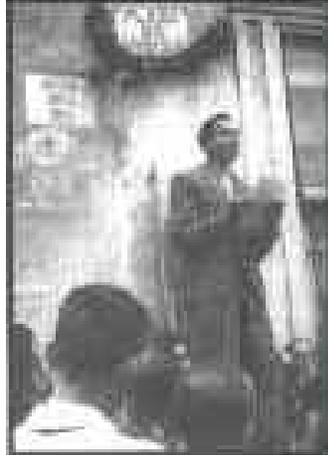


Miguel Hernández: Twenty Poems



*Hernández:
Selected Poems*

‘His face was the face of Spain.’

Pablo Neruda: Memoirs

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'You Threw Me A Lemon'

(IV: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

You threw me a lemon, so bitter,
with a hand warm and so pure,
that its shape was not spoiled,
and I tasted its bitterness regardless.

With that yellow blow, from a sweet lethargy,
my blood passed to an anxious fever,
feeling the bite of the tip
of a breast that was firm and full.

But on gazing at you and seeing the smile
that broke from you, at this acid act,
so different from my voracious malice,

my blood stood still, inside my shirt,
and became that porous and golden breast
a pointed and dazzling pain.

'Your Heart, A Frozen Orange, A Centre'

(V: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

Your heart, a frozen orange, a centre,
within, without light, of sweet juniper oil
and a porous appearance of gold: a surface
that promises danger to those who look.

My heart, a feverish pomegranate
of clustered blushes, and opened wax,
which might offer you its tender seeds
with an enamoured obstinacy.

Ay! What an experience of loss
to go to your heart and find a coldness
of irreducible and fearful snow!

Through the outskirts of my weeping
a thirsty handkerchief goes flying,
with the hope of one who might drink there.

'Because Of Your Feet, Where Your Beauty Ends'

(VIII: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

Because of your feet, where your beauty ends
in ten fragments of whiteness, more a dance,
a dove ascends to your waist,
an unending balm falls to earth.

Along with your feet goes the wonder
of nacre, in a ridiculous narrowness,
and where your feet go whiteness goes,
a dog sowing anklets of jasmine.

At your feet, as much foam as shore,
sand and sea reach me, and ebb from me,
and I try to enter the sheepfold of your sole.

I enter and let myself pass to your soul itself,
with the loving voice of the grapes:
trample my heart, now it's ripe.

'It Would Have Been Less Painful'

(IX: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

It would have been less painful if it had been
nard your complexion to my gaze, nard,
thistle your skin to my touch, thistle,
bitter-apple your voice to my ears, bitter.

Bitter-apple is your voice to my ears, bitter,
and I burn, in and around your voice, I burn,
and I'm slow to burn, what I'm slow to offer,
juniper oil, my voice for yours, juniper.

Briar is your hand, if I hold it, briar,
wave your body, if I reach for it, wave,
close to me once, yet a thousand times not close.

Heron is my pain, a slender sad heron,
alone like a breath and a cry, alone,
stubborn in its error and disgrace, stubborn.

'You Are Dying Of Purity and Simplicity:'

(XI: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

You are dying of purity and simplicity:
I am guilty, love, I'm confessing
that I, intrepid snatcher of kisses,
I sipped at the flower of your cheek.

I sipped at the flower of your cheek,
and since that glory, that event,
your cheek, so careful and serious,
droops, despoiled and sallow.

The ghost of that delinquent kiss
haunts your persecuted cheekbone,
always more obvious, dark and immense.

And you are sleepless, zealously
watching my mouth, with such care,
so nothing corrupts or outrages!

'I Have A Need For Your Voice,'

(XII: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

I have a need for your voice,
a longing for your company,
and an ache of melancholy
for the absence of signs of arrival.

Patience requires my torment,
the urgent need for you, heron of love,
your solar mercy for my frozen day,
your help, for my wound, I count on.

Ah, need, ache and longing!
Your kisses of substance, my food,
fail me, and I'm dying with the May.

I want you to come, the flower of your absence,
to calm the brow of thought
that ruins me with its eternal lightning.

'Do You Recall That Throat'

(XXI: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

Do you recall that throat, call up a memory
of former privilege, of that former matter
that was, almond-like, white and lovely,
an almond-flower of half-rotating cream?

I recall and do not recall that history
of ivory dying away into hair,
where the swans's neck learnt how to frown
and proclaim ephemeral snow.

I recall and do not recall that core
of choke-able feminine coldness,
like a brief and milky track.

And I recall that kiss without rest,
that stayed between my mouth and the path
of that neck, the kiss and the day.

'At The Outpouring Of Your Voice, Its Gentleness'

(XXV: From '*El Rayo Que No Cesa*')

At the outpouring of your voice, its gentleness
of honeyed mouth, and its pure swaying,
desire lays its roses in my earthly
hands, beside the customary fire.

Exasperated, I reach the summit
of your island breast, and surround it
with an ambitious sea, and the stamp
of exasperated petals of light.

But you defend yourself, with walls,
from the eagerness of my moods,
that drown you in oceans and lands.

For pure stone, indifferent, you keep silence:
to keep the silence of stone you pile, and pile,
more and more roses into my hands.

Elegy

(XXIX: From 'El Rayo Que No Cesa')

(In Orihuela, his town and mine, Ramon Sije, whom I loved so much, has died like lightning, he and I.)

Friend of my soul, I want to be
the tearful gardener of the earth
you occupy, and enrich, all too soon.

My grief without purpose feeding
the rain, the snail-shells and organs,
I'll give your heart for food

to the desolate poppies.
Such sorrow gathers in my chest,
that I mourn with painful breath.

A harsh slap, an icy blow,
an invisible, murderous axe-stroke,
a brutal thrust has felled you.

There's no expanse big enough for my hurt,
I weep for my misfortune and yours together
and I feel your death more than I do my life.

I walk on the tracks of the dead,
and without warmth from anyone, or consolation
I go from my feelings to my work.

Too soon death lifted in flight,
too soon the dawn broke,
too soon you're surrounded with earth.

No forgiveness for lovesick death,
no forgiveness for thankless life,
no forgiveness for earth or nothingness.

A storm rises, in my hands,
of rocks, lightning bolts, harsh axes,
thirsty and hungry for catastrophes.

I want to gnaw at the earth with my teeth,
I want to take the earth apart bit by bit
with dry, burning bites.

I want to mine the earth till I find you,
and kiss your noble skull,
and un-shroud you, and return you.

You'll return to my garden, my fig tree:
In the high trellises of flowers,
birdlike your soul, the hive

of angelic waxes and labours.
You'll return to the enamoured farm-hands'
ploughshares' lullaby.

You'll brighten the shadow of my brow,
and your girl and the bees will go along,
on both sides, arguing over your blood.

My eager voice of a lover
calls from a field of foaming almonds,
to your heart, already ruined velvet.

I summon you to the winged souls
of the creamy almond blossoms,
we've so many things to speak of,
friend, friend of my soul.

10th of January 1936

Final Sonnet

(XXX: From 'El Rayo Que No Cesa')

For un-feathering the glacial archangels,
the barbed-lily snowfall of slender teeth
is condemned to the weeping of fountains
and the sadness of well-springs.

For diffusing its soul into metal,
for the fire to grant its sunrise to iron,
the torrential blacksmiths' draw it
to the sorrow of harsh anvils.

To the painful sting of the thorn,
to the fatal discouragement of the rose,
and the corrosive action of dying,

I see myself given, and all this ruin
is for no other misfortune, no other reason
than loving you, and only loving you.

It Did Not Want To Be

(III: From '*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*'))

It did not recognise the meeting
of the he and she.

The blossom so enamoured
could not become flowery.

It stopped its senses,
refused discovery,
descended diaphanous
before light's clarity.

It saw tomorrow's cloudiness,
stayed, in yesterday's history.

It did not want to be.

'The Cemetery Is Near'

(VI: From '*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*'))

The cemetery is near
where you and I are sleeping,
between blue prickly-pears,
blue agaves and children,
who scream excitedly
if the dead darken the road.
From here to the cemetery, all
is blue, golden, clear.
Four paces, and the dead.
Four paces, and the living.
Clear, blue and golden,
my son there grows remote.

‘What Does The Wind Of Bitterness want’

(VIII: From ‘*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*’)

What does the wind of bitterness want
that it comes down the gully
and forces the windows
while I dress you in my arms?

To overthrow us, pull us down.

Overthrown, pulled down,
both our bloods receding.
What more does the wind want
more bitterly each moment?

To part us.

Waltz Of The Lovers Joined Forever

(IX: From '*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*'))

They never departed
the garden of embraces.
And round the red rose
of kisses they travelled.

Hurricanes wanted
to part them with rancour.
And sharp axes,
and bony lightning.

They added to a land
of pallid hands.
They measured cliffs
impelled by the wind
between molten mouths.
They delved through shipwrecks
their arms each time
deeper in their bodies.
Persecuted, drowned,
by a great helplessness
of memories and moons,
of November and March,
they saw themselves blown
like inconstant dust:
they saw themselves blown,
but always embracing.

'Like A Young Fig Tree'

(XI: From '*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*'))

Like a young fig tree
you were, on the cliffs.
And when I passed by
you rang in the mountains.
Like the young fig tree,
brilliant and blind.

Like a fig tree you are.
Like an ancient fig.
And I pass, and you greet me
with dry leaves and silence.

Like a fig tree you are
that the lightning has aged.

'The Sun, the Rose, and the Child'

(XII: From '*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*'))

The sun, the rose, and the child
were born the flowers of the day.
Things of every day
suns, flowers, new children.

Tomorrow I'll be no more:
someone else will be real.
I'll be no more, beyond
those who wish for their memory.

The flower of a day is tallest
at the foot of the smallest thing.
Flower of light, the lightning flash,
and flower of the moment, time.

Between the flowers you went.
Between the flowers I remain.

‘Love Ascended Between Us’

(XLI: From ‘*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*’)

Love ascended between us
like the moon between two palm-trees
that have never embraced.

The intimate murmur of our two bodies
made the cooing the sea-swell brings,
but the hoarse voice was stifled,
the lips turned to stone.

The yearning to encircle moved our flesh
illuminated our inflamed bones,
but our arms’ desire to reach out
died away in our arms.

Love and the moon passed between us
and devoured our lonely bodies.
And we are two ghosts who search
and find each other from afar.

The Mouth

(LXVI: From ‘*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*’)

Mouth that tugs at my mouth.
Mouth that has tugged at me:
mouth that comes from far off
to illuminate me with its rays.

Dawn that gives to my nights
a radiance, reddened and white.
Mouth inhabited by mouths:
bird filled with birds.
Song that flaps its wings
upwards and downwards.
Death reduced to kisses,
dying slowly to thirst,
you give the blood-stained grass
two great beats of your wing.
The upper lip is the sky,
and the earth is the lower lip.

Kiss that wheels in the darkness:
kiss that comes rolling
from the first cemetery
to the last stars.
Star that holds your mouth
dumb and enclosed,
until a celestial dew comes
to quiver your eyelids.

Kiss that moves to a future
of young girls and boys,
who won't leave the streets
or the fields empty.

How many mouth-less mouths
already buried we disinter!
I drink from your mouth to them,
toast them from your mouth,
as many as fell: over the wine
in their loving glasses.
They are memories, memories,
kisses distant and bitter.

I sink my life in your mouth,
I hear the murmurs of space,
and infinity seems
to have emptied itself over me.

I have to return to kiss you,
I have to return. I sink: I fall,
descending among the centuries,
towards the deep ravines,
like a feverish snowfall
of kisses and lovers.

Mouth that unearthed
the clearest dawn,
with your tongue. Three words,
you've inherited, three fires:
Life, Death, Love. There they remain
written on your lips.

'The Wild-Broom Crowned with Bay, Myrtle, Rose'

(LXX: From '*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*')
(LXX: From '*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*')

The wild-broom crowned with bay, myrtle, rose,
is the hero among us who faces the debris.
To free each thing without flight, from dust,
below, since it was palm tree and blue, of the sky.

Its sword's ardour young and joyful's unresting.
Thin with fear, purity, sunlight, courage,
the white lily that sweeps across the same grave,
is taller each time, is hotter, is purer.

Never! The wild-broom will never be crucified,
because youth recreates its skeleton,
which is a lone flute, dumb but sonorous.

It is a lone tongue, sublime and harmonious.
And before its quick breath the still dust flies,
and a palm tree, a pillar, climbs towards dawn.

Flight

(CXXXV: From ‘*Cancionero Y Romancero De Ausencias*’)

Only he who loves, flies. But who loves enough
to be like the slightest and most fugitive bird?
It goes eastwards sinking, commanding hatred, all that
might have wanted to rise again, direct and alive.

To love... But who loves? To fly... But who flies?
I will conquer the blue, eager for plumage,
but love, always beneath, is saddened
at not finding the wings that sure courage gives.

An ardent being, clear of desires, winged,
wanted to ascend, to have freedom in which to nest.
He wanted to forget that men move away in chains.
Where they lacked feathers put valour and oblivion.

Sometimes he flew so high, that the sky shone
over his skin, under his skin, the bird.
Being, you who were once confused with a lark,
others, like weights of hail, brought you down.

You know already the lives of the rest are flagstones
to cover you: prisons to swallow what's yours.
It passes, life, among bodies, behind bars of beauty.
Through the bars, the blood flows free.

Sad instrument happy to be worn: urgent
tube for desiring and breathing fire.

Sword devoured by constant use.
Body in whose closed horizon I unfold.

You will not fly. You cannot fly, body that wanders
through these corridors where the air is my knot.
No matter how hard you struggle in ascending, you are
wrecked.
You will not cry out. The field is what follows, deserted
and mute.

The arms do not flutter. Perhaps they are tail-feathers
that the heart wanted to launch into the firmament.
The blood is saddened at fighting on alone.
The eyes turn saddened from knowledge of evil.

Each city, sleeping, waking crazy, exhales
the silence of prison, of sleep that burns and rains down,
like a hoarse insect having no power to take wing.
The man lies down. The sky lifts itself. The air moves.

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