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Flèrida

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Vicent Andrés Estellés

CRY IN THE NIGHT

Families mourning all night long.
The war and the years after. . . . I remember a mother
who was never told her son had died
on the Teruel front: she was told
“he’s missing in action.” And she waited for him
during the war. And she kept on waiting
once it was over. And she set the table
and she put fresh sheets on his bed;
she waited at the door. No news of him.
Did he die? Nobody knows. He is just missing.
She shut herself in her house. I remember
her crying out. The neighbors knocked at her door
but she would not open it. Where was her son?
If dead, where did he die? Oh, the facts of war!
Who can ever know? Families mourning
for the rest of their lives. The war and the years after. . . .

FLÈRIDA

Those of you who love take these ashes
—Roís de Corella

On certain nights, in the dark, the sad blind man
comes to the head of your bed and touches your body
with the trembling, numb hands of the blind,
as if trying to recognize an old delight.
You are silent, meanwhile, in the conjugal bed,
your eyes open in the dark, full of tears.
The hands insist, stiff, useless.
Some leftovers are on the modest table
in the dining room; the kids must be sleeping

just as your husband sleeps next to you.
The blind man mutters a name, your name. You say nothing.
The air burns your muttered, bitten name.
When the morning light shows through the shutters
the blind man leaves slowly, feeling his way
bitterly along the biblical walls of the city.

THE LOVERS

Flesh needs flesh
— *Ausiàs March*

“There were not two lovers like us in València.”

We made love fiercely from dawn to dusk.
I think of all of it while you hang out the wash.
Many years ago; many things have happened.

Suddenly a storm, or love, seizes me.
We cannot conceive of silk and compliments
(may chaste Mr. López Picó forgive us).
Love flares up like an old hurricane,
throwing us to the floor.
Sometimes I have wished for a civilized love;
the music is playing, I kiss you carelessly,
first your shoulder, then your earlobe.
Our love is abrupt and wild.
Kissing and scratching each other on the floor,
we long bitterly for our own land.
What can I do? We ignore
Petrarca and many other things:
Riba's *Estances* and Bequer's *Rimas*.
Afterwards, we realize we are barbarians.
It should not be that way;
we are old enough, and so on.

There were not two lovers like us in València.