

TOSIGO ARDENTO

*Para
María del Carmen Mari:
The nobleness of life
Is to do thus [Embracing]: when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do 't, in which I bind,
On pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless.*

*«Exim Annaei Lucani caedem imperat. is profluente sanguine ubi frigescere pedes
manusque et paulatim ab extremis cedere spiritum fervido adhuc et compote mentis
pectore intellegit, re c o rdatus carmen a se compositum quo vulneratum militem per
eius modi mortis imaginem obisse tradiderat, versus ipsos rettulit eaque illi suprema
vox fuit»*

TÁCITO

1

Coming out of the mist in the cold

of a sad sea
the great health spas float.
The long wooden walkways
disappear as in a misted
mirror

Lone deckchairs awnings folded. And

you hear
the break of an ancient
wave.

The boat's prow
balances solemnly in the whiteness. I remember my grandfather's
old motorcar—End of summer, the
first
chills, at dusk; some men
grappling with boards doors and windows
in the ramshackle beach-house. And the car, black, huge,
magnificent, like a funeral

hearse — silence of photography: We all
go up. I see the beach distancing
from the window the wind moves the palm trees.

Meanwhile

I grow old. Some
Girls go by
in bare feet on the sand, they protect
their necks with their arms
around their jerseys. I hear them
laugh. Their faces
are lost in the (fog)mist. The waves break
slowly. Like smooth
dying animals
the moorings creak.

With the sound of the sea

the music of some distant
speakers arrives, an arcade
of bumpers.

Lonely
beach terraces,
with a glass in my hand

It has always been
night. Which is why you love
Istanbul, sumptuous, and love Venice, I
and the New York dawn, police
cars in the rain.

Yes

Remember: the Atlantic in the solitude of the quays,
the grime on the pillars dead rats
move the water, the
lights like a ghost train
a transatlantic liner somebody crosses

the wet ground, with
wellingtons, in the frozen
silence, at the bottom
of huge metal doors

Disappearing as of now

on the calm sea
the great health resorts destroyed,
their long mysterious promenades.

Phosphorescent ladies stroll slowly. The gulls
go by on the other side of the

mist. The legs of the table
stick in the sand,
shells break. The
world capsizes. Ah,

marvellous. We see a memorable fall.
Contemplate it, acknowledge the gesture give
a
tip.

That child who went
in his grandfather's car would have done so,
the strand distancing itself,
the palm trees shimmering in the wind. Let

night pass, drink,
listen

to the sea that
breaks
against
the dilapidated spas.

On the other side of these waters
Alexandria, Smyrna, Alexander's Dream, dirty
backstreets of some port.

And

hear that tune wafting
from the speakers of a bumper's
arcade.

An old
and sugary and
stupid
song.

One night, in the Piazza

San Marco, contemplating
its splendour,
you thought
that was
the perfect place
to end your life. Yes, there, the last bottle,
little orchestras
playing, stunning adolescents and Japanese
go by,
the shadow of Ezra Pound.

Yes, but

not in winter, you thought,
although it would be more honourable, save
one of those wonderful end-of-summer nights
amidst hundreds of tourists, a coarse waltz,
your memory like a hoor's bed. And, you

one now with the grandeur
of the Piazza,
sleep-inducements taking effect,
deciphering the blurred columns, the domes
of the Basilica, the music, the voices
going out in your head. You think,
perhaps, Las
Meninas, The Winter's Tale, Maria Callas, trying
to maintain a proud
composure.

Meanwhile

the palaces eraze, the water
rots the foundations, the stones covered
in moss.

For

God's sake, leave it! Everybody has gone!

And you rise
before the moon's splendour,
that other moon of your indifference

There are lights in the mist.
Distant. Like pearls.
The sea caresses your tongue. Gold-clad
women and fascinating motor cars
go by. You hear
a song known to the Spanish. The lights of the big wheel. You drain
your drink.

 Kiss
death in the mouth.

Some couples
embrace, like ghosts
in the mist of the walk-ways.

You have

nothing.
That sand
you take in your hand.

There was a morning

- the palaces reflected in the Great Canal
like jewels thrown on a silk sheet -

I roamed the halls
of one of those palaces.
It was full of tourists,
overwhelmed by luxury;
one - I suppose - a teacher
soliloquizing in front of some boys
on a certain cloth.
They looked,
not now as if it such
were of the past (including
I, to whom such beauty gave so much consolation) but
like indecipherable
signs from another world.
I thought that those ceilings and paintings,
furniture and precious
objects, those clothes, everything, were once
chosen by somebody (somebody whose life
we can hardly imagine)
because it was part
of his lifestyle.

We wandering around a dead aquarium,
scraps of an abandoned dream
now without any connection
with our life.

And I thought of the Stanze
of the Vatican,
made for the gratification of a great Pope
He would

have smashed his glass against a fresco
on a delightful night
And Raphael would have decorated again that wall,
and perhaps even better.

Now that beauty
was something that had
to be watched over, protected, a unique
wonder, strange,

that dies
in the eyes
of those who cannot now conceive it.

But perhaps that was
my luck. To see the end.
And like that beauty
the solitude of my memory.

And for that reason
you do not have to fear
death. Not even
imagine it honourable,
proud, spent
as that splendid jewel
of the Piazza.

It may take you one day
between the burnt iron
of a car. Or die alone in an hotel. Take a fistful
of

sand. It is moist. It is like taking
a print in the hand. Listen

to the flotsam of the water

against the pillars.

Solemn, abandoned, in the
mist,

the great health resorts float.
The rumour of that sea
breaks, dark, you almost
understand everything. You are drinking
against a background of lights clouded by the mist
of an arcade of bumper
cars. Death dances to excite you
in a concrete lot a stupid
song. Girls
stroll by who are abysses.

Ah, listen. Those are the oars
of the Greek ships. Hear

the *zzzzzzzzzzzz* of the gulls.

passing through

the mist.

Humid flesh

of the heavens.

The world stops.

Gods

of suicide.

Vivaldi's violent moon.

If that alone

had lasted If we had not read
Homer,
Virgil, Tacitus. If no

ruin
had reached our eyes

this column

would have been enough,
solitary at the edge of the promontory,

with just the right height for a man
to use as a rest, and in the freshness of the pine trees
contemplating the view
allows his thoughts to soar

Column in the evening sun
Sicily's immensity. The passer-by
stops enthralled.

Everything is madness outside of this ambience.

And we pile up some logs
beside her, and we make a bonfire,
and gazing at the flame we drink wine
and the sunset like a peacock
closing in on itself alone and distant
at the water's end. Someone recited
verses of the Iliad, working up
a challenge and the courage of some men
in front of the sacred doors.

How

the heart
ignites how
the oldest emotion
revives,
the flame, the blood, the victory.

A dog
that came down from the mountain
comes closer. We throw it
a piece
of bread.

The column decreases
in the light
of a huge night advancing.

Yes, that clarity.

Decided by someone

facing the same Destiny.

We lie down beside her,

to gaze on her
and lick our wounds.

and 3

Shakespeare came within inches
of losing
his head. It is something
we should
reflect on measure

carefully
the neck.

Afterwards

travel. It is worth
(nevertheless) – while you roam
the landscape
like a cyclorama – it is worth
meditating a lot on that
which Montaigne wrote: Necessity is love
which not only corrupts my
judgement, but also
my conscience. And

Oh, yes, World, pass by!

Stendhal sat in this
café.

(perhaps

Stendhal has not yet
sat in
this
café) I remember one winter's night
the moon was a solemn goddess.

It lit up

The gates of Florien

like golden butterflies in the mist.

I had been drinking slowly
when a couple entered and behind them
a dog.

They sat
under one of those agreeable paintings
by Casa and Carlini. A waiter came
and served coffee, some cakes.
He withdrew. And a little later
appeared carrying a silver
bowl, full of water,
and he placed it beside the dog.

That grandeur cannot be improvised.
Like the eyes of the shoe shiners
of Istanbul, like leprosy in Cairo.
Know that the end of the world
is nothing more than the vane repetition
of certain misadventures now known,
and never with greater interest than that of a
perfect twilight service.

Good.
Shakespeare just about
saved his head. Don't forget it. It is something we should
always bear in mind. It teaches you
to survive. Our heads have always
been worth
little.

Remember it.

Remember it

while the gondolas go by
like Death's lips while your life passes
and you recognize it in some
fragment

birds
pass through the mist. The sea
breaks against the quays. And

nothing means
nothing, history
rotten flesh,

ah, and you,

solitary drinker

who sees everything
ah, you,
who knows the end

You contemplate
in the twilight
facades most serene, see the gold of the world
go out over the Dogana, Fortune soon still
in the silence of the winds, you note
how the city collapses

have seen time in the waters.
And what you love, respect, float
like rubbish in the tide.

Think about Shakespeare.

Remember how beautiful this Piazza is
to die.
Without knowing anybody. One of those magnificent
summer nights, the little orchestras play everything
it is full of unknown

people. Some insomniacs.
And drink.

And you see beauty vanish
as the moon goes by.

They say, later: a
foreigner, yes, perhaps the heart. Before carrying out
the autopsy.

What they find.

Streets that blind the traveller women's
faces

The

night is madness. It has
the shine of mirrors. You feel
the alcohol at one

with your body,
it makes you perfect like a verse of Virgil.

All
who were have gone
dying on nights
like this:

You finish off
the last

drop, leave, note the cold
on your face, a taxi goes by

Afterwards there is the desert. Rimbaud crossed it.
Yes, Rimbaud, that sick fiend.
Defending
his money-belt.
I remember, entering the Jeu de Pomme, by the little exit
on the left, in the web
of Fantin-Latour. Ah, one
of those haughty nights
amongst friends, drinking, dreaming
with the glory, beside Verlaine,
moon of such heavens.
Ah the verse that doesn't die.

Your eyes are wild. Perhaps it is the night
of Merde
à la Poésie.

Toll of bell – I believe -. You know
others like him visited this portrait
over the years.

Verlaine shines.

That shit
still looks
ugly in poetry. He saw
himself lose his way, while he stroked a green glass he saw

himself erase in the fog of a dirty back-street, like
a prostitute
who retires
tired.

In
the fragile night

they drink.

I think
on
two subsequent events:

Ernst Jünger
contemplates
from a window of the Majestic
Paris blacked-out. It doesn't matter who the victor

is in this war for
behind the misted glass

It ends.

A head
that had extended the limits
of intelligence, courage, tolerance,
died. In a mirror
full of blood

he contemplates
satisfied
an undesirable. Time

of assassins. The young man of the web
I mentioned had dreamt it.

And years
later, in a small town
in the USA, a young soldier
enters

a diner, he carries two rifles, a

pistol, he begins
to fire at the people, he doesn't select, he kills
at random. He stops firing
when he is no longer amused.

Good. There is no need
to put

your
hands
to your head.

It is normal
that it happens.

And perhaps of all
who were eating there, it is possible that only the assassin
held something of life in his heart, perhaps he was the only
one you could sit down with
to drink.

The television reported on it
immediately. We could see the bodies.

Time

of assassins.

When the lights of the avenues
shine like a disappointment on the wet footpaths.
And motorcars go by
beautiful ladies
with powerful
gazes.

The wind comes full of crystals,
drags limbs,
fetus clog the drains,
and in New York

they appear at dawn
stick out their heads from
holes in the avenues
white-eyed beings and without hair.

What they have to do to survive.
No

Rimbaud, that sat waiting for them.
Nor Verlaine, unprecedented shade
of the moon

See the albinos,
habitués of the left-overs,
their animals cold as soap.

That is what remains.

That.

Many times I have read
in the admirable Life of Pompeii,
your death. And to those unsurpressable
pages I refer.
But I insist on an image:
Cut off your head, preserve it
in order to buy favours
from Cesar, who will
frown on the offering (and turning
your
face away, cry,
says Plutarco).
The body dumped in a bog,
your free slave, Felipo, washes the remains in the sea
and with planks from a boat
he constructs a funeral pyre.

Then someone approached,
someone who in your youth had been
a soldier in the Legion of Pompeii,
and in the name of that glory he waked the flame
until the greatest of the captains
was ash.

Perhaps those verses
repeat this gesture,

and wake

another corpse:
he of the Art.

Because only those ashes.

Daybreak has a bright
moon
of desperation.

Yes, listen.
Mind your neck,
Shakespeare barely
saved

his.

The night
is beautiful, divine.
Nor does it matter much
that a civilization
collapses.

*Traducción John Liddy
La noche de San Juan.
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TOSIGO ARDENTO

I

Lo Pagán, Septiembre de 1983;
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Sevilla – Cartagena, Octubre de 1984.

II

Roma (Villa Doria-Pamphili), Junio de 1982;
Lo Pagán, Noviembre de 1983;
Locarno, Enero de 1984;
Cartagena, Marzo de 1984;
Roma, Mayo –Cartagena, Julio de 1984.

III

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