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A Brief Introduction

To the Poetry of Aníbal Núñez

The poetry of Aníbal Núñez (Salamanca, 1944-1987) is on a first reading a poetry of social comment although this does not make it ideological, in terms of political parties—right-wing, left-wing or otherwise. However, this social background should not distract the reader from the fact that Núñez’s poetry is mostly one of rejection—of language as a means of representation and of the discourse of media, political formulas and hypercodified lives.

Núñez’s father was José Núñez Larraz, a well known photographer and leftist; his mother was Ángela San Francisco. The quarter of Salamanca they lived in was inhabited by transient students and artists of various kinds, leftists of one sort or another; in other words, it was a kind of Greenwich Village. This had no little influence on his later development as a rebel. Although he was educated by the Marist Brothers, Núñez was soon a rebel himself, a hippy of sorts, rejecting the stifling conservatism of the City Fathers and the bourgeoisie who controlled the city and culturally suffocated it.

There are things Núñez observes around him and he feels the need to comment on these things. But his commentary is not explicitly journalistic or dogmatically judgemental. Rather, he presents his scenes in the Poundian sense, leaving the reader to form his or her own judgement. And that, in a nutshell, is the nature of his poetry. It is also the challenge, often a daunting challenge, for the reader. It is not without reason that he was a painter as well as a poet, the canvas for him opening up possibilities of interpretation for the viewer. It is this individualistic observation that can make his poetry seem so enigmatic. He was a maverick and because he was a maverick it makes the classification of his work so difficult especially to English or even Spanish readers. But that would have delighted him. He had no wish to belong to any group or school of poetry.

Having said that is not to say that there are not recurrent themes in his poems (which we shall return to later). What he observes registers on his mind and sensibility. Among other things, a Beckettian absurdity runs throughout many of his poems, which is reflected in the disjointedness of his language. In a certain way, Núñez’s poems are similar to those of John Ashbery’s, especially to the American poet’s early works, characterized by an often shocking and unnerving syntax, mixed with a witty and subtle sense of irony. The tidy, moralising lyric is something he rejects. That is not how he sees life. Life is a broken-up affair affording mere snapshots,
many of them out of focus. We are sometimes reminded of Raymond Carver’s short stories—not his poems—or for that matter, Chekhov, leaving us wondering what the outcome of things will be. But that is deliberately left for the reader to ponder.

Possibly the main difficulty with Núñez’s poetry is its disjuncture with the “norms” of syntax and his thematic hyphenations. None of this, of course, is new in the context of Charles Olson or Robert Creeley or others from the Black Mountain group of poets, whose exemplar in this respect would probably be William Carlos Williams.

If we consider Williams’ famous red wheel-barrow poem (so much depends / upon…)

1, the poet’s response to anticipated adverse comment was: “What do they mean when they say: ‘I do not like your poems. Is this what you call poetry? It is the very antithesis of poetry. It is antipoetry. Poetry that used to go hand in hand with life, poetry that interpreted out deepest promptings, poetry that inspired, that led us forward to new discoveries, new depths of tolerance, new heights of exaltations. You moderns! it is the death of poetry you are accomplishing. You have not yet suffered a cruel blow from life. When you have suffered you will write differently…”

Even if Williams could not in his early years have been familiar with the Black Mountain poets, he admitted that the pieces in his book, A Novelette and Other Prose (1921-1931) (Toulon, 1932), showed the influence of Dadaism. “I didn’t originate Dadaism but I had it in my soul… Paris had influenced me there; there is a French feeling in this work… An American reader would have been lost entirely… I sat in front of the paper and wrote.” In other words, although he did not anticipate the Black Mountain poets, he doubtless would have been in sympathy with many of their ideas.

So even if Núñez was not familiar with Williams’ poetry, there is the fact that he was familiar with French modernism, such as the work of Rimbaud whose work he had studied in the University of Salamanca and whose Poems 1870-1871, The Stupra and Illuminations he would come to translate later on. Other French poets whom Núñez had read with great interest and care were Nerval and Mallarmé, both of whom he also translated.

All this, of course, is mere speculation. What is no speculation is that Núñez was knowledgeable about experimental poetry, as was Claudio Rodríguez, a poet greatly admired by Núñez—to the extent

of writing an article on two of Rodríguez’s lines. The point of this is that he had predecessors to support him in his own form of technical experimentation, and this at a time when in Spain poetry was in the doldrums. He also knew his experimentation would come at a price: isolation, both social and aesthetic. But he never baulked at this. For, where Claudio Rodríguez understood that his poetry could drive him toward a transcendental apprehension of reality, Núñez brought that conflict down to the problematic relation between language and reality. Careless of the world of men, Núñez realm will orbit, especially in his latest work, around that of a language that will become asymbolic. What matters most to the poet is grabbing reality itself, through language and through life, which is, in the end, the same fragmentary game of whispers, murmuring and voids.

We don’t know yet to what extent, if any, Núñez was influenced by the Black Mountain poets, but the following poem by Robert Creeley is certainly reminiscent of Núñez’s poetry, albeit some may think Creeley’s line has a simplicity not to be found in that of Núñez’s:

All night in a thoughtful mood, she

resigned herself to a conclusion – heretofore

rejected…

In his Cátedra anthology of Núñez’s work, La luz en las palabras, Vicente Vives Pérez identified three main themes of the Salamancan poet: nature, the city and ruins. And he makes a very good case for his reading. That case is too complicated to elaborate here in a brief introduction. A simpler and more general reading should provide adequate guidance to the new reader, especially the Anglophone reader.

Núñez was a “Green” before the Green Party was invented. He saw what was happening to the countryside, its despoliation; he saw the evils of capitalist urban life; and he saw the ruins that would be the result of all this. He was not, however, a naïve sentimentalist. He was well groomed


in political analysis, by his father and by his friends. One should rather think of him as a Spanish Edwin Muir, but without Muir’s religious proclivities. We don’t know how familiar he was with the work of Ezra Pound. He certainly did not possess the obsessiveness that Pound had with usura, an obsession that mars a lot of his work; but he would have appreciated some of Pound’s early poems such as ‘Provincia Deserta’:

At Rochecourt,  
Where the hills part  
in three ways,  
And three valleys, full of winding roads,  
Fork out to south and north,  
There is a place of trees … grey with lichen.  
I have walked there  
thinking of old days.4

Or these lines from ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’:

These fought in any case,  
and some believing,  
pro domo, in any case…

Some quick to arms,  
some for adventure  
some from fear of weakness,  
some from fear of censure,  
some for love of slaughter, in imagination,  
learning later…5

Looking back at Spain’s Civil War, how often must Núñez have had such thoughts?

In his own Salamanca he saw the re-emergence of the old bourgeoisie, the reappearance of their greed, their disdain for the defeated working-class and the enlightened liberals. His detestation of post-Franco Spain permeates his poetry. And that detestation is probably the root of his self-imposed isolation. His isolation was not into an ivory tower, like Yeats’, but through a repugnance he felt for the Spain he saw emerging after Franco’s savage victory: its avarice, its contempt for the defeated,

for ordinary humanity, its reckless disdain for the countryside. There one finds the driving force behind Núñez’s poems on nature, the city and the ruins left behind by the Civil War.

He has been described as the best poet of his generation, sometimes called the generation of ’68. His recognition has been a long time coming, but as we say in English, “Better late than never.”

Michael Smith, Dublin
Luis Ingelmo, Zamora

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A.N.’s Work


On A.N.’s Work


Aníbal Núñez

Selected Poems
de

29 Poemas

(1967)
from

29 Poems

(1967)
ONCE WITH A RAINBOW
and with a blue light aircraft
there was someone returning as usual—
although there are no signs of his passing—
he stumbled he felt blood
behind in its hidden
circulation
he shuddered or at least
noted mentally in his private notebook
a distinct event
in that place where so often:
a fateful property company was moving its claws
it was planting with hostility its surveying where—
by the square metre the bark was dying—
love had a nest and a fence interposes
(in the place where time
gathered urine in old tins
directed the sky immune
from rains and solstices
and delayed still the daily embrace of Eros and Psyche)
entry to anyone
unauthorized to the construction work
(and it was thus the story ended
although it is said
that Love—the occasion
agreed—
took shelter in subsidised housing)
AN URBAN BUS HEADING DOWNTOWN
picks up
amid the traces of burnt gas-oil
a delicate trail of cheap perfume
(a suburban made-up girl introduces
the ticket in her imitation-suede
purse, furtively corrects in the mirror
her eye-lines, certifies the
sedative presence of her packet of filter-tipped
Virginia tobacco right of admission)
and she reaches the bus-stop
where
she descends resolutely—
nothing about her extraction origin
remains written: the plaster
on Father’s hands the servile
cloth of a good family
of Mother now times gone by—the girl-friends
must be about to arrive
the light has already dimmed when—
it happens while
it’s Spring and the sweet
gust of happy-together music
sounds in a heaven
only for two—
they arrive at the darkness of a nightclub—
proletarian on the rocks
how is it going?—while
the ritual martini
is reborn

(what follows is the story
of an evening
with a suspicion of alcohol
and possibly words of love)
an urban bus to the outskirts
hides under its rough jolting
the fleeting annoyance of a girl child
who on the following Saturday
will again become the sweet drudge in the palace.

§
IT ALL BEGAN ON ANY GIVEN DAY
perhaps raining they set
a whole life ahead of him
a whole long row
of candles to blow
he grew—a fragile shoot
of an honourable family tree—
sheltered from so many bad winds:
it was then when
riding a cardboard horse
the index finger ringed
with gold and virtue would point out
the route of good the tortuous
path of evil
the unalterable flame
of his surname in all the display cabinets
(someone gave him as a present
a pink religious card in which
a guardian angel
was looking after an infant’s reckless race
across a ruined bridge over the abyss)

II

of that golden age
there remain only memories in the family
album a fragrance
of merry-go-round
innocence applauded on the visits:
a misted-up memory
of things gone by:
the idolised good guys
the lumber room
III

but those years did not burn in vain
nor were they in vain later
depositing incense in the aisles
of school chalk nor prize-winning
medals for Latin declensions
that asserted even more the chrysalis
in eternal truths of course

IV

but the time of the shipwreck
of the last paper boats has arrived:
now a grown-up man and everything
will happen as foreseen:
the girlfriend blushing at the marriage proposal—
oh valued shyness—then
the blessed nuptial
pair will perpetuate
the shining trail of virtue
in children for heaven
and three loops of pearls
thus the man of order—
what’s below is in keeping
with the lower part—
he will tread solidly
he will cough respectably
he will greet the doorwoman
good morning he will hear
solemn Mass
he will play at the Magi1
he will dress made-to-measure charity…
and so on until the return

---

1 A reference to the Christian celebration on the day of Epiphany, January 6, when the Magi receive letters from children and thus bring them gifts on the night before Epiphany, visiting the houses of all the children much like Santa Claus with his reindeer. (Translators’ note.)
of a day—possibly
a sunny one—he will deliver up his soul
to god in six-columns\(^2\)
and thus
everything will end
or rather everything
will continue guaranteed
a current account faith and love as pure
as that which can now be read in his epitaph

§

ONE NIGHT THEY BROUGHT HUMID EARTH
the same on their shoes
now that they emerge face to face
on the fatal pavement
how easily
to rebuild the stage backdrop
of the love that sank
down the
road now it’s very late
they’re going to give out to me at home
words still capable
of reviving
diffusely
that shared cold
barking of some dog
drop
by
drop
false flavour of mint
in the gums blood

\(^2\) Spanish funeral notes in newspapers vary in size (and price) depending on the amount of columns, up to six, that the note takes on the page. The larger the note, the more expensive it is and, also, the better it is seen by newspaper’s readers. (Translators’ note.)
now almost interwoven
finally the illicit
hand
fixing up the hair
undoing the proofs
of love—
their gaze seeking an exit
through the rim of light from the first
houses—
so easily if they could
meet directly
but he caressing
the drool of the trophy
among the gang she
a sealed adolescent knows
the exact
boundaries that stipulate
decorum and middle class
they could even if they pass
and say goodbye like water off a
duck’s back
not even aware of the water.

§

AT DAYBREAK TO WORK
a man is pedalling
he hears cocks at dawn
the usual trains
while the light that grows
climbing the leaves
burning—
it was in May, it was
in May—the sickly-sweet
acacias of the avenue
is refracted in the rust
of the spokes damp with dew—
and in May it had been
so many years ago—
(she with her pots and pans
stretching the day’s pay
imagining the spot
for the TV set
projecting some porcelain
flowers on top)
the slow road
a man travels to work
on his bicycle all
the light now made day
made noise of milk churns
when the man goes over—
he winds up his thirst—
nebulous sequences of chicks
legs of cover-girls
constellated stars Thursday female
the half-open image
of a white consumptive smile
interferes
with the long siren from the factory:
as when he returns and she opens—
years ago—the door.

§

*now they come, now they go*
*soldiers to war*

*Popular*

(the poet, on the occasion of the season’s arrival,
feels obliged to sing)

**SPRING LADIES GENTLEMEN**

has arrived:
(an event easily verifiable
by the winged rise of the mercury
the sudden invasion of chlorophyll)
the park premieres a heaven
the pigeons
swamp the pond with reflections
ladies knitting
testifying to the gardens’ peace
alice in the land
of bread and chocolate
laughter on a bicycle filing
through the triumphal arch below the aerial skipping-robe
the poet
breathes the new air inspires
gently
throws a stone at the swans’ pond
which uncurls in concentric circles

the flower of water broken
riddled the trill on the other side
the feverish snack
(I apologise I wouldn’t know
my job as a poet the irremediable
misprints now at the last moment)

§

ONCE UPON A TIME
I in front of the window
biting the evening’s nails
A SAD PRINCESS
I taking
the armchair’s pulse
BUT A RUMOUR REACHED THE KINGDOM
THAT A SPIRITED STEED
you have breakfast
with gunpowder cutlery
you chewing the war
chipped
along the four walls of the jungle
THE YOUNG NOBLEMEN PLAY DUCK, DUCK, GOOSE
(and I at home the only

gag for my voice that would proclaim

the seed—now rotten—

of the fight you win)

Song

friend if there’s a war,
awaken my blood:
we will set a tinfoil bait
for the submarine ship
friend if there’s a war
camouflage that tank’s glasses
so it won’t find its way
help me friend to sow the air
with clandestine pollen
so that the cowardly bomber
muddles up its target:
friend if there’s a war
may it not count on you or me.
Fábulas domésticas
(1972)
from

Domestic Fables

(1972)
Infancy Triptych

1

they took us to the tube of laughter
now under the flags that won the map
to the tube of laughter and how joyfully
we collected ourselves contented and happy
at each turn of the carousel ponies
vertigo just defeated, hope barefoot
the shots of war although we’re
sucking a lollipop
sticky with sugary froth
we were in the meantime
the joy of the house
(at the funfair mickey mouse would swear:
‘nothing happened here’)

2

and the school where we later learnt
to be good Christians by the grace
of God and the sulphurous boilers
of that old nick
the national hymns two abreast
the interminable seven times
table that still today hunts us
keeping us awake so many tall stories
of exemplary children and precocious
martyrs who didn’t go
and steal unripe fruit or mulberry
to the nuns’ patio where the
refulgent virgin refugium pecatorum
was about to take us with her
how boring to pluck lilies
for the May altar (whoever brought the most

---

3 A very popular fairground attraction at the time, it consisted of a large tube that had to be passed through while rotating around its longitudinal axis. (Translators' note.)
earned
a step to heaven
with Dad and Mum if they weren’t reds)
(but, much to our regret, they were)

for wide is the gate and broad
the road that leads to destruction

in those days we were instructed
by the good consciences, they approached
they promised us our happiest day
and before the celestial bread we didn’t disclose—
our shiny shoes gripping our feet
the cakes surrounded by lace—
the announced mystery: the starchy date
that in the following years we could not
almost recognise in the solemn
words that decent manners
inculcated in us:
the sorrowful glorious string of rosary beads
the visit to the Holy Sacrament; all the mise-en-scène
of the fee-paying school where we were
unable—submissive amid
so much mystery and ace sportsmen—
to miss certain faces
(‘small is the gate that leads’) 
that fell behind goodbye lads
whom we now meet along the street
their servile good morning looking at the ground
since ‘there have always been—other—
rich and poor’ we’ve been told
although
we keep the most diaphanous memory
of summer nightfalls
playing hide-and-seek holding our breath
so as not to reveal our presence
(they were looking for us)
we looked
at the galactic night so far away
from the bored fly
from the classroom and a whole
future crossed our mind
without lesson or punishment
with freedom of movement and being
real men of course
there was not a trace of the same
threat which now is not a game anymore

(they had found us)

Smoking I’m Waiting for the Man I Love

Your repression of a liberated girl
makes you grasp
with cushioned disgust the butt
of a cigarette you hasten
to consume so as to burn up the time
of waiting—
the panther is bored lying in wait
burdened with its splendid fur—
to fill the evening with spirals
the way penelope wove
the absence of her man
the bad omen
FEELING THAT PLEASURE
OF THE INTOXICATING SMOKE
THAT ENDS UP LIGHTING THE GLOWING FLAME
OF LOVE
to end up returning
with another wrinkle as bait
to your intimate darkness—
you clutch your pillow—
crowded with yellow leaves
(no one is coming to burn them to set
the junk-room on fire piled up
with irremediable joans
of arch to sweeten
your desire
to get out of hand
for the mirrors to leap out of the packed wardrobe)

and you do not make out any flies—as a last resort—
prepared to be trapped by their legs
in the boggy honey of your mascara.

Fable of the Spectator

Without cognac and a football scarf
you would be helpless
but are well stocked (lacking nothing)
with warm pondering of the latest
and exclusive news
of the hero you support—
packed out—
with your breath
so comforted before the working
winter of eight hours
with consignment—man
does not live on bread alone—
of polemical pasture
from which light may be shed
so it reveals the tip
for the next round
of the League the approximate
budget of the treasure
which he will find in the sand
the one of the poster hung from the cape
under the applause from the stands
with your consent in the end
in full page fully abreast of the very moment
of the victory goal and some other Monday
fodder that fatten you up
oh Easter lamb for the table
of the all-powerful businessmen.

Parable of the Punch

He took a right blow,
a long right
direct to the head,
and got ready to return the blow
launching, in legitimate defence,
his counterattack, but
not before having counted
on the consent of the majority
represented in a meeting:
he filled out the required forms,
oberving the necessary margins,
he queued up, patiently
hoping for an adequate quorum…
and, so, after a rational procedure,
after a dispassionate study,
the assembled house gave their approval
and stamped their bruised seal
on his other cheek.

Permission once granted
democratically, the assaulted
diffidently swung a punch
to the gap the aggressor had left
after departing peacefully.

(applause)
On the Dark Face of the Timber

a boy with chalk
marks the door of his house
closes the last ring
of the dartboard
takes a few steps backwards... years later
he knocks at the door reaches the lukewarm
tenderness of the hearth
after crossing the threshold and doesn’t notice
the blurry white picked out
by the darts back then:
WHEN WE WERE KIDS
waving an awful mood IT WAS THE GOODIES
WHO SAVED THE FORT AT THE LAST MINUTE
SURROUNDED BY THE BADDIES he would feel
more breath on the chair
less fragile the soup and uphill
the return to work

but today he won’t discern the dartboard
(timeshavechanged)
nor even less the boss’ head
in its very centre
blown off by a shot

Little Red Riding Hood

...and they lived
happily ever after.

Although anyhow
the ending was happy
little red riding hood would not have been
the wolf’s breakfast
nor would she have covered
so many miles in the woods to carry
the little honey-pot to her grandma
if she had paid
more attention to what they told her
on the neighbours’ radios
every day at half past two
and every night at ten o’clock

but obstinate and mulish
she didn’t pay the slightest notice
of the wise words of the wise forest-ranger
and the wolf gobbled her up

she had everything
and wanted for nothing:
she even had her much preferred forest scent
in her toothpaste
if only she had kept
quiet at home…
we would have gone on living
happily ever after…

although anyhow the ending
(and that’s the trouble) was happy.

Let’s See How You Manage Here, Smart Puss

Let’s see how you manage here, smart puss
in boots tom thumb
the brave thinks all
your tricks would be useless
your cunning and wiles against batman
and superman seven leagues amount to nothing
compared to supersonic wings the ogres
had small brains and a large stomach
to be able to digest
the tender infants they didn’t have
however a radar to help them
track the flesh or IBMs
to count in a second
how many crumbs you left on your way

you would have a tough time with james bond
his henchmen & co.:
experts in karate
adept in submarine fighting
they quietly turn a heart off
a hundred yards away while taking a daiquiri

(they know your tricks they have
all your movements anticipated)

you’d have a tough time though rumour has it
that in a remote eastern country
the opposite is completely true.

All the Scraps

I

All the scraps
erased without worry—
the rubbish thus becomes invisible—
a whole extensive range
a studied product for every
situation (from slow digestions
to harmful realisations)
the most up-to-date and easiest
procedure for
your home’s aesthetics and hygiene
speedy installation
follow our advice our brand
is a symbol in the free
world of guarantee
watch for the daily asepsis
of your family sleep
peacefully: someone
is keeping watch somewhere
over your security

II

long years of practice
back the experience
of our company: not one
fly is heard (now completely
incapable of finding carrion)

III

And if the flight of a
bolder one dares
to discover what’s hidden—
despite the hermetic seal—
it will be brought down simply and rapidly
with the adequate and exact product
(see our catalogue).

In Spring Especially

In spring especially
your dermis needs a treatment
to neutralise the excessive
secretions to cleanse
the blocked pores
in spring particularly when
everything is reborn it is necessary
BEFORE YOUR THOROUGH
MAKING UP to watch
the natural dryness of your complexion
WHICH WILL GIVE THE FINAL TOUCH TO YOUR NEW
ADORABLE FACE
needless to say
one must avoid in the blossoming season
exposing oneself to the infra-red rays
of sunsets
without taking the necessary precautions
and—especially—sprinkling
one’s body with petrol
setting oneself on fire and burning alive
for causes completely
beyond skin care
contrary to beauty control.

Goodnight

Sink softly into the silky
surface of acrylic petals—
on a moonbeam
sleeping beauty floats sliding
on the caressing slope of
lingering sleep—of our
mattresses totally foam…
you will awaken jolly as if nothing
seen or heard were true
(a quadruple insulating layer) (we also
supply little angels to guard
your children’s slumbers)

and your awakening will be—we’ve already said it—
happy and melodious: your
princess or blue—it
depends—prince will place
a kiss on your cheek: a butterfly
that announces breakfast now steaming
as if nothing had happened.

A Different Ending for the Milkmaid’s Tale

Taken by your arm
among cotton clouds he is to lead you
up the aisle of meringue the keys to the
coupé are now jingling you jump unafraid
hanging well from the manly hook
you feel so assured
in your wifey role
unafraid to stumble: he’s taking you, worries
for the future of you both
for the family’s prestige…
(you will merely find a place
to hang his degree diploma
the shade of the living-room wallpaper)

and you are humming so happily
almost savouring between your teeth
mendelssohn’s wedding march gleaming
like a keyboard raising your hopes:
thousands and thousands of trips
chinchilla fur water-skiing
on the smooth surface
of blank cheques…

you couldn’t care less about
the wraith of the shattered pail—poor
little milkmaid: farewell milk
farewell cow calves farm…—you know
there are many men in the world
for a girl like you: pretty.
Oh Naiad, Nereid, Nymph, Siren, Gorgeous

Oh Naiad, Nereid, nymph, siren, gorgeous chick reproduced in full colour almost life-size luscious thighs advertising a product, let’s say, antifreeze, for example grace full of desire to eat you to possess you in that very shop window

the bad thing is that we know our daring would be paid by the insurance and much worse to know that our bite would not find a live apple but rather a taste of papier-mâché and a false appearance of carnal relief in that lithography and we’d end up buying anything to make amends, good afternoon, for our wicked thoughts.

He Dreams—Hands on the Wheel—

The knight—hands on the wheel—dreams about his princess dreams of freeing her from the talons of the Saturday dragon so bored at home

he crosses swiftly between clouds of carbon monoxide the abyss of the pedestrian crossing he overcomes unharmed boldly rushing against the red eyes of the malignant traffic lights
he crosses dreaming a thousand perils
shining with chromium plating
and it is said that bewitched
by some swallowed evil plants
that grew there all about
the knight went crazy believing
his sporting horse was
the rosy princess and that the reins
that is the wheel were the hands
of his beloved, the roadway the bed
of love’s love… and every curve
a caress, putting his foot down
on the accelerator against a tree shattering
with a seeding deadly embrace shards
of junk, castles in the air—
the sirens sang sadly—
as we can see today
in the news reports of the court.

Warning to Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer
(on the centenary of his death)

Throughout the gloomy nooks of my brain, stripped
and huddled, the eccentric offspring of my fancy sleep…
G.A.B.

Now throughout the gloomy
nooks
of your brain
measuring assessing
the possible profits
are the huddled
not stripped expert
programmers of words…
y they do not sleep or rest,
the never-eccentric
offspring and successors
of the powerful publishing
house come out
not from my fancy
but rather let us say from offices
in whose centre the dictaphone
is sighted by way
of a dictator of fashion and over there the harp
your harp bécquer gustavo adolfo the harp
awaiting a hand (not of snow)
which knows how to tear it out of the notebook
of your eternal schoolgirls
to promote it with an attractive
format on a large scale
clear of dust and luminous
now that a hundred years ago it’s been a hundred years
since the last tubercle bacillus took you away

On Ephemeral Existence
(epilogue)

On the ephemeral existence
of the red poppy everything has been
said, about the ants
scholarly words have been written
describing their toilsome life
their foresightful carrying of provisions
for the bitter winter
    a thousand treatises
on geology and botany record
the names of rocks and inflorescences
(the tiniest plant is classified)
nothing, then, have I to say
of everything I see, although it’s easy for me
to raise my head, to raise myself, to distinguish
at the far end of the landscape—giving up
my pastoral siesta—the desolate and high
wall of my prison
and not write on it or about it
a single word: freedom.
de

Naturaleza no recuperable

from

IRRETRIEVABLE NATURE

Popular Art

‘Long live my master manuel sánchez
for many years in the company
of his beloved spouse carolina
garcía, inhabitants of the town
of paradinas de san juan
jurisdiction of peñaranda, may
of the year of our lord 1861’

reads
the powder horn for a muzzleloader that ángel
briones, a native
and inhabitant of the above
village, carved at penknife point
on the kitchen bench when
there was no work on the estate and fire
in the hearth burned from vine-shoots:
the pomegranates the tawny owl
the shining sun the carnations
and the sea night dew remained
engraved exactly
so that later Manuel Sánchez
likewise a native though not an inhabitant—
he wants to know nothing about
the village—would sell the horn
of his great-great-grandfather and the attic
for two drinks without the right
to make a racket in the night
club abandoning
the plough and with a flat
with a three-seater couch and a janitor
central heating working the land
is very demanding and these things
there are people who collect them.
Sprinkling

You must prepare the aspergillum with verbena periwinkle sage mint strawberry and basil (at most add a bit of rosemary) all tied (with a thread by a young virgin) around a wand of wild hazel three hand-spans long

And know that wherever you are and do the sprinkling with the above said you will banish your obsessions

(lacking the above mentioned plants you can substitute them just fine with ferns rue mugwort juniper plantain...)

Glorious weeds glorious coleopteran which saw us yesterday beside the conspiratorial gate romping about they offered us a bed a fresh pillow fragrances of cryptogams (spearmint feverfew sun spurge...) and it, its golden elytra which picked up the last sunrays like two glorious lamps

Hurrah to you who survived DDT and herbicides Hurrah!
Trilogy of the Elves

I

(When on clear nights
under the lime trees
the elves dance in a
ring in the meadows
they trace in them green
circles where with newfound
strength will be reborn
the plants their winged feet tread)

II

(every tree trunk corresponds
to an elf’s dwelling)

III

take care never to offend
the tree where the elves dwell
never
attempt to surprise them
(with fellings systematic drawing pens irrigations/
in their mysterious retreats
fear
to tread the herbs to which they devoted
themselves on their night patrols

these things can happen to you if you do so:
    harm the evil eye sickness
    family misfortune ruin misery
    greater comfort in your apartment—
    if you don’t lose your life—

an easy cure luckily
exists: it’s enough
to burn a little
valerian:

    at once
you will see them appear
under the delicate form
of fragile dolls
that will moan speak plead
‘mammy’ ‘wee-wee’… depending on
the disk selected.

§

…he was looking at the garden as if it were his, not bought,
but by an ancient possession of lineage and thought

at the garden planted
by that great-grandfather who left written what can be seen—
ploughing up levelling
finding out the future waters—
but saw nothing
    the pond reeds
the redcurrants the cherry tree
that endured two cyclones
the vine arbour that embraced the watchtower
the avenue lined with fruit trees the silk raspberries
the slate benches
the hung tools the toy hoe
the walnut tree and its foliage
the friction of the swing on the bark
    nothing

only a crowd of low beetroot
the plot of levelled land and they say that the very
water that is now not worth drinking.
§

The difference lies in the migratory swift that returns to drink in the pool—it doesn’t understand doesn’t know doesn’t comprehend doesn’t speak English has no idea about finances and it drinks and rises in final flight and beneath its eyes cross the furrows that saw it being born like two thighbones of death…

However, the can of lubricant does not have engraved on its bilingual side among its multiple uses and applications the propriety of being an occasional boat of Charon in the mythology of swifts.

Rural Fortune-Telling

If on reading your cards a white butterfly flutters, it augurs well

And if on telling your fortune you hear a crow cawing or rather the song of a barn owl, (‘It’s great: we are in the country!’) you will have news of the death of a loved one (‘Help!’)