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From "de Una Niña De Provincias Que Se Vino A Vivir En Un Chagall"

Blanca Andreu

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Look at my vitriolic mouth
and my throat of Ionian hemlock,

look at the homeless broken-winged partridge

look at the trees like brittle nerves of the day,
My love, look at my vitriolic mouth
look at the broken partridge that dies in Rimbaud's deserts of thyme,

look at the trees brittle nerves of the day,
crying water of the scythe

This is what I see in the even hour of April
[ ]
My love my mouth
and my throat

look at the partridge
that dies,

    at the trees
crying water of the scythe

This is what I see in the even hour of April,
and in the chapel of mirrors I see it too,

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and I can’t think about the doves that live in the word Alexandria

or write letters to Rilke.
My love, the love I never had feverish and pacific,

verses for the little octopus of death,
verses for the strange death that makes its way between telephones,

for my feeble mind verses, for the circuit of the violin,
for the circuit of the heron,
for the confines of the south, of sleep

verses that don't shield me or are cause for life,

that don't give me the sweet umbilical snake
or the glucose chamber of womb.
The air around me,
how strange it will be,
when you are no longer,

Amor mío, amor mío, you without day for you,
celled in between mirrors and bad things,

dead the transcendental silver
and old anemones of eclogue,

dead this version, that now I darken and refuse to read,
to read it, younger.

Amor mío, my love of never feverish,

verses for the little octopus,
verses for the strange death that winds through telephone lines,

for my feeble mind verses, for the circuit

of sleep

that don’t shield me

that don’t give me
the chamber.
How strange will seem the air around me, 
how strange it will be, 

when you are no longer, 

the cathedral of day, 
the cloister condensing the advanced age of light 
and character of storms. 

My love, my love, 
trapped in a hive of mirrors and bad things, 

dead the transcendental silver 

dead this version, that now I darken and decline, 
to read it, younger. 

My love 

my feeble mind, the violin, 
the confines of the south, of sleep 

verses that are not cause for life.
TRANSLATOR’S NOTE
Blanca Andreu’s first publication, De una niña de provinicas que se vino a vivir en un Chagall, was quickly recognized in Spanish literary circles after it won the Premio Adonais. Her writing was talked about perhaps as much for its illogical syntax and irrational dream-like imagery as for her provocative references to drugs and sexuality, references that gave the twenty-one year old poet a certain notoriety. But many critics argue that to sensationalize her work in this way is to undermine the scope of her poetic project and the way that, as Silvia Sherno describes, “Andreu creates imaginary worlds that are at once primitive and apocalyptic; a sense of impending catastrophe that threatens, whether by fire or water, these ambiguous environments; and the persuasive, vying strains of destruction and creation.”

Historically, her work recalls the poetry of Aleixandre, Neruda, and surrealist Lorca, combining contemporary referents with more traditional literary and artistic allusions. At the same time, the appearance of Una niña signals the beginnings of the postnovísima movement, in which a younger generation of poets turned their focus towards diverse philosophical or emotional concerns, envisioning themselves as a continuation in many traditions of Spanish and foreign literatures, not necessarily bound (as the novísimos were) to make a hard break with the literary past. In the case of Andreu, through her poetic project she is able, according to Sherno, to “parallel the path of mystic progress by tracing the protagonist’s figurative descent into darkness, her transformation by cleansing fires, and her eventual ascent into a space illuminated by the radiance of poetic vision.”

In this translation I have tried to get at the breakdown of language that is implicit in Andreu’s poetry by spreading the English poems across multiple pages. Translation thus comes in waves, attempting to evoke the multiple meanings inherent in the original work.