving qualities. The spectator is irritated by, and sees through, the piercing light, the shattering whistle and Winnie’s shrill voice which expresses false consolations:

> Oh no doubt the time will come when before I can utter a word I must make sure you heard the one that went before and then no doubt come another time when I must learn to talk to myself a thing I could never bear to do such wilderness.

In spite of her efforts, Winnie cannot cast herself into the part of a listener. Since she does not by any means hold Willie’s steady attention, she has no audience to give existence to her speeches. As Winnie is condemned to utter words which do not touch upon reality she is denied silence: life as a performance but not a reality must go on.

In *Krapp’s Last Tape* the mechanical voice has become one of the protagonists, filling Krapp’s long silences. In *Happy Days* a somewhat false theatrical voice delivers a monologue in order to play at being alive. In *Play* where projectors replace the natural twilight and the simulated sunshine of the former plays, the organic human voice has com-
pletely disappeared. The three characters standing in funeral urns with only their heads emerging belong to an Inferno which no longer suggests our everyday existence. They pronounce words at such speed that the spectator can only extract their meaning when the play is repeated verbatim. *Play* is filled with words. Not a second of silence. Each character's speech follows the other's without interval or pause as soon as the light falls on him. The man and the two women constituting the cast talk without taking a breath as long as the light persists. Speech, provoked from without not within, is a “toneless,” “unorganic” mechanical voice the strength of which depends on the intensity of the light beam. The characters do not speak to express themselves or to reply to one another. Each one utters in a fragmentary way words dimly related to his very ordinary past. Each one embarks upon the reciting of an insignificant story, no more able to put it together than to give up his abortive attempts at narration. Although there is not a second of silence or relief for the audience, paradoxically the play is entirely made up of silence and suggests a part of our experience which lies beyond words. As human beings, the man and the two women have ceased to speak. They are forever silent, but in their consciousness shapeless memories, petty feelings, mitigated qualms have not subsided. They remain in a constant state of quiver or murmur. All three characters pray that no more words be extracted from them, that no more light shine on them; and they pray to forget, in order that a blackness and quietude external to themselves may parallel their inner condition. Whereas in *Waiting for Godot* words imply a masquerade of silence, in the Inferno of *Play* words become a painful unmasking of silence. The play consists of three monologues by three characters whose words never overlap, even though they give the impression of simultaneity. Most often, each of the two characters remaining silent and in darkness is unaware of the words and existence of the third speaker. Thus the listener has been eliminated and the relation of silence to speech fundamentally transformed. Words extracted with daggerlike brutality, no longer linked to identity and situations, become interchangeable. *Play* appears to illustrate Kierkegaard's statement: “The sure way of being mute is not to hold your tongue but to talk.”

In Beckett's first two plays silence and the human voice, with its slow rhythms and weak modulations, echo the dim hope or aspiration left to mankind. Godot, as well as the mysterious child in *Endgame* or any other possible savior unlikely to arrive, are bound to remain silent. Later plays do not provide the slightest illusion that a divine or even human voice might be heard. Still greater absurdity characterizes those
plays where despair, the sequel to hope, is banished. The mechanical or artificial voice reveals an estrangement from which there is no return, a world where even words and silence have severed their relations. *Bing*, one of the very last texts of Samuel Beckett, may be the ultimate form of reduction of all literature, including drama. A body which may be dead or alive, lips and legs glued or sewn together, replaces the almost anonymous characters of the previous play. Words no longer connected in any tangible way with the body tend persistently toward a whiteness, the poetic equivalent of silence, filling an arbitrarily delineated space which refers to nothing and beyond which lies nothing. Punctuated by the words *ping* in English, *bing* and *hop* in French, this text evokes by different devices a shift of attention or awareness from without, since all inner organic qualities have come infinitely close to complete silence and immobility. It might seem that after *Bing* Beckett will be almost silent as a writer, despite the permanent vitality of imagination he suggests in one of his own texts. Nonetheless, in his recent works Beckett has come as close as possible to his goal: the communication of the incommunicable.
BOOK REVIEWS


The first English translation of Karl Krolow's Foreign Bodies, one of the most important and influential poetry books written after the second World War, is appearing ten years after its original publication in German in 1959. Several new editions have been published since then in Germany, and it is almost incomprehensible that a decade had to elapse before the book was translated into English. Krolow has established himself as one of the most innovative poets of postwar Germany. The intellectual intensity and metaphorical originality of his poems place him, aesthetically speaking, into the line of those poets who have most rigorously influenced and changed the atmosphere of modern poetry: Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and Valéry. Although his poems quite often deal with nature, Krolow can by no means be called a nature poet. He sees everything with the eye of the mind and each poem reflects the conceptual intensity of new perceptions.

Whenever a poet is rendered from one language into another, the difficulties of translations have to be overcome. Krolow is certainly no easy poet to translate. It requires a constant effort on the translator's part to keep listening to the nuances that play between the words and the lines of the original text. Michael Bullock, the translator of Foreign Bodies, has mastered the rendering of Krolow's poems with fine precision and textual accuracy. Although the English translations of each poem give the reader an exact reflection of the original text, he will have the pleasure of finding each poem reproduced in bilingual form. Thus the eye can shift rapidly between the German text and its English recreation. Mr. Bullock, who has translated numerous books from the German, has also translated Krolow's Invisible Hands, which was published simultaneously in England and the United States.

With Krolow's Foreign Bodies, Ohio University Press has continued its series of bilingual poetry books of foreign poets which started with Yves Bonnefoy's Douve. The translation of Foreign Bodies will make it possible to introduce Karl Krolow to an English-speaking audience and establish for him the reputation and fame he has had for several years in other countries. It can only be hoped that more poetry books of this nature will be published in the future.

Peter Paul Fersch
“A fiction that changes something in the
universe becomes itself reality”

WITOLD GOMBRONICZ

J. Michael Yates is a poet. This means that he is constantly peering through the semi-transparent screen of “reality” in search of Reality. As a poet he records what he sees through the screen at moments when it fleetingly clears. As a writer of fictions he is concerned with the totality of his vision, which involves both the screen itself and the dimly perceived figures beyond it. Hence the duality, the ambiguity, the ambivalence of his stories. Hence, too, the wealth of convincingly realistic detail on the one hand and the extreme flights of fantasy on the other.

The pieces in Man in the Glass Octopus are all, in varying degrees, records of this act of looking: not fleeting visions clearly seen for an instant, as in a poem, but movement, change and development seen sometimes distinctly, sometimes darkly, but always within an enveloping haze of doubt.

Sono Nis himself is so protean that we ask ourselves: Does he exist? And again: Is not the very multiplicity of his forms a proof that he exists more than any of us? Within these pages, in any case, he exists with an intensity all the greater because he is in constant danger of extinction. Indeed, at the end of the very first story, “the passage of Sono Nis,” we leave him in a situation from which there is clearly no escape. The world has been reduced to ceaselessly-running crowds of men with a very occasional woman, racing through the streets of the city so tightly packed that to attempt to break out of the stream means certain death as the result of being hurled and crushed against the walls of the buildings. Sono Nis, by his own volition, is firmly wedged in one of these streams and must go on running until he dies from hunger and exhaustion. Thus the book may be said to begin with the extinction of its chief protagonist.

The next story concerns a top-level disc jockey who, in the course of his studio-bound existence in which he enjoys constantly growing, absolutely unparalleled success entirely unjustified by any real achievement, gradually shrinks physically to the point at which he is so tiny
he has to be picked up with forceps in order to be removed from his office. Again, ultimate extinction threatens.

In two stories, "smokestack in the desert" and "concerning a temple," the human characters are dominated by enigmatic buildings whose origin is mysterious and whose function is sinister.

After further stories permeated by the idea of extinction—of a life, a personality, a faculty (sight) or a physical quality ("the man who lost his human scent")—we find ourselves back near the starting point with "an inquest into the disappearance and possible death of (the late) Sono Nis, photographer." Here the problem of identity, existence, extinction is posed directly. Is Sono Nis alive or dead? Did he ever live, did he ever die? These questions of existence and extinction remain unanswered because they are unanswerable. How establish the existence or nonexistence of an entity devoid of any fixed identity? Sono Nis is not so much a figure seen through a haze of doubt—he is the haze of doubt. Every statement made about him dissolves into another and contradictory statement that obliterates the first.

This, the author seems to be saying, is the fundamental quality of human life. Devoid of any essence, man is nothing but fleeting existence—an existence so wavering and insubstantial as hardly to deserve the name. Perhaps only the fictions woven around his ever changing figure have any true claim to reality.

MICHAEL BULLOCK


Since 1914, when Dino Campana erupted in orphic frenzy on the Italian literary scene, his work has suffered lamentable neglect. Only in the last fifteen years have critical efforts focused on this "wild man of Italian poetry," efforts limited almost exclusively to his native land and tongue. Surely when the annals of international Modernism
are compiled, the verse and prose poems of Campana must be reckoned with. This proto-Modern contributes signally to the formulation of a new literary sensibility. His translator's contention that "he is as important to twentieth-century poetry as, say, Lorca or Mayakovsky" is no partisan exaggeration.

I. L. Salomon's apt and lucid renderings of this difficult material, formally chaotic and verbally incandescent, are eloquent tribute to a genuine poet. *Ignotus* not only is resurrected; he is materially transubstantiated. The monoglot reader will scarcely be able to assess what James Dickey calls Salomon's "imaginative fidelity" to Campana's Italian. But he will ride the surging "ecstasy of violence" that bursts from the original poems and is conveyed in all its "elemental fury" in Salomon's English. He may indeed concur with Dickey, who says that "the discovery of Dino Campana in these translations is one of the most exciting events of my recent life." For this accomplishment Marradi, Campana's birthplace, has justly awarded the translator its Gold Medal.

Salomon's own masterfully controlled lyrics in his volume *Unit & Universe* project a spirit consonant with that of such a poet as Carlo Betocchi, whose *Poems* (Clarke and Way, 1964) he also translated admirably. But for the work of Campana, the schizoid hobo-seaman, he must substitute for "elective affinity" a generous measure of sympathetic sensitivity to an alien spirit.

As Pound was barking his injunction "Make It New!" against the flaccid, echoic Edwardians, Campana was railing at the Italian literary lazzeronismo, when "a generation of petty thieves came to literature." Orphism, the esoteric mystique of the poet-Redeemer, promised salvation. The orphic vision commanded his tortured mind. Walt Whitman's means, stylistic and strategic, freed that vision from the bondage of petty poetizing. "Art is expression. This should imply a reality." Whitman's evocatory and incantatory style was not only a liberating instrument, but also a scaffold for erecting a transcendent reality.

Like Poe's deep, dark vistas, Campana's

*landscape is mythical*

*With ships toward infinity.*

But his is surrealistic landscape, charged with the imperatives of his "catastrophic ardor," as he is pursued by unrelenting "Chimeras." He is "poet of the night," the dark night of an anguished soul, as
Life in the distance
Its raucous cries merged screams:
Screams to the dying sun
That stains the flowerbeds with blood.

Even “At the heart of evening there is/ Ever a red stagnant wound.”
Campana assaults grammar and syntax, as well as the proprieties of diction, in conjuring his apocalypse, in which

The beastly monarchs tremble over their baroque chairs
And thrones and altars cemented with sperm collapse
Let us purify the women under the weight of the sea.

He transfigures the quays and streets of Genoa and Buenos Aires with a “poetry, poetry, poetry” that he invokes to

Rise rise rise up
From the electric fever of the pavement at night.

His usage calls up John Millington Synge, who in 1910 said that language must grow brutal before it can again be human. And long before the modern mode became canonical he recognized that the “rare virtue” of his art was “To bear distorted rhymes off-beat.”

Salomon pulsingly conveys the inscape of this ecstatic madness, “threatening on the precipitous slope” of sanity. But he catches the grace of another note as well. Years before Eliot’s “Lady” and Ransom’s “Blue Girls,” Campana’s “Tre Giovani Fiorentine” swing along. Through Salomon’s generosity and skill we can match them stride for stride:

Rolled with a virginal gait
Rolled, head of hair like music
In the splendor of the warm sun
There were three girls all of one grace
Rolled with a virginal gait
Curly black head of hair like music
There were three girls all of one grace
And six little feet in a marche militaire.

PHILLIP HERZBRUN

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Grant finds that the perilous adventure of man’s fall and ascent unifies Hugo’s fiction (H<text>an d’</text>Islande, Bug<text>-</text>Jargal, Notre<text>-</text>Dame de Paris, Les Misérables, Les Travailleurs de la mer, L’Homme qui rit, Quatrevingt<text>-</text>treize), plays (Cromwell, Marion de Lorme, Hernani, Ruy Blas, Les Burgraves), and epics (La Légende des siècles, La Fin de Satan).

Even before these works, Hugo as a ten-year-old dramatist had written The Devil’s Castle (1812) about a knight who had a dreadful fall. This knight sets out to kill an evil spirit and imps but is chained in a dark cavern. When robbers want him to marry their queen, he prefers being thrown to his death so that he will always remain true to his lady. To his astonishment, he falls onto mattresses. At eighteen, Hugo began Han d’Islande, a novel about a Norwegian hero who meets Musdoemon and Oglypiglap, climbs the enchanted tower of Vyglag, traverses Druid forests, and fights blood-drinking Han in the grotto of Walderhog. Waiting to be executed, the hero is married to his beloved who wishes to descend into death with him. But freed, they ascend.

Ascent after a fall, treated by the youthful Hugo in a hair-raising, Wizard-<text>of</text>-<text>Oz</text> style, later was expressed by the mature Hugo in philosophical, theological, and social images, myths, and prophecies. In the preface to Cromwell (1827), he described man as being, on the one hand, mortal and always descending toward mother earth and, on the other hand, immortal and ascending toward Heaven, the fatherland. Although fall and ascent remain the subject, Hugo’s form becomes more and more sublime—in fact, form makes him appear today as one of the greatest stars in the literary heavens.

Grant concludes that “the totality of Hugo’s work has one central theme: a quest for the ideal. . . . Hugo . . . sensed that the road to the ideal . . . ran not directly upward but down into the Hell of private passions or social misery.” This original conclusion is drawn by Grant from a scholarly, exact examination of Hugo’s texts and from studies made by Brombert, Py, Piroué, Barrère, Albouy, Eliade, Berret, Levaillant, Roos, and others who approach but do not quite reach the theme of Hugo’s work: man’s perilous adventure leading to his fall and, then, ascent.

MARTHA O’NAN

The phrase “you can’t go home again” has added meaning in light of Alan Sillitoe’s new collection of short stories, Guzman, Go Home and other Stories. The success of the author’s earlier writing rests largely on his ability to probe and vitalize the stark realities of Nottingham and its inhabitants; in this volume, however, there is a sterile flatness where there was once poignant depth. Only when Sillitoe draws himself out of Nottingham does his present book achieve artistic vitality. For this reason, “Guzman, Go Home,” the final story in the collection, brilliantly redeems the book as a whole.

Sillitoe’s technique in “Guzman, Go Home” is reminiscent of the dramatic monologue. Through a long, unbroken first-person narration, Guzman (his name is significant) reveals himself, if unwittingly, as a latter day Odysseus characterized by ruthlessness instead of nobility. He has wandered from Russia to Africa in search of a home, yet when he feels he has at last found that home—a Volkswagen garage in Spain—he is told, “Guzman, go home.” But if his fate is meet justice for his cold-blooded career, he is clearly the victim of a larger crime: the twentieth-century with its wars, bombs and terror.

Unfortunately, the rest of the book is neither as meaningful nor as well constructed as “Guzman.” We are brought back to Sillitoe’s Nottingham and presented with seemingly endless scenes of marital failure and general domestic unhappiness. When he attempts to provide depth, the author founders in a quasi-Kafkaesque description of a chicken-with-its-head-cut-off (“The Chicken”). And for a gust of contemporaneity, we are given the narrative of an expatriate in Greece who subsists on a diet of pot, hash and LSD at the expense of the reader’s patience.

But if the larger part of Alan Sillitoe’s newest book leaves the reader disappointed, we are still occasionally reminded that Mr. Sillitoe has something meaningful to say—as in “Guzman, Go Home”—in a manner which is uniquely his own, a manner which at times is clearly brilliant and worth consideration.

MARK E. ROLLINS

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Robert Burton writes, "it is a kind of policy in these days to prefix a fantastical title to a book which is to be sold. For as larks come down to a day-net, many vain readers will tarry and stand gazing like silly passengers at an antic picture in a painter's shop that will not look at a judicious piece." This may explain the English title of Hermann Meyer's *Das Zitat in der Erzählkunst*—quotation in fiction. Where the original overstates the case only with *Erzählkunst*, the translation unwisely intrudes the modish word "Poetics" and grandly renders *Erzählkunst* as "European Novel." Perhaps this antic picture will cause readers of catalogues to tarry and gaze, but a glance at the table of contents reveals that "European" excludes more than it includes; as for a full poetics of quotation, that is more than any reader will take away from his reading.

Part One of the book treats three authors and works: Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Part Two is exclusively devoted to German fiction and traces the "Development of the Art of Quoting in German" from Wie­land through E.T.A. Hoffmann, Immermann, Fontane, Raabe, and finally Thomas Mann. The contrast between this and the claims implied in the title are clear enough and clearly regrettable. What is most regrettable about it all is that the book does not really need this kind of Madison Avenue treatment, for it is an arresting study of a subject that has long called for serious scholarly and critical examination. In his introduction Meyer makes no such claims for his study as are implied by the title; rather he states his aim to be to "illuminate, analytically and historically, a certain formal trait of the German novel." This modest aim he realizes with considerable success. But for most English-language readers this aspect of the study will be less interesting than what Meyer says about the art of quoting in a broader context and about the three main literary figures that occupy Part One.

The art of quoting that Meyer is concerned with is the sort that springs from a deep sense of play and even playfulness that nevertheless issues in high seriousness. Hence Meyer's epigraph from Goethe at the beginning of the book: "Nur aus innig verbundenem Ernst und Spiel kann wahre Kunst entspringen." Further, Meyer is interested in the highly serious play with quotation only in those works where quotation itself is a structural principle; that is to say, the mere presence
of quotations, even abundant quotations, is not alone sufficient for Meyer to include a work in his study. What is necessary is that the use of quotations be also a principle of the structure and organization of the novel. In the hands of Rabelais, Cervantes, and Sterne this is actually the case. Cervantes, for example, defines both the order of events and the tone of his book through his counterpointing of quotations. Meyer notes that the elements of the novel are literary forms and styles, and that they constitute part of the very subject matter of the book: “The forms themselves, as it were, become dramatis personae: they come into conflict, bump into one another, are reconciled, and reflect one another reciprocally.” Quixote quotes his fabulous romances, Sancho Panza quotes his proverbs, and these modes as well as the specific words help organize the shape and tone of the book. Meyer writes: “For we should keep in mind that the whole existence of our hero is to a certain extent a quotation, a quoting imitatio of the form of existence ‘realized’ (that is to say: imagined) in the courtly romances and hence prescriptive for him.” The same sort of approach is made to Rabelais and Sterne and each author is shown as having mastered and exploited quotation as a principle of his art.

It is indeed a pity that Meyer did not write the book his translators’ title suggests he did, for we need more of this sort of analysis of the great manipulators of quotation than we have. Further, we do need a poetics of quotation, a void scarcely filled by Meyer’s somewhat thin introductory chapter. Perhaps the working out of a full poetics of quotation would have enabled Meyer to see the charms of Burton’s Anatomy, which he sorely underestimates, and perhaps then too he might have included others in his study who are now missing—Jean Paul, for instance, who despite Meyer’s disclaimer must have a special place in the history of quoting. Or Swift or Joyce. For, as Burton quotes Scaliger as saying, “nothing more invites a reader than an argument unlooked for.” I should modify that to read that only one thing more invites a reader than an argument unlooked for; it is the argument looked for.

G. B. Tennyson

For the International Poetry Forum to present its first national award (1969) in a series of national awards to Mr. Daglarca, an outstanding Turkish poet, is especially appropriate. Though Mr. Daglarca has enjoyed lavish praise in his own country, his little-known language renders him scant chance of an audience in the western world. The award has given impetus to the bilingual publication of a selection of his poems.

Mr. Halman, the translator, though not always successful, has done a remarkable job in creating workable English translations. Taking poems from each of Daglarca’s thirty-one collections (beginning with Havaya Çizilen Dünya—A World Sketched on Air, 1935—and ending with the poet’s most recent volume, Haydi—Come On, 1968) Mr. Halman has given us a taste of what seems to promise much more. However, as an introduction to a poet of the East, several carefully selected poems may serve as initial stimuli to a public which in the past decade has sought to intensify its sensitivity to the allurements of eastern cosmology. Surely it is in the poetry of the eastern world, cultured as it is in the case of Mr. Daglarca by a feeling for traditions of centuries and sparked by mystic individuality, where an attuned reader will sense vibrations of relationships between East and West.

Mr. Daglarca persistently expresses the predicament of being human in a world of darkness, nakedness, calamity, deafening roar and silence, a world whose vibrant wholeness one can only sense in its total nakedness and utter darkness. His expression of being human is conditioned by his mystic sense of unity in the world. The unity, however, is unseen and unheard except by the poetry of night and silence. In a poem called “Epeski” (“Age-Old”) from the book Asu he writes, “The night sings the unfinished songs of blind shepherds.” This theme runs through all of Daglarca’s work and the metaphoric exploitation of the theme bears many resemblances to modern western poetry. Yet, as Mr. Nayir points out in the introduction, to search for actual foreign influences is futile since Daglarca has no knowledge of any foreign language.

Thus one of the exciting prospects for the reader of this selection of poems is not the comfortable disclosure that Mr. Daglarca’s thematics are in a sense similar to those of modern western authors but the discovery that they are strikingly different. The poet’s metaphors stab the
eternally rotating eastern centuries into life, a life which sometimes makes the now and the then painfully present. Because of an intense emotional connection with the dark depths of the past and the often hopeless hunger, suffering and death of the present, Mr. Daglarca’s poetry pulsates not with the sometimes sterile aesthetics of intellectual western poetry but with the time-worn growth of human sensations from the blackest subconsciousness of mankind to the hypersensitivity of a focused imagination.

Perhaps the more recent poems of the selection are the most enticing. I am thinking particularly of the selections from the book Asû (1955) and the final book, Come On (1968). Asû is a naming of a central universal force which ultimately, of course, defies a name. Come On consists of 1243 quatrains arranged in alphabetical order of the first words of the quatrains. Mr. Halman selects twenty-four for our scrutiny. Each poem consists of a startling exploitation of a metaphor, as for example in “Glimmer:”

Darkness
Is sensed a little
When the mind
Of the bat strikes.

The publication of such translations, though at best approximations of the original, opens possibilities of novel poetic pleasure for the reader of the English language.

H. P. Doezema
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

RAFAEL ALBERTI is a Spanish poet and painter who left Spain in 1939 with the collapse of the Republic. Since 1964 he has been living in Italy. Alberti’s first volume of poems, Marinero in tierra, published in 1925, won him the national prize for poetry in 1924-1925. One of his most important collections of poetry, Sobre los Angeles, appeared in 1929. His Poesias completas were published by Losada in 1961 to mark his sixtieth year. An English bi-lingual version of his selected poems was published by the University of California Press in 1966. Valley of Aniene is an unpublished poem. Alberti’s lithographs were printed with the kind permission of the Grafica Romero in Rome.

WILLIS BARNSTONE is a poet and critic who is currently professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Riverside. He has edited and introduced an anthology titled Modern European Poetry. He is also the editor of the bilingual journal, Hispanic Arts.

BEN BELITT is an American poet and translator who was awarded prizes in the Brandeis Creative Arts Award competition in 1962, and the National Institute of Arts and Letters contest in 1965. He has translated Neruda, Alberti, Lorca, Machado, and Guillén.

ALAN BRILLIANT is director of the Unicorn Press. He is the author of a small chapbook of poetry, At Trial, and a full-length volume of verse, Searching for Signs. He translated a volume of Lorca’s early lyrics, scheduled for Fall, 1970 publication.

MICHAEL BULLOCK is a British poet, playwright, short-story writer and translator. He is the author of four books of poetry, the most recent, Zwei Stimmen in meinen Mund, a bilingual volume published in Germany. He has a collection of surreal fictions, Sixteen Stories as they Happened, to be published by Sono Nis Press, Vancouver. He is the author of over a hundred translations from the German, French and Italian, including the complete works of Max Frisch and two volumes of poems by Karl Krolow.

RICARDO GULLÓN is Professor of Spanish at the University of Texas. His publications include several books on literary criticism, articles on painting and sculpture, and a book on modern art entitled De Goya al Arte Abstracto. He frequently contributes essays to Insula and Mundo Nuevo. For 1970 he has received a Guggenheim Fellowship to write a book on the Spanish Modernists to be published by the University of Chicago.

RENÉE RIESE HUBERT is professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine. She has published six books of poems in France and numerous essays on contemporary poetry, fiction, and drama in various journals.
KARL KROLOW, who has published about a dozen books of poems, is still little known in the United States. He is one of the most important figures in German poetry since 1945. His book Foreign Bodies has just been published in a bi-lingual edition with Michael Bullock's translations by Ohio University Press. Krolow has also translated many of the Spanish and French modern poets. Born in 1915, Krolow now lives in Darmstadt, Germany.

AGNES MONCY teaches English at the University of Texas. She has published translations in several journals.

MURIEL RUKEYSER is a poet and translator whose recent book publications include The Orgy (1964), and The Speed of Darkness (1968). She has translated selected poems of Octavio Paz and Gunnar Ekelöf and plans to publish additional work by these writers in the near future. She is currently working on a play, Houdini.

MICHEL SAINT-JEAN is a photographer for the National Film Board of Canada. He has published in Culture Vivante, Cahiers du Cinéma, Foto Canada and has participated in group exhibitions in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. Born in 1937, he is now living in Montreal.

DONALD A. YATES is professor of Spanish American Literature at Michigan State University. He has lived for three years in Buenos Aires, Argentina where he has studied that country's literature of fantasy and imagination. He is preparing a critical biography of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges.
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