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by the English-speaking world, including poetry
from the Catalan, Galician and Basque languages!

ATLANTA



**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

REVIEW

SPAIN

Poetry from the Castilian, Catalan

Basque and Galician languages

Vol. IX, No. 2



Spring/Summer 2003

U.S. \$ 6.00
CAN. \$ 9.00
U.K. £ 5.00
AUS. \$12.00



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Volume IX, Issue Number 2

ATLANTA REVIEW

www.atlantareview.com

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Atlanta Review appears in April and October. Subscriptions are \$12 a year.
Free surface mail anywhere in the world!

Atlanta Review is distributed by Ingram, Media Solutions, Blackwell, and Ebsco.

Indexed in the *Index of American Periodical Verse*.

Submission guidelines: Up to five poems, with your name and address on each. Short fiction and nonfiction. Reproductions of black-and-white artwork. All submissions & inquiries must include a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. Issue deadlines are June 1st (Fall issue) and December 1st (Spring issue).

Please send submissions and subscriptions to:

ATLANTAREVIEW
P.O. Box 8248
Atlanta GA 31106

Visit our "Home Pond": www.atlantareview.com

© Copyright 2003 by Poetry Atlanta, Inc.

ISSN 1073-9696

Poetry Atlanta, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation in the state of Georgia.
Contributions are tax-deductible.

Atlanta Review is printed on acid-free paper by the Rose Printing Company.

Welcome

This issue is the culmination of a lifelong fascination with Spain. My freshman year in college I would go down into the basement stairwell and recite Garcia Lorca aloud, to enjoy the echoing resonance of his incomparable language. Senior year found me poring over yellowing Anarchist newspapers for my thesis on George Orwell and the Spanish Civil War. (If you haven't read Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, it's by far his most poetic book.) Orwell fought in the trenches to defend the Spanish Republic from the Fascist general Francisco Franco, and my only regret was that I was born too late to join him.

Spain has healed and emerged as one of Europe's most culturally vibrant democracies. Much of the world is still unaware, however, that modern Spain is home to a number of languages and cultures besides the dominant Castilian. These languages—Catalan, Galician, Basque—constitute a buried treasure of unique poetry which Steven Ford Brown unearths for your enjoyment in this amazing issue.

Just outside the borders of our Spain section (appropriately enough) is another Spanish language and culture that few are aware of. When the Inquisition expelled the Jews from Spain in 1492, the emigrant Jewish community held fast to a language and tradition that have survived to this day. This issue offers the rare treat of two modern-day *Ladino* poets, translated by Brenda Serotte. Spain's influence on the New World is acknowledged here too, as famed Latin American poet Jorge Luis Borges reflects on the culture of horse and rider that Texas shares with his native Argentina.

Next year is *Atlanta Review's* Tenth Anniversary! There will be a special treat in the first issue of Volume X. As a hint, I will just say that in the past ten years, *Atlanta Review* has brought you the poetry of every *inhabited* continent on earth. Alexander the Great may have bemoaned the fact that he had no more worlds to conquer, but not us.

See you then!

Dan Veach
Editor & Publisher

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Gulf Stream

Once, flying out of Miami, I saw the thin
surface we float upon, a film shaking
on a pudding, people like paramecia wriggling

under a microscope, blue canals like Queen Anne's
lace, intersecting, spread in a skein
over the flatlands,

and in the distance a green stripe,
the Gulf Stream sluicing through the ocean
heading north with its tropical memories,
its cargo of toucans and mangoes.

I remember, out there at sea level,
how dwarfed we are in the great expanse of waves
and floating currents, bubbles of sea foam
and the quick darting leaps flying fish take,
bright blue against the green.

Trolling for marlin in an unsteady boat,
the whole tableaux is drifting north, heading
towards snow and icebergs if we let it take us,

just a speck on the ocean's curved
hemisphere, like something out of Winslow Homer,
the desperate islander awash in the storm-tossed sea.

When on dry land in this city, when the tedium
of daily life, its entanglements,
press heavily upon me,

I think of the Gulf Stream, of its liberating
coils heading northward out to sea.

Ron De Maris

Bill Monroe Novena

One morning I woke up
and there he was: a tiny Appalachian man
tucked behind my ear
like a hearing aid tuned to the infinite,
like a sharpened pencil, awaiting news from the world.

He did not introduce himself. It was clear
he didn't care what color shirt I wore that day.
Crouched cross-eyed in the key of G,
his skittish mandolin easily mistaken for a tick,
he wanted to talk seriously
about the wishbone where two people meet,
about uranium poisonings in Paducah,
low ACT scores, car dealerships,
about property taxes and the insomniac science of loneliness
and how a little bit of everyone dies in Helena, Arkansas.

He said things. All I could do was listen.
It was as if a whole country pressed its grass-stained
lips to my ear, speaking
how mountains speak: posthumously
into the present,
crossing internal time zones, confounding clocks.
It wasn't enough to shave, eat breakfast
and go about my day with indifference.
I had to hear every leaf yawn,
every social security number gritting its teeth
over a human soul.

I ceased praying
with my hands, began praying with my whole body.
Memories deepened ten generations. Dead men

woke up beneath my tone-deaf tongue
and ate at the kitchen table with me.
None of this was miraculous; it was necessary.
Necessary, dim angels balanced
their celestial checkbooks on the back of my right hand,
that the sound of my voice became
a streetlight pollinating the night, dreaming aloud
the airconditioned names of cashiers and housewives,
pizza deliverymen, accountants, each daily stranger
like a sewing machine locked
in an abandoned
attic, humming the dark, hungry for thread.

Listen: in the evening,
beneath somnambulant sidewalks, a tiny man is whispering.

And whenever someone suffers, he begins to sing.

Kyle Thompson

Texas

Here too. Here, at the edge of another sea
and continent, there lies another new
and boundless plain where voices vanish and die. Here too:
the Indian, the lasso, and horses running free.
Here too: that secret bird whose sweet song glides
above the roar of historical time, reviving anew
the memory of a forgotten afternoon. Here too:
that mystic alphabet of stars which guides
my pen to scrawl these names from long ago,
still undisturbed by the labyrinth of time:
San Jacinto, and that second sublime
Thermopylae, the Alamo.
Here too: that strange, incomprehensible strife,
so brief, so anxious, that we know as life.

Jorge Luis Borges
translated by William Baer

Jorge Luis Borges the famed Argentine author, who wrote frequently
about gauchos and the pampas, also taught at the University of Texas.

Allusion to the Death of Colonel Francisco Borges (1835-1874)

At dusk, I leave him riding on his horse
looking for death. Of all the hours of his past,
this is the image that I'd like to last,
with both its triumph and its bitter remorse.
Solemnly, he moves across the terrain
his white horse and poncho approaching his fate,
while Death, patient in the rifles, lies in wait.
Sadly, Francisco Borges crosses the plain.
This is what surrounds him now: the rifles' roar;
this is what he sees: the endless plains.
This has been his life, it's what remains,
and this has been his place: in battles and war.
So high on his horse in his epic universe,
I leave him as he is, untouched, almost, by my verse.

Jorge Luis Borges
translated by William Baer

The Safety Zone

for Nate

It's where they send you
when the wind shifts—
clearing, road, river bed—
any place where running fire
won't engulf you.
So you tell me.

It's the first thing the foreman does
when you reach the black edge
where the crew will dig—
he stakes out a safety zone,
flags the escape route.
So you say.

You know this zone appeals to me,
quiets my she-wolf impulse
to seize by the throat
any beast that would hurt you,
even a pillar of flame.

For you, fire is work, pay, service,
thrill, a spooked mustang to corral,
a wild thing that can turn on you.

For me, fire is teacher,
a guru wrapped in orange robes,
circling my house of sticks,
searing away illusions
of safety zones,
of predicting the wind.

Karen Bashkirew

Dark Side of the Mountain

The sun is gone and the moon isn't
coming. Your father did not impress you

with what happens when you lose
track of time in this place. Put down

your shotgun; it won't help in the dark.
Press your back against a tree trunk.

This is the defeated hour when it's you
who wear the delicious flesh and feel

the silver chill of adrenaline each time
pine needles crunch. Conserve warmth,

think of a good song instead of the water
and granola you left in your truck.

We who live nearby heard your shouts
echo from the mountain at sunset.

We know exactly what happened.
Sifting on the deck with the neighbors,

we tell stories about waking up with
a mountain lion peering into the living

room window, and finding warm bear scat
near the garage, and our cats that

disappear. We can't find you tonight,
any more than you can make your own

way down. We call you a stupid kid
and leave the porch lights on.

Angela Armstrong

Clotheslines

From Ugljevik to the Lukavac railhead, Dobrnja to the Mostar bridge, deep in gypsy forests, riverbanks lined with burned-out carbodies, a confetti of trash, a convoy gunner swivels the barrel from metal to metal, standing in the chill wind flecked with drifting snow, and he sees clothesline after clothesline swaying heavy with dresses that are lifted by the breeze, in riffling hems, filled by a cool breath, soft cotton.

And from shoulder to shoulder those clothes hang, pensive, attuned, as if they are watching the road, as if they might remember U.N. peacekeepers driven out of Srebrenica, that safehaven fallen under Serb mortar and artillery attacks, or other times, or other places, the results being largely the same, buildings pockmarked by small arms fire, the crying, the muzzle-flashes of barrels aiming for the chest.

The gunner's thumb rests on a butterfly trigger, gently, there in the turret's hatch as they pass girls in the streets who are not curious to see his face, what is hooded over in a black balaclava, stung pink in the day's bright cold, whose eyes have not seen the horrors committed here, whose mouth cannot open and reveal the tips of bullets chambered in the heart and in the brain, who sees how tender and reverent the girls are, their small hands at the clotheslines, unfastening each shirt, holding each dress in their close embrace.

Brian Turner

From the Gunner's Turret

Bombed houses blur past like skulls made of brick, small children run out from their open doorways begging for candy, for colas, pens and water, saying *Hello* and waving souvenir money in their hands, as the gunner waves back shouting *Zdravo! Zdravo!* and the streets slide by, rough and broken.

The Sarajevo airport is not far off the highway, and the up-armored humvee swings down the road to see what damage there is. Here is where the Culture of Butmin was discovered in 1893, tools were dug up, domestic utensils, weapons, here is where they uncovered 90 urban settlements dating back to Neolithic times, 2400-2000 B.C. To have such history, the gunner thinks, to stand in the home of your blood thousands of years removed,

how could anyone make war, here, among their own, shelling the sacred, shelling an archeological find such as this, bombing the past into a second oblivion, as if to erase even the existence of history.

What will archeologists think hundreds of years from now, when they dig into the earth and discover body after body laid down together, the cruelty deciphered and carefully written down, debated and argued over, bones placed in sterile containers, tagged with numbers as evidence,

proof that there was great care and love in this country, in arms wrapped around one another, one shielding the other with the great cage of the body, skulls opened for all the fallen starlight and gravel they can hold, their mouths still speaking it.

Brian Turner

Walking on Glass

The mind rifles through the death
of a friend, tries to find bits of sanity, like

inching along in the bombed-out rubble
of a war-time church, where stone

walls lift ghoulish silhouettes against
a cloudy moon, and all those broken

windows have exploded their stained glass
inward, leaving beautiful shards scattered

across the cold floor.... Every step here breaks
more glass; shoeless, our feet bleed, showing us

where we've been as we sift through
jagged bits of color, trying to piece together

a face, a hand, the sleeve of a robe....

Kathy Kieth

Dandelion Gone to Seed

Not gone, really, but come
into your own, gaudy yellow
mellowed to fleecy white

as if snow had lain in your lining
all along. So here you are, though
surely I saw you yellow just yesterday,

slick, smug tines poofing like petticoats.
The universe pivots in just such arabesque.
At this juncture of boon and blight

you don your mime-white face.
Night has danced your hair
to air, so fragile my finger

could flick you into feathers.
A child could blow you back
to snow. I hold

you up and twirl
you gently, each silvery quill,
such ghostly grace.

Imagine a cloudburst at my fingertips,
its cool petals twizzling into echoes.
What color is the moment

no one ever sees, the ripe, raw instant
we are no longer what
we were? A blessing, then,

to shed our harder skins,
to pinwheel ourselves like tiny memories:
soft, secret, riding the wind.

Elizabeth S. Volpe

You, Muster Mark

by the tourneyold of the watterfalls
—Joyce

Someone hears
the sounds below the sounds
the frog breathing
the neighbor's heartbeat
the wiry black whine
of blueflies sleeping
the tiny silver shock
as thorns emerge on the rose
the delicate slurp
of drinking bumble-bees
and underneath all that
xylophonic fugues
as particles dance
in the center of the sunflower
in the glint of granite.

Lenore Mayhew

Song

Go on singing
yourself into being:
Glissando. Rose
mitosis in three-quarter
time. Your unheard
notes, already composed,
extend across
bone-staves
and hours.

Slide along, song,
under fretboard of ribs
above bridge of pelvis,
play the fine treble strings
of veins and pulse
harmonics in me,
campanella bell chimes
along my spine.

Lie with me now
a rest stroke on the wicker.
Can you sense the air
on my skin, tremolo
winds of July? To shiver
is to quake you.

I am the dark ground.
I listen for you, leaning
toward an earth-deep
inaudible bass,
chord's-floor
vibrating out of me,
out of future,
into your crescendo
of arrival.

Ellen Andolsek

The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting

Entangled hemp fibers, ax cuts, horse teeth—in this 17th

century Chinese guide,
brushstroke labels almost outpaint
the works themselves.

Small eddies
it prescribes for apricot foliage or,
for the ridged gleam
of a trout's fanned tail,
liquid rivulets. Engaging, these descriptions,
but they're hemmed

in by such a slew
of intricate instructions that, stifled,
the pupils' works are bound
to be interchangeable.

Where, then, the departure,
the discovery of contours
unknown, where the path
into your own, made
wilderness of ink?

In the Asian garden,
manicured to the last spore of moss,
a fountain churns

the central pool
stocked with minnows—minute tiers
of silver shimmer,
striated & tapered, none,
even in their gilt prismatic,
distinguishable

from the rest. & how
is their repeated flesh any different
from the rash facsimiles
this brushwork requires?

The manual, turns out, expounds
an art not of innovation
but of expanding

awareness. Know, that means, the caterpillars
that spun the silk

you paint on, the mulberry
on which they fed. Know what herbs
gave their only roots

to be ground
into this very ink. (Such spells of attention
meant to wrench you

from your frame
so you enter, for a few astonished
breaths, the scene

you're bent to capture.)
The pool's fish, at the merest shadow's
approach, veer at once

in a single multi-finned
feint, one reflex extended between
a dozen bodies.

Not a single one
could (or would ever want to) stand out.
& maybe—so foreign

to our cult of self-
gratification, our endless *I me mine*—
maybe *that's* the manual's

aim—to set aside,
for a moment, innovation & wear instead
grand anonymity.

Are you prepared,
a slick of bruised peach tipping
your brush, to be astounded
out of your skin?

Enough of this same old
making new.

Let these copper fins
lavish a familiar current, tread the same
ancient cascade

that plunges & spills,
as it must, & can never run dry.

Stephen Cramer

Concert with Two Guitars
Church of Santa Ana

No poem can hope to construct
the enclosed universe filled with light
 which perfect music
builds inside us
 like a cathedral.

The musician brushes his fingertips
across the strings. They vibrate
 the air and the place inside us
that is hollow
 and longs to be filled.

Like clouds on August afternoons
the notes continually rise and billow.
 Oh, the airy architecture
spun from wood and wire,
 the rose light through the windows,
the voices and the guitar!

Chris Cantu

“Soleares Gitanas”

to guitarist Manitas de Plata

Yours is a song of solitude and mountains,
as ragged as the rocks and passes where
it goes on feet as dusty as the ground and
twists away—a song that turns to air
(like smoke from sunburnt fires in the narrow
foothill corridors, where no one finds
the fire or the camp)—that, when we follow,
mounts a donkey.

 We can walk behind it
into barren country where your cry
mines the stony desert, and your hands
quarry silver from the desert stone.
But your lament, when once we understand
it, rides away without us—as alone
as if its coda is the empty sky.

Deborah Warren

Flamenco Dancer

Forget this Chicago night club.
The flamenco guitar strums
polyrhythms of the *cante jondo*,
the gypsy *cantadora* wails
a plaintive Andalusian "Aye..."
all the others clapping complex
constructs of the ancient music
of a race in motion across pain,
and we are in the clearing
of a deep wood in Spain,
a full moon rising behind
painted wagons.

Into the dim firelight
in the center struts the rover,
his back a strung bow,
and what will be released
from the stretched gut will
surely go where he aims.
A slow, deep lunge, muscles taut.
He is a hunter and we are his prey.
A spark from the campfire ignites his legs
as boot heels begin to blaze.
He claps,
he stamps,
he arches,
he snaps.
We are not breathing.

He is a fighting cock.
He is the crucified Christ.
He is a hawk soaring.
He is a pair of swans, their graceful necks
entwining in a slow dance of courtship.
He is a dervish, circling us into his holy trance.

He is that dark shouldered gypsy rover
about whom, in some form or another,
every mother has warned her daughter,
and about whom every young girl secretly dreams.

He is a grouse hen making spectacle
to lure a predator from her nest.
He is a peacock, the eyes in his tail wide,
chest puffed, neck extended.
He is the root of the sacred grove, upended.
He is a cobra rising to the charmer's pipe.
He is a Matador, daring the flared-nostriled bull
to charge. He is the charging bull.
He is a great ape,
pounding messages
on pectoral muscles,
on thighs.
He is a diamondback coiled and rattling,
ready to strike.
He is an egret flying silently into the night.
He is a stag rutting, magnificent rack
stroking the back of the willing doe.
He is a willful child
stomping his tantrum on the boardwalk.
He does not want to go.

He is seductress.
He is *machismo* on fire.
He is *duende*.
He is a panther surveying its prey,
poised for the pounce.
We are his dinner.

Maureen Tolman Flannery

Meditation at the Plaza Puerta de Moros

Evensong, the Plaza Puerta de Moros, frozen in time between light and dark, this moment and distant centuries. A crescent moon, glued to a steel-blue sky, appears where the sun recently passed. Alone at a sidewalk table, I observe the evening seeping into the oldest buildings of Madrid, and absorb the darkening *muralla* of an ancient monastery, erected after the Moors were driven out, the sound of echoing Gregorian chant now wafting through the twilight air. The sixteenth-century walls loom above the plaza in their Catholic posture of power and mystery, and where monks once scourged their backs with whips, children play tag on the broken steps, while men in collared shirts and slacks play soccer in a corner of the lamplit square. As usual, I observe the night with silent mental scribbling, always striving toward something. Unlike Spaniards, Americans are always striving. No three-hour *siestas*, no all-night *veladas*: they do not benefit industry. So I've come to Spain to be stationary, to learn to breathe the same air twice, to see the leaves tremble and fall, to eat the fruit without pruning for next season's harvest, to witness all mistakes without correction, to learn to live, more or less, without stealing someone else's time.

Filled with the song of cloistered monks, tonight I refuse my cultural inclination—relentlessly, forever striving. I will strive only to sit and contemplate the harmonious chant, the *café con leche* I sip, or if I must, the moon, where a star brightens ten fingers above the upper horn. Yet how suggestive, the sky at this late unknown hour, still showing twilight in the west. Spaniards live among symbols, I'm told, and here the pace emanates from ancient stones, like the solemn melody drifting across the square. And here life's fretful ambition seems ridiculously grimaced, like a Jester *carnaval* mask, pointless in its masquerade of prestige. To escape I've tried wine, and yes, there's poetry, and someday, since I must, "easeful death," unless Keats' timeless nightingale lies of infamous tender nights.

Of course, my friend, till then—I cannot. This is the season of wanting, and my culture's pulse beats ambition, as I fret over time I came momentarily to forget, the keyboard that waits in the *pensión* up the stairs, before empty satisfying sleep, obsessed over the right

word, like the bum the pennies in his cup, or the parachutist the proper fold of cloth. An American to the end, or like Sisyphus, humping words up a hill, a life exerted towards one recurring task, for which my whole being must strive, in full view of the peril, all that endless exertion towards the final consummation of nothing.

Mario René Padilla

Imagine This

My mouth fills with birds flapping
wings colorful as orange
green red parrots
squawking on Las Ramblas;

you remember the ones
sold near the mimes, hopping
as nimbly as
we crossed each other's boundaries

in those days when
our walls were low, and
you lounged on the promenade
with my head and the setting sun

in your lap; Spanish spices turned
streets, trains, your body
hot—melting steel columns,
transforming the architecture of

my rational heart; redesigning
the old construction, replacing
the façade. No longer
isolating precious space,

the new structure resembles
a Calatrava creation, an arching
curving spanning surging bridge,
a building-bird soaring toward

your Mies-inspired pavilion, where
objects breathe in the liberating
lack of ornamentation;
no words

softly whispered in Barcelona
while we fell in love with
Galician octopus, *jamón*, the Barri Gotic;
so many impressions to carry home, but

the idea of being your woman
is the memento I cradled across the Atlantic,
the picture in the frame, the postcard on the desk;
you would panic to hear the ways I've changed, so

I keep my lips tightly pressed, chew
feathers threatening to escape.

Michele Rosenthal

The Binding of Isaac

In the silence of my heart,
The tribunal of my prayer,
I ask You:
Who were You testing
When You put Your beloved
Nation, those who observe,
Those who remember,
Between the *auto de fe* of the West
And the ovens of the East,
Where the fires burned
Awaiting the sacrifice
Of Your Chosen People,
Bound
On the altar of the world?

My little ones were consumed
My body, burned
My faith, tried
Because of one missing letter, the "s"
Between my God, *Dio*,
And their *Dios*.

Adir Huerta
translated from the Ladino
by Brenda Serotte

Ladino the language spoken by the former Spanish Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492, during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.

auto de fe sentence handed down by the Spanish Inquisition.

My Heart is a Beautiful Citron

My heart is a beautiful citron
wrapped up in cotton,
hidden within Your rooms.
My heart is a citron.

My heart is asleep.
Outside, your Law spreads far and wide
but the heart sleeps in its chambers.
In its dreams it is a citron
between orchards of myrtles
and gardens of spices.

Suddenly, Your grace shines upon me, my God,
Your Law is bestowed within.
My heart awakens,
the citron opens,
and Your pure light reaches me.

Desire tightens within me,
my heart longs to come near
to the orchard of holy apples,
to sing Your praises clear.

Avner Perez
translated from the Ladino
by Brenda Serotte

Ghazal for Lorca's Grave

the train rumbles across the bridge
above the black flowers of crows

and the skin of a coyote is draped
over a barbed wire fence

and the Andalusian ponies are eating
straw under the decapitated trees

leave me alone with the green moon
and silver grasses and the buried coins

leave me here with the anguished ferns
black and bent over like nuns in prayer

I listen to the fields
sobbing under the storm clouds

where this one fireweed has grown
out of the dark stubble—a stalk of flame

Michael Spring

18 Contemporary Poets

from

SPAIN

edited by

Steven Ford Brown

AT A CROSSROADS: POETRY FROM THE NEW SPAIN

Spain has always been a country geographically poised between East and West, and, after Columbus, between the Old World and the New. With a culture that traces its origins to Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Spain has long served as a unique bridge between cultures.

Once a world power, Spain by the beginning of the twentieth century was a weakened country. With its defeat and the loss of its last colonies in the Spanish-American War of 1898, Spain entered an era of decline it would not emerge from until the death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. The major event of this period was the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), which erased an entire generation of its most talented poets: Federico Garcia Lorca, assassinated in an olive grove in Granada; Miguel Hernandez, the beautiful shepherd boy turned poet, dying of tuberculosis in Franco's prison; Antonio Machado, dying of heartbreak in Colliure, a French village just across the Pyrenees where he had fled from Franco's armies. The story was the same everywhere: an entire generation of Spanish intellectuals now dead, imprisoned or in exile. Some of them regrouped in Paris or fled to Mexico and the United States. With the rise of Franco's dictatorship, Spain's spirit and its poetic heart were broken.

By the end of the war there were one million Spaniards dead and another million in Franco's jails. Spain became a gulag of spectacular proportions for almost half a century. Regional languages and cultures were repressed. The poets of the early part of the century, regardless of region, background or culture, had to write in Castilian, the official constitutional language of Spain. Even though a poet like Blas de Otero (1919-1972) was Basque by birth and temperament, he wrote and published in Spanish. Although some continued to write and publish in regional languages, most of the prominent writers from the minority cultural regions, in order to have an audience, were forced to inhabit the official Spanish language. With the political and cultural autonomy statutes enacted in the 1970s and 80s, younger generations of Basque, Catalan and Galician writers, some having already established literary reputations in the Spanish language, could return to writing and publishing in their native languages.

The second largest country in western Europe, modern day Spain is the result of a history that includes the interplay of invasion, conquest, settlement, and assimilation. The residue of ancient cultures

is everywhere in contemporary Spain—from its dramatic castles and architecture to its poetic traditions and the languages spoken in its geographic regions. Four major languages are used in modern day Spain: Castilian Spanish (28 million), Catalan (6 million), Galician (3 million) and Basque (600,000). Beginning in the 1970s and through the 1990s the Spanish government created the statutes of political and cultural autonomy for the regions that freed them from the oppression of the “official” Spanish language and culture and allowed them to conduct their governmental and cultural business in their native languages.

The result of Spain's unique history is a diverse contemporary poetic voice that is unique in western literature. This small collection of poets is certainly not the authoritative word on happenings in the literary community of Spain today. The community is too rich, varied and multitudinous to be captured in a snapshot of 60 pages. If anything, this collection is merely a visitor's postcard from a meandering journey through a vast country with many spectacular literary vistas.

This anthology of poets from Spain is very much a product of the Internet Age. I performed most of my research, correspondence and exchange of manuscripts online throughout the various regions of Spain. Thus my blizzard of e-mails descended on the Spanish countryside as well as various academic research centers and institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom. In one instance I tracked a Basque writer from a small private college in western Massachusetts to the University of Nevada (in Reno there is a research center for Basque culture) to New York City to Paris to various locations in the United Kingdom (imagine here your trusted correspondent chasing a Basque writer through the English countryside with a butterfly net!). After an exhaustive search—and the daily despair of seeing a face and name everywhere on the internet but not being able to find him anywhere in the real world—I finally had my writer!

From Madrid to Barcelona to the Basque country, manuscripts streamed into my computer via e-mail. The Basque Writer's Association in Donostia-San Sebastián, the Catalan Writers Association in Barcelona, British expatriate writer Matthew Tree (also in Barcelona), Jill Adams at the *Barcelona Review*, Amanda Schoenburg in Costa Rica (who had done interesting work with Catalan writers in the late 1990s), Amaia Gabantxo in Norwich, United Kingdom, and Elizabeth Macklin in New York all provided leads, assistance—and sometimes

translations of poets—for this issue. Thus in the same way contemporary culture and life are various, overwhelming, and random, this issue was put together.

Virtually all of the names included here will be new to American readers of contemporary poetry. Although Allen Ginsberg translated a few poems by Carlos Edmundo de Ory in the 1960s, he is unknown to American readers. From Barcelona, I just heard that Miguel Martí i Pol—beloved as their more urban version of Robert Frost—has been the subject of a petition by 400 city councils in Catalonia to nominate him for the Nobel Prize in literature. Bernardo Atxaga is the first Basque writer to establish an international literary reputation, although primarily as a novelist. Pere Gimferrer, one of the best known of the *Novismos*, or the Venetian School—as poets of his generation are often now referred to in literary circles—also has been whispered as a candidate for the Nobel Prize.

Beginning in the 1960s, American translators began to turn their gaze from Spain to Latin America. The result is that very few translations of Spanish writers—not to mention Basque, Catalan, or Galician—have been published in English in recent years. Thus today in Spain the various contemporary schools of literary thought, the cultural and aesthetic shifts that distinguish one regional poetry from another, the literary rebellions against the established canon, remain hidden from view to readers in English.

When one thinks of Spain it is usually of the romantic images of Ferdinand and Isabella, the poems of Federico Garcia Lorca, the towering mountains of the Pyrenees or the sunny Mediterranean Costa del Sol, dark gypsies and the fiery flamenco, the Barcelona of Gaudí, or the lyrical guitars of Sabicas and Nino Ricardo. To this portrait, to these images, perhaps this small collection of poets adds a new window on contemporary Spain.

Steven Ford Brown
Boston, February 2003

Miguel Anxo Fernán-Vello (Cospeito, Lugo, 1958-)

August Afternoons

Afternoons of burning resin and coal and swan,
boiling of glass and salt;
afternoons of a star and its waves, moving in and out of hours,
fervor of mud and beach, white profile of breeze.
Afternoons tied to a root, to a star,
among thick banners of south,
hot syllables of chalk and kiss
inside the flame, inside
flesh burned by wind.
This anchored August of light
is like a slow fish that swims deeper into the blood,
sole astonishment of dawn that becomes trees in time.
These August afternoons that burn in phosphorous and sea foam,
living flowers of wax in the day's transparent oven.
Boiling again in the city are a thousand mirrors and eyes
within eyes, angles
of iron and silk, biting the bonfire of air.
Afternoons of sun, stone and clean embers,
edges consumed until they are a still light on the horizon.
Afternoon like a dry animal in the mouth and curves of dust and nickel,
thick bonfire, burnt machine,
brilliant streets that taste like lamps and sand.
August afternoons, afternoons of skin and deer and fiber,
the center of summer between land and sea.
In the blood-madness, the fire's blue sex,
the heart without shade, alive with a spell of joy
illuminating the body,
the spiral of water and light you can drink from eyes,
here, in the happy center of time,
in this trembling clarity that incessantly announces
the distance and the oblivion of death.

The Photographer's Position

The streets slowly keep dreaming another light,
like a resplendent river that passes into winter.
And thoughts conform to some inner sense of touch;
angles that tremble with clarity,
sky that exhales the sole hour of blue glass.

Perspective is now desire, abyss, silence.

The eye petrifies transparency's color.

This is the instant that illuminates breath within body.
The head discovers the secret of its roots,
the unforeseen soul pulsing in memory.

Later, the streets become the landscape's motionless echo,
another light, born in the intimate latitude of time.

Plaza at Dusk

The trees slowly drink the sky's light.

Distance, growing silent in the air, highlights its profile of shadow on stone. This limit marks the rose-colored rule of the afternoon's suspended glass, the trembling street corners that extinguish their hardness in the hours' dissipated heart. A line of shadow crosses the eyes and silence discovers a space where a fresh star announces what the night exhales.

Meanwhile, in the bazaars of golden lamps, in the hot taverns fragrant with new wine, in the shops with electric names, words hurry forth as if a strange sense were dividing its echo between daylight and shadows.

The trees slowly drink the sky's light.

The miracle of wind stops and now a tide fills the plaza, its sleepwalking heart, the diluted spiral of the voices that the afternoon had suspended, filled with wings.

Now all thought has stopped: empty monologue of time, motionless photograph of the soul.

Farewell

On the straight avenue where buildings possess
the sky's light and the reason of glass,
the wind crosses dusk's horizontal hour.

At the end, behind the blue chaos of the urban heart,
the sea burns in winter's shattered mirrors.

This city is an untied miracle in the air.

This cold light that wounds memory
and suddenly illuminates the blood
knows my destiny.

Here, on this straight avenue that goes to the sea to die,
the long burn of solitude shines now.

Will some part of this beauty be mine?

What pity is there beyond life
that bleeds to death now
when I lift my arm with infinite sadness
and the taxi appears
like that ashen mystery I already carry in my soul?

*translated from the Galician
by Steven F. White*

Carlos Edmundo de Ory (Cádiz, 1923-)

Silence

No one's here I'm alone with the violin of silence
Silence is a murmuring crystal rain
In the silence you can hear the slow steps of a madman
pacing back and forth all alone in a bedroom
I've lost my fingers inside an infinite piano...
A phantom piano inside my heart
Silence, silence! I believe silence
is an angel listening to God speak
In silence you can hear the autumn leaves falling
You can hear waves and kisses and the magician of time
in his chariot of hours with silk wheels
on a beach humid with laughter and pain
An angel's tongue my heart soaked
in the water of silence with no rhyme nor reason
it wants to sing just like God was singing
Today God's feet trample my green heart

In the rainy afternoon a sexless woman
a woman of air and mist drifts I go
towards her and she doesn't exist I only see her eyes
and her mouth and hair But she doesn't exist
No one's there I'm alone My soul is a giant bow
that goes with the violin of silence in a sky of love
I go to the window... It's still raining Still...
A bitter woman weeps tonight out of
divine nostalgia for something distant
The rain in the night becomes a blossoming guitar

There is no moon tonight... I'll build the moon when I die

Poem

I can't hear death when it's in my pencil
It's too far away from my gut
My hair is the closet thing I've got
Death doesn't own me

Talk about death bores me
It has nothing serious to offer me
I'm not interested in such unrefined language
It is true that my soul understands Arabic

Denise

When I run my metal hands
my unskilled primitive hands
through your thick hair where your body
begins breathing in mortal love

When my fingers touch your whole
height from your feet to your head
with a steady pulse I love each
extravagant piece of your carnal self

Then out of the pure friction and stillness
your liquid gaze engulfs me
and your feminine silence sets me ablaze

With sudden action I am transfigured
I reach down and touch your slip
I undress you and love you and it's getting late

*translated from the Spanish
by Steven J. Stewart*

Ana Maria Fagundo (Tenerife, Canary Islands, 1935-)

The Nineteen

*Case 246/1936, January 23, 1937
To my uncle Tenesol, who was executed on
January 23, 1937, while my only sister was being born*

Time wished to place in my hands
a paper, a sentence, a piece
of the past that had slept among files.

(Nineteen names, nineteen men,
nineteen youths condemned to death.)

It is my infancy that evokes the sweet and sour thistles
of that January dawn:

My grandmother who shrieks her harsh cry,
my mother who opens with grieved love
her bowl of surrender to the white clouds,
my sister who is born to her first grief.

(Nineteen names, nineteen men,
nineteen youths condemned to death.)

Not even men, still children,
whose clear eyes are pure sunlight,
whose smooth bodies sing of life,
whose noble hands ask for pity.

Nineteen sons lie shot, lie shot
against the wall.
Their mothers shriek and search for their forms,

they lick with caresses their spilled blood,
they wish to again be lap and lullaby.

The winds of fifty Januaries have passed
and this childhood vision insistently returns,
and is repeated exactly, punctually, painfully
even though I deny it its shadow in my sun.
The paper says in plain type:

“Condemned to death: Jose, Domingo,
Marcos, Modesto, Vicente... Tenesol”

Childhood returns harsh and ominous
with its sharp arrow of black anger,
to my present room filled with light and chimeras
and submerges me again in the old vision:

Nineteen men lie shot against
a wall on a clear day.

*translated from the Spanish
by Susanna Cavallo*

Angel Gonzalez (Oviedo, 1925-)

If You Composed...

If you composed
your thoughts, if you could
just stop and think,
look around, feel the things
you pass through,
maybe
it would be easy to recognize
faces, I don't know, places,
people
who would speak and understand your language.

If you could
find a place to throw yourself
face down, to close
your eyes,
and look, slowly, inside your
life,
perhaps
it would be easy to learn
something, to understand
the places you want
to go, where you come from,
what you're here for,
what your name is.

But time doesn't exist,

and you're always in a hurry:
there's no room for you even in the open places
you live in,

tears
can come suddenly, light falls
into shadow—it's almost

winter,
autumn turns into rain and cold—
no one is looking your way, go on,
hurry

your weary body needs
rest,
it's night already,
run,
no, not here either,
but you've got to get there, don't
stop,
go on searching,
move, walk.

Here, Madrid, 1954

Here, Madrid, nineteen
fifty-four: a man alone.

A man filled with February,
greedy for luminous Sundays,
making for March step by step,
towards the March of wind and red
horizons—and the recent spring
already on the verge of a rainy April...

Here, Madrid, among streetcars
and reflections, a man: a man alone.

—May will come later, then June,
July after that, and, finally August—

A man faced with a year of nothing
and his boredom with everything.

*translated from the Spanish
by Steven Ford Brown*

Olga Novo (Vilarmao, Galicia, 1975-)

Intimate Liquid

with my skin you can graft the apple trees.

some still bear the stretched names I engraved with a knife
every afternoon on my way back from school.

I pull at a poem like at a calf
when its legs appear,
when one is not at an age to grow
all maturation requires a tearing of tendons
it is then herds of goats run over my chest
going nowhere,
they climb to the walls from which I see you,
with their tongues they tear at the pasture as you depart.

the touch of your violins makes me cry terribly.

and I can hardly stand the caress of your hands
like the wool of sweaters my mother made when I was a child.

but with my skin
with my skin you can graft the apple trees.

Cavendish

I have a craving for lettuce broth the silo the fodder and the tool
that will pull my heart out onto the surface of this bed of yellow turnips
to gnaw at the oxygen.

only from the acacias are iambic lines made my aunt also made them
with a Singer machine and granny Benigna with a huge spinning wheel
but I don't, I don't know how to do them anymore.

in me hedgehogs stir in the place where people have their ganglia
what will become of me.

Cavendish calculates the electrodes how I give myself away
and his theorem based on my hypersensitivity makes
the leaves
fall
this autumn.

I look at the hoes I look at my ring
and my hair grows at a parallel time like any nocturnal flower
of the flesh.

Cavendish makes beautiful figures of my life of high voltage
he knows about the alternating currents and the formula of the speed
I dedicate to love
through time and space.

I am his perfect cipher to demonstrate nuclear fusion in a finger
that caresses
in a gesture or simply by the voice, by the fact of existing
I am that cipher.

But only from the acacias are iambic lines made my aunt also made them
with a Singer machine and granny Benigna with a huge spinning wheel
but I don't, I don't know how to do them anymore.

I only look at the hoes at the hedgehogs that I have instead of ganglia
and I pull my heart to the surface to gnaw at the oxygen
and I pull my heart to the surface without fear
ready to be eaten for the last time
by the kiss of Cavendish.

*translated from the Galician
by Ingrid Martinez-Rico*

Cavendish Henry Cavendish (1731-1810), British chemist and physicist
who established that water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen.

You Have So Little

You have so little:
a table and a few books,
a longing for her, far away
but still remembered,
and this silence, thick
with unsaid words.
If now you write, sheltered
by so much melancholy,
you'll get lost on the paths
of a benign sadness,
your voice will become
fearful and sickly
and in every word you'll think
you're losing a piece of life.
Let it be. Outside
the evening is quiet.
Walk. There are people
to keep you company.
Don't reject any horizon that calls you.
When you return, everything will be
more sensible and fitting.
You won't have forgotten anything
—he who forgets is not more free—
but your hands will be full
of refreshing light.

Autobiography (1965-66)

From my mother's womb
—as they say in the books—
I went directly to the factory.
And I felt desolate and lonely
when they gave me my smock.

The first few days I cried in corners
and the din of the machines
rang in my head
for twenty-four hours.

It was a hard way to grow up,
I admit.
But now my hide is as hard
as the rest of them,
I have left behind all that might
remind me of the years of effort
and I await in peace the time to return
to the bosom of the earth
—as they say in the books.

Now I Often Think

Now I often think if things
had gone the way we wanted
maybe we'd have new fuchsias
in a sunny patio, and the deep blue
of the open sea in the distance.
My skin would be darker
and on winter evenings I'd bring you
bouquets of words to adorn the silence.
Playfully I think of Sunday afternoons
and wicker rockers that make the hours
go slowly by, and of a tree by the window.

The world we had once imagined
is so small and so dense, it stops
the fall of time and even retains,
like an old amphora, an ancient past
of dreams and marvels.
Words are so docile at times
they shatter in our fingers and the wind
scatters their magical crumbs about.

Now I often think of that absent world I haven't lived and
it pains me: the white house and the patio, and you, and
the books, and the silence.

from *Twenty-seven Poems in Three Tempos*

1

Look at me carefully: I'm the other one.
Lame in both legs,
sullen and solitary.
I come from nowhere
and I write to survive.
I wear out paths
because I don't know shortcuts.
I resume old customs.
If only I could, I would lie
on the edge of open fields
with dark-skinned girls.
But I've grown up
and somebody has filled my blood
with broken glass.
Look at me carefully: I limp.
I have only my voice
to speak for me.
I pour out words
and the words purify me.

I shall emerge from myself the day
a land breeze
dries my eyes.
The fiery swords are others
in this struggle of mine
that keeps me standing
against my fears and dreams.

Look at me closely,
Look at me well: I'm the other one.

*translated from the Catalan
by John L. Getman*

Ana Rosetti (San Fernando, Cádiz, 1950-)

The Most Beautiful Night

Alfonso Maria de Ligorio tells
how the devil, astute and seductive,
used the delicious stimulant that dance creates
to occupy the senses,
used unwary and bewildered maids, in the delirium that leads to the abyss.
That irresistible owner of the night,
and his opulent castings of the net: no woman declined
to lose herself in his arms.
It was, after all, the eighteenth century:
to the blurred beauty of the lost angel
add brocade, stockings like cresting waves
on his delicately curved calf,
arrogant heels and smooth wig,
his weightless hands, like lilies,
barely emerging from the abundant lace sleeves
and the brash beauty mark guarding his smile.
It's easy to understand how any woman, eager and enchanted,
from ripe young ones to grave family matriarchs,
all of them, who would attend a dance,
dizzy, with their cleavage in plain view,
would swoon into oblivion.
...Oh, sweet negligence!...
In the boudoir's most hidden place,
she's tender and dazed: against her will, she left
her holy medallion and her golden *stop, please stop.*
It was, after all, the eighteenth century.

My Keeper

The Salamander is desire
drinking the topaz of a lake
in Giotto's skies,
in the moist vaults of translucent ivy.
Mulberry and vine wilt in your hand.
Desire is a horse,
crazed by fear, below a torrent of water,
a waterfall where the rainbow explodes,
a spoiled braid between falling stones.
Your arm shields my waist
and exceeds itself like beauty, mercurial
shipwreck of vines that climb the cedar,
suffocating it, since desire is penetration and wound.
My passion overflows in your body,
a whole shield in sweet melting honey,
and your effort is in vain: not even the most deadly
laurel can stop an enamored lip.
You can no longer keep an angelic tessera intact
in its supreme dominion.
Let my emotion trim this great cypress
in an elegant park
and contemplate the abyss from the railing
without getting dizzy.
Cruelty that drops you to your knees, that's desire.
And I surrender myself to its sword, and I don't want to flee
its teeth.
Stay away from me! I don't want you to keep me,
or hold back tears and gardens in my body.
And before all your complaints stoke my scorn,
before the warnings of my wrath, let this fall on your lips
as diligent fire, as pleading grenade:
the delicate death of me forgetting you.

*translated from the Spanish
by Dan Sheff*

Rafael Guillén (Granada, 1933-)

I Won't Go Back to Paris
(Paris, 1996)

*Because time is already other and it's not possible
to live again what time has disordered.*

—Limites

I won't go back to Paris. This shimmering
light of the boulevards was only created
for one moment of splendor in the rain.
Tomorrow will be another light in another time
and the branches that rustle their springtime greenery
will do so in another air.
And that distant syncopated sax won't sound
from the same place. That woman in red
won't repeat again her pensive
gesture of posing just so, unsure
about the exact time of her date.
A cloud will overshadow the brash resplendence
of that gilded statue, and there's no way
that tomorrow's puddles will
faithfully reflect the same mute sequence
of faces that pass by without seeing themselves.

Paris is the impossible confluence
of successive splendors. A field
where the light celebrates its major battles,
and today's love will never exist again.
—Why seek a stopping place in the always moving scene? —
And if today isn't what will live on for my eyes,

why return in vain
one time or a thousand times to my passion of
what will be "then," where at age twenty
those floundering years held such obscure and radiant
fearful palpitations, with the rich
bewilderment of mystery or discovery?

I won't go back to Paris, although some day
I may return. The clouds will drift along
over grey roofs that don't understand their games.
The ambience will be festive, and along the Seine
everything still passes by like a romance in the black
and white tones of antique postcards.
We go on dying in the midst of what we loved;
a wispy haze clouds the eye-like mirroring
of the arches under the bridge.
Barges go by, plowing through the leaden
reflections of afternoon
in waters that will never be the same
and the rocks, still present in a different past
can sense me here today and look me over
with their centuries-old expression which I bear
expectantly as the rain
begins again, but they don't know me.

On the Matter of Taxis

I'll wait for you again on the same desperate corner. Through the mounting racket come and go red autobuses and blackened taxis that, even occupied, slow down only a second before disaster. The blinking stoplight turns the waiting into a cartoon film.

These taxis are made with the stuff of loneliness, of rushed kisses, words left hanging, of quick goodbyes, and heads that keep turning as though begging for help. Every taxi shuttles back and forth weaving its silken cocoon through the streets, wrapping its butterfly in the taut threads of a city that, wailing, winds around it.

Why must desire wait its turn? Steady rain blinks on and off with the flashing neon of Piccadilly and the tires on the wet asphalt make a sound like an enormous skin is being flayed. All the exhaustion of the rush has sunk into the stained seat cushions of the taxis, whose fated destiny is to arrive only to come back again.

The taxis feed on cigarette butts, on slick portfolios, eyeglass frames, on funeral wreaths, perfumed gloves, disgusting handkerchiefs and forgotten umbrellas. The taxi driver's horizon is reborn with the daylight, populated by clinics and surgeries, and bordered by signs and signals that drag him dashing from one business to another.

Where will love escape to if it doesn't show up for our appointment? A slow ooze of drops trickles down a ridge of the lantern that comes on at night. A hacking cough breaks out very close to my scarf and the wind sics its dogs of cold on me. And more taxis pass by without stopping, like other nights, like all the nights of my life.

At dawn, when the taxis are finally alone, the shabby upholstery hugs itself, stained with a few old tracks of semen or tears.

Ballad for an Invisible Man

If a woman brushes past him
in the street, a flush
rises in him all the way
to his throat. Overhead,
a dense mist obscures
the verdigris of the cupolas
and the people lose themselves
in their daily tasks. The expression
in his timeless eyes
grows transparent, pallid
with a customary fear.
Laughter is heard, and his
invisible arm points out
the solemn statues of heroes. If
someone pronounces the word
"liberty" a kind of lightheadedness,
as if from wine or maybe
from extreme youth clouds
his pathetic nonexistence.

The Danube is no longer blue.
At times, from the suspension
bridge, can be seen
something like a reflection
of blood beneath the water.

*translated from the Spanish
by Sandy McKinney*

Dolors Miquel (Lleida, 1960-)

Drumbeat

The rib cage of the skeleton of the poem
cannot withstand
this our Zulu, Bantu heartbeat.
Blood floods through our temples.
The word turns into the cold palm of a hand.
The verse hugs the root of your fly.
I am a vaginal poem.
You are a poetic rod.
This is love. The Seine knows it.
I can't speak.
I can't say anything.
My tongue is paralyzed in your mouth.
I am an animal roosting in your mouth.
I am an animal thirsting for the water of your mouth.
All the world is for the sweet building up of Us into the One.
Ancient drumbeats in the jungle of veins.
The skeleton of the poem cannot withstand such pressure.
It weakens without being or not being.
I have no voice left.
You are well and truly mine.
You and I know it. This is love.

Nordic Yamaha

This man was a motorbike.
I asked him to tell me about himself
and he told me about his motorbike
a Yamaha several hundred and something,
the kind all my students dream about.
Afterwards I talked to him some more
—It's interesting to converse with a motorbike—
I told him my car had broken down
and my father had one foot in the grave.
He was worried about my car.
He said: Tell me all about your car
I haven't got a bastard clue about cars.
So I talked to him about life.
I don't know how I managed to bring up a subject
that had so little petrol in it.
My reply put him off
especially given that the temperature was
several degrees below zero
in that icy country he was riding through.
I fitted onto his Yamaha just fine
and he knew how to work the accelerator
feeling my breasts against his back
my breath, the diesel chemistry.
The words traveled over 10,000 km.
until the answers braked sharply.
A break-down. Something minor.
My father didn't die, after all.
The death foreseen happened to someone else.

Wood with Boar

Swallow the wave of my Aubergine Wolf,
right now on my fingernails are wild mushrooms
for your boar's lips, delicacy of the wood's Autumn.
My apple is searching for the mouth of its pig
in the oven of the lust of ethereal love.
I have disappeared under the invisible mantle of your damp solitude,
your embrace is a fire of leaves,
my fire is an embrace of trunks.
I am your stomach pierced by the bullet of life,
I am the gun barrel that wants your soul under the full pressure of the cells,
they are a wild stampede of verses.
We will mark our soul with the mystic hoof and we will be mud.
Right now at my feet the wild fruit
for your lips which suck down to the root of the soul.
Because we have found the soul in the body and the body in life.
And we laugh at death, who is playing with children under our window.
And this discovery astounds us so much that it stops us doing so.
We are so excited by this find that we are afraid we will disintegrate
and fall into the hands of the nanny of the unbeings.

*translated from the Catalan
by Matthew Tree*

The Train

He was never really sure why he had taken that train. He didn't remember the beginning or the station that was undoubtedly decorated, like all stations, with an endless array of literary references: poems in which an anonymous writer raises a hand to trace the air with the figure of an impossible embrace, shared pain, an uncanny metaphor for arrival, the obsessive habit of waiting for someone who doesn't want to be waited for, the simple colors of longing. He had truly forgotten the beginning of the trip.

He tried to remember the train's silhouette. He wanted to rescue it from oblivion, to contemplate something besides the sketches and designs the railroad company had placed in the corridors to give the sensation it was fashionable in such things.

They would frequently come across other trains. Then he would hear the whistles like an alarm, like a murmuring losing itself in the night. And he could see lights like glowing embers in their empty cars.

He liked the dimensions of the train, the nervous sights of the passing landscapes—though you could say it was a single, mad landscape.

Only lately had he realized that he was the only passenger, not only on that train but all the other trains. To kill his loneliness he would constantly get up and rearrange the luggage (he was, even in those circumstances, obsessively neat). He would also frequent the dining car, where he thought he could hear the voices of other passengers. As often as he went, a freshly-poured drink awaited him.

After returning from that car, his anxiety lessened and the alcohol carried him toward an unrealistic optimism. He would vehemently dream that the station was approaching. Tears would bathe his dreaming, for even asleep, he knew that waking would be bitter, and along with the hangover would come the certainty that no station would ever be his.

Hotel

In the spring of 1992 I lived in a Madrid hotel famous as a site where bullfighters and other philosophers of death would congregate. At the time of my arrival the bellhop led me to room 511. It was spacious and well-furnished.

I was just lying down when I noticed a dried bloodstain on the wall next to the bed. It was like the bitter stroke of an abstract artist. Shocked by such a lack of hygiene, I called the concierge. Whispering, he explained that there had been an altercation with a bull. "But how did it get into the room? On the fifth floor?" I heatedly asked. The concierge was evasive and refused to answer: "Don't ask me any more questions. I can't risk losing this job."