

With Pearls in Both Hands

Prospectus
for a Bilingual
Anthology
of Modern
Catalan Poetry

Catalan/
English

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Foreword
Catalan literature as world literature

Some years ago, as we were listening with excitement near Manhattan’s Hudson Yards to Lou Reed declaim the verses that the Mallorcan poet Blai Bonet had written about the boxer “Panama” Al Brown, we realized that a bridge was missing between Catalan poetry and readers of poetry in the US. Among Europe’s many literary traditions, writing in the Catalan language from Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands has contributed major works to Western civilization since the Middle Ages. The “classics” of the early period include the songs of the Catalan school of troubadours and the achievements of the Mallorcan philosopher and mystic Ramon Llull (1232–1315), as well as the great works of the Catalan Renaissance and Humanism, such as the poems of Ausiàs March (whose work combines Petrarch’s rhetoric with deep psychological insights) or Joanot Martorell’s chivalric romance *Tirant lo Blanch* (Tirant the White Knight) which made an impression on Cervantes a century later. In modern times, the nineteenth century produced a distinctively Catalan version of Romanticism and a movement of linguistic and literary modernization culminating in the poetry of Jacint Verdaguer (1845–1902), the realist novels of Narcís Oller (1846–1930), and the historical tragedies and social dramas of Àngel Guimerà (1845–1924), whose most famous plays, *Terra baixa* (The Lowlands) and *Maria Rosa*, served as the libretto for Eugen d’Albert’s opera *Tiefland*, opened in English translations on Broadway in the early 1900s and then were shown across the US from Boston to San Francisco with such success that Cecil B. DeMille filmed *Maria Rosa* in 1915. During the twentieth century, it is of course in the field of art that Catalan culture has seen its greatest international recognition, with towering figures, such as Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and Antoni Gaudí. But while Milan Kundera has famously noted that “the Europe made up of little countries is another Europe; it offers another perspective and its culture is often completely at odds with the Europe of big countries,” Catalan literature has also participated vivaciously in all the modern literary currents and “the Europe of big countries,” from symbolism to surrealism. In other words, since the middle of the nineteenth century, Catalan literature, with its authors, texts and readers, has been a vibrant part of world literature.

Although recent decades have seen an increasing number of Catalan books (especially prose fiction) appear in English translation, poetry remains the hidden gem of this great “small” literature. No comprehensive anthology that presents a complete overview of modern Catalan poetry has been attempted in English. This is the gap that the present anthology project intends to fill.

Content and structure of the anthology

This prospectus presents some thirty sample poems from what we envision as a larger anthology of modern Catalan poetry in English translation. The larger anthology is conceived as an authoritative and comprehensive overview of modern Catalan poetry, covering the period from c. 1830 to the 1980s. In our prospectus we have excluded the work of living poets in order to present what one might call the

“modern classics” of Catalan poetry. The samples here have been selected to demonstrate the range of voices, styles, themes and forms of modern Catalan poetry that would be showcased in the larger anthology. Preference has been given to poems that work well as poems in English, and we have included poems inspired by literary currents outside of Catalan literature, such as the avant-garde experiments of Joan Salvat-Papasseit, as well as poems that function in dialogue with other Catalan poems (such as the “Spiritual Canticles” by Joan Maragall and Josep Palau i Fabre, or Cèlia Viñas’ poem on the death of Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel). Poets whose works vary considerably in form, style or themes are represented here by two different poems.

In order to give priority to poetry, to the strength and beauty of each of the poems, we have chosen to present them here simply alphabetically by the poet’s last name instead of in chronological order. At the same time, the entire modern period is represented. Jacint Verdaguer stands at the end of the modernization of the Catalan language and of Catalan literature during the course of the nineteenth century known as the *Renaixença* (rebirth), as do the two Mallorcan poets Joan Alcover and Miquel Costa i Llobera. The next generation of poets, the movement known as *Modernisme* (with its parallel in the architecture of Antoni Gaudí), moved away from the romantic fascination with national-historical themes, folklore and nature, as we see in the poems by Joan Maragall. It was also in Maragall’s generation that the first modern female poets became visible, beginning with Maria Antònia Salvà and later followed by Clementina Arderiu.

The subsequent movement of the *Noucentisme* combined an awareness of form and classical Mediterranean cultural and literary traditions with the aim of establishing an independent Catalan culture in an international context. Among its representatives in the field of poetry were Josep Carner and Carles Riba. As a leading figure in Catalan poetry in the precarious years after the Spanish Civil War, Riba was greatly influential on subsequent generations, not least through his translations of Hölderlin and the Greek and Latin classics, including the *Odyssey*.

During the Franco dictatorship and its brutal repression of regional cultures, Catalan language and culture suffered a serious setback. In this time of oppression, poetry became a medium for the preservation of language and identity. This is reflected in quite different works, such as those of Salvador Espriu, an existential and often hermetic poet, whose name was suggested several times for the Nobel Prize, of the Mallorcan Blai Bonet, as well as the iconoclastic feminist poets Montserrat Abelló (a translator and correspondent of Adrienne Rich) and Maria-Mercè Marçal.

For the larger anthology, we propose to present the poems in a bilingual edition, with a facing original text, if possible, although a translation-only format would certainly be possible as well. The poems will be followed by short bio-bibliographies on the individual poets and suggestions for further reading.

The editors and translators

This anthology project is proposed by the Institut Ramon Llull, the Catalan public institution responsible for promoting Catalan language and culture internationally. The Institut represents a cultural and linguistic community of more than 10 million people who participate actively in global events and conversations through performing arts, literature and knowledge exchange. The Institut is a consortium formed by the Government of Catalonia, the Government of the Balearic Islands, Barcelona City Council and Palma City Council.

The editors of the anthology are both specialist scholars of Catalan literature and published translators. Jaume Subirana is a Catalan writer and scholar, and a professor of literature at Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona) with numerous publications on modern Catalan literature. He has translated into Catalan Billy Collins, Seamus Heaney, Ted Kooser and Gary Snyder, among others. Sascha Ebeling is a professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago who works on Catalan literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and who has published poetry translations from several languages into English. While in terms of scholarly expertise we complement each other, we have made the selection of texts here also as translators and writers.

For the English translations of the poems in the larger anthology, we will be able to draw on an array of existing translations. For a small number of individual poems we will make or commission new translations.

We would like to express our gratitude to Joan de Sola who is responsible for the initial idea and to Andreu Borrego who provided invaluable help.

Sascha Ebeling, Jaume Subirana
Barcelona and Chicago, September 2024

Nit i dia el plor, l'infant

*Nit i dia el plor, l'infant.
He caminat sense guia
per un camí desert, però ara
m'assec a la meva porta,
temorosa de perdre
l'invisible fil
que em lliga
a l'arbre i a la pedra.*

Night and day the crying, the child

Night and day the crying, the child.
I have walked unguided
along a deserted path, but now
I sit at my door
afraid of losing
the invisible thread
that binds me
to trees and stones.

Desolació

*Jo so l'esqueix d'un arbre, esponerós ahir,
que als segadors feia ombra a l'hora de la sesta;
mes branques, una a una, va rompre la tempesta,
i el llamp, fins a la terra, ma soca migpartí.*

*Brots de migrades fulles coronen el bocí
obert i sens entranyes que de ma soca resta;
cremar he vist ma llenya; com fumerol de festa,
al cel he vist anar-se'n la millor part de mi.*

*I l'amargor de viure xucla ma arrel esclava,
i sent brostar les fulles, i sent pujar la saba,
i m'aida a esperar l'hora de caure, un sol conhort:*

*cada ferida mostra la pèrdua d'una branca;
sens jo, res parlaria de la meitat que em manca;
jo visc sols per a plànyer lo que de mi s'és mort.*

Desolation

I am all that remains of a tree,
once luxuriant, able to shade the harvesters' siesta;
but storms shattered each of my branches,
and lightning split my trunk to its depths.

Only these paltry leaf buds are left to crown a trunk
hollow where a heart was;
I have watched my skin burn for kindling; like smoke clouds rising
from a country fair,
I have witnessed the best parts of me ascending skyward.

Chained now like a slave by roots that suck up this earthly bitterness;
I still feel my leaves budding, my sap rising,
and as I await my death I cling to a single consolation.

Each wound is a portrait of a lost branch;
were I not still standing, no one would ever narrate my missing
selves;
I live now only to mourn what I've lost.

Cançó de la bella confiança

*A l'amat he donades
totes les claus;
jo tinc totes les seves,
i fem les paus.
Però resta una cambra
al fons del fons
on entrar no podríem
ni breus segons.
Tantes forces ocultes,
tants pensaments
allà dins són escàpols a tots
moments!
Bé seria debades
sotjar-hi un poc:
l'aldarull colpiria
més que no un roc.
Contentem-nos d'una ombra
o d'un ressò.
Que ell es dugui els seus comptes
com me'ls duc jo.*

Song of the Beautiful Trust

I've given my lover
all my keys,
and I have got his
and we are at peace.
But there's one room left
in the deepest lair,
and not for one second
can we enter there.
So many a heavy thought
and secret power
flees into it every
passing hour!
It isn't worth it
to pry at the lock:
the uproar would blast you
harder than rock.
The echoes and shadows
will do just fine.
Let him keep his accounts
and I'll keep mine.

Al Brown

*Què seria de l'home sense les bèsties?
Si, en un moment, se n'anessin de la terra
totes les bèsties de la terra,
l'home cauria en una gran depressió...
Recordo el dia en què ell ho digué
però recordant-ho. Semblava
que feia la cita d'un gran autor...
No existia res que el tragués
tant del clot i que l'encengués tant
com el fet de sentir anomenar
les bèsties com a éssers inferiors. L'enutjava
sentir parlar de bestialitat
en fets i accions que atenyen la persona,
sobretot persones que tenien la pegada
contudent, com els cops del campió de boxa
Al Brown. Quan en parlava
el seu comentari sovint era
que en la literatura i la boxa
s'empra el mateix llenguatge: l'estil.
N'Al Brown es veia en claror amb abril
que el caràcter de l'art era la mentida,
una raça d'amor mesclat amb l'horror
perquè ser boxejador, negre i homoeròtic,
és una situació en la qual
el pitjor que hom pot fer és penedir-se...
Això més o menys devia brunzir
dins el cap i els sentiments d'Al Brown,
quan Jean Cocteau s'enamorà apassionadament
d'ell i sense aturall va fer passes
fins que aconseguí que Cocó Xanel
els arreglés una cita a l'Hotel de Castilla,
on Cocteau no aconseguí res perquè n'Al
era un dandi, enviava les camises
a planxar a Londres, li agradava
col·leccionar cavalls de pura sang,
però volia que l'amor fos amb la bèstia
d'un garrit jovenet de barriada.
Si hagués quedat sense les bèsties, n'Al Brown
també haguera caigut en una gran depressió
molt, molt, molt semblant a la cultura...*

Al Brown

What would become of us without the animals?
If, at a certain point, every animal
that lives were to abandon the earth,
mankind would fall into a deep depression...
I remember the day he said it,
like something he remembered,
as if quoting from a great writer.
Nothing got him quite so worked up
or made him so furious as when animals
were spoken of as inferior beings.
He hated it when a person got compared
to an animal because of something they did
or that happened, especially if,
like boxing champion Al Brown,
they could knock you out in a one-er.
Talking about him, he often said
that literature and boxing use
exactly the same language: style.
Al Brown was the living proof
that what matters in art is lying
because being a boxer, black and gay
means the very worst thing you can do
is say you're sorry...
So what was going on in his head
must have resembled what Al Brown felt
when Jean Cocteau fell passionately
in love with him and couldn't stop
trying to get off with him until at last
he convinced Coco Chanel
to arrange a meeting at the Castille Hotel
where he got absolutely nowhere
because Al was a dandy, he sent
his shirts to London to be ironed,
collecting purebred horses was his hobby
but when he made love, it had to be
with an animal, a young guy from the slums,
the kind you'd die for. If he'd been left
without any animals, Al Brown too
would have fallen into a deep depression
practically indistinguishable from culture...

La cala

*Obriu-me dins el mar, vells pescadors,
que m’entri de verdor una alenada
que tingui llum de barques i pinar,
i el sol em transparenti el joc de l’aigua.*

*Carritxeres de sol. El mar dibuixa
blancors i morenors de les terrasses,
que guaiten, sota una ombrel·la verda,
a la fira de llum, il·luminades.*

*Dormides xarxes fosques pels murs blancs:
el sol hi juga, aranya entre les malles.
Tot dorm un somni verd; només el sol
llança una pluja d’or als pits de Dànae.*

*Un molí d’alegria tenc al cor...
Moliners, moliners d’aigua salada:
pel caló del meu cos, lent, hi desfila
un horabaixa mariner del Carme.*

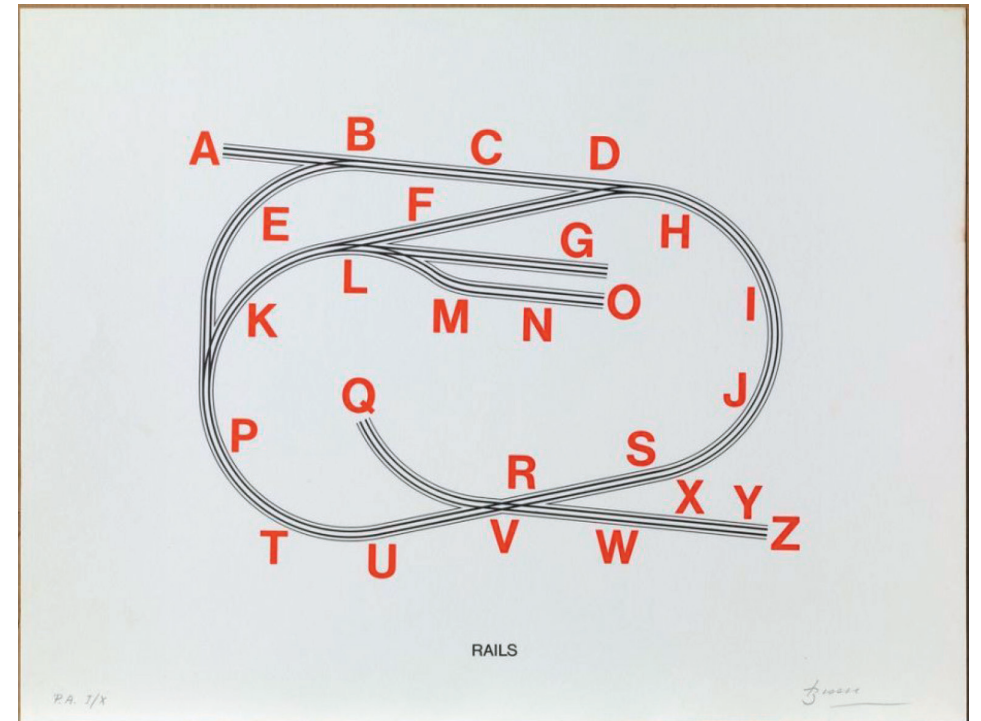
The Bay

Spread me out in the sea, old fishermen,
that whiffs of green may enter me, and light
of fishing boats and pine groves I may see,
and sunlight shine all through the water’s play.

Reed thickets of sun. And the sea is painting
in shades of white and tan the terraces
that lie in wait beneath a parasol
of green, a carnival of light, illuminated.

Dark fishing nets are sleeping on white walls,
the sun plays there, a spider in the meshes.
All sleeps in silent green, whereas the sun
pours down a shower of gold on Danae’s chest.

A mill of joy is turning in my heart ...
You millers, millers of the salty water:
It’s afternoon and through my body’s cove
the fishermen’s procession slowly passes.

Rails

Si em vaga...

*Viuré, si em vaga encar de viure,
supervivent d'un cant remot.*

*Viuré amb la cella corrugada
contra les ires, contra el llot.*

*Viuré dreçant-me com un jutge,
només mirant, sense dir mot,*

*com la paret en el seu sòtol,
com una pedra en el seu clot.*

If I'm let...

I'll go on living, if I'm let,
as one surviving a distant song.

I'll go on living, with brows frowning
against anger and mud.

I'll live straight-backed as a judge,
merely looking, not speaking,

like a wall in its patten,
like a stone in its rut.

Retorn a Catalunya

*Ja veig damunt la serra de foc el nostre pi.
Oh gent que per les feixes daurades feu camí!
em sobta com un vi
la força tota vella i humil que ens agermana.
(És viu com la ginesta i com el blau marí
el teu escarafall, oh noia catalana.)*

*Com somrieu en hores del vespre, masos blancs,
entre pellers de bona companyia,
i cada mas ateny en curta rodalia
bosquet i blat i vinya i un marge amb tres pollancs.*

*Voldria, tot perdent-me per valls i fondalades,
dir tes llaors, oh terra de salut!
enmig de coses fosques i vides oblidades
com aquest grill que canta dins un camí perdut.*

Return to Catalonia

Now I can see our pine-tree upon the fiery hills,
oh people making your way through the golden fields,
the ancient humble force that makes us brothers
takes me off guard like wine.
(And your wild outburst, Catalan girl, is live
like flowering broom or dark blue sea.)

How you smile in the evening hours, while farms,
among companionable ricks,
and each farmstead in a small space achieves
wood, vine, and wheat, three fringing poplars.

Losing myself in ravines and valleys,
I'd like to sing your praises, land of well-being!
among dark things and lives forgotten,
like a cricket singing on some secluded path.

El pi de Formentor

Electus ut cedri

*Mon cor estima un arbre! Més vell que l’olivera,
més poderós que el roure, més verd que el taronger,
conserva de ses fulles l’eterna primavera,
i lluita amb les tormentes que assalten la ribera,
com un gegant guerrer.*

*No guaita per ses fulles la flor enamorada,
no va la fontanella ses ombres a besar;
mes Déu unguí d’aroma sa testa consagrada
i li donà per trono l’esquerpa serralada,
per font la immensa mar.*

*Quan lluny, damunt les ones, renaix la llum divina,
no canta per ses branques l’ocell que encativam;
el crit sublim escolta de l’àguila marina,
o del voltor que passa sent l’ala gegantina
remoure son fullam.*

*Del llim d’aquesta terra sa vida no sustenta;
revinclu per les roques sa poderosa rel;
té pluges i rosades i vents i llum ardenta;
i, com un vell profeta, rep vida i s’alimenta
de les amors del cel.*

*Arbre sublim! Del geni n’és ell la viva imatge:
domina les muntanyes i aguaita l’infinít;
per ell la terra és dura, mes besa son ramatge
el cel que l’enamora, i té el llamp i l’oratge
per glòria i per delit.*

*Oh, sí, que quan a lloure bramulen les ventades
i sembla entre l’escuma que tombi el seu penyal,
llavors ell riu i canta més fort que les onades
i, vencedor, espolsa damunt les nuvolades
sa cabellera real.*

*Arbre, mon cor t’enveja. Sobre la terra impura,
com a penyora santa duré jo el teu record.
Lluitar constant i vèncer, regnar sobre l’altura
i alimentar-se i viure de cel i de llum pura...
O vida, o noble sort!*

*Amunt, ànima forta! Traspassa la boirada
i arrela dins l’altura com l’arbre dels penyals.
Veuràs caure a tes plantes la mar del món irada,
i tes cançons tranquil·les ‘niran per la ventada
com l’au dels temporals.*

The pine of Formentor

Electus ut cedri

This noble pine enthralls me; no orange tree so vernal,
nor oak e’er lived so mighty, nor olive tree so old:
In his unfading vesture endures the spring eternal;
with storms that lash the sea-line he strives with strength supernal,
a giant warrior bold.

No little lovelorn floweret out from his lattice peeping;
no mountain rill caresses his shadows where they sleep;
but heaven in fragrance ever his hallowed head is steeping,
and on the serried ramparts his throne exalted keeping
his fount the vasty deep.

When o’er the distant waters the newborn day is stealing
among his shadowy branches no captive songsters wake;
the cry of great sea-eagles he hears sublimely pealing,
or feels the mighty pinion of soaring vulture wheeling
his leafy mantle shake.

Not it the soil sustaining his tower of living vigour,
about the stubborn boulders his massy roots entwine:
He greets the dews and showers, chill wind and torrid rigour;
and, like the ancient prophet, the smiles of heaven transfigure
his form with life divine.

Sublime of trees! of genius the living sign and wonder,
superb above the mountains he scans the infinite:
His form fond heaven embraces, though harsh the earth thereunder;
and in that love he welcomes the lightening and the thunder
for glory and delight.

Ay, when through all the heavens the tempests rage uproarious,
and seems that to the surges down must his peak be hurled,
high o’er the billows’ clamour he sings with laughter glorious,
and rears above the cloud wrack his regal head victorious,
triumphant o’er the world.

My heart, oh Tree, enshrines thee; above the base earth’s staining,
thy memory for ever I guard a holy sign;
steadfast to strive and conquer, in loftiest regions reigning,
from purest rays celestial new life and nurture gaining
what fate sublime is thine!

Mount, mount, aspiring spirit! The shrouding mists transcending;
stand fast aloft, as standeth that Pine upon the steep;
calm shalt thou view beneath thee the world’s wild seas contending,
and like the circling sea-birds, thy songs in joy unending
above the storm shall sweep.

Tr. James Webb

Divagacions. Quan els sorolls s’adormen

*Els reflexos d’un llac...
Un cloquer romànic...
La quietud de la tarda
morenta... El misteri
de la nit propera... tot
es dorm i difumina... i
és allavors que baix la pàl·lida
claror d’una estrella,
vora el portal d’una casa
antiga es sent enraonar
baix i tot seguit els sorolls
s’adormen i el fresc
oreig de la nit gronxant
les acàcies del jardí
fa caure damunt dels
enamorats; una pluja
de flors blanques...*

Ramblings. When the noises fall asleep

The reflections of a lake...
A Romanesque bell tower...
The stillness of the dying
afternoon... The mystery
of the approaching night... everything
falls asleep and fades... and
it is then that under the pale
light of a star,
beside the entrance of an old house
one can hear soft
chatter and at that point the noises
fall asleep and the cool
night breeze rocking
the acacias in the garden
pours upon the
lovers; a shower
of white flowers...

Ofrenat a Cèrber

*He donat la meva vida a les paraules
i m’he fet lenta pastura d’aquesta fam de gos.
Ah, guardià, caritat per als ossos,
car ja t’arribo sense gens de carn!
Vaig enfonsar les mans en l’or misteriós
del meu vell català i te les mostro
avui, sense cap guany, blanques de cendra
del meu foc d’encenalls, i se m’allunya
per la buidor del cap el so del vidre fràgil.
Ara ballo amb dolor, perquè riguin les goles,
per obtenir l’aplaudiment dels mil lladrucs,
i em coronen amb un barret de cascavells.*

Offering to Cerberus

I have given my whole life to words,
and I have made myself slow pasture for this dog-hunger.
O, guardian, have mercy on my bones,
for I come here without a scrap of flesh!
I sank my hands into the mysterious gold
of my good old Catalan, and I show them to you,
today, with no gain, white from the ashes
of my own brief fire, as the sound of fragile glass
recedes in the emptiness of my head.
Now I dance in pain, to make the throats laugh,
to garner the applause of a thousand barks,
and in the end they crown me with a jester’s cap.

Poema XXX de La pell de brau

*Diversos són els homes i diverses les parles,
i han convingut molts noms a un sol amor.*

*La vella i fràgil plata esdevé tarda
parada en la claror damunt els camps.
La terra, amb paranys de mil fines orelles,
ha captivat els ocells de les cançons de l'aire.*

*Sí, comprèn-la i fes-la teva, també,
des de les oliveres,
l'alta i senzilla veritat de la presa veu del vent:
“Diverses són les parles i diversos els homes,
i convindran molts noms a un sol amor.”*

Poem XXX, from La pell de brau

People are different and different are their languages,
and many names have come together for a single love.

The old and fragile silver becomes an afternoon
lingering in the radiance above the fields.
The Earth, in snares of a thousand fine ears,
has trapped the birds of the songs in the air.

Yes, understand it and make it yours, too,
from the olive groves,
the lofty and simple truth of the wind’s captured voice:
“Different are the languages and people are different,
and many names will come together for a single love.”

Els amants

La carn vol carn (Ausiàs March)

No hi havia a València dos amants com nosaltres.

*Feroçment ens amàvem del matí a la nit.
Tot ho recorde mentre vas estenent la roba.
Han passat anys, molts anys; han passat moltes coses.
De sobte encara em pren aquell vent o l'amor
i rodolem per terra entre abraços i besos.
No comprenem l'amor com un costum amable,
com un costum pacífic de compliment i teles
(i que ens perdone el cast senyor López-Picó).
Es desperta, de sobte, com un vell huracà,
i ens tomba en terra els dos, ens ajunta, ens empeny.
Jo desitjava, a voltes, un amor educat
i en marxa el tocadiscos, negligentment besant-te,
ara un muscle i després el peçó d'una orella.
El nostre amor és un amor brusc i salvatge
i tenim l'enyorança amarga de la terra,
d'anar a rebolcons entre besos i arraps.
Què volem que hi faça! Elemental, ja ho sé.
Ignorem el Petrarca i ignorem moltes coses.
Les Estances de Riba i les Rimas de Bécquer.
Després, tombats en terra de qualsevol manera,
comprenem que som bàrbars, i que això no deu ser,
que no estem en l'edat, i tot això i allò.*

*No hi havia a València dos amants com nosaltres,
car d'amants com nosaltres en són parits ben pocs.*

Lovers

Flesh craves flesh (Ausiàs March)

Never were there in Valencia two lovers like us.

We loved ferociously, from morn 'til night.
I recall everything, as you hang out the clothes.
Years have passed, many years: many things have happened.
Suddenly that wind, or love, seizes me still
and we roll on the ground amidst embraces and kisses.
We do not know love as a loving custom,
as a quiet custom of politeness and finery
(and may the chaste López-Picó pardon us).
Love, It awakens suddenly, like an old hurricane,
it throws us to the ground, it joins us together,
squeezing us tightly.

Sometimes I desired a courteous love,
with the gramophone on, kissing you idly,
now a shoulder, next an ear lobe.
Our love is a brusque and savage love
and we feel a bitter yearning for the Earth,
of rolling upside down amidst kisses and clutches.
I'll say it clear. Primal, I know it.
We ignore Petrarch's work, we ignore many things.
The stanzas of Riba, the rhymes of Bécquer.
Afterwards, lying somehow on the ground,
we realise that we are barbarous, that this may not be,
we are not in the right age, and this and that.

Never were there in Valencia two lovers like us,
lovers like us are just not born!

Posseït

*Soc més lluny que estimar-te. Quan els cucs
faran un sopar fred amb el meu cos
trobaran un regust de tu. I ets tu
que indecentment t’has estimat per mi
fins al revolt: saciada de tu,
ara t’excites, te me’n vas darrere
d’un altre cos, i em refuses la pau.
No soc sinó la mà amb què tu palpeges.*

Possessed

I am beyond loving you. When the worms
will make a cold dinner from my body
they will find an aftertaste of you. And it is you
who has indecently fallen in love with me
ad nauseam: sated of yourself,
you excite yourself now, come after me
as a different body, and won’t leave me in peace.
I am nothing but the hand with which you touch.

Cambra de la tardor

*La persiana, no del tot tancada, com
un esglai que es reté de caure a terra,
no ens separa de l'aire. Mira, s'obren
trenta-set horitzons rectes i prims,
però el cor els oblida. Sense enyor
se'ns va morint la llum, que era color
de mel, i ara és color d'olor de poma.
Que lent el món, que lent el món, que lenta
la pena per les hores que se'n van
de pressa. Digueu, te'n recordaràs
d'aquesta cambra?*

*“Me l'estimo molt.
Aquelles veus d'obriers — Què són?”*

*Paletes:
manca una casa a la mançana.*

*“Canten,
i avui no els sento. Criden, riuen,
i avui que callen em fa estrany.”*

*Que lentes
les fulles roges de les veus, que incertes
quan venen a colgar-nos. Adormides,
les fulles dels meus besos van colgant
els recers del teu cos, i mentre oblides
les fulles altes de l'estiu, els dies
oberts i sense besos, ben al fons
el cos recorda: encara
tens la pell mig del sol, mig de la lluna.*

Autumn room

The blind not fully closed, like a sudden fear
held back from falling, does not separate
us from the open air. Look, there are
thirty-seven neatly ruled horizons,
yet the heart dismisses them. Without regret
the light recedes, the honey-coloured light
is now the colour of the scent of apples.
How slow the world, how slow the world, how slow
one's grief for the hours that quickly slip away.
Will you recall this room?

“I'm fond of it.
What are those workmen's voices?”
Builder's men.

The block still lacks one house.

“They sing,
but today I hear no sound. They shout and laugh,
and now they're silent it seems strange.”

How slow
the red leaves of the voices, how uncertainly
they come to cover us. As if in sleep,
the leaves of my kisses cover by degrees
your body's secret hiding places and,
while you forget the tall midsummer leaves,
the expanse of days we didn't kiss, deep down
the body recollects: your skin
retains one half of sun, one half of moon.

És quan dormo que hi veig clar

*És quan plou que ballo sol
Vestit d’algues, or i escata
Hi ha un pany de mar al revolt
I un tros de cel escarlata,
Un ocell fa un giravolt
I treu branques una mata,
El casalot del pirata
És un ample gira-sol.
És quan plou que ballo sol
Vestit d’algues, or i escata.*

*És quan ric que em veig gepic
Al bassal de sota l’era,
Em vesteixo d’home antic
I empaito la masovera,
I entre pineda i garric
Planto la meva bandera;
Amb una agulla saquera
Mato el monstre que no dic.
És quan ric que em veig gepic
Al bassal de sota l’era.*

*És quan dormo que hi veig clar
Foll d’una dolça metzina,
Amb perles a cada mà
Visc al cor d’una petxina,
So la font del comellar
I el jaç de la salvatgina,
—O la lluna que s’afina
En morir carena enllà.
És quan dormo que hi veig clar
Foll d’una dolça metzina.*

When I Sleep, Then I See Clearly

When it rains I dance alone
Dressed in algae, gold, and fishscales.
There’s a stretch of sea at the turning
And a piece of scarlet sky.
A bird whirls in flight
And a bush brings forth branches,
The pirate’s old mansion
Is a broad sunflower.
When it rains I dance alone
Dressed in algae, gold, and fishscales.

When I laugh I look hunchbacked
In the pool beneath the threshing floor.
I dress like an old gentleman,
I chase the custodian’s wife,
And between pine grove and oak
I plant my flag;
With a sack needle I kill
The monster I never name.
When I laugh I look hunchbacked
In the pool beneath the threshing floor.

When I sleep, then I see clearly
Maddened by sweet poison
With pearls in both hands
I live in a shellfish’s heart,
I’m a fountain on the canyon floor
And a wild beast’s bed,
Or the waning moon
As it dies beyond the ridge.
When I sleep, then I see clearly
Maddened by sweet poison.

Tardor

*Aquest desmai de roses amb la posta
damunt la sorra fina del jardí.
Aquest llanguir callat que té la brosta
al bes enfredorit de l'aire fi.*

*Aquestes melodies apagades
de les fulles caient en el repòs,
com de llac adormit, en resignades
notes opaques d'un dolor reclòs.*

*Són veus d'un mateix cant... Oh melangia
tan tendrament subtil de la tardor
que em poses nou encís dins de la via
i fas més amorós el meu dolor!...*

Autumn

This swoon of roses at sunset
above the fine garden sand.
This silent languishing of leaves
at the cooling kiss of the breeze.

These fading melodies
of petals, falling to rest
like subsiding ripples,
opaque notes of hidden grief.

They are voices of a single song...
Autumn wistfulness laid lightly on my path,
another spell you have cast
to enamor all my grief!

Tr. Ronnie Apter and Mark
Herman

Oda a Espanya

*Escolta, Espanya, —la veu d’un fill
que et parla en llengua —no castellana:
parlo en la llengua —que m’ha donat
la terra aspra;
en ‘questa llengua —pocs t’han parlat;
en l’altra, massa.*

*T’han parlat massa —dels saguntins
i dels qui per la pàtria moren;
les teves glòries —i els teus records,
records i glòries —només de morts:
has viscut trista.*

*Jo vull parlar-te —molt altrament.
Per què vessar la sang inútil?
Dins de les venes —vida és la sang,
vida pels d’ara —i pels que vindran;
vessada, és morta.*

*Massa pensaves —en ton honor
i massa poc en el teu viure:
tràgica duies —a mort els fills,
te satisfeies —d’honres mortals
i eren tes festes —els funerals,
oh trista Espanya!*

*Jo he vist els barcos —marxar replens
dels fills que duies —a que morissin:
somrients marxaven —cap a l’atzar;
i tu cantaves —vora del mar
com una folla.*

*On són els barcos? —On són els fills?
Pregunta-ho al Ponent i a l’ona brava:
tot ho perderes, —no tens ningú.
Espanya, Espanya, —retorna en tu,
arrenca el plor de mare!*

*Salva’t, oh!, salva’t —de tant de mal;
que el plor et torni feconda, alegre i viva;
pensa en la vida que tens entorn:
aixeca el front,
somriu als set colors que hi ha en els núvols.*

*On ets, Espanya? —No et veig enlloc.
No sents la meva veu atronadora?
No entens aquesta llengua —que et parla entre perills?
Has desaprès d’entendre an els teus fills?
Adeu, Espanya!*

(1898)

Ode to Spain

Listen, Spain, to the voice of a son
who speaks to you, not in Castilian,
but in the language given him
by a harsh land:
In this language too few have talked to you;
in the other too many.

They have made too much of Saguntum
and of dying for the homeland:
of your glories, and your memories,
memories and glories only of the dead.
You have lived a sad life.

I want to speak to you —in a different way.
To what end useless bloodshed?
Coursing through the veins —blood equals life.
Life for the living and for those yet to live.
Once spilt, it is death.

You dwelt too long on honor
and too little on life:
Tragic, you led your children to the grave,
sated on deadly honors,
your feasts were funerals,
oh, unhappy Spain!

I have seen the laden ships depart
bearing the sons you swept to their death:
Smiling, they parted toward their fate;
as you sang —by the shore
like a madwoman.

Where are your ships now? Where are your sons?
Ask the West Wind and the brave wave:
You lost everything —you have no one.
Spain, Espanya, come to your senses,
release your motherly sob!

Save yourself, be saved, from so much pain;
tears can make you lively, lush, and joyful;
think of all the life that still surrounds you:
Lift up your head,
and smile at the seven colors of the clouds.

Where are you, Spain? I search for you in vain.
Can you not hear my deafening voice resound?
Can you not grasp this tongue that speaks to danger?
Have you unlearned the language of your brood?
Farewell, Espanya!

(1898)

Cant espiritual

*Si el món ja és tan formós, Senyor, si es mira
amb la pau vostra a dintre de l’ull nostre,
què més ens podeu da’ en una altra vida?*

*Per’xò estic tan gelós dels ulls, i el rostre,
i el cos que m’heu donat, Senyor, i el cor
que s’hi mou sempre... i temo tant la mort!*

*Amb quins altres sentits me’l fareu veure,
aquest cel blau damunt de les muntanyes,
i el mar immens, i el sol que pertot brilla?
Deu-me en aquests sentits l’eterna pau
i no voldré més cel que aquest cel blau.*

*Aquell que a cap moment li digué «Atura’t»
sinó al mateix que li dugué la mort,
jo no l’entenc, Senyor; jo, que voldria
aturar tants moments de cada dia,
per fe’ls eterns a dintre del meu cor!...
O és que aquest «fe’ etern» és ja la mort?
Mes llavors, la vida, què seria?
Fora l’ombra només del temps que passa,
la il·lusió del lluny i de l’a prop,
i el compte de lo molt, i el poc, i el massa,
enganyador, perquè ja tot ho és tot?*

*Tant se val! Aquest món, sia com sia,
tan divers, tan extens, tan temporal;
aquesta terra, amb tot lo que s’hi cria,
és ma pàtria, Senyor; i no podria
ésser també una pàtria celestial?
Home so i és humana ma mesura
per tot quant puga creure i esperar:
si ma fe i ma esperança aquí s’atura,
me’n fareu una culpa més enllà?
Més enllà veig el cel i les estrelles
i encara allí voldria ser-hi hom:
si heu fet les coses a mos ulls tan belles,
si heu fet mos ulls i mos sentits per elles,
per què aclucà’ls cercant un altre com?
Si per mi com aquest no n’hi haurà cap!
Ja ho sé que sou, Senyor; pro on sou, qui ho sap?
Tot lo que veig se vos assembla en mi...
Deixeu-me creure, doncs, que sou aquí.
I quan vinga aquella hora de temença
en què s’acluquin aquests ulls humans,
obriu-me’n, Senyó’, uns altres de més grans
per contemplar la vostra faç immensa.
Sia’m la mort una major naixença!*

Spiritual

If the world is so fine, Lord, if we see it
with the peace that is yours in our eyes,
what more could you give us in another life?

That’s why I cling to these eyes, this face,
this body you’ve given me, Lord, and this heart
stirring nonstop inside—I’m so afraid of death!

With what other senses would you have me see
the blue sky over the mountains,
and the vast sea, and sun shining down on it all?
In these my senses give me peace everlasting
and I’ll want no more heaven than blue skies.

Those who never said to any moment: “Stop!”
except for the one that brought them death,
I can’t understand, Lord; I who would gladly
stop so many moments every day
and have them go on forever in my heart!
Or is this “go on forever” to be death?
But what, then, would life be?
Would it be but the shadow of time’s passing,
the illusion of things far-off and near,
a tallying up the many, the few, the too much—
delusory, because everything’s all there is?

No matter! This world, be what it might,
so varied, so wide, so bound in time;
this earth, with all the thrives here,
is my home, Lord; and mightn’t
it be, as well, heavenly home?
I am a man and my measure is human
in all I might come to believe and hope:
and if my faith and hope end here,
will you fault me in the beyond?
I see, out there, the sky and stars—
and there, too, one wishes to be:
if you’ve made things so delightful to my eyes,
and fit me out for them with sight and senses,
why strip me of them for some other how of it?
Like this one, for me, there’ll never be another!
I know that you are, Lord; but where? who can say?
All that I see resembles you in me...
Let me believe, then, that you’re here.
And when the dreaded hour comes
and these my human eyes are shut,
open in me, Lord, new and greater ones
so I might see your face in its immensity.
Let my death be a farther-reaching birth!

Brida

*A la fira dels Folls
jo hi aniria.
Vindria qui sap d'on
—i ningú no ho sabia—
amb els llavis oscats
de molta vida,

traginer de cançons
en cavall sense brida.

Quin esquer se m'arrapa
a la geniva?
Amor, estel amarg
a la deriva,
em fa senyals: jo vaig
per l'altra riba,

traginer de cançons
en cavall sense brida.

Cadenes són presons
i jo en fugia
pel call dels bandolers
a trenc de dia.
A la fira dels Folls
jo hi aniria

traginer de cançons
en cavall sense brida.*

Bridle

To the Feast of Fools
I would go, from
who knows where
—and no one would know—
with lips much scarred
from so much life,

a peddler of songs
on a horse with no bridle.

What bait lures me
back to the hook?
Love, bitter star,
drifting, beckons:
I cross the stream
to the other side,

a peddler of songs
on a horse with no bridle.

Chains are prisons
and I ran away
through the thieves' quarter
at the break of day.
To the Feast of Fools
I would ride,

a peddler of songs
on a horse with no bridle.

La carn, sense paraules

*La carn, sense paraules,
davant de mi i en mi.
I jo que havia llegit tots els llibres.*

Flesh, without words

Flesh, without words,
in front of me and in me.
Me, who had read all the books.

Tr. Christopher Whyte

Primer amor

A José Agustín Goytisolo

*En la Girona trista dels set anys,
on els aparadors de la postguerra
tenien un color gris de penúria,
la ganiveteria era un esclat
de llum en els petits miralls d'acer.
Amb el front descansant damunt del vidre,
mirava una navalla llarga i fina,
bella com una estàtua de marbre.
Com que els de casa no volien armes,
vaig comprar-la en secret i, en caminar,
la sentia, pesant, dins la butxaca.
A vegades l'obria a poc a poc,
i sorgia la fulla, recta i prima,
amb la conventual fredor de l'arma.
Presència callada del perill:
vaig amagar-la, els trenta primers anys,
rere llibres de versos i, després,
dins un calaix, entre les teves calces
i entre les teves mitges.
Ara, a prop de complir els cinquanta-quatre,
torno a mirar-la, oberta al meu palmell,
tan perillosa com a la infantesa.
Sensual, freda. Més a prop del coll.*

First Love

To José Agustín Goytisolo

In the dreary Girona of my seven-year-old self,
where post-war shop-windows
wore the greyish hue of scarcity,
the knife-shop was a glitter
of light in those small steel mirrors.
Pressing my forehead against the glass,
I gazed at a long, slender clasp-knife,
beautiful as a marble statue.
Since no one at home approved of weapons,
I bought it secretly, and as I walked along,
I felt the heavy weight of it, inside my pocket.
From time to time I would open it gradually,
and the blade would spring out, slim and straight,
with the convent chill that a weapon has.
Hushed presence of risk:
I hid it, those first thirty years,
behind books of poetry and, later,
inside a drawer, in amongst your knickers
and amongst your stockings.
Now, almost fifty-four,
I look at it again, lying open in my palm,
just as dangerous as when I was a child.
Sensual, cold. Nearer my neck.

Punt i final

*Ho deixo tot, però estreno claror.
Faré un pas més i fugiré de mi
per preservar l'empremta d'un desig
que sé que mai no m'abandonarà.
Perdre la hisenda em dona llibertat.
El mirall s'ha trencat en mil bocins
i en cadascun m'hi veig, desmesurat.
Amor, amor que em crides quan no hi soc,
¿per quins camins massa sovint te'm perds
si et duc al sexe, al cor i al pensament?
Ho deixo tot i aprenc codis secrets
en el silenci lúcid de la nit.
Demà em dibuixaré en una paret,
demà passat, si em vaga, faré el mort
i al tercer dia ressuscitaré.
Després els versos es riuran de mi
i jo em riuré dels versos, complagut.
Seré molts o potser no seré cap.
Ho deixo tot, aprofiteu's-en, gent.
Al que no soc li agrada el desgavell.
Tot el turment em turmenta ben poc.
Només un cos de dona em fa feliç
i ara el descric tancant, solemne, els ulls.
Espero el llamp que m'ha de redimir.
A poc a poc, em posaré dempeus.
S'apropa el gran moment. Ho deixo tot.*

Full Stop and Close

I leave it all, yet can broach clarity.
One more step and I shall escape myself
in order to hold fast to the imprint
of a desire I know will not forsake me.
Losing the estate brings me liberty.
The mirror shatters to a thousand fragments
each of them reflecting a huge me.
Oh love that summons me when I am absent
what paths lead you all too often astray
if I carry you in my sex, my heart, my thought?
I leave it all, discover secret codes
within the lucid silence of the night.
I'll draw myself tomorrow on a wall,
the next day, if I feel like it, I'll act
dead, and rise again on the third day.
After that verses will laugh at me
and I shall laugh at them, self-satisfied.
I may be many, or not even one.
I leave it all, get from it what you can.
The me I am not takes delight in chaos.
All of the torment fails to torment me.
Only a woman's body makes me happy:
now I describe it, eyes closed, solemnly
and wait for the redemptive thunderbolt.
Little by little I'll get to my feet.
The great day draws near and I leave it all.

Cant espiritual

*No crec en tu, Senyor, però tinc tanta necessitat
de creure en tu, que sovint parlo i t'imploro
com si existissis.*

*Tinc tanta necessitat de tu, Senyor, i que siguis,
que arribo a creure en tu —i crec que crec en tu
quan no crec en ningú.*

*Però després em desperto, o penso que em
desperto, i m'avergonyeixo de la meva feblesa i et
detesto. I parlo contra tu que no ets ningú. I parlo
mal de tu com si fossis algú.*

*¿Quan, Senyor, estic despert, i quan soc adormit?
¿Quan estic més despert i quan més adormit?
¿No serà tot un son i, despert i adormit, somni la
vida? ¿Despertaré algun dia d'aquest doble son i
viuré, lluny d'aquí, la veritable vida, on la vetlla i el
son siguin una mentida?*

*No crec en tu, Senyor, però si ets, no puc
donar-te el millor de mi si no és així: sinó dient-te
que no crec en tu. Quina forma d'amor més
estranya i més dura! Quin mal em fa no poder dir-te: crec.*

*No crec en tu, Senyor, però si ets, treu-me
d'aquest engany d'una vegada; fes-me veure ben
bé la teva cara! No em vulguis mal pel meu amor
mesquí. Fes que sens fi, i sense paraules, tot el meu
ésser pugui dir-te: Ets.*

Spiritual Canticle

I do not believe in You, Lord, but I have such a
need of believing in You that I often speak and
plead with You as if You existed.

I have such a need of You, Lord, a need of Your
existing, that I come to believe in You —and believe
that I believe in You when I believe in no one.

Yet afterwards I awaken, or think that I awaken,
and I feel ashamed of my weakness and detest You.
And I speak out against You who are no one. And
I speak poorly of You as if You were someone.

When, Lord, am I awake, and when am I sleep?
When am I most awake and when most
asleep? Is it not all sleep and life, whether awake
or asleep, a dream? Will I awaken some day from
this double sleep and, far from here, lead the real
life where sleeplessness and sleep are but a lie?

I do not believe in You, Lord, but if You exist, I
cannot give You the best of me if it is not in this
fashion: by telling You I do not believe in You.
What a strange and harsh form of love! How it
hurts me not to be able to tell You: I believe.

I do not believe in You, Lord, but if You exist,
lead me away from this delusion once and for all;
make me see Your face clearly! Do not bear malice
against me for my small-minded love. Enable my
whole being, endlessly and wordlessly, to say to
You: You exist.

Qui ha viscut...

*Uns wiegen lassen, wie
Aufschwankem Kahne der See
Hölderlin*

*Feliç qui ha viscut dessota un cel estrany
i la seva pau no es mudava:
i qui d’uns ulls d’amor sotjant la gorga blava
no hi ha vist terrejar l’engany.*

*I qui els seus dies l’un per la vàlua de l’altre
estima, com les parts iguals
d’un tresor mesurat; i qui no va a l’encalç
del record que fuig per un altre.*

*Feliç és qui no mira enrere, on el passat,
insaciable que és, ens lleva
fins l’esperança, casta penyora de la treva
que la Mort havia atorgat.*

*Qui tampoc endavant el seu desig no mena:
que deixa els rems i, ajagut
dins la frèvola barca, de cara als núvols, mut,
s’abandona a una aigua serena.*

Happy the man...

*Uns wiegen lassen, wie
Aufschwankem Kahne der See
Hölderlin*

Happy the man who has lived under an alien sky
and whose peace has not been disturbed;
and happy who on searching into the rugged gorge of eyes
in love finds no falsehood lying there.

And he who appreciates his days, the one as much
as the other, like the equal parts
of a measured treasure; and does not pursue
the runaway memory of another.

Happy the man who does not look back, where the past,
ever insatiable, takes away from us
even hope, chaste pawn of the truce
which death had granted.

Happy he who does not urge his desire onward;
who drops the oars and, stretching himself
in the frail boat, towards the clouds, silent,
surrenders himself to untroubled waters.

A Mallorca, durant la Guerra Civil

*Verdegen encara aquells camps
i duren aquelles arbredes
i damunt del mateix atzur
es retallen les meves muntanyes.
Allí les pedres invoquen sempre
la pluja difícil, la pluja blava
que ve de tu, cadena clara,
serra, plaer, claror meva!
Soc avar de la llum que em resta dins els ulls
i que em fa tremolar quan et recordo!
Ara els jardins hi són com músiques
i em torben, em fatiguen com en un tedi lent.
El cor de la tardor ja s’hi marceix,
concertat amb fumeres delicades.
I les herbes es cremen a turons
de cacera, entre somnis de setembre
i boires entintades de capvespre.*

*Tota la meva vida es lliga a tu,
com en la nit les flames a la fosca.*

Barcelona, setembre, 1937

For Mallorca, during the Civil War

Those fields still turn green,
those groves remain,
and my mountains are etched
above the same azure.
The stones always invoke
the difficult rain, the blue rain
that comes from you, bright ridge,
my mountains, pleasure, brightness!
I’m greedy for the light, lingering in my eyes
that makes me tremble when I remember you!
Now the gardens are like music;
they trouble and tire me like some slow tedium.
Autumn’s heart already fades
fixed with delicate smoke-clouds.
And the grass turns brown on hunting party
hills, among September dreams
and dusk-tinted fogs.

All my life is bound to you,
like flames at night to the darkness.

Barcelona, September, 1937

Tr. David Rosenthal

D'un cactus

*Com rèptil monstruós de pell clapada,
d'entranya llefiscosa, era ajocat
al seu racó bevent la solellada.
De sobte, sa malícia desvetllada,
enrevisclant-se va esquerdar el test.
Enllà de l'hort, que se'n perdés el quest,
dalt una paret seca fou llançat,
i al cap de temps, damunt les pedres dures,
furgant per les llivanyes i juntures,
trobí el vell drac encara aferrissat.*

Of a cactus

Like a monstrous reptile with spotted skin,
with slimy entrails, it lay
in its corner drinking in the sunlight.
All at once, its malice awakened,
reviving, it cracked the flowerpot.
Beyond the orchard, to be lost track of,
it was hurled over an arid wall,
and after a time, upon the rugged stones,
poking among the crevices and seams,
I found the old dragon still raging and clinging.

Marxa nupcial

Llum de l'IRRADIADOR camaleònic damunt
l'estrella del Circ encara hexagonal

Exit! Exit!! Exit!!!

CLOWNS equilàters líders romàntics
Això és sa i en les constellacions de quatre barrets
cònics

La terra només gira perquè jo sóc aquí i jo sóc un
PALLASSO qui agonitza

Margot amb el MALLOT i els cabells pintats
rojos sembla un ciri que cremi
Només crema per mi:
Davant dels cent centaures que fan faixa a la Pista
DAURADA D'EMOCIÓ

Margot ara m'esguarda fit a fit i en caient del
Trapezi he llegit un anunci a la pantalla:

Escopiu a la closca
pelada
dels cretins

Aquest home que diu:
—La música de Circ és tan definitiva com no la va conèixer
Richard Wagner tanmateix un pompier!

La sombra dels comparses en el sol de les taules
Moure's i projectar-se no existir:
La VIDA al Dinamisme

Jo protesto que això degeneri també
—Perquè ara el «domador» vol fer jocs malabars
i els cavalls amb les potes

Més m'estimo l' 

i en CHARLOT que s'han tornat bessons per
tal d'entrar en sèrio a la glòria del cel

(car ells són ignorants de que venim d'ahir
d'abans d'ahir de l'altre abans d'ahir
i més d'abans encara)

L'Esfera del rellotge a les DOTZE fecunda les hores
que vindran que són:

una	dues	tres	quatre
cinc	sis	set	vuit
nou	deu	onze	

i després el



—i així seré immortal perquè d'aquí ha nascut el meu
JO dins el TOT

Joan Salvat-Papasseit 1894–1924

61

Wedding March

Light of the chameleon RADIANCE above
the star of the Circus still hexagonal

Success! Success!! Success!!!

equilateral CLOWNS romantic leaders
This is healthy and in the constellations of four conical
hats

The earth only turns because I am here and I am a
CLOWN in agony

Margot with the TIGHTS and her hair painted
red seems like a burning candle
She only burns for me:
Before the hundred centaurs that forms a barrier in the arena
GILDED WITH EMOTION

Margot stares at me now and in falling from the
Trapeze I read an advertisement on the screen:

Spit on the bald
pate
of the cretins

This man who says:
– Circus music is more definitive than anything Richard Wagner
knew of a fireman notwithstanding!
The shadow of masquerades in the sun of the tables
To move and project yourself not to exist:
LIFE in Dynamism

I protest that this also may degenerate
– Because now the “tamer” wants to juggle
and the horses with their hoofs

I prefer 

and CHARLIE CHAPLIN who have become twins in
hope of seriously entering the glory of heaven

(since they don't know we come from yesterday
from the day before yesterday from before the day
and from even before)

The Dial of the clock at TWELVE engender the hours
to come which are:

one	two	three	four
five	six	seven	eight
nine	ten	eleven	

and then



—and so I shall be immortal becaue here was born my
I in EVERYTHING

Tr. David H. Rosenthal

Trofeu

Per a un amic escultor

*El vent pregunta. Al cau mateix del vent,
respon el còdol
enfonyat entre brins de palla i de tenebra.
I mireu-li la galta, llisa, vibràtil,
quan l'alosa s'enfila, canta que canta.*

*Respon el vent.
Alt i senyor, petja i urpeja.
Amb la capa ocel·lada, damunt l'esbarzerar,
la nit s'avara, doctoralment.
Tan dret i negre, mireu com el nauxer
llisca segur entre els pètals de l'alba.*

*Res de paisatge. Tot és sabut, premut,
resolt en abraçada musculosa
i abandó de parpelles.*

*Només, a l'horitzó,
tants i tants horitzons que ens bateguen als polsos,
a la ratlla d'un dia i cada dia,
com a llast, el darrer, del darrer aire,
pesos de fruita i de colors
per a quina justícia o bé tendresa?*

*Com si,
en marbre i bronze, en gropes i malucs,
s'alzinés ara o mai la carícia del sol,
i un contrapunt obac de notes greus i tinta
enclogués el secret d'alguna alta victòria.*

Trophy

To a sculptor friend

The wind asks. Deep in the wind's lair
a pebble answers,
wedged among wisps of straw and darkness.
Observe its smooth, pulsating cheek as the lark
takes to the skies in uninterrupted song.

The wind answers.
Tall, masterful, treading on claws that tear.
In birdlike cape, above the bramble thicket
night lifts a dogmatic anchor.
So straight, so black, observe the mariner
slip unerringly between dawn's petals.

Absence of a landscape. Everything is known,
compressed, issues in muscular embrace,
abandoning of eyelids.

But, on the skyline,
skyline on skyline throbbing at our wrists,
at a day's edge and every day's
like a dead weight, the last, of the last air,
swags of fruit and colours profiting
what justice or what tenderness?

As though,
marble and bronze, hips and hindquarters,
the sun's caress should now or never draw
itself erect, and a shadowy counterpoint
of deep-toned notes and ink were to embody
the secret of some lofty victory.

Plus ultra

*estello, fai-te clara,
car cerque moun camin*

*Allà dellà de l'espai
he vist somriure una estrella
perduda en lo camp del cel
com espiga en temps de sega,
com al pregon de l'afrau
una efimera lluerna.
—Estrelleta —jo li he dit—,
de la mar cerúlea gemma,
de les flors de l'alt verger
series tu la darrera?
—No so la darrera, no,
no so més que una llanterna
de la porta del jardí
que creies tu la frontera.
És sols lo començament,
lo que prenies per terme.
L'univers és infinit
pertot acaba i comença,
i ençà, enllà, amunt i avall,
la immensitat és oberta,
i a on tu veus lo desert
eixams de mons formiguegen.
Dels camins de l'infinit
són los mons la polsinera
que puja i baixa a sos peus
quan Jehovà s'hi passeja.*

Plus ultra

*estello, fai-te clara,
car cerque moun camin*

Out there in space
I have seen a star smile
lost in the field of the sky
like a corn cob at harvest time,
like in the deepest ravine
an ephemeral flicker.
“Little star,” I said to it,
“you cerulean gem of the sea!
Of the flowers of the High Garden,
might you be the last?”
“I am not the last, no,
I am no more than a lantern
at the gate of the garden
that you mistook for the border.
It is only the beginning,
what you took for the limit.
The universe is infinite,
everywhere it ends and begins,
and here and there, and up and down,
the immensity is wide open,
and where you see the desert,
swarms of worlds teem.
Of the paths of infinity
worlds are the dust
that rises and falls at His feet
when Jehovah walks there.”

Mar brut

*Pel cel encapotat, ni un raig de sol.
Et miro cargolant-te, mar
bròfec, estèril,
massa ocupat en tu mateix,
bramant,
les ones reboquant-se
sense recurs.
On trenquen, les gavines
van en rengle pacífic a l'aguait
de les deixalles
que els portes, brut.
Aquestes coses
em fan senyals, visc estranyant-me'n. Miro,
busco el sentit:
així faig moure peces,
de casa a casa, en el tauler del temps,
per màgia o per precepte:
jocs
per ajornar la mort.*

Dirty sea

Not a single ray of sun pierces the clouds.
I watch you twist and turn, rough,
sterile sea,
far too wrapped up in yourself,
thundering,
 waves thrashing
with no way out.
 Down where they break, the seagulls
walk in peaceful rows looking out
for the debris
you have to offer, dirty sea.
 These things
send me signals that confuse me. I look and
search for meaning:
 I move the pieces
from square to square on the board of time
driven by magic or design:
 games
to delay death.

A l'amic i poeta mort

(B. Rosselló-Pòrcel)

Com sentir-te definit,
concret,
amb visió d'estàtua
i record d'ulls i forma
si eres paraula?

La paraula morta nonada
sobre el teu llavi humit
del bes que no donares.

Mes mans t'esculpiran
d'aire glaçat i carícia truncada,
i el meu sanglot
t'obrirà els ulls blancs
de marbre.

I miraràs lluny, molt lluny
de mi i de tu,
a dins i fora
dels horitzons concrets
del Tu i el Jo.

Quin gran silenci blanc
obrires amb tes mans
lasses de veremes abans d'hora,
immaculat,
sense paraules,
tu que fores vida i paraula.

Se m'ha esfullat
entre els dits
ton poema
de paraula de tinta,
i tinc les mans plenes
de papallones mortes
mentre crides rere els vidres
dels aires perduts i oblidats:

“L'alba floreix, l'alba floreix!”

Mes, és blanca de neu,
i el sol és una lluna
glaçada i morta.

To the dead friend and poet

(B. Rosselló-Pòrcel)

How to feel defined,
concrete,
with statue vision
and memory of eyes and form
if you were word?

The dead word unborn
on your moist lips
of the kiss that you did not give.

My hands will sculpt you
from frozen air and truncated caresses,
and my sobbing
will open your white eyes
of marble.

And you will look far, far away
from me and from you,
inside and out
of the concrete horizons
of You and I.

What a great white silence
you opened with your hands
tired of harvesting the grapes too soon,
immaculate,
without words,
you who were life and word.

Between my fingers
your poem
of words of ink
has lost its leaves,
and my hands are full
of dead butterflies
while you shout behind the glass
of the lost and forgotten airs:

“Dawn blossoms, dawn blossoms!”

But it is snow white,
and the sun is a moon
that is frozen and dead.

Montserrat Abelló (1918-2014) was exiled in Chile with her parents, but upon her return to Catalunya she became an influential female poetic voice, who also translated the poetry of Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Anne Sexton and many others into Catalan. She was awarded the Premi d’Honor de les Lletres Catalanes in 2008. A selection of her poems in English translated by herself has appeared under the title *Fifty Love Poems* (2014). The poem chosen is from her collection *Vida diària* (Daily Life, 1963).

Joan Alcover (1854-1926) was a Mallorcan writer and intellectual whose work is rooted in the Romanticism of the Catalan Renaixença. He is known today as the author of some of the most highly valued Catalan poems, including “La Balanguera”, the official anthem of Mallorca. A selection of his poems in English translation by Kristine Doll and Robert E. Brown has appeared under the title *Elegies* (2004). “Desolació” appeared originally in *Cap al tard* (At Evening Twilight, 1909).

Clementina Arderiu (1889-1976) was one of the foremost female Catalan poets of the twentieth century, influenced in her work by folk lyrics as well as Maragall and Carner. She was married to the poet Carles Riba. The poem chosen - which was also set to music by Víctor Bocanegra - is from her *Cançons i elegies* (Songs and Elegies, 1916).

Blai Bonet (1926-1997) was a poet and novelist from the small town of Santanyi in Mallorca. While pursuing his education in the Greek and Latin classics at the Palma Seminary, he developed tuberculosis which came to mark the rest of his life. His poem “La cala” (The Bay) was first published in his second collection of poems *Entre el coral i l’espiga* (Between Coral and Wheat, 1952). His poem about Panama Al Brown, the first Latin American boxer to win the world championship, was written in New York in 1991. Lou Reed read it in 2007 at the Baryshni- kov Arts Center in NYC, during a “Made in Catalunya” poetry reading. Bonet’s novel *El Mar* (The Sea) was published in English translation by the Dalkey Archive Press in 2015.

Joan Brossa (1919-1998) was 17 when the Spanish Civil War broke out. He was drafted into the Republican army and went into combat. After the war, he met the leading representatives of the Catalan avant-garde, J.V. Foix, Joan Miró and later Antoni Tàpies. Both as a poet and as a playwright he loved experimentation and enjoyed crossing artistic limits. “Rails” is an example of his visual poems.

Josep Carner (1884-1970) is considered a leading figure in Catalan poetry. After a strong commitment to the political and cultural movement of the Noucentisme, he became a career diplomat. In 1939, he went into exile, first to Mexico and then to Belgium, where he lived until his death. Selections from his poetry have been translated into English by Pearse Hutchinson and published by The Dolphin Book Co. in 1962. The two poems chosen were collected in *Poesia* (Poems, 1957), “Si em vaga” as unpublished, “Retorn a Catalunya” from his *Bella terra bella gent* (Beautiful Earth Beautiful People, 1918).

Miquel Costa i Llobera (1854-1922) was a priest and poet born in Pollença, Mallorca. He is a master of poetic form and the author of one of the most celebrated poems in Catalan poetry: “El pi de Formentor” (an area north of the island that had belonged to his family and is today home to a famous hotel). The poem, written in 1875, was published in his *Poesies* (Poems, 1885).

Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) is of course known today not for his poetry in Catalan, but rather as one of the greatest painters of the twentieth century. His poem “Divagacions” (Ramblings) was written at age fifteen for the magazine *Studium* which he edited together with his high school classmates.

Salvador Espriu (1913-1985) was a poet, essayist, novelist and playwright who belongs today to the great modern classics of Catalan literature. Espriu spent his childhood in Barcelona and Arenys de Mar, a village on the Maresme coast that appears anagrammatically in his poetry as Sirena. Translated into several languages, Espriu’s work has obtained international recognition, such as the *Montaigne Prize* (1971), in addition to many national and local awards. English translations of his poems have been published by Kenneth Lyons, Burton Raffel, Magda Bogin, Louis J. Rodrigues, Joel Graham, and others. “Poem XXX” is from his book *La pell de brau* (The Bull Hide, 1960), and “Ofrenat a Cèrber” is from *Les Hores* (The Hours, 1952).

Vicent Andrés Estellés (1924-1993), born in Burjassot, near Valencia, is the author of an extensive poetic oeuvre for which he obtained important public and critical recognition from the 1970s onwards. He received Catalunya’s highest literary award, the Premi d’Honor de les Lletres Catalanes in 1984. The chosen poem belongs to the *Llibre de meravelles* (Book of Wonders, 1971). Estellés has been translated

into English by David H. Rosenthal, Nathaniel Smith and Dominic Keown, among others.

Gabriel Ferrater (1922-1972) was a poet, essayist, and a critic of literature and art. His poetic oeuvre, collected in his book *Les dones i els dies* (Women and Days, 1968), is not large, but he has remained one of the most influential voices of modern Catalan literature. A selection of his poems was published in 2004 by Arc Publications, UK, with the title *Women and Days*, translated by Arthur Terry and with a foreword by Seamus Heaney.

J.V. Foix (1893-1987) was, in addition to being a pastry chef in Sarrià (today a neighborhood of Barcelona), a scholar of poetry, whose entire life was connected to avant-garde art and literature. Selections from his prose poetry have been published in an English translation by Lawrence Venuti as *Daybook 1918: Early Fragments*. “It’s when I sleep that I can see clearly”, set to music by the famous singer Joan Manuel Serrat, appeared in 1953 in *On he deixat les claus...* (Where I Left My Keys).

Rosa Leveroni (1910-1985) received a university degree in literature and became a librarian before the Spanish war. Salvador Espriu wrote: “Leveroni’s is the most authentic and purified lyrical woman’s voice of the generation to which I also belong”. The selected poem was first published in *Presència i record* (Presence and Memory, 1952).

Joan Maragall (1860-1911) was one of the great Barcelonese intellectuals of the beginning of the twentieth century, a journalist and poet, and both a classic author of modern Catalan literature and a typical modernist poet. “Oda a Espanya” is from his book *Visions i cants* (Visions and Cantos, 1900) and “Cant espiritual” is from *Seqüències* (Sequences, 1911).

Maria-Mercè Marçal (1952-1998) is a key name in the culture and literature of the Spanish Transition and the first democracy. As a poet and activist, she left a great legacy that accounts for the continued popularity of her writings today. The selected poems are from her *La germana, l’estrangera* (Sister Stranger, 1985), a book that, according to the translator Christopher Whyte, “describes the experience of childbirth along with the erotic tensions provoked by the figure of a midwife”. English translations of her poems by Montserrat Abelló, Noèlia Díaz Vicedo and Clyde Moneyhun have been published by Francis Boutle Publishers, London.

Joan Margarit (1938-2021), architect and poet, was recognized late in life with the translation of his work into several languages and the highest institutional awards, such as the National Award of the Generalitat de Catalunya in 2008, the Reina Sofia Award for Iberoamerican Poetry and the Cervantes Prize in 2019. The selected poem, chosen as poem of the week by *The Guardian*, is part of the collection *Tugs in the Fog: Selected Poems*, translated by Anna Crowe and published in 2006 by Blood-axe Books.

Miquel Martí i Pol (1929-2003) was a poet of extraordinary popularity: his books sold more than 20,000 copies, and his best-known title, *Estimada Marta* (Dear Martha, 1978), is one of the most republished books in Catalan. In 1973, he was confirmed as suffering from multiple sclerosis, an illness which forced him to give up his job as a clerk in a textile factory and which would influence the rest of his life and literary work. “Punt i final” appeared in *Llibre de les solituds* (The Book of Solitudes, 1997) which received the Premi de la Crítica Serra d’Or.

Josep Palau i Fabre (1917-2008), a friend of Pablo Picasso and one of the foremost authorities on his work, wrote poetry, essays and plays. In the town of Caldes d’Estrac, the Fundació Palau houses today the twin literary and artistic archives of the writer and his father who was a painter. The poem selected – which responds to the poem “Cant espiritual” by Joan Maragall – was published in *Poemes de l’Alquimista* (Poems of the Alchemist, 1977).

Carles Riba (1893-1959) was a literary critic and writer and one of the main Catalan intellectuals of the twentieth century. He was also a translator of classic literature known for the best Catalan version of the *Odyssey*. After the Spanish Civil War, he took the path of exile, which led him to France. Upon his return, Riba devoted himself to writing and translating. Selections from his poetry have been translated into English by Joan L. Gili and published by The Dolphin Book Co. in 1970. The poem we have selected was originally published in *Segon llibre d’estances* (Second Book of Stances, 1930).

Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel (1913-1938) was a poet from Mallorca who called himself a “Catalan of Mallorca” and who died tragically young of tuberculosis. Despite his premature death, he became an important influence not just on his friend Salvador Espriu, but also on Josep Palau i Fabre and Cèlia Viñas. “A Mallorca, durant la Guerra Civil”, written in

Barcelona in September 1937, appeared in the volume *Imitació del foc* (Imitation of Fire, 1938).

M. Antònia Salvà (1869-1958) is known as the first woman in modern times to write poems in Catalan. Born in Mallorca, she authored works that were deeply rooted in the rural world, of bucolic poems depicting an island unchanged from ancestral times. “Of a cactus” was first published in *El retorn* (The Return, 1934). Fifty years later, M.M. Marçal wrote a beautiful piece in dialogue with it.

Joan Salvat-Papasseit (1894-1924), grew up in an orphanage but as a bookseller, avid reader and autodidact, he became one of the key figures of the poetic avant-garde in Catalunya and Spain. His most famous collection of poems is *El poema de la rosa als llavis* (The Poem of the Rose on the Lips, 1923), a signal text of Catalan lyric and erotic poetry which has remained in print without interruption since the end of Franco’s dictatorship. The two poems chosen are from his book *L’irradiador del port i les gavines* (The Port Beacon and the Seagulls, 1921).

Jordi Sarsanedas (1924-2006) was a poet, prose writer, and translator. He studied in France, lectured at the University of Glasgow, lived in Milan, and was a teacher at the French Institute in Barcelona. He was also a founder of the Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona, and the president of the Catalan PEN (1983-2004). In 1994 he was awarded the Premi d’Honor de les Lletres Catalanes. “Trofeu” was published in *Fins a un cert punt. Poesia 1945-1989* (Up to a certain point, Poems 1945-1989).

Jacint Verdaguer (1845-1902) became, already during his lifetime, Catalonia’s national poet and also enjoyed great international fame. He is the author of two epic poems, *L’Atlàntida* (Atlantis, 1878) and *Canigó* (1886), but also of popular verses every Catalan knows by heart, such as “L’emigrant” or “Virolai”. Selections from his epics and lyric poems have been translated into English by Ronald Puppo (University of Chicago Press 2007, and Barcino-Tamesis 2015), and in 2024 Fum d’Estampa Press has published a full translation of *L’Atlàntida*, also by Puppo. The selected poem was published in his posthumous volume *Al cel* (To Heaven, 1903).

Joan Vinyoli (1914-1984), translator of Rilke, is perhaps one of the best modern Catalan poets, even though it took him a while to gain recognition from his readers and literary critics. In the words of D. Bonner, Vinyoli “evolved from a

devoté of symbolism into a realist eminently capable of using everyday language and imagery to make forceful statements about the human condition”. The poem selected is from his book *Cercles* (Circles, 1980).

Cèlia Viñas (1915-1954) was a writer in both Spanish and Catalan, and a schoolteacher. Born in Lleida, she moved with her family to Mallorca, where she was a student of Gabriel Alomar. As a teacher she worked in Almeria, where she lived until her death. Her Catalan poems were published under the title *Del foc i la cendra* (Of Fire and Ashes, 1953).

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Further Reading

While no comprehensive anthology of modern Catalan poetry exists in English, in addition to the titles listed above selections from various poets and poems translated into English can also be found at the following links:

Lyrikline. Listen to the poet
<https://www.lyrikline.org/en/suche?submit=Suchen&query=catalan>

Poetàrium. Contemporary Catalan Poetry (Institut Ramon Llull)
<https://poetarium.llull.cat/poetarium/index.cfm/ENG/inici.html>

Visat. Digital magazine of literature and translation (PEN Català)
<https://visat.cat/translations-catalan-literature/literary-genre/poetry>

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3 Foreword

6 **Montserrat Abelló**

8 **Joan Alcover**

10 **Clementina Arderiu**

12 **Blai Bonet**

16 **Joan Brossa**

18 **Josep Carner**

22 **Miquel Costa i Llobera**

24 **Salvador Dalí**

28 **Salvador Espriu**

30 **Vicent Andrés Estellés**

34 **Gabriel Ferrater**

36 **J.V. Foix**

38 **Rosa Leveroni**

40 **Joan Maragall**

44 **Maria-Mercè Marçal**

48 **Joan Margarit**

50 **Miquel Martí i Pol**

52 **Josep Palau i Fabre**

54 **Carles Riba**

56 **Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel**

58 **M. Antònia Salvà**

60 **Joan Salvat-Papasseit**

66 **Jordi Sarsanedas**

68 **Jacint Verdaguer**

70 **Joan Vinyoli**

72 **Cèlia Viñas**

74 About the poets

77 Translation Sources