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ANTOLOGIA ORAL
Poesia hispanoamericana
del Siglo XX

ORAL ANTHOLOGY
Spanish-American Poetry
of the 20th Century

A careful selection of
poems by the best poets
of the present times.

Recorded by Octavio Corvalan
of Rutgers University, New Jersey

Cover design from a painting by Ronald Clyne

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MUSIC LP

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SALVADOR NOVO (Mexico)

Poetry

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At the beginning of the 20th. century the 'Modernista Movement' was still at its peak. The great Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío had linked the different tendencies in Spanish America and Spain, and given a certain unity to that literary current consisting mainly of the "art for the art-sake" doctrine, with no social or political preoccupations.

By 1910 many poets throughout Spanish America had begun to show some discontent with the symbolistic, sophisticated beauty of the Modernista poets. Although there were some earlier attempts at reaction, it is usually said that Enrique González Martínez was the first poet to really begin the war against Modernism when his sonnet *Tuercele el cuello al cisne...* appeared in his book *Los senderos ocultos* --The hidden paths--, in 1911. In that widely known sonnet, González Martínez proclaimed that the "swan" (symbol of the nobility of Art, used by Darío) should be replaced by the "owl", which represents wisdom, profundity and inner beauty.

It can be noted that he does not reject symbols --or symbolism--; he only substitutes his own symbol for those of the Modernista poets. But even so, González Martínez opened a new path for the stagnant poetry; he introduces new ideals and suggests that the poet should be more concerned about human affairs. From then on, Latin American poetry sprang in many different directions, making the study of its trends a complex task.

However confused the problem may appear, it is possible to draw some lines which will help us to understand this first half of our century. First of all, let us say that, the name 'post-Modernism' has been suggested by various critics for the period immediately following the Modernista Movement. For three decades at least, after 1910, this name is valid. After 1940, however, a new generation arises, a new philosophy attracts the young intellectuals of Latin American countries, the second World War plays its part --a very important one, by the way--and we no longer can call the writers of the forties 'post-Modernists'.

This Anthology attempts to gather the most significant figures of post-Modernism and, since the sequence follows a chronological line, it may be necessary to say a few words on the ideals or artistic points of view of the different poets included. There are poets, whom we can call "heirs of Modernism", who keep some of the traits of their predecessors, i.e. the search for melody and rhythm, the use of symbols, the eagerness for finding a style of "their own", unmistakable, unique.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

ABRIL, Xavier [Peru] Lima, 1903

Abril traveled in Europe, was associated with the surrealists in Paris, and was at one time protege of Cocteau. One of the more important poets of modern Peru. (D. Fitts: "Anthology of Contemporary Latin American Poetry. Norfolk, Conn., 1942)

AGUSTINI, Delmira [Uruguay] Montevideo, 1886-1914

An intense poetesse, who died tragically, Delmira was one of the richest voices in Latin American poetry when the 'modernista' school was still vigorous. Her work deals essentially with love, as a devastating force that leads to death.

BANCHES, Enrique [Argentina] Buenos Aires, 1888

... "One of the first of the contemporary Spanish American poets to seek inspiration in the traditional founts of Hispanic verse.

Among these poets we can mention González Martínez (Mexico), Gabriela Mistral (Chile), Sabat Erceasty (Uruguay) and Arturo Capdevila (Argentina).

The second tendency was completely opposed to Modernism. These poets sought the expression --sincere and without artistic retouching-- of their inner confusion. Many terms have been used to designate this poetry: *ultraísmo*, *creacionismo*, *vanguardismo*, et al. It can be said that most of these tendencies had a strong expressionist shade, with a visible influence of Surrealism and of Freud. This poetry is more often than not incoherent; the poems are merely strings of dissociated lines, without order, logic or formal structure, although in some of the greatest, namely Vallejo, Neruda, this is only apparent.

As an illustration of this manner we include in our selection poems by César Vallejo (Peru), Pablo Neruda and Vicente Huidobro (Chile), Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina), Jorge Carrera Andrade (Ecuador) and Octavio Paz (Mexico).

Some of these poets were influenced by the modern social theories emerging after the Russian revolution of 1917. The attempt to express the plight of the workers, to defend the rights of Indians and negros, protest the capitalistic exploitation of the native land. In doing so, these poets cultivated popular poetry, folklore and the colloquial language of the people, trying to transform this elementary means of expression into artistic beauty. Responsible for this was in part the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca who influenced strongly the Spanish American poets of his generation.

A good example of this tendency is Nicolás Guillén (Cuba).

Finally, in the later years of this period, came the poets who were influenced neither by the perfectionists of the early 20th. century nor by the surrealist masters --who abhorred poetic harmony--. These poets evolved their styles independently and may be called 'classicist' in the widest sense, although their poetic language is modern. They resorted to the sonnet and other traditional forms, in their search for equilibrium and full meaning. Their phrases are logical, precise and clear. Among many others, these deserve to be cited: Jorge Voces Lescano (Argentina), Vicente Palés Matos (Puerto Rico), Gonzalo Escudero (Colombia), Eugenio Florit (Cuba) and Salvador Novo, (Mexico).

All these different trends, attitudes and esthetic ideals have something in common, and this element should be noted as a characteristic feature of the Spanish American poetry of this period. It is an almost obsessive worship of the metaphor; the belief that the poetic vision, expressed by means of a daring image, has a value of its own. For some poets the poem is the result of an addition of metaphors whose only law is the association that brought them together. For others, the complexity of a vision can only be rendered through a highly elaborated, --baroque-- metaphor; for the rest, poetic beauty is a goal that only can be reached by twisting, forcing the words to express logically the obscure representations of the mind.

That is the reason why, no matter what kind of poem we hear in this Anthology, we will find, more than anything else, a linguistic struggle, a great verbal battle from which the Spanish language has emerged far more apt for artistic expression, richer in meaning and more flexible.

O. C.

New Brunswick, N.J.
Winter, 1960

BANCHES has well caught the spirit and technique of the popular songs and ballads of the Spanish romancero". H. Hespelt, *An Anthology of Spanish American Literature*. Appleton-Century Croft, New York, 1946.

BLANCO, Andrés Eloy [Venezuela] 1897

A popular poet in his country during the 20's, he later gained a larger reputation in Spain and Latin America. He demonstrates vestiges of Modernism, literary school which lasted longer in his country.

BORGES, Jorge Luis [Argentina] Buenos Aires, 1900

Borges studied in Geneva, Switzerland, during the first world War, and later lived in Spain, where he was associated with the Ultraista movement. (...) His verse varies from the earlier semi-surrealist style to what might be called a mysticism of local color. (D. Fitts, op. cit.)

- CAPDEVILA, Arturo [Argentina] Córdoba, 1889
Poet and essayist; in a classic manner he has recreated episodes of Spanish American history in magnificent ballads, reminiscent of the ancient Spanish epic. His early poems, however, are somewhat romantic, full of sentiment.
- CARRANZA, Eduardo [Colombia] 1915
"His verse marks a break with the tradition and is distinguished by a novel fantasy". (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- CARRERA ANDRADE, Jorge [Ecuador] Quito, 1903
Traveler, poet and diplomat, Andrade has carried a very active life. "The fresh immediacy of his verse, together with its extraordinary invention and sharp wit, makes it a signal contribution to American literature". D. Fitts: "Anthology of Contemporary Latin American Poetry".
- ESCUADERO, Gonzalo [Ecuador] Mazatlán, 1887-1937
"His work stems more or less from the older symbolism, but it is instinct with his own particular grace and wit." (D. Fitts, op. cit.)
- FLORIT, Eugenio [Cuba] Madrid, 1903
Florit's mother was Cuban, his father Spanish. He studied in the University of Havana. Today Florit is considered one of the most important of the contemporary Cuban writers. (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- FOMBONA-PACHANO, Jacinto [Venezuela] Caracas, 1901
"Extraordinarily effective in its bold imagery" is the poetry of Fombona Pachano, one of the most distinguished of the living Venezuelan poets. (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- GONZÁLEZ-MARTÍNEZ, Enrique [Mexico] Guadalajara, 1871-1952
He (...) is responsible for the revolt against the decorative rhetoric of the school of Ruben Dario. From his work --stripped, hard, clear--the new poets derive much of their strength. It is no exaggeration to say that his sonnet on the Swan (...) is the manifesto of post-Modernism --one of the significant landmarks in world literature". (D. Fitts: id. id.)
- GUILLEN, Nicolás [Cuba] Camagüey, 1904
Of African and Spanish descent, he is a leader of the Afro-Cuban school of poetry. It was he who brought the son, the local Cuban folk song, into literature and made African folk-lore, which is still current in the Antilles, popular as artistic material. (D. Fitts: id. id.)
- HUIDOBRO, Vicente [Chile] Santiago, 1893-1948
'Creationism', his theory of esthetics, was launched in Buenos Aires, in 1916. Huidobro had considerable influence in Spain and Latin America. Huidobro's own poetry owes much to Guillaume Apollinaire and depends upon free association in the manner generally identified with surrealism." (D. Fitts: id. id.)
- IBARBOUROU, Juana de [Uruguay] Melo, 1895
'Juana de América' exalts Love, Life, Nature and God in her work. She sings with naïveté the emotions of a woman in close contact with nature and her love poems rank among the best in Spanish letters.
- LOPEZ, Luis Carlos [Colombia] 1880
Lopez is an ironist in rebellion against the lulling murmur of the traditional symbolist poetry. He is an unsparing recorder of the sterility and boredom of provincial life. (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- LUGONES, Leopoldo [Argentina] Córdoba, 1874-1934
"His assimilation of many influences and many forms of expression have made Lugones the finest, most varicolored, most cosmopolitan Argentine poet of the twentieth century. He writes with a strength and facility which show that he has mastered the intricacies of rhyme, rhythm and metaphor so completely that he has few peers among the world's poets".
- MISTRAL, Gabriela (Lucila Godoy Alcayaga) [Chile] Vicuña, 1889-1957
Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945, Gabriela Mistral is the figure of highest prestige in Latin America and her moral and spiritual influence is felt throughout Latin America. She died in Long Island in 1957.
- NALÉ-ROXLO, Conrado [Argentina] Buenos Aires, 1898
He writes graceful, nostalgic lyrics rather in the manner of Samain (Albert)." Nale-Roxlo is also a good humorist and playwright.
- NERUDA, Pablo (Nefatli Ricardo Reyes Basualto) [Chile] Temuco, 1904
"Neruda is one of the best known names in contemporary Latin American poetry. He has traveled extensively in Europe and the Orient. (...) The two volumes of *Residencia en la tierra* contain the poetry that has made him famous. (...) Neruda is as much the poet of a decaying social system as is T. S. Eliot: he sees life as a romantic and grotesque nightmare." (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- NOVO, Salvador [Mexico] Mexico, 1904
"He is an intellectual poet, experimenting with new rhythmic patterns and forms. His poetry has been translated into other languages, particularly the French." (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- OQUENDO DE AMAT, Carlos [Peru] Puno, 1909-1936
One of the youngest Peruvian surrealists. Although he died young, leaving but one book, he was already a poet of great promise. He wrote rather in the style of Elouard (Paul). (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- PALES-MATOS, Vicente [Puerto Rico]
Member of a family of writers, Vicente Palés Matos has published "Viento y espuma", a collection of short stories and poems which shows an intense emotion together with a thorough knowledge of the modern literary techniques, both in prose and verse.
- PAZ, OCTAVIO [Mexico] Mexico, 1914
Among the young poets of Mexico, Octavio Paz is one of the most representative. His work shows a deep concern for the fate of man on earth and his ultimate destiny. His poems are rather obscure because of the density of his thoughts and his rich imagination.
- REYES, Alfonso [Mexico] Monterrey, 1889-1959
Alfonso Reyes (...) is considered throughout Hispanic America one of the most eminent men of letters writing in Spanish in this hemisphere. He was a profound scholar, an acute critic and a poet of the greatest distinction. (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- TORRES BODET, Jaime [Mexico] Mexico, 1902
Torres Bodet "was in close touch with modern French writing and somewhat affected by surrealism. (...) His most recent phase is a kind of neo-symbolism, romantic in tone, full of searching and profound self-analysis". (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- SABAT-ERCASTY, Carlos [Uruguay] 1887
One of the first poets in attempting to free himself from the influence of the modernists. His verse is powerful in thought and sonorous, full of new visions and prophecies.
- STORNI, Alfonsina [Argentina] Switzerland, 1892- Mar del Plata, 1938.
Most of her life she was a schoolteacher and journalist. Her work is full of the preoccupations of an urban professional woman. As a love poet she is effective by reason of her sensuous imagery. (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- VALLEJO, César [Peru] Santiago de Chuco, 1895- Paris, 1937
A powerful imagination and a personal and highly complicated style make him difficult to translate: his images sometimes work on two or even three levels, although they are seldom loosely associative in the surrealist manner. (D. Fitts: op. cit.)
- VOCOS-LESCANO, Jorge [Argentina] Córdoba, 1924
One of the youngest and most promising poets of Argentina today, Vocos Lescano represents the return to the classic founts. His sonnets of rare perfection have placed him among the great figures of Argentine letters.

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Then twist the neck of this delusive swan

Then twist the neck of this delusive swan,
white stress upon the fountain's overflow,
that merely drifts in grace and cannot know
the reed's green soul and the mute cry of stone.

Avoid all form, all speech, that does not go
shifting its beat in secret unison
with life... Love life to adoration!
Let life accept the homage you bestow.

See how the sapient owl, winging the gap
from high Olympus, even from Pallas' lap,
closes upon this tree its noiseless flight...

Here is no swan's grace. But an unquiet stare
interprets through the penetrable air
the inscrutable volume of the silent night.

Translated by John Reale Bishop
in "Anthology of Contemporary
Latin-American Poetry", edited by
Dudley Fitts. Norfolk, Conn. 1942)



ENRIQUE GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ

(México)

Tuércete el cuello al cisne

Tuércete el cuello al cisne de engañoso plumaje
que da su nota blanca al azul de la fuente;
él pasea su gracia nomás, pero no siente
el alma de las cosas ni la voz del paisaje.

Huye de toda forma y de todo lenguaje
que no vayan acordes con el ritmo latente
de la vida profunda... y adora intensamente
la vida, y que la vida comprenda tu homenaje.

Mira el sapiente buho cómo tiende las alas
desde el Olimpo, deja el regazo de Palas
y posa en aquel árbol el vuelo taciturno...

Él no tiene la gracia del cisne, mas su inquieta
pupila que se clava en la sombra, interpreta
el misterioso libro del silencio nocturno.

(From "Los senderos ocultos", 1911)

ENRIQUE BANCHS (Argentina)

Baluceo

Triste está la casa nuestra,
triste, desde que te has ido.
Todavía queda un poco
de tu calor en el nido.

Yo también estoy un poco
triste desde que te has ido;
pero sé que alguna tarde
llegarás de nuevo al nido.

¡Si supieras cuánto, cuánto
la casa y yo te queremos!
Algún día cuando vuelvas
verás cuánto te queremos.

Nunca podría decirte
todo lo que te queremos:
es como un montón de estrellas
todo lo que te queremos.

Si tú no volvieras nunca,
más vale que yo me muera...;
pero siento que no quieres,
no quieres que yo me muera.

Bien querida que te fuiste,
¿no es cierto que volverás?;
para que no estemos tristes,
¿no es cierto que volverás?

Stammering

Sad is this house of ours,
sad, ever since you have gone;
there still remains a little
of your warmth in our nest.

I, too, feel a little bit
sad, ever since you have gone,
but I know that some day
you will be back in our nest.

If you knew how much, how much,
my house and I love you!
Some day, when you're back again
you'll see how much we love you.

I could never tell you
how much we love you;
it is like a heap of stars
all our love for you.

If you should never come
--better that I die--
but I know you wouldn't want it,
you wouldn't want that I die.

My beloved, far away,
you will return, will you not?
So we are not sad anymore,
tell me that you will return...

(From "El cascabel del halcón", 1909)

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán,
New Brunswick, N.J., 1960)

Salmo pluvial

Tormenta

Erase una caverna de agua sombría el cielo;
el trueno, a la distancia, rodaba su peñón;
y una remota brisa de conturbado vuelo,
se acidulaba en tenue frescura de limón.

Como caliente polen exhaló el campo seco
un relente de trébol lo que empezó a llover.
Bajo la lenta sombra, colgada en denso fleco,
se vió al cardal con vívidos azules florecer.

Una fulmínea verga rompió el aire al soslayo;
sobre la tierra atónita cruzó un pavor mortal;
y el firmamento entero se derrumbó en un rayo,
como un inmenso techo de hierro y de cristal.

Lluvia

Y un mimbreral vibrante rué el chubasco resuelto
que plantaba sus líquidas varillas al trasluz,
o en pajonales de agua se espesaba revuelto,
descerrajando al paso su pródigo arcabuz.

Saltó la alegre lluvia por taludes y cauces;
descolgó del tejado sonoro caracol;
y luego, allá a lo lejos, se desnudó en los sauces,
transparente y dorada bajo un rayo de sol.

Calma

Delicia de los árboles que abrevó el aguacero.
Delicia de los gárrulos raudales en deslíz.
Cristalina delicia del trino del jilguero.
Delicia serenísima de la tarde feliz.

Plenitud

El cerro azul estaba fragante de romero,
y en los profundos campos silbaba la perdiz.

(From "El libro de los paisajes", 1912)

Psalm of the rain

Storm

The whole sky was a cavern of dark water;
the tunder, in the distance, rolled down its huge rock,
and a remote breeze in versatile flight
brought with it a tenuous freshness of lemon.

The dry prairie smelled of warm pollen,
with a fragrance of clover when it started to rain.
Under the slow darkness, hanging like a dense fringe
the thistle was seen blooming in glittering blues.

A blazing yardarm ripped the sky sideways;
above the astonished earth a deadly fright passed by;
and the whole sky seemed to fall apart in a lightning flash,
like a tremendous vault of iron and glass.

Rain

And the shower in progress was a trembling reed-bed
which planted its liquid rods in silhouette,
or a hay-loft of water while thickened while stirred,
triggering its plentiful shot.

The happy rain fell down the slopes and creeks;
unfastened from the roof tiles a sonorous sea-shell;
and then, far off, she unveiled herself among the willows
transparent and gilded under a gleam of sun.

Calm

Delight of the trees whom the rain watered.
Delight of the garrulous torrents sliding down.
Crystalline delight of the trill of the linnet.
Most serene delight of the happy afternoon.

Plenitude

The blue hillock was fragrant of rosemary
and there in the deep plains the partridge whistled by.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán, 1960)

VICENTE HUIDOBRO

(Chile)

En

El corazón del pájaro

el corazón que brilla en el pájaro

el corazón de la noche

la noche del pájaro

el pájaro del corazón de la noche

Si la noche cantara en el pájaro

en el pájaro olvidado en el cielo

el cielo perdido en la noche

te diría lo que hay en el corazón que brilla en
el pájaro

La noche perdida en el cielo

el cielo perdido en el pájaro

el pájaro perdido en el olvido del pájaro

la noche perdida en la noche

el cielo perdido en el cielo

Pero el corazón es el corazón del corazón

y habla por la boca del corazón

(From "Ver y palpar", 1941)

In

The heart of the bird
the heart that shines in the bird
the heart of the night
the night of the bird
the bird of the heart of the night

If the night should sing in the bird
in the bird forgotten in the sky
the sky lost in the night
I should say what there is in the heart that shines
(in the bird)

The night lost in the sky
the sky lost in the bird
the bird lost in the oblivion of the bird
the night lost in the night
the sky lost in the sky

But the heart is the heart of the heart
and speaks with the mouth of the heart

(Translated by H. R. Hays
in "12 Spanish American
Poets", Yale Univ. Press,
New Haven, 1943).

Hombre pequeñito

Hombre pequeñito, hombre pequeñito,
suelta a tu canario que quiere volar...
Yo soy el canario, hombre pequeñito,
déjame saltar.

Estuve en tu jaula, hombre pequeñito,
hombre pequeñito que jaula me das.
Digo pequeñito porque no me entiendes,
ni me entenderás.

Tampoco te entiendo, pero mientras tanto
ábreme la jaula, que quiero escapar;
hombre pequeñito, te amé media hora,
no me pidas más.

(From "Irremediablemente", 1919)

Little man

Very little man, very little man,
let your canary loose, she wishes to fly.
I am your canary, my little man,
set me free.

I was in your cage, little man,
very little man who gave me a cage,
I call you very little for you don't understand me
and never will...

I don't understand you either, but in the meanwhile,
open the cage for I want to escape.
Very little man, I loved you half hour,
don't ask me for more.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán
New Brunswick, N.J., 1960)El ruego

Señor, tú sabes cómo, con encendido brío,
por los seres extraños mi palabra te invoca.
Vengo ahora a pedirte por uno que era mío,
mi vaso de frescura, el panal de mi boca,

cal de mis huesos, dulce razón de la jornada,
gorjeo de mi oído, ceñidor de mi veste.
Le cuido hasta de aquellos en que no puse nada.
¡No tengas ojo torvo si te pido por éste!

Te digo que era bueno, te digo que tenía
el corazón entero a flor de pecho, que era
suave de índole, franco como la luz del día,
henchido de milagro como la primavera.

Me replicas, severo, que es de plegaria indigno
el que no untó de preces sus dos labios febriles,
y se fué aquella tarde sin esperar tu signo,
trizándose las sienes como vasos sutiles.

Pero yo, mi Señor, te arguyo que he tocado,
de la misma manera que el nardo de su frente,
todo su corazón dulce y atormentado
¡y tenía la seda del capullo naciente!

¿Que fué cruel? Olvidas, Señor, que le quería,
y que él sabía suya la entraña que llagaba.
¿Que enturbió para siempre mis linfas de alegría?
¡No importa! Tú comprendes: ¡yo le amaba, le amaba!

Y amar (bien sabes de eso) es amargo ejercicio;
un mantener los párpados de lágrimas mojados,
un refrescar de besos las trenzas del silencio
conservando, bajo ellas, los ojos extasiados.

El hierro que taladra tiene un gustoso frío,
cuando abre, cual gavillas, las carnes amorosas.
Y la cruz (Tú te acuerdas, ¡oh, Rey de los judíos!)
se lleva con blandura, como un gajo de rosas.

Aquí me estoy, Señor, con la cara caída
sobre el polvo, parlándote un crepúsculo entero,
o todos los crepúsculos a que alcance la vida,
si tardas en decirme la palabra que espero.

Fatigaré tu oído de preces y sollozos,
lamiendo, lebrez tímido, los bordes de tu manto,
y ni pueden huírme tus ojos amorosos
ni esquivar tu pie el riego caliente de mi llanto.

¡Dí el perdón, dílo al fin! Va a esparcir en el viento
la palabra el perfume de cien penos de olores
al vaciarse; toda agua será deslumbramiento;
el yermo echará flor y el guijarro esplendores.

Se mojarán los ojos oscuros de las fieras,
y, comprendiendo, el monte que de piedra forjaste
llorará por los párpados blancos de sus neveras:
¡Toda la tierra tuya sabrá que perdonaste!

(From "Desolación", 1922)

Prayer

Lord, you know with what frenzy fine
Your help for strangers I have often sought.
Now I come to plead for one who was mine,
honeycomb of my mouth, spring of my drought.

Lime of my bones, sweet reason to be,
birdsong at my ear, a belt my waist to trim.
I have sought help for others who meant nothing to me.
Do not turn Your head now when I plead for him.

I tell You he was good, and I say
his heart like a flower in his breast did sing,
gentle of nature, frank as the light of day,
bursting with miracles as is the Spring.

Unworthy of my pleas is he, You sternly say,
since no sign of prayer crossed his fevered face
and one day, with no nod from You, he went away,
shattering his temples like a fragile vase.

But I tell You, Lord, I once caressed
his gentle and tormented heart --
as a lily might his brow have pressed --
and found it silky as a bud when petals part.

You say he was cruel? You forget I loved him ever.
He knew my wounded flesh was his to shatter.
Now the waters of my gladness he disturbs forever?
I loved him! You know, I loved him -- so that does not
(matter.

To love (as You well understand) is a bitter task --
eyelids wet with tears may be,
kisses in prickly tresses may bask,
beneath them guarding eyes of ecstasy.

To welcome the chill of iron one may choose
when loving flesh its thrust encloses.
And the Cross (You recall, Oh, King of the Jews)
may be gently borne like a sheaf of roses.

So here I am, Lord, my head in the dust,
pleading with You through a dusk unending,
through all the dusks that bear I must
if You should prove unbending.

I shall wear down your ears with prayers and with cries,
licking the hem of your garment like a dog full of fears
never to avoid me anymore Your eyes,
or Your feet escape the hot rain of my tears.

Grant him forgiveness at last! Then all winds will blow
rich with a hundred vials of perfume,
all waters will sparkle, all cobblestones glow,
and the wilderness burst into bloom.

From the eyes of wild beasts gentle tears will flow,
and the mountains You forged of stone will understand
and weep through their white eyelids of snow:
the whole earth will learn of forgiveness at Your hand.

(Translated by Langston Hughes in
"Selected poems of Gabriela Mistral",
Indiana University Press, Bloomington,
Ind.. 1957).

CÉSAR VALLEJO

(Perú)

XXVIII

He almorzado solo ahora, y no he tenido
madre, ni súplica, ni sirvete, ni agua,
ni padre que, en el facundo ofertorio
de los choclos, pregunte para su tardanza
de imagen, por los broches mayores del sonido.

Cómo iba yo a almorzar. Cómo me iba a servir
de tales platos distantes esas cosas,
cuando habrása quebrado el propio hogar,
cuando no asoma ni madre a los labios.
Cómo iba yo a almorzar nonada.

A la mesa de un buen amigo he almorzado
con su padre recién llegado del mundo,
con sus canas tías que hablan
en tordillo retinte de porcelana,
bisbiseando por todos viudos alvéolos;
y con cubiertos francos de alegres tiroriros,
porque estánse en su casa. Así, ¡qué gracia!
Y me han dolido los cuchillos
de esta mesa en todo el paladar.

El yantar de estas mesas así, en que se prueba
amor ajeno en vez del propio amor,
torna tierra el bocado que no brinda la
MADRE;
hace golpe la dura deglución; el dulce,
hiel; aceite funéreo, el café.

Cuando ya se ha quebrado el propio hogar,
y el sirvete materno no sale de la tumba,
la cocina a obscuras, la miseria de amor.

(From "Trilce", 1922)

XXVIII

I now have lunched alone, I have had
No mother or "please" or "help yourself" or water
or father who, over the eloquent offertory
of green corn ears, by his statue-slowness,
asks for the greater hooks of sound.

How was I going to lunch? How was I to serve myself
with those things from such distant plates?
When your home is broken to bits,
when no "Mother" comes to your lips,
how was I to lunch on nothing at all?

I have lunched at the table of a good friend
with his father recently returned from far away,
with his grey-haired aunts talking
in a gray tinkle of china,
whistling through all their missing teeth;
and with the gay silverware with the sound of joyful
(wood winds,
because they were at home. And what merit in that!
And the knives of this table
hurt me in all I tasted.

And dining at tables like these, at which you put on
an alien love instead of your own,
the mouthful not offered by your Mother turns into earth,
the difficult swallow is a blow, the desert
gall; the coffee, funeral oil.

When your home is already broken to bits
and the maternal "help yourself" comes no more from the
(tomb,
Dark kitchen, poverty of love.

Translated by H. R. Hays
in "Twelve Spanish American
Poets", Yale University
Press, 1943.

JORGE LUIS BORGES

(Argentina)

La guitarra

He mirado la pampa
en un traspatio de la calle Sarandí en Buenos Aires.
Cuando entré no la vi.
Estaba acurrucada
en lo profundo de una brusca guitarra.
Sólo se desmelenó
al entreverar la diestra las cuerdas.
No sé lo que azuzaban;
a lo mejor fué un triste del Norte
pero yo vi la pampa.
Vi muchas brazadas de cielo
sobre un manojito de pasto.
Vi una loma que arrinconan
quietas distancias
mientras leguas y leguas
caen desde lo alto.
Vi el campo donde cabe
Dios sin haber de inclinarse,
vi el único lugar de la tierra
donde puede caminar Dios a sus anchas.
Vi la pampa cansada
que antes horrorizaron los malones
y hoy apaciguan en quietud maciza las parvas.
Vi de un tirón todo eso
mientras se desesperaban las cuerdas
en un compás tan zarandeado como éste.
(La vi también a ella
cuyo recuerdo aguarda en toda música.)
Hasta que en brusco cataclismo
se allanó la guitarra encabritada
y estrújome el silencio
y hurañamente volvió el vivir a estancarse.

(From "Fervor de Buenos Aires", 1923)

The guitar

I have seen the pampa
from a small 'patio', on Sarandí Street in Buenos Aires
As I entered, I did not see it.
It was muffled up
deep in the hull of a sudden guitar.
The pampa only came through
when a right hand strummed the strings.
I do not know what they were playing
--maybe a sad tune from the North--
but I saw the pampa.
I saw armfuls of sky
above a little lump of grass.
I saw a hillock half hidden
by motionless distances
while leagues, and leagues
fall from above.
I saw the plains where there is room enough
for God to stand without having to bend.
I saw the only place on the earth
where God can walk freely.
I saw the tired pampa
once terrorized by the Indians
which today the heystacks appease
with their massive stillness.
All at once I saw this
while the strings went frantic
in a rhythm wild as this one.
(I also saw her--
whose memory waits in all music)
untill, with a sudden cataclism
the furious guitar tumbled down
and the silence crushed me
and life grimly went still again.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán.
New Brunswick, N.J. 1960)

Poema 15

Me gustas cuando callas, porque estás como ausente,
y me oyes desde lejos, y mi voz no te toca.
Parece que los ojos se te hubieran volado
y parece que un beso te cerrara la boca.

Como todas las cosas están llenas de mi alma,
emerges de las cosas, llena del alma mía.
Mariposa de ensueño, te pareces a mi alma,
y te pareces a la palabra melancolía.

Me gustas cuando callas y estás como distante
y estás como quejándote, mariposa en arrullo,
y me oyes desde lejos, y mi voz no te alcanza:
déjame que me calle con el silencio tuyo.

Déjame que te hable también con tu silencio
claro como una lámpara, simple como un anillo.
Eres como la noche, callada y constelada.
Tu silencio es de estrella, tan lejano y sencillo.

Me gustas cuando callas, porque estás como ausente.
Distante y dolorosa como si hubieras muerto.
Una palabra entonces, una sonrisa bastan.
Y estoy alegre, alegre de que no sea cierto.

(From "Veinte poemas de amor y una
canción desesperada", 1924)

Poem number 15

I like you when you're still because you look absent,
and you hear me from far away, and my voice doesn't touch you.
It's as though your eyes had flown away
and it seems as if a kiss had closed your lips.

Since everything is full of my soul,
you emerge from the things, full of this soul of mine,
dreamed butterfly, you resemble my soul
and you're very much like the word "melancholy".

I like you when you're still, when you look so distant,
and you seem to lament, my ponding butterfly;
and you hear me from the distance, and my voice doesn't reach
let me keep silent with that silence of yours. you.

Let me speak to you, also with your silence
clear as a lamp, simple as a ring.
You are like the night, still and constellated.
Your silence is starlike, so distant and so easy.

I like you when you're still because you look so absent;
so remote and sorrowful as if you were dead.
Only a word, then, or a smile, is enough,
and I am happy, happy to see that it's not true.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán, 1960)

JAIME TORRES BODET

(México)

Danza

Llama
que por morir más pronto se levanta,
flotas entre las brasas de la danza.

Y te arranca de ti,
al principiar, un salto tan esbelto
que el sitio en que bailabas
se queda sin atmósfera.

Así el pedazo negro de la noche
en que pasó un lucero.

Pero de pronto vuelves
del torbellino de las formas
a la inmovilidad que te acechaba
y ocupas,
como un vestido exacto,
el hueco
de tu propia figura.

Pareces una cosa
caída en el espejo de un recuerdo:
te bisela
el declive del tiempo.

Un minuto después, estás desnuda...

La brisa
te peina en ondulado movimiento
y a cada nueva línea
que las flautas dibujan en la música
obedece una línea de tu cuerpo.

No resonéis ahora,
címbalos, que la danza es como el sueño.

Dance

Flame
rising the sooner to die,
you hover among the embers of the dance,

plucked from yourself,
at the very start, by so lithe a leap
that the place where you were dancing
hangs like a void.

So the dark space of night
when a great star has gone by.

But suddenly you return
from the whirlwind of forms
to the immobility that stalked about you
and you invest,
like an exact garment,
the hollow
of your own figure.

You seem a thing
falling into the mirror of a memory:
bevelled
by the edge of time.

A moment later, you are naked...

The wind
dresses you in undulating motion,
and to each new line
that flutes trace in music,
an answering line of your body is obedient.

Resound no more,
cymbals: this dance is like a sleep.

(Translated by Rolfe Humphries
in "Anthology of Contemporary
Latin-American Poetry", edited
by Dudley Pitts, Norfolk, Conn.
1942).

LUIS CARLOS LÓPEZ

(Colombia)

Muchachas solteras

Muchachas solteras de provincia,
que los años hilvanan
leyendo folletines
y atisbando en balcones y ventanas...

Muchachas de provincia,
las de aguja y dedal, que no hacen nada,
sino tomar de noche
café con leche y dulce de papaya...

Muchachas de provincia,
que salen --si es que salen de la casa --
muy temprano a la iglesia,
con un andar doméstico de gansas...

Muchachas de provincia,
papandujas, etcétera, que cantan
melancólicamente
de sol a sol: "Susana, ven... Susana"..

Pobres muchachas, pobres
muchachas tan inútiles y castas,
que hacen decir al Diablo,
con los brazos en cruz: --"¡Pobres muchachas!"

(From "Por el atajo", 1928)

Old maids

Provincial old maids
Sewed up by the years,
Reading love-story magazines
And peering into balconies and windows...

Provincial old maids,
They of the needle and thimble who do nothing
Except consume each night
Café-au-lait and papaya sweetmeats...

Provincial old maids,
Who go out -if they do leave the house-
Very early on their way to church,
Walking with the domesticated waddle of a goose.

Provincial old maids,
Overripe, et cetera, who sing
In a melancholy way
From sun to sun: -Susana, come... Susana...

Poor old maids, poor
Old maids so useless and so chaste,
Who make the devil say
With folded arms: -Poor old maids!-

(Translated by H. R. Hays in
"12 Spanish American Poets",
Yale University Press, 1943)

CARLOS SABAT ERCASTY

(Uruguay)

XVI

Del alba a la mañana, de la tarde al ocaso,
del impuro crepúsculo a las sombras totales,
algo del corazón, en pérdidas fatales
que roban lo más nuestro, cae entre paso y paso.

Nos morimos en un repetido fracaso,
bebemos demasiado los ardientes panales,
agotamos la dicha, y hasta los mismos males
merman, y un día queda sin nada todo el vaso

Que nos den más fuerzas para los deseos y los sueños,
y para el dolor, y para llenar la vida,
y para el alto volar, y para los empeños

tenaces y las ansias de no cansarnos nunca,
¡ah, clamemos por no morir así, desde esa herida
fina y lenta, que ni se cierra, ni nos trunca!

(From "Los adioses", 1929)

XVI

From dawn till morning, from afternoon till dusk,
from the spurious nightfall to the complete shadow,
something of our heart, in fatal losses
--which take away the best of ourselves-- falls step by step.

We die in a repeated failure.

We drink too much of the ardent honeycombs,
we drain happiness, and even evil
diminishes, and one day the glass is empty.

Let us have more strength for wishes and dreams
and for pain, for filling life
and for high flights, for the tenacious

eagerness and the desire of never being tired...

Oh, let's pray not to die like this, from this wound,
fine and slow, which neither cuts us off nor ever closes.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán, 1960)

NICOLÁS GUILLÉN

(Cuba)

Velorio de Papá Montero

¡Quemaste la madrugada
con fuego de tu guitarra,
zumo de caña en la jícara
de tu carne prieta y viva
bajo luna muerta y blanca!

El son te salió redondo
y mulato, como un níspero.

Bebedor de trago largo,
garguero de hoja de lata,
en mar de ron barco suelto,
jinete de la cumbancha:
¿qué vas a hacer con la noche
si ya no podrás tomártela;
ni qué vena te dará
la sangre que te hace falta,
si se te fué por el caño
negro de la puñalada?

¡Ahora sí que te rompieron
Papá Montero!

En el solar te esperaban,
pero te trajeron muerto;
fué bronca la jaladera,
pero te trajeron muerto;
dicen que él era tu ecobio,
pero te trajeron muerto;
el hierro no apareció,
pero te trajeron muerto...

¡Ya se acabó Baldomero,
zumba, canalla y rumbero!

Sólo dos velas están
quemando un poco de sombra;
para tu pequeña muerte
con esas dos velas sobra.
¡Y aun te alumbran, más que velas,
la camisa colorada
que iluminó tus canciones,
la prieta sal de tus sones
y tu melena blancheda!

¡Ahora sí que te rompieron
Papá Montero!

Hoy amaneció la luna
en el patio de mi casa;
de filo cayó en la tierra
y allí se quedó clavada.

¡Los muchachos la cogieron
para lavarle la cara,
y yo la traje esta noche
y te la puse de almohada!

(From "Sóngoro Cosongo", 1931)

Wake for Papa Montero

You burned the dawn
with the flame of your guitar,
juice of the sweet cane in the gourd
of your dusky quick flesh
beneath a dead, white moon!

Music poured from you
as round and mulatto as a plum.

Drinker of tall drinks,
gullet of tin,
boat cut loose in a sea of rum,
horseman of the wild party:
what will you do with the night
now that you can no longer drink it,
and what vein will give you back
the blood you've lost,
gone down the black
drain of a knife-wound?

They certainly got you this time
Papa Montero!

They were waiting for you in the tenement,
but they brought you home dead;
it was a drunken brawl,
but they brought you home dead;
they say he was your pal,
but they brought you home dead;
nobody could find the knife,
but they brought you home dead...

Baldomero's done for -
Attaboy, you old dancing devil!

Only two candles are
burning a little of the shadow;
for your humble death
two candles are too many.
But brighter than the candles
is the red shirt
that lighted your songs,
the dark salt of your music,
your glossy straightened hair!

They certainly got you this time,
Papa Montero.

Today the moon dawned
in the courtyard of my house;
it fell blade-wise to earth,
and there it stuck.
The kids picked it up
and washed its face,
so I bring it tonight
to be your pillow!

Translation by Langston Hughes

(From Anthology of Contemporary
Latin-American Poetry, edited
by Dudley Fitts; Norfolk, Conn.
1942)

JUANA DE IBARBOUROU

(Uruguay)

Noche de lluvia

Llueve..., espera, no te duermas,
quédate atento a lo que dice el viento
y a lo que dice el agua que golpea
con sus dedos menudos en los vidrios.

Todo mi corazón se vuelve oídos
para escuchar a la hechizada hermana,
que ha dormido en el cielo,
que ha visto el sol de cerca,
y baja ahora, elástica y alegre,
de la mano del viento
igual que una viajera
que torna de un país de maravilla.

¡Cómo estará de alegre el trigo ondeante!
¡Con qué avidez se esponjará la hierba!
¡Cuántos diamantes colgarán ahora
del ramaje profundo de los pinos!

Espera, no te duermas. Escuchemos
el ritmo de la lluvia.
Apoya entre mis senos
tu frente taciturna.
Yo sentiré el latir de tus dos sienes,
palpitantes y tibias,
tal cual si fueran dos martillos vivos
que golpearan mi carne.

Espera, no te duermas. Esta noche
somos los dos un mundo,
aislado por el viento y por la lluvia
entre las cuencas tibias de una alcoba.

Espera, no te duermas. Esta noche
somos acaso la raíz suprema
de donde debe germinar mañana
el tronco bello de una raza nueva.

(From "Antología poética", 1940)

Rainy night

It is raining... Wait, do not sleep.
Listen to what the wind is saying
and to what the water says tapping
with little fingers upon the window-panes.

All my heart is listening
to hear the enchanted sister
who has slept in the sky,
who has seen the sun close by,
and now comes down, buoyant and gay,
holding the wind's hand
like a traveler returning
from a marvelous land.

How gay the waving wheat will be!
How eagerly the grass will thrive!
What diamonds will cluster now
in the deep branches of the pines!

Wait, do not sleep; but let us listen
to the rhythm of the rain.
Cradle between my breasts
your silent forehead.
I will feel the beating of your temples
palpitant and warm
just as if they were two living hammers
striking upon my flesh.

Wait, do not sleep. Tonight
the two of us are a world,
isolated by wind and rain
in the warmth of a bedroom.

Wait, do not sleep; tonight we are,
perhaps, that root that goes deep down,
from which tomorrow there will spring
the lovely stock, the race to come.

(Translated by Rolfe Humphries
in Anthology of Contemporary
Latin-American Poetry, edited
by Dudley Fitts, Norfolk, Conn.
1942)

DELMIRA AGUSTINI

(Uruguay)

Lo inefable

Yo muero extrañamente... No me mata la Vida,
no me mata la Muerte, no me mata el Amor;
muero de un pensamiento mudo como una herida...
¿No habéis sentido nunca el extraño dolor

de un pensamiento inmenso que se arraiga en la vida,
devorando alma y carne, y no alcanza a dar flor?
¿Nunca llevasteis dentro una estrella dormida
que os abrasaba enteros y no daba un fulgor?...

¡Cumbre de los martirios!... Llevar eternamente,
desgarradora y árida, la trágica simiente
clavada en las entrañas como un diente feroz!...

¡Pero arrancarla un día en una flor que abriera
milagrosa, inviolable!... ¡Ah, más grande no fuera
tener entre las manos la cabeza de Dios!

(From "Los cálices vacíos", 1913)

The ineffable

I die strangely... It is not Life that kills me,
nor is it Death, or Love...

I die from a thought as silent as a wound.
Have you not ever felt the strange pain

of a tremendous thought that takes root in your life
and devours soul and flesh and never blooms?
Have you not ever borne inside a star asleep
which burns you whole and gives not any light?

Peak of torments!... To bear eternally,
destructive and arid, this tragic seed
nailed in our entrails like a ferocious fang!

But, could we uproot it one day in a wondrous flower
which opens inviolate... Oh, it would be
like having in our hands the very head of God.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán,
1960)

ALFONSO REYES

(México)

Esta necesidad...

Esta necesidad de sacrificio,
que me hace vivir como muriendo,
me subleva de modo que no entiendo
cómo me tiene amor a su servicio.

Quédate, amor, y váyase el suplicio
inútil que me tienes padeciendo:
¡si el alma claro me lo está diciendo,
que amar amor es amar sacrificio!

¡Cuánto exiges, amor, ay, cuánto exiges!
¡Y cómo en tus oscuros arrebatos
disfrutas, alma, cuando más te afliges!

¡Y qué bien miro lo que estoy perdiendo!
¡Y qué bien miro que son insensatos
los que quieren vivir como muriendo!

(From "Repaso poético", 1906-1913)

This eagerness...

This eagerness for sacrifice
that makes me live as though agonizing,
rebels me in such a way that I don't see
how can love hold me to his service.

Stay here, oh Love, and let it go,
this torment that you have had me suffer;
my soul is telling me quite clear
that loving Love is loving sacrifice.

How much you ask for, oh how much!
And how, in your obscure impulses,
the more you suffer. Soul, the more you enjoy.

And how well I see what I am losing,
and how well I see that are insensible
the ones who like to live as though agonizing.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán, 1960)

ARTURO CAPDEVILA

(Argentina)

En vano

¡Cuánto verso de amor, cantado en vano!

¡Oh, cómo el alma se me torna vieja
cuando me doy a recordar la añeja
historia absurda del ayer lejano!

¡Cuánto verso de amor, gemido en vano!
Primero, fué el nectario y yo la abeja:
después mi corazón halló en tu reja
la amarga nieve que lo ha vuelto anciano.

¡Cuánto verso de amor, perdido en vano!
-- Hoy están mis ventanas bien abiertas;
hay sol... hay muchas flores, ... y es verano.

Pero da pena ver, junto a mis puertas,
en un montón de mariposas muertas,
tanto verso de amor llorado en vano.

(From "El poema de Senútar", 1915)

In vain

How many poems of love, sung in vain!
Oh, how old becomes my soul
when I recall the ancient
absurd story of yesterday.

How many poems of love, moaned in vain!
First you were a flower, I, the Bee.

Then my heart found in your window
the bitter snow that drove me old.

How many poems of love, lost in vain!
Today, my windows are wide open,
there is sunshine... many flowers, and it's summer...

But it's sad to see by my doorstep,
among so many dead butterflies,
so many poems of love cried in vain!...

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán,
New Brunswick, N.J., 1960)

CONRADO NALE ROXLO

(Argentina)

Lo imprevisto

Señor, nunca me des lo que te pida.
Me encanta lo imprevisto, lo que baja
de tus rubias estrellas; que la vida
me presente de golpe la baraja

contra que he de jugar. Quiero el asombro
de ir silencioso por mi calle oscura,
sentir que me golpean en el hombro,
volverme, y ver la faz de la aventura.

Quiero ignorar en dónde y de qué modo
encontraré la muerte. Sorprendida,
sepa el alma a la vuelta de un recodo,
que un paso atrás se le quedó la vida.

(From "El grillo", 1923)

The unexpected

Dear Lord, please never grant me what I ask Thee;
The unforeseen enchants me: what is sent
Below from Thy fair stars; I hope that life
Will all at once the cards to me present

Against which I must play. I want the wonder
Of passing quietly through my dark street,
Of feeling that one taps me on the shoulder,
Of turning, there adventure's face to meet.

I do not wish to know just where and how
I shall encounter death. Struck with surprise,
Around a bend I hope my soul may learn
One step behind it life abandoned lies.

(Translated by Mildred E. Johnson
in Spanish Poems of Love. New
York, 1955).

GONZALO ESCUDERO

(Ecuador)

Zoo

Sol,
inventario de color.

Los caballos han aprendido a leer el mundo
en las frutas de vidrio de sus ojos.
Colonia nudista de las madreporas.
Grúas de chocolate de las jirafas.
Claude Debussy es apenas
la aguja de sonido de las ratas.
Convoyes eléctricos de las boas constrictores.
Pantalones marineros de los elefantes.
Stravinsky es la pubertad de los gatos en los techos de luna
llena.
Metalurgia de los proyectiles de los pájaros.
Crenallera de cobre de la iguana.
¿Qué cordillera se encabrita como los camellos?
¿Qué transatlántico enarbola los surtidores de las ballenas?
Geodesia, sabiduría del caracol.
La erudición de Marx es el soviét de las hormigas.
Los pingüinos son los camisas negras del cielo.
Carlos Chaplin se doctoró en el salto de los antilopes.
Nadie resolverá la ecuación algebraica de una serpiente X.
¿Qué nodriza británica como el canguro
donde Freud aprendió a balbucear la libido?

Relojería de las ostras.
¿Qué cortesana vistió en invierno como los armiños?
Traje dominical de las cebras penitenciarias.

Los avestruces raudos son los automóviles de pluma.
Araña títere en los andamios de cristal.

Y todo, para que el murciélago abra el paraguas de la noche.

Zoo

Sun,
inventory of colour.

The horses have learned to read the world
In the glass fruits of their eyes.
Nudist colony of the white corals.
Chocolate derricks of the giraffes.
Claude Debussy is barely
the gramophone-needle of the rats.
Electric trains of the boa constrictors.
Sailor pants of the elephants.
Stravinsky, the puberty of tomcats on the roofs in the full
moon.
Metallurgy of bird-projectiles.
Copper cog-rack of the iguana.
What mountain range rears up like the camels?
What liner branches up such spouting as the whales?
Geodesy, wisdom of the snail.
The erudition of Marx is the soviet of the ants.
The penguins are the black-shirts of the sky.
Charlie Chaplin took his doctorate in antelope-leaping.
Nobody will solve the algebraic equation of a serpent X.
What British wet nurse better than the kangaroo,
where Freud learned to babble the libido?

Clock-shop of the oysters.
What fancy woman dresses in winter like the ermines?
Sunday suit of the penitentiary zebras.

The swift ostriches are automobiles of feathers.
Spider, puppet of the crystal scaffolding.

And all this, that the bat may open the umbrella of night.

(Translated by Richard O'Connell
in "Anthology of Contemporary Latin-
American Poetry", edited by
Dudley Fitts, Norfolk, Conn. 1942).

JORGE CARRERA ANDRADE

(Ecuador)

Corte de cebada

En un cuerno vacío de toro
sopló el Juan el mensaje de la cebada lista.

En sus casas de barro
las siete familias
echaron un zumo de sol
en las morenas vasijas.

La loma estaba sentada en el campo
con su poncho a cuadros.

El colorado, el verde, el amarillo
empezaron a subir por el camino.

Entre un motín de colores
se abatían sonando las cebadas de luz
diezmadas por las hoces.

La Tomasa pesaba la madurez del cielo
en la balanza de sus brazos tornasoles.

Le moldeaba sin prisa la cintura
el giro lento del campo.

Hombres y mujeres de las siete familias,
sentados en lo tierno del oro meridiano,
bebieron un zumo de sol
en las vasijas de barro.

(From "Registro del mundo - Antología
poética", 1940)

Reaping the barley

On a bull's hollow horn
Juan blew the message that the barley was ready.

In their clay huts
the seven families
poured the sun-juice
into brown jars.

The hill squatted in the field
wrapped in a plaid poncho.

Red, green, yellow dresses
began to climb the road.

Amid a riot of colours
the glowing barley sheaves went down with a swish,
decimated by the sickles.

Tomasa weighed the ripeness of the sky
in the scales of her sunflower arms.

The slow swing of the field
molded the shape of her waist.

Men and women of the seven families,
seated in the tender noon-day gold,
drank sun-juice
from the clay jars.

(Translated by Muna Lee de Muñoz Marín
in "Anthology of Contemporary Latin-
American Poetry", edited by Dudley
Fitts, Norfolk, Conn. 1942)

ANDRÉS ELOY BLANCO

(Venezuela)

Regreso al mar

Siempre es el mar donde mejor se quiere,
fue siempre el mar donde mejor te quise;
al amor, como al mar, no hay quien lo alise
ni al mar, como al amor, quien lo modere.

No hay quien, como la mar, familiarice
ni quien, como la ola, persevere,
ni el que más diga en lo que vive y muere
nos dice más de lo que el mar nos dice.

Vamos de nuevo al mar; quiero encontrarte

la hora más azul para besarte

y el lugar más allá para quererte,

donde el agua es al par agua y abismo,

en la alta mar en donde el aire mismo

se da un aire al amor y otro a la muerte.

Return to the sea

It is always the sea where one loves better.

It's been always the sea where I loved you best

for nobody can smooth down love or the sea

neither can anyone moderate the sea or love.

There is no one who --as the sea does-- familiarizes;

there is no one either who --as the waves do--perseveres,

nor can who says more, living or dead

say more than what the sea can tell us.

Let's go again to the sea; I want to meet you

at the bluest hour and kiss you;

let's go to the farthest place to love you better.

Where the water is as well water and abyss,

in the high sea where the very air

gives itself an air to love and other air to death.

Translated by Octavio Corvalán
1960

CARLOS OQUEENDO DE AMAT

(Perú)

Madre

Tu nombre viene lento como las músicas humildes
y de tus manos vuelan palomas blancas.

Mi recuerdo te viste siempre de blanco,
como un recreo de niños que los hombres miran desde aquí,
distante.

Un cielo muere en tus brazos y otro nace en tu ternura.
A tu lado el cariño se abre como una flor cuando pienso.

Entre ti y el horizonte,
mi palabra está, primitiva como la lluvia, o como los himnos,

porque ante ti callan las rosas y la canción.

(From "5 metros de poemas", 1929)

Mother

Your name comes slowly like modest music
and from your hands fly white doves

My memory always dresses you in white
like a children's game which the men here watch from a
distance

And a heaven dies in your arms and another is born in your
tenderness

At your side affection opens like a flower when I am thin-
(king)

Between you and the horizon
my word is primitive like rain or like hymns

Since in your presence roses and song are silent

(Translated by H. R. Hays in
in "Anthology of Contemporary
Latin-American Poetry",
Norfolk, Conn. 1942).

XAVIER ABRIL

(Perú)

Elegía a la mujer inventada

Una mujer o su sombra de hiedra
llena esta soledad de lámparas vacías.

En la memoria del corazón
está marchita una flor,
un nombre de mujer.

Los ojos de la ausencia
están llenos de lluvia, de paisajes helados y sin árboles.

¿Quién conoce el nombre de esa mujer
que olvida su cabellera en los ríos del alba?

¡Qué difícil es distinguir entre la noche
y una mujer ahogada hace tiempo en un estanque!

El desmayo de una flor no se compara
al silencio de sus párpados cerrados.

(From "Difícil trabajo" (?) 1955)

Elegy to the invented woman

A woman or her shadow of ivy
fills this solitude with empty lamps.

In the memory of the heart
a flower is withered, --
a woman's name.

The eyes of absence
are full of rain, of frozen landscapes without trees.

Who knows the name of that woman
who forgets her tresses in rivers of dawn?

How difficult to distinguish between the night
and a woman long-drowned in a pool!

The swooning of a flower can not compare
with the silence of her shut eyelids.

(Translated by Mma Lee de Muñoz Marín
in "Anthology of Contemporary Latin-
American Poetry", ed. by Dudley Fitts,
Norfolk, Conn., 1942).

EUGENIO FLORIT

(Cuba)

A la mariposa muerta

Tu júbilo, en el vuelo;
tu inquietud, en el aire;
tu vida, al sol, al aire, al vuelo.

Qué pequeña tu muerte
bajo la luz de fuego vivo.
Qué serena la gracia de tus alas
ya para siempre abiertas en el libro.

Y en tí, tan suave, en tu morir callado,
en tu sueño sin sueños,
cuánta ilusión perdida al aire,
cuánto desesperado pensamiento.

(From "Reino", 1936-1938)

To the dead butterfly

Your joy, in flight;
your restlessness, in air;
your life, of sun, of air, of flight.

How small your death
beneath the light of living fire!
How serene the grace of your wings
now held for ever open in this book!

And in you, so soft, in your hushed dying,
in your sleep without dreams,
what magic lost into air,
how much despairing thought!

(Translated by Richard O'Connell
in "Anthology of Contemporary
Latin-American Poetry", edited
by Dudley Fitts, Norfolk, Conn.,
1942).

I

Blanda invasión de alas es la noche.
Laten bajo su pecho las criaturas.
Ensimismadas laten y latiendo
de sí mismas se olvidan y comulgan,
al fluir de las horas entregadas.

¡Oh viento suspendido, rama quieta;
aguas mudas, sonámbulas, sin freno;
tierra henchida soñando cielos puros;
oh, solitaria sangre, dulce río
donde la noche nace y desemboca!

¡De un costado del hombre nace el día!

(From "Noche de resurrecciones", 1939)

I

Soft invasion of wings is the night.
In its bos om creatures palpitate.
Self-concerned they palpitate and doing so
they forget themselves and commune
while the worn-out hours flow away.

Oh, suspended wind, oh quiet limb,
silent waters, ever watchful and restless,
ripe earth dreaming of pure skies,
oh, lonely blood, sweet river
where the night is born and where it dies.

Out of the man's rib, there the day breaks.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán, 1960)

VICENTE PALÉS MATOS

(Puerto Rico)

Hoy me he echado a reír

Hoy me he echado a reír al salir de mi casa.
Alguien comenta: -Vedle, ¡hoy está alegre!-- Tomo
la ruta campesina, y anticipo en voz alta:
--¡In un trago de sol voy a beberme el día!

Hace fresco. Me baña la claridad del alba,
y canto y grito y corro diciendo: --Hermano viento,
métete por mis poros hasta el fondo del alma
y hazme vibrar como un anemocordio.

No sé qué magia tiene para mí esta alborada,
que aspiro a pulmón lleno la brisa, y siento un vago
renacer de los días alados de mi infancia...
¡y me enerva un anhelo de convertirme en luz,
o en abeja que zumba o en ruiseñor que canta,
para gozar de un claro sentido de la vida,
libre de toda inútil desvelación arcana,
y acercarme a las piedras y decirles: --Soñad;
soñad que el fuego cósmico os quema las entrañas;
soñad que para el gozo primitivo del mundo,
en vuestros hombros duros os han nacido alas.

Las cosas tienen rostros familiares y amigos
y con secretas voces en el viento me hablan.

¡Oh, si toda la vida se convirtiera en uno
de esos amaneceres! ¡Un minuto! ¡Una ráfaga!
¡Que fuera intensa y breve, para luego dormir!
¡Y así, pleno de ensueños, exaltarme en la llama
del sol, con muchos pájaros y humos madrugadores,
y nubes y animales!... Y de pronto, cercana,
con el vestido blanco aparecieras tú,
suelta al aire la pálida cabellera dorada,
y frente a mí rompieras a reír, y mimosa,
en medio de la boca con pasión me besaras...
(Sin que se estremeciera nuestra arcilla nerviosa)
y correr y llenarnos de energías paganas
para decirnos: --Bésame sobre los ojos... ¡Tómame!
Y morirnos de amor, de alegría y de alba.

Pero tú no apareces. Yo estoy loco. Quisiera
sacudir de mi lado toda esta carga vana
de andrajos y miserias que nos pudren la vida,
y correr cara al sol, cara al sol, ¡cara a cara!
y quedarme tendido sobre las hierbas húmedas,
bajo la milagrosa canción de las cigarras.

(From "Viento y espuma", 1945)

Today I burst into laughter

Today I burst into laughter upon leaving my house.
Someone comments: --"Look at him! Today he's gay". I walk
the country-side road, and predict in loud voice:
--"I'm going to drink this day in one swallow of sun".

It's cool. The brightness of dawn bathes me
and I sing, and shout and run, while saying: "Brother wind,
get through my pores into the bottom of my soul
and make me vibrate like a reed-organ.

I don't know what magic this morning has for me,
that I breathe by the lungful the breeze and
I feel a vague uprising
of the winged days of my childhood...
And an eagerness to be transformed in light enervates me;
or to be a buzzing bee, or a singing nightingale,
to enjoy a neat sense of life,
freed of all useless watchfulness,
and to approach the stones and tell them:--"Dream;
dream of the cosmic fire burning your entrails;
dream that you have grown wings on your shoulders
for the primeval delight of the Creation".
Everything has a familiar, friendly face
and speaks to me with secret voices in the wind.

Oh, may the whole life become one of these daybreaks.
One minute! One gust of wind!
May life be intense and brief, and then, to sleep!
And thus, full of dreams, to exalt myself in the flame
of the sun, among many birds and early smokes,
and clouds, and animals!... And suddenly, close to me,
dressed in white, may you appear,
loose in the air your pale golden hair,
and before me you would start to laugh, and tenderly,
full on my mouth you'd kiss me...
(But our nervous clay wouldn't be disturbed).
And then, to run, to fill ourselves with pagan energy
and to tell each other: "Kiss me on the eyes... Take me!"
And to die of love, of joy, of dawn...

But you don't appear. I am mad. I'd like
to shake off all this vain load
of rags, and misery that ruins our lives,
and run face to the sun, face to the sun, face to face!
And end lying down on the misty grass
under the marvelous song of the cicadas.

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán
New Brunswick, N.J., 1960)

JORGE VOCOS LESCANO

(Argentina)

Soneto

Y qué fuerza de Dios, qué ardiente y pura
tarde de Dios te mueve y te sustenta.
Oh saciedad que siempre estás sedienta.
Oh plenitud que nunca estás madura.

Y el alma canta y sin descanso apura
la vida, el sueño, lo que se presenta.
Pero en su canto mismo transparente
su gran afán, su mucha desventura.

Y es que estás tú y es que en tu aliento llevas
fragancia de unos aires, de unas hojas,
lucos de un cielo eternamente nuevas.
¡Tarde y vida de Dios, oh Poesía!
¡Surges, contigo acaban las congojas,
pero nos matas de melancolía!...

(From "La poesía"

Sunday

Poetry

And what power of God, what ardent, pure
evening of God moves and supports you,
Oh, society that goes forever thirsty,
Oh, plenitude that never gets mature.

And sings the soul and restless hurries
life and dream, whatever comes along,
and yet its very song somehow makes evident
the soul's great anxiety, its much unhappiness.

And it's because you're there, conveying in your breath
the fragrance of some air, of some leaves,
the light of certain skies that keeps forever new.

God's evening and life, Oh, Poetry!

You come along and all our sorrows end,
but still you kill us with melancholy!...

(Translated by Octavio Corvalán)
1960

EDUARDO CARRANZA

(Colombia)

Domingo

Un domingo sin ti, de ti perdido,
es como un túnel de paredes grises
donde voy alumbrado por tu nombre,
es una noche clara sin saberlo
o un lunes disfrazado de domingo;
es como un día azul sin tu permiso.

Llueve en este poema, tú lo sientes
con tu alma vecina del cristal:
llueve tu ausencia como una agua triste
y azul sobre mi frente desterrada.

He comprendido cómo una palabra
pequeña, igual a un alfiler de luna
o un leve corazón de mariposa,
alzar puede murallas infinitas,
matar una mañana de repente,
evaporar azules y jardines,
tronchar un día como si fuera un lirio,
volver granos de sal a los luceros.

He comprendido cómo una palabra
de la materia azul de las espadas
y con aguda vocación de espina,
puede estar en la luz como una herida
que nos duele en el centro de la vida.

Llueve en este poema y el domingo
gira como un lejano carrusel:
tan cerca estás de mí que no te veo,
echa de mis palabras y mi sueño.

Yo pienso en ti detrás de la distancia,
con tu voz que me inventa los domingos
y tu sonrisa como vago pétalo
cayendo de tu rostro sobre mi alma.

Con su hoja volando hacia la noche,
rayado de llovizna y desencanto,
este domingo sin tu visto bueno
llega como una carta equivocada.

La tarde, niña, tiene esa tristeza
del aire donde hubo antes una rosa:
Yo estoy aquí: rodeado de tu ausencia,
hecho de amor y solo como un hombre.

(From "Canciones para iniciar la fiesta",
1956)

A Sunday without you, lost away from you,
is like a tunnel with grey walls
through which I pass lighted by your name;
it is a clear night, clear without knowing it,
or a Monday masquerading as a Sunday;
it is like a dark blue day without your consent.

It is raining in this poem: you feel it
with your soul that verges upon crystal:
your absence descends like rainfall, sad
and dark, upon my banished brow.

I have come to know how a little
word, like a pin of moonlight
or a butterfly's fragile heart,
can raise up infinite walls,
in an instant kill a morning,
dry up blue and gardens together,
crop a day as if it were a lily,
change the morning stars into grains of salt.

I have come to know how a word
made of the sword's blue substance,
with its thorn-sharp intention,
can gather the light like a wound
aching in the centre of our lives.

It is raining in this poem, and Sunday
whirls like a far-off carousel:
so close are you to me that I can not see you,
fashioned of my words and my dreaming.

I think of you beyond the distance,
inventing Sundays for me with your voice:
of your smile like a drifting petal
drifting down upon my soul from your face.

With its leafage flying toward night,
streaky with mist and disillusion,
this Sunday, without the seal of your approval,
arrives like a misdirected letter.

And evening, dearest, holds the sadness
of air where there was once a rose:
I am here, surrounded by your absence
made of love and lonely as a man.

(Translated by Donald Devenish Walsh
in "Anthology of Contemporary Latin-
American Poetry", edited by Dudley
Fitts, Norfolk, Conn. 1942).

JACINTO FOMBONA PACHANO

(Venezuela)

Mi América, la dulce

Tú venías vestida de guitarras y pájaros
y tu sombrero era de sol y tiernas palmas,
cuando de pronto me dijeron
que vientos encendidos te buscaban
para soplar tizones en tu falda.

Volé. Te vi los lazos verdes
y el cinturón de agua,
te vi el traje, las flores y toqué tu sombrero.
Y pensé que la vida estaba intacta,
que tú, mi dulce América, no ardías.

Y, sin embargo, yo el inquieto,
yo el que canta en las albas, yo el reloj de la cómoda,
yo el que interrumpe el sueño de los hartos,
sé que es verdad y te digo: despierta!
porque he oído las lenguas de fuego en los pasillos,
porque ya están crujiendo tus guitarras tostadas,
a ese negro rescoldo que les raja las fibras,
cuando para dormir cuelgas el traje
en el ropero de tus siestas.

No hay que dormir. Vela en la piedra,
vela en la pluma, y en la onda,
en la semilla y el retoño, vela,
en el pan, en el aire,
en la llama de la esquila que tiembla
borrando y alumbrando terrores del espejo.

Ve que a ninguno falte
ni el aguja ni el hilo para surcir su casa,
ni el agua de amellar fillos al rojo,
ni el corazón, ni las abejas,
ni el vellón y la leche de los mansos.

Ve que en todos los techos haya humo
y haya canción en cada hoguera,
que rían todas las ventanas
y que todas las puertas quiebren
las llaves espantosas.

Quiero salvarte. Quiero
que no te alcancen con sus lenguas,
que no te tiznen esos gritos
que andan rayando túnicas de corderos y niños.
A ti, mi nueva, a ti, mi dulce,
sin cerrojo en tu casa, sin limón en tu plato,
la inocente, la mía,
quiero salvarte yo, quiero salvarte,
verte seguir intacta,
segura para siempre de tus pies y tus manos,
sobre puentes sin riesgo,
con la rosa de todos los vientos en tu boca,
vestida para todos de guitarras y pájaros.

(From "Las torres desprevenidas", 1940)

JACINTO FORBONA PACHANO

America, my sweet

You came dressed in birds and guitars
and your hat was of sun and tender palm leaves
When they suddenly told me
That flaming winds were seeking you
To blow up embers in your lap.

I flew. I saw your green bowknots
And your girdle of water,
I saw your garment, the flowers, and I touched your hat.
And I thought that life was still inviolate
Since you, my sweet America, were not burning.

And yet I, the unquiet one,
I who sing in the dawns, I, the clock on the bureau,
I who interrupt the sleep of the self-satisfied,
Know that it is true and I say to you: awaken!
For I have heard the tongues of fire in the passages,
For your scorched guitars are already crackling
For those black embers that split their fibers
When you hang up your gown at bedtime
In the wardrobe of your slumbers.

You must not sleep. Keep watch in the stone,
Keep watch in the wave and in the feather,
In the seed and in the seedling, keep your vigil,
In the air and in the breadloaf,
In the call of the bell that trembles,
Obsuring and illuminating terrors of the mirror.

See to it that no one lacks
Either the needle or the thread to sew his house up,
Either the water for tempering red-hot blades,
Either the heart or the bees,
Or the fleece and the milk of the bellwethers.

See to it that over all the roofs there is smoke
That all the windows are laughing
And that all the doors fracture
The fearful keys.

I want to save you. I do not want them
With those tongues of theirs to reach you,
I do not want those cries to scorch you,
Those cries that go streaking the robes of lambs and of
(children).

You are new, my sweet,
Without a latch in your house, without a lemon in your dish,
O innocent and mine,
I want to save you, I, I want to save you,
I want to see you continue inviolate,
Your hands and feet, forever secure
Upon safe bridges,
With the rose of all the winds in your mouth,
Dressed for everyone in birds and guitars.

(Transl. by H. R. Hays, "12 Span. Amer. Poets", Yale, 1943)

SALVADOR NOVO

La poesía

Para escribir poemas,
para ser un poeta de vida apasionada y romántica
cuyos libros están en las manos de todos
y de quien hacen libros y publican retratos los periódicos,
es necesario decir las cosas que leo,
esas del corazón, de la mujer y del paisaje,
del amor fracasado y de la vida dolorosa,
en versos perfectamente medidos,
sin asonancias en el mismo verso,
con metáforas nuevas y brillantes.

La música del verso embriaga
y si uno sabe referir rotundamente su inspiración
arrancará las lágrimas del auditorio,
la comunicará sus emociones recónditas
y será coronado en certámenes y concursos.

Yo puedo hacer versos perfectos,
medirlos y evitar sus asonancias,
poemas que conmuevan a quien los lea
y que lo hagan exclamar: ¡Qué niño tan inteligente!

Yo les diré entonces
que los he escrito desde que tenía once años:
no he de decirles nunca
que no he hecho sino darles la clase que he aprendido
de todos los poetas.
Tendré una habilidad de histrión
para hacerles creer que me conmueve lo que a ellos.

• Pero en mi lecho, solo, dulcemente,
sin recuerdos, sin voz,
siento que la poesía no ha salido de mí.

Poetry

To write poems,
to be a poet with a passionate and romantic life
whose books are in everyone's hands,
about whom books are written and whose picture is
(published in the papers,
I must say the things that I read,
matters of the heart, women and landscapes,
love come to grief and grievous life,
in perfectly measured verses,
avoiding assonance within a single line,
with new and brilliant metaphors.

The music of the verse intoxicates,
and if one can state his inspiration clearly
he will draw tears from the audience,
he will communicate to it his recóndite emotions,
and be crowned in contests and competitions.

I can make perfect verses,
measure them and avoid their assonances,
poems that will move the readers
and make them exclaim: "What a bright child!"

I will tell them then
that I have been writing poems since I was eleven:
I must never tell them
that I have merely given them the course that I have
(learned

from all the poets.
I shall have an actor's skill
to make them think that what moves them moves me.

But in my bed, alone, softly,
without memories, without voice,
I feel that poetry has not come out of me.

(Translated by Donald Devenish Walsh
in "Anthology of Contemporary Latin-
American Poetry", edited by Dudley
Fitts, Norfolk, Conn. 1942).