

Catalan Poetry

with

Carles Duarte

Gaspar Jaén i Urban

Vinyet Panyella

Ponç Pons

At 6.30pm on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009

At the Instituto Cervantes, 102 Eaton Square, London, SW1W 9AN



Poetry has been written in various forms of the Catalan language (Catalan, Valencian, Balearic Catalan, especially) for nearly six hundred years, covering an area that stretches from Roussillon in southern France, southwards to Alacant (Alicante) and beyond in the Eastern seabord of Spain, and as far across the Medierranean as Alguer (Alghero) in Sardinia.

Our four distinguished poets –Gaspar Jaén from Elx (Elche), Ponç Pons from Alaior (Menorca) and Carles Duarte and Vinyet Panyella from the major Catalan-speaking area of Barcelona — will read selections from a varied body of work that testifies to the vitality of poetry in the language today.

This event in the Intituto Cervantes of London is taking place thanks to the support of the Institut Ramon Llull of Barcelona, Poet in the City, and King’s College London, as well as the collaboration of the Cultural Office of the Spanish Embassy.

*Robert Archer  
King’s College London*

Readers of the English translations:

Robert Archer

Gwendolen MacKeith

---

**Carles Duarte i Montserrat** lives in Barcelona, where he has had a distinguished career in government administration and publishing. His published work includes important contributions to Catalan linguistics. His prize-winning poetry, which has been translated into numerous languages, meditates on a number of central concepts of man's existence.

**Gaspar Jaén i Urban** lives and works in Elx in the southern tip of the region of Alacant (Alicante) in the Valencian Autonomous Region. By profession an architect, closely involved in several major projects in Elx and the author of important works on architecture, he has published distinctive prize-winning poetry in Valencian on a wide range of themes.

**Vinyet Panyella** lives in the coastal town of Sitges, a short distance from Barcelona. She multi-faceted career has included spells as the Director of the prestigious Biblioteca de Caatlunya and as elected representative to the Catalan Parliament, as well as curator of several exhibitions. Her work as a writer includes essays on art, literature and cultural history. She has consistently published as a poet since 1992, and has been the recipient of several prizes.

**Ponç Pons** writes in Balearic Catalan from his native Menorca. His work includes not only poetry, for which he has won numerous prizes, but also translations and children's literature. A frequent aspect of his poetry is a direct interaction with the literature of other countries and languages, and the degradation of traditional life on his island.

---

VESTIGIS

Cerques arreu vestigis d'altres vides,  
dels somnis que les feien bategar,  
dels déus que en mitigaven la temença,  
dels mots que n'explicaven les mirades,  
dels gestos esculpits on preservaven  
allò que creien que era digne  
de sobreviure el temps.

Cerques vestigis de tu  
salvats en el paisatge,  
però ja saps que et vencerà  
aquesta ona infatigable  
que sents, ja serè, com va desfent-te  
mentre els teus ulls somriuen a la llum  
i amb els llavis celebres  
el raïm i la pell.

*(Arvad, 2009)*

TRACES

You search everywhere for traces of other lives,  
the dreams that made them pulse,  
the gods that calmed their fears,  
the words that might explain those glances,  
the sculpted gestures with which they preserved  
everything they thought worthy  
of surviving time.

You search for traces of yourself  
preserved in the landscape,  
but you already know you'll be beaten down  
by this tireless wave  
and you feel, already serene, how it defeats you  
while your eyes smile at the light  
and with your lips you celebrate  
grapes and skin.

*(Translated by Anna Crowe)*

---

UN OBLIT INSACIABLE

M'arrapo a les paraules  
i als afectes efímers  
perquè no sóc res més  
que un oblit insaciable,  
una veu que s'escolta fugaç  
dins un somni,  
un instant negligible  
dins el temps infinit,  
una pell que s'estén dins el buit,  
un volum escassíssim  
de neguits i tendreses.

(Unpublished)

AN INSATIABLE FORGETTING

I gird myself round with words  
with feelings that come and go  
for I am only  
an insatiable forgetting  
a voice that hears its own brief cry  
from deep within a dream,  
one insignificant moment  
in never-ending time,  
a skin stretched across a void,  
the tiniest clump  
of anguish and of tenderness.

(translated by Robert Archer)

---

TERRA

Terra,  
pols,  
plasmació del foc,  
recer de mars,  
matriu dels minerals,  
sitja del gra,  
aljub de l'aigua de la pluja,  
nodridora de plantes i paraules.

Terra,  
camí fressat pel temps,  
matèria de la casa,  
mesura de la sang,  
escenari de pells i del desig.

Terra,  
saliva,  
teixit de fruites i d'aromes,  
paisatge de la fam i de la mort,  
t'estrenyo entre els meus dits,  
et retinc entre els llavis,  
t'esculpeixo amb el tacte,  
et vesteixo de somnis.

(Unpublished)

LAND

Land,  
dust,  
mould of fire,  
refuge from the oceans,  
mineral's matrix,  
storehouse of grain,  
rain-tank for the rain-water  
nourisher of plants and words.

Land,  
a road worn by time,  
the stuff of dwellings,  
measure of blood,  
a stage for the flesh and for desires.

Land,  
saliva,  
the weave of fruits and scents,  
fieldscape of hunger and death,  
I crush you between my fingers,  
I place you between my lips,  
I mould you with touch,  
I clothe you with dreams.

(translated Robert Archer)

---

AQUELL QUI ENCARA NO HA NASCUT

*"Més feliç que els uns i els altres és el qui encara no ha nascut"*  
Eclesiastès, 4.2

Aquell qui encara no ha nascut  
no ha viscut ni el dolor ni la paraula,  
ni el creixement ni el cansament dels dies,  
ni l'ha colpit l'avidesa dels cossos  
o el llambrec de la llum damunt les mans,  
i no coneix l'agilitat del puma  
ni els colors vistents del guacamai;  
no ha sofert tampoc cap fred inhòspit  
ni la humitat feixuga  
que alenteix les hores,  
no s'ha emprovat el vell vestit del mar,  
ni ha tocat els arbres ni les roques,  
ni ha caminat la mort.

Potser és feliç  
el qui encara no ha nascut,  
però no duu ni a la pell ni a la memòria  
el tast dels anys,  
i la textura del vent  
no n'habita la sang,  
ni ha fruitat als seus llavis  
el crit de la tendresa.

Potser és feliç  
sense l'olor del te  
i el gust de la taronja.

Jo no podria ser-ho.

THE YET UNBORN

*"More fortunate than either, I reckoned those yet unborn"*  
Ecclesiastes, 4.2

The yet unborn  
has known neither pain nor word,  
nor the growing of the day nor its falling off,  
nor has felt the avid body's yearning  
or the glance of light on the hands;  
he does not know the nimbleness of pumas,  
the loud colours of macaws;  
he has not felt the unwelcoming cold  
or the heavy dampness  
that slows the passing of hours,  
he has never donned the sea's ancient robes  
nor has he touched the forest or the rocks  
nor ever trod the path of death.

He might be happy  
to be unborn,  
but does not bear in skin or memory  
the taste of passing years;  
the weave of the wind  
does not course through his blood,  
and the cry of tenderness  
lies mute between his barren lips.

Perhaps he's quite content  
without the smell of tea  
or the taste of oranges.

I could never be.

L'ABISME

L'albada és de cristall  
i una Lluna de marbre  
s'allunya pel ponent.

Dins els teus ulls  
viu un silenci dens,  
un fred precís  
que ens pren la mà  
i ens duu molt lentament  
fins al llindar,  
sense passat,  
sense futur,  
on tot és fet d'abisme.

T'abraço fort,  
m'abrades,  
vençuts per aquesta set,  
per aquest dolor  
que es torna inextingible.

Aprinc a abandonar-me.

La mar i jo  
ja som només  
la llàgrima.

THE ABYSS

A dawn of crystal cuts the sky,  
and the marbled moon  
turns Eastwards away.

In your eyes thick silence  
has come to dwell,  
a chill concision  
that reaches for our hands  
and, step by silent step,  
conducts us to the edge.  
Everything there was  
or might have been  
has come to the abyss.

I hold you fast,  
you cling to me;  
we thirst here with the same thirst,  
and the same pain beyond all cure  
slowly fills us both.

I have learnt not to resist.

The sea and I  
have now become  
a single tear.

*(El centre del temps, 2003)*

*(translated by Robert Archer)*

---



GERMÀNICA, 1: BERLIN 1979

S'ha nuvolat de colp i ha començat a ploure.  
La pluja ens ha sobtat enmig del parc, després  
d'haver eixit de veure el mausoleu de Schinkel.  
Ens hem arrecerat sota el pòrtic d'una ala  
del palau. També hi venen alguns homes amb gossos  
i velletes que duen al cap bosses de plàstic.  
Sota el xàfec tremolen les extenses arbredes.  
Ara aquí, com a Roma, amb goig m'ompli la pluja.  
Ciutats velles d'Europa, acabades amb arbres,  
matins de sol als parcs, aigües verdes de pluja.  
Berlín, ciutats estranyes, ara mortes i buides,  
suburbis de la por, altre temps capital  
de les corts europees. Flors per a Schinkel ara,  
quan la ciutat que feu no existeix ja. Passeig  
sota els til·lers, encara amb restes de metralla.  
Al Vell Museu romanen ombres de creus gammades.  
La Victòria Gran. Porta de Brandeburg.  
Damunt el parc, la pluja referma, com tardor.  
Alguna gent se'n va corrent sobre la gespa.  
Mirem la tranquil·líssima vesprada. Potser que,  
si ha parat ja de ploure, tingam avui a Berlín  
una posta de sol d'aqueixes que li crema  
a la ciutat les cases.

Recordaria encara

temps després com va ser de formosa la posta  
de sol, amb tu a Berlín, d'aquell dia d'agost.

(*De Re Aedificatoria*, Unpublished)

GERMÀNICA, 1: BERLIN 1979

It has suddenly clouded over and begun to rain.  
The shower has caught us in the middle of the park,  
after  
we went out to see the Schinkel mausoleum.  
We have taken shelter under the portico of one wing  
of the palace. Some men with dogs come in too  
and little old ladies wearing plastic bags on their heads.  
The extensive groves of trees shudder under the  
downpour.  
Here now, just as in Rome, the rain fills me with joy.  
Old European cities, perfected with trees,  
sunny mornings in the parks, green rainwater.  
Berlin, foreign cities, now dead and empty,  
suburbs of fear, former capital  
of the European courts. Bouquets now for Schinkel,  
when the city you made no longer exists. Avenues  
of lime trees, where shrapnel is still embedded.  
In the Old Museum the shadows of swastikas linger.  
The Great Victory. Brandenburg Gate.  
Over the park, the rain grows heavier, like autumn.  
Some people take to their heels across the lawns.  
We gaze at the utterly peaceful evening. Perhaps,  
if the rain stops, we will have in Berlin today  
one of those sunsets which sets the houses  
of the city ablaze.

I would still remember  
much, much later, how beautiful the sunset was,  
with you in Berlin, that day in August.

(translated by Anna Crowe)

---

PLOU A GATWICK

Tebi alè de foscúries boirosses,  
cargolant-se a la nit que t'encimbellava,  
enfonsant-la,  
vessen els crepuscles dels jardins.  
Cossos inassolibles als meridians de Londres  
engendren cabells verds a les espatlles;  
amors d'arbres nus que no coneixen  
enteixinats d'alberedes pel sol envermellides.

Ha emmudit el teu cos, ja plec o mentida,  
ja cavall fet de neu amb els angles trencats,  
flor de glaç esventada pel vent,  
per uns altres ulls que deleixen  
el color dels teus ulls.

Plou a Gatwick  
i els vidres humits desen carícies.  
Silenciosament plou  
un abandó d'ocells fugits cap a la llum.  
Borrosses planúries de fresca i núvols  
desdibuixen remors de parets esblanqueïdes.  
Està oberta la tornada a geografies de sang al sol:  
un altre país, mobles blaus assabentats de la suor,  
corba del somni estesa devers el blau remot.

A Gatwick la pluja llença gespa  
a les cares que la creuen  
per tornar a llunyanes ciutats de ferro,  
per fils abrusats dibuixades.  
A Gatwick, la pluja fa escriure la boirina  
preludiant el primer oblit  
de les cares amuntegades damunt la teua cara.

*(De Re Aedificatoria, Unpublished)*

RAIN AT GATWICK

Cool breath of misty darks,  
curling into the night that placed you on high,  
deepening it,  
dusks pour out of gardens.  
Unattainable bodies on London's meridians  
breed green hair on shoulders;  
love affairs of naked trees that know nothing  
of panellings of poplar groves rosy with sun.

It has gone silent, your body, now a sealed document or  
lie,  
now a horse made of snow with broken angles,  
an ice flower tossed away by the wind,  
by other eyes that destroy  
the colour of your eyes.

It is raining at Gatwick  
and the wet windows store up caresses.  
In silence it rains  
an outpouring of birds that flee towards the light.  
Vague flatlands of fresh air and clouds  
blur rumours of whitewashed walls.  
The return flight opens on geographies of blood in the  
sun:  
another country, blue furniture acquainted with sweat,  
thick curve of dreaming towards the far-off blue.

At Gatwick the rain throws grass  
in the faces pushing through it  
to go home to cities made of steel,  
via burned threads that have been pencilled-in.  
At Gatwick, the rain breaks up the mist  
as a prelude to the first forgetting  
of all the faces piled on top of yours.

*(translated by Anna Crowe)*

---

DE RE ÆDIFICATORIA

1

Haviem fet vint anys i amb deler apreníem  
que han de ser les escales espais buits on la llum  
penetra a dolls i cau lliscant per les parets;  
que el pas lent i calmat del carrer a la casa

per corredors de vidre portar l'esguard havia  
a les vistes de fora, ocells, arbres, façanes;  
que s'han de mesurar les estances amb cura  
i posar al lloc just pilars, murs, xunts, cornises;

que han de ser fermes i nets els traçats i els dibuixos  
i dretes i aplomades arestes i trobades;  
rectes, angles i línees; llises, les superfícies.

Aprenguérem a usar amb mesura el color,  
la corba, i amb prudència fantasies i somnis.  
Vam saber que la regla, l'ordre i la matemàtica

guien de l'arquitecte la mà i el pensament.

2

Que són els finestrals fonts de sol i celística  
sabérem, de frescor i de vent i paisatges,  
que ens arriben ciutats amb carrers i comerços  
quan mirem al través, persones que passegen

o que van a la feina, el brogit dels vehicles.  
Vam saber que els volums s'han de retallar nets  
i amb claredat en l'aire, com perfils d'una serra,  
evitant les retòriques i les formes inútils.

DE RE ÆDIFICATORIA

1

We were just twenty and learning with zeal  
that stairways have to be empty spaces where light  
floods in and slithers down walls;  
that the slow and measured walk from street to house

along glass passages had to carry the eye  
to things seen out of doors, birds, trees, frontages;  
that you have to measure dwellings with care, and place  
in just the right spot pillars, inner walls, shafts, cornices;

that plans and drawings have to be steady and clear  
and edges and joints unwavering and perpendicular;  
angles and lines all straight; surfaces smooth.

We learned to use colour and curve with moderation,  
and with caution fantasies and dreams.  
We knew ruler, order, mathematics

are what guide the architect's hand and thinking.

2

That large windows are a source of sun and of starlight  
we learned, of fresh air and wind and landscapes  
that cities with streets and business come to us  
when we look out, and people taking a walk

or going to work, and the roar of the traffic.  
We knew volume and mass should stand out precisely,  
printed in air like the profiles of mountains,  
eschewing all rhetoric, all useless forms.

---

Les tanques de l'espai sabran de ritme i mòdul,  
d'igual forma i grandària les portes i finestres,  
les bigues i els pilars, els pòrtics, els balcons,

multiplicació de nombres, buits i plens;  
lleis del bon construir, geometria exacta.  
Vam aprendre com eren de bells aquells suburbis

tot fent un bloc de pisos. Mar de la Malva-rosa.

*(De Re Aedificatoria, Unpublished)*

The walls of the space should embrace proportion and  
rhythm,  
windows and doors of commensurate shape and size,  
the beams and the pillars, the porticos, balconies,

multiplication of numbers, empty and full;  
laws of good building, exact geometry.

We learned how lovely they were, those suburbs

while making a block of flats. A Sea of Geraniums.

*(translated by Anna Crowe)*

---

BIBLIOTECA DE CELSUS

*En record de Philip Larkin*

Sota un sol rutilant que encega els ulls  
i transforma l'esperit en plenitud  
em pren el fosc neguit de la certesa  
que mai no llegiré tots aquells llibres  
que sé que m'aguardaven.  
M'aboco endins la sòlida estructura,  
traspasso els límits de la pedra tallada,  
penetro al cor alat de l'edifici  
desfet pel temps en aire i en carcassa:  
portals, llindes, finestres, traç magnífic,  
arquitectura esplèndida del buit.

*(Memorial de platges, 1993)*

THE LIBRARY OF CELSUS

*In memory of Philip Larkin*

Under the shining sun that blinds your eyes  
and transforms the spirit of fullness  
I am overtaken by the dark irking certainty  
that I will never read as many of those books  
as I knew were awaiting me.  
I enter the solid outer walls,  
I cross the limits of modeled stone,  
I reach the airy heart of the building,  
undone long ago into space and surrounding shell:  
doorways, lintels, windows, a magnificent layout,  
architecture of emptiness.

(translated by D. Sam Abrams)

---

VISIÓ D'HIPÀTIA, II

Esguarda'm ja com sóc,  
en la nuesa.  
Despulla de victòries més que incertes de l'odi sense  
glòria.

Nua com una sang.  
Com els ulls de l'infant que s'interroga.  
Nua com un corall, o una petxina.  
Com el trencall que mor damunt la sorra blanca.

Esguarda'm ja com sóc.  
Sóc en la cendra.  
En el crepuscle roig.  
En el silenci blau.  
En l'hora quieta de la calma blanca.  
Enlloc no hi ha botí per celebrar-hi el triomf.  
El cor batega en la pedra calcinada.

*(Miralls de Marbre, 2000)*

VISION OF HYPATIA, II

Look at me just as I am,  
in my nakedness.  
The remains of victories more uncertain than unglorified  
hatred.

As naked as blood.  
Like the eyes of a wondering child.  
As bare as coral or a seashell.  
Like breakers dying upon the white sands.

Look at me just as I am.  
I am in the dust.  
In the red edge of day.  
In the blue silence.  
In the quiet hour of white calm.  
There are no spoils anywhere to celebrate our victory.  
My heart beats in the scorched stones.

*(translated by D. Sam Abrams)*

---

CAVALLS I COLLARET (SUITE DE TERRAMAR)

I

Els naufragis habiten la mar del meu davant. El bressol i la tomba de les civilitzacions que m'han configurat. Olimp sense núvols, infern sense flames. L'arbitri dels déus que escriuen els nostres destins ho és tot. D'això en diem constel·lacions.

II

Després de la tempesta baixen a la platja els escamots. Inauguren el seu ritual cobejós vora la mar. Cerquen els tresors que la mar retorna. S'ajuden amb croses que endevinen, bastons que furguen, pals que tracen cicatrius. La mar ho va esborrant amb plàcid llanguiment. No em robaran el collaret blanc dels matins de festa.

III

De nit escolto els renills que s'apropen. Cada rompent bramula més a la vora amb fosca veu. M'abandono a la fosca. Em deixo bressar per la remor oculta de qui sap quina tonada.

IV

Clareja. El trencant del galop agita la crinera blanca de la fúria. Els remolins clapegen la blavor de l'alba amb una simfonia de blancs.

V

Cavalls o collaret. ¿Qui sóc, de totes dues? Jardí de dues ombres. Mimosa i buganvíglia, espígol i roser, xiprer i tamaríu. Capvespre i alba. Sorra i rocam. Còdol i duna. Alga i petxina. Aiguamoll, cova de mar, líquen. Sóc totes dues.

HORSES AND NECKLACE (TERRAMAR SUITE)

I

Shipwrecks inhabit the sea before me. Cradle and grave of civilizations that have made me. Unclouded Olympus, flameless hell. The will of the gods that write our destiny is all there is. We call it constellations.

II

After the storm the squads go down to the beach. They begin their covetous ritual by the sea. They search for treasures the sea returns. They use canes to divine, poles to dig, sticks to draw scars. The sea in peaceful sluggishness washes it all away. They won't be able to steal my white necklace for holiday mornings.

III

At night I can hear the neighing come closer. Every breaker roars nearer in a dark tone. I surrender to darkness. I let myself be rocked by the hidden rustle of who knows what song.

IV

It's light. The crash of the gallop stirs the white mane of fury. Whirlpools speckle the blue sunrise with a symphony of white.

V

Horses or necklace. Who am I, of the two? A garden with two shadows. Mimosa, bougainvillia, lavender and rose, cypress and tamarisk. Evening and dawn. Sand and reef. Pebble and dune. Algae and shell. Delta, cove, lichen. I am both.

---

VI

Cada nit de lluna neix un riell de vidre que em somriu.  
Travessa la mar per les esclotxes de les quatre puntes del  
llençol. Em segueix el traç de plata del vial bellugadís.  
Collaret que s'esmicola quan m'hi endinso. I m'inunda  
de la llum cobejada. I no temo els cavalls adormits dins  
l'aigua fosca.

VII

Corall i ambre. La tria del tresor. Corall i ambre. La sang  
dels arbres mar endins. L'or de la llum empresonat a les  
entranyes de la pedra. Retorno el corall i l'ambre al seu  
amagatall.

VIII

Centenars de milers de mirallets trencats en milions de  
partícules van engolir la centèsima part de claror que els  
pertocava. De nit i dia s'hi emmiralla la llum. Els  
collarets es fan arran de l'aigua, al compàs de l'alenar que  
els fa brillar com un adéu.

IX

Se m'enduu el galop salvatge de les ones que envesteixen  
la planura. Blancalls, aiguabarreigs, revolts. El glaç de les  
espurnes de l'aigua esmicolada. Galop endins, renills i  
tombarelles. Fuga de llum. La tomba oberta és dins de  
cada instant.

VI

Every moonlit night a smiling spill of glass is born. It  
crosses the sea by way of the wrinkles at the four corners  
of the sheets. The silver trail follows me down the  
unsteady path, shattering the necklace as I start off. I am  
drenched in coveted light. I do not fear the sleeping  
horses in dark waters.

VII

Coral and amber. The choice of treasure. Coral and  
amber. The blood of trees at sea. The gold ore of light  
imprisoned in the entrails of rocks. I return coral and  
amber to their hiding place.

VIII

Hundreds of thousands of tiny mirrors broken into  
millions of particles drank up only a hundredth of their  
share of light. Day and night light shines into them. The  
small necklaces are made by the water, in time to the  
breathing that makes them shine like a goodbye.

IX

I am carried away by the wild gallop of the waves that  
charge against the plain. Spindrift, confluence, whirls. Ice  
sparks of shattered water. Within the galloping, neighing  
and jumping. Fleeting light. The open grave is at every  
moment.

---



X

La mar sempre retorna allò que no vol seu. Tria avarament els materials. Construeix jardins i les ciutats ocultes. I de tant en tant s'enamora. Una dona, un infant, un jove. L'amor i la saviesa. El desamor i el desesper. La joia i l'engany. I els crida de nit amb la veu fosca que només els escollits poden escoltar. I se'ls enduu vers el fragor de les crineres amb l'esquer del miralleig de lluna. Cavalls i collaret.

XI

Cavalls i collaret. Corall i ambre. Riell de vidre i miralls de sorra. ¿Sóc totes dues? Sóc.

(Unpublished, 2005)

X

The sea always returns what it prefers not to keep. It selfishly chooses its materials. It builds hidden gardens and cities. And from time to time it falls in love. A woman, a child, a young boy. Love and wisdom. Unlove and despair. Joy and deceit. And it calls them in a deep voice that only those who will listen can hear. With the enticing sparkle of the moon it carries them away towards the clash of manes. Horses and necklace.

XI

Horses and necklace. Coral and amber. Spill of glass and sand mirrors. Am I the two? I am.

(translated by D. Sam Abrams)

---

EXORDI

*Tutto che mi resta è già perduto*

Quasimodo

Les roses de Ronsard ja s'han marcit  
i Déu és ara sols un record més  
Hi ha mars enllà de l'illa que no he vist  
i llocs de mapes verds on mai no he estat  
La nit és una cambra enmig del món  
la vida un buit que amb mots ompl de sentit  
On són les neus que va cantar Villon  
Del magma espès del goig n'he tret dos fills  
de l'íntim pou dels anys un vers d'enyor  
El vell mussol enguany no ha regressat  
ni han fet els pardals niu al meu cambró  
Somii aquell Son Bou immens d'infant  
M'estic fent vell i torn a llegir a Shakespeare

EXORDIUM

*Tutto che mi resta è già perduto*

Quasimodo

Ronsard's roses are long faded now  
and God is only one memory more  
There are seas beyond the isle I have not seen  
and places on green maps where I have not trod  
Night is a chamber in the midst of the world  
life a vacuum that with words I fill with sense  
Where are the snows of which Villon sang  
From joy's thick magma I have brought forth two sons  
from the years' intimate well a yearning verse  
The old owl has not returned this year  
nor have sparrows nested in my small room  
I dream of that immense Son Bou of the child  
I am aging and read Shakespeare again

(translated by Julie Wark)

---

TRISTIA

Al darrer món de Tomis,  
cobert de terra estranya,  
en una tomba ignota  
que el vent salí colpeja,  
potser visquis encara  
en el record d'antigues,  
enamoradoes dones  
i et cantin vells poetes  
com jo mateix que, líric,  
madur, pausat, els versos  
i plany dolgut, romànic,  
la nostra vida incerta.  
El temps, que tot ho esfondra,  
solida el teu prestigi  
i fa el teu nom de mestre  
per sempre inesborrable.  
Però ja clàssic, mite,  
amant d'amor, ni el sexe  
perdura i és inútil,  
llorer marcit, la fama.  
Tots som llavor d'oblit.  
El celistre que corca  
quaderns, carpetes, llibres,  
ho amara tot de sal.  
Ser feliç és un plagi,  
escriure un deure amarg.  
No vivim, les paraules  
ens desviuen i ens fan,  
cercadors enfebrits  
de bellesa, perduts  
presoners d'una pàgina.  
Naufragam en gargots.

TRISTIA

In the final world of Tomis,  
covered in foreign earth,  
lying in an anonymous tomb  
buffeted by the saline wind,  
you are still living on perhaps  
in the memory of those  
bygone enamoured women  
and we sing to you, old poets,  
lyrical like me who  
quietly ripen my verses  
and in Romance lament the pain  
of our uncertain life.  
Time that demolishes all,  
consolidates your prestige  
and makes your peerless name  
ineffaceable for evermore.  
But now classic, myth,  
lover of love, not even sex  
endures and futile is  
the faded laurel, fame.  
We are all seed of oblivion.  
The sharp draught that consumes  
notes, folders and books  
steeps everything in salt.  
Being happy is plagiarist,  
writing a bitter duty.  
We do not live, the words  
undo us, making of us  
feverish seekers  
of beauty, the lost  
prisoners of a page.  
We are wrecked on scribbles.

---

A l'Olimp, pura ossera  
de castanyers i núvols  
que el càlid sol grec besa,  
els déus també s'han mort.  
Tot és fum i no hi queda  
ja res etern, Ovidi.

On Olympus, pure ossuary  
of chestnut trees and clouds  
kissed by the warm Greek sun,  
the gods too have died.  
All sent up in smoke, Ovid,  
nothing left eternal now.

(translated by Julie Wark)

---

CALA'S MORTS

*Llueve sobre mi infancia*

Octavio Paz

I

Vora el mar brau del nord dret veig ploure la pluja  
 Rere aquest nus al coll s'amuntega la infància  
 No viurem ja mai més els hiverns crus de l'illa  
 Ni al furtiu safareig nedarem mai més nus  
 Ara el temps esburbat presagia eixorquesa  
 I un retorna feliç als versos dalt sa cambra  
 Corriem pels hortals d'espessa fruita lliures  
 Jugàvem a foners per camps sembrats de cards  
 No sabíem alegres que fóssim tan pobres  
 El sexe no era encara afronta ni pecat  
 Les vetllades s'omplien de contes i mites  
 El vent sencelistrava al cor ple de bondat

II

Fills del mar i la calç amb camamilla als ulls  
 Descobríem els noms dels ocells emboscats  
 Ens vestíem de llum a les platges ardents  
 Amb sorra esmerilàvem gregament el cos  
 La sal creixia als patis verds sota el raïm  
 No sabíem que el món existia i que enllà  
 De les costes de l'illa hi hagués altres déus  
 Un vell atlas romput em va obrir tots els ports  
 Vaig llegir l'*Odíssea* entre mates i pins  
 On són ara els senders desvirgats de Son Bou  
 O els tendals de canyís vora els verds tamarells  
 Sobrevolen Addaia sornuts gavians  
 Aquí encara hi ha gestos de Guerra Civil

CALA'S MORTS\*

*It rains on my childhood*

Octavio Paz

I

Standing by the wild north-coast sea I see the rain  
 raining  
 Behind this lump in my throat is my childhood heaped  
 We shall nevermore know the island's crude winters  
 Nor ever again swim nude in the furtive tank  
 Now careless time presages sterility  
 And one returns happy to the verses above his room  
 We ran free through the orchards laden with fruit  
 We played with our slings in cardoon-sown fields  
 We did not know in our happiness that we were so poor  
 Sex had not yet become affront or sin  
 Our evenings overflowed with stories and myths  
 The wind rose in the sky to a heart full of goodness

II

Children of sea and limestone with camomile in our eyes  
 We discovered the names of birds that hid in the woods  
 On the burning beaches we were arrayed in light  
 Like Greeks with emery sand our bodies shone  
 Salt grew in green patios under bunches of grapes  
 We did not know the world existed and that beyond  
 The island's coasts there were other gods too  
 A battered old atlas opened all the ports to me  
 I read *The Odyssey* among thickets and pines  
 Where are they now Son Bou's deflowered paths  
 And the trails of reeds by green tamarisk trees  
 Flying over Addaia are peevish gulls  
 Here there are still gestures of Civil War

(translated by Julie Wark)

\* *A bay on the Menorcan coast which has been the scene of many shipwrecks*

CALÇOBRE

Perquè escriure és també donar un sentit al món  
i salvar del neguit un temps mortal absurd  
persever en la nit tot cercant fervent mots  
que emotius m'apuntalin fets versos la vida.

CHALK DEBRIS

Because to write is also to give sense to the world  
and to rescue from anguish what is finite and absurd,  
I persevere into the night fervently turning words  
into emotion and so shore up my life with verse.

(translated by Julie Wark)

---