Also available in this series:

Skyquake / Temblor de cielo
Arctic Poems / Poemas árticos
Equatorial & other poems

Selected Poems
Vicente Huidobro

Square Horizon  
Horizon carré

Translated from French and Spanish by  
Tony Frazer

Shearsman Books
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Horizon carré was originally published in Paris in 1917 by Paul Birault. The text here is mostly based on the first edition and on the Obra poética (2003) whenever clarification was required.

The Spanish versions in Section III are all by Huidobro himself, and their texts are drawn from the Obra poética, in which they were first brought together.

The translator wishes to convey his thanks to Timothy Adès, whose skill as a translator of French saved him from a number of embarrassing errors in this volume. Any errors that remain are of course entirely the fault of the translator.
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**Notes**
Vicente Huidobro and *Horizon Carré*

The Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948) is one of the most important figures in 20th-century Hispanic poetry and, along with César Vallejo, one of the pioneering avant-gardists in Spanish literature. Like Vallejo, he lived for many years in Paris but, unlike his Peruvian contemporary, he participated fully in the city’s various artistic movements. Influenced initially by Apollinaire, whom he met within weeks of arriving in the city, Huidobro fell in early with forward-looking French writers such as Blaise Cendrars, Pierre Reverdy and Jean Cocteau.

Originally from an upper-class Santiago family, Huidobro was fortunate to have the means to support himself and his family while he found his artistic way, and —after an early phase in his native country writing in a quasi-symbolist style, influenced by Rubén Darío—he felt he had outgrown provincial Santiago.

He left Chile with his family in late 1916, bound first for Madrid, and then for Paris. While he very much wanted to see what was happening in the world’s artistic capital, the initial impetus for the move had in fact been the avoidance of further scandal at home, where Huidobro had not long before gone off to Buenos Aires with Teresa Wilms Montt. The pair certainly had an affair, but the event also had a slightly more gentlemanly aspect, as Huidobro had engineered Teresa’s escape from the Santiago convent in which she had been immured by her irate husband, following her affair with one of his cousins. Teresa was to develop her own literary career in Buenos Aires and would later move on to Europe, where she committed suicide in 1921. Huidobro continued to remember her long afterwards, and the daring escape to Argentina prefigured his later exploits with Ximena Amunátegui, who was to become his second wife.

* * *

Huidobro published *Horizon carré* in Paris in 1917, and quickly followed it with *El espejo de agua* (The Water Mirror, in Spanish, 2nd edition, Madrid, 1918), *Tour Eiffel* (Eiffel Tower, in French; Madrid, 1918), *Hallali* (in French; Madrid, 1918); *Ecuatorial* (Equatorial, in Spanish; Madrid, 1918) and *Poemas árticos* (Arctic Poems, likewise
published in Spanish in Madrid, 1918). All of these are available in this series of books, Arctic Poems in one volume, and Equatorial and other poems containing the rest. These publications mark the beginning of the Huidobro's engagement with the European avant-garde, and a transition away from the influence of Rubén Darío that had dominated his early poetry.

* * *

Horizon carré is heavily influenced by the work of Guillaume Apollinaire and marks Huidobro's definitive arrival on the avant-garde scene in Paris, even if—it must be admitted—the volume is somewhat derivative. Huidobro's French was good even before he arrived in Paris; he had been educated well in Santiago, but this would not have prepared him for the linguistic and intellectual ferment he would find upon arrival in the main seat of the international avant-garde. Many of his early French-language manuscripts show signs of corrections by his friends at the time—Pierre Reverdy and the Spanish artist, Juan Gris, both being among them. Some of the poems in the book were reworked from Spanish poems in the chapbook collection, El espejo de agua, the resulting versions being given an Apollinairean mise-en-page. Huidobro was much taken with Apollinaire's calligrammes and composed several such poems himself, but he also adopted the freer organisation of text pioneered by the French poet.

Part and parcel of the intellectual ferment in which the poet found himself was the founding of the Creationism movement (Creacionismo). While this has been much discussed by critics, the fact is that Huidobro was just about its only “member”. Gerardo Diego in Madrid was briefly involved, before moving on to the Ultraists; Cocteau, Radiguet and Reverdy were all published in the magazine Creación / Création. At the time, having an -ism was important; having a manifesto was important; both things piqued the interest of commentators and ensured that one was interviewed, ensured that one was taken seriously in the same way that the painters were taken seriously. Creationism is in some ways a literary analogue of Cubism, but there is nothing spectacularly original about it. The fact that it is still discussed seriously today proves, however, that a movement was worth founding. Horizon carré was a kind of calling-card for the new “movement”, as can be seen by the epigraph to section 1, which sets out the creationist stall, so to speak.

* * *
Octavio Paz later referred to Huidobro as *el oxígeno invisible* (the invisible oxygen) of Latin American poetry, reflecting the fact that his influence was felt by poets right across the continent; in fact he was probably *the* major link between the European avant-garde and progressive literary circles in Latin America.

Huidobro was a restless soul and an artist of the very highest calibre. Today he is probably most revered for his extraordinary long poem *Altazor*, apparently written over a period of some 12 years and finally published in 1931. [There is an excellent translation of this work by Eliot Weinberger available from Wesleyan University Press.] Less well-known is the long prose poem *Temblor de cielo* (*Skyquake*—a translation of which is also available in this series), published the same year and mostly written in 1928. Huidobro regarded the two works as his artistic testament, and the summation of his work up to that point. He continued to look back fondly at his tyro works created in the early European years, however, and we need to understand them in order to appreciate how he reached the apotheosis represented by those great works of 1931.

Tony Frazer
January 2019
HORIZON CARRÉ
SQUARE HORIZON
À MADAME LUISA FERNÁNDEZ DE HUIDOBRO

I

Créer un poème en empruntant à la vie ses motifs et en les transformant pour leur donner une vie nouvelle et indépendante.

Rien d’anecdotique ni de descriptif. L’émotion doit naître de la seule vertu créatrice.

Faire un POÈME comme la nature fait un arbre.
To create a poem by borrowing its motifs from life and then transforming them so as to give them a new and independent life.

Nothing anecdotal, nothing descriptive. Emotion should be born of nothing but creative virtue.

To make a POEM as Nature makes a tree.
NOUVELLE CHANSON

POUR TOI MANUELITA

En dedans de l’Horizon
QUELQU’UN CHANTAIT
Sa voix
N’est pas connue

D’OÙ VIENT-IL

Parmi les branches
On ne voit personne

La lune même était une oreille

Et on n’entend
aucun bruit

Cependant
une étoile déclouée
Est tombée dans l’étang

L’HORIZON
S’EST FERMÉ

Et il n’y a pas de sortie
NEW SONG

FOR YOU MANUELITA

Inside the Horizon
SOMEONE WAS SINGING

His voice
Was unknown

WHERE DOES HE COME FROM

Among the branches
No one can be seen

The moon itself was an ear

And no sound

   can be heard

However

an unhooked star

Has fallen into the pond

THE HORIZON

IS CLOSED

And there is no way out
GLACE

Ma FACE
Et autour un peu d’eau

La glace
   Et une porte ouverte
Qui montre une chambre pareille

SINGE
Pourquoi fais-tu ce que je fais
   Je m’attends
   derrière la glace
MIRROR

My FACE
And a little water around me

The mirror
And an open door
That shows an identical room

MONKEY
Why do you do what I do
I’m waiting for myself
behind the mirror
L’HOMME TRISTE

Sur mon cœur
il y a des voix qui pleurent

Ne plus penser à rien
Les souvenirs et la douleur se dressent
Prends garde aux portes mal fermées

LES CHOSES S’ENNUIENT

Dans la chambre
Derrière la fenêtre où le jardin se meurt les feuilles pleurent
Et dans le foyer
tout s’écrase
Tout est noir
Rien ne vit
que dans les yeux du chat

SUR LA ROUTE

UN HOMME S’EN VA

L’horizon parle
Et derrière on s’efface

La mère
est morte sans rien dire
Et dans ma gorge un souvenir
THE SAD MAN

There are voices weeping

over my heart

No longer thinking of anything
Memories and pain stand erect
Beware of poorly-closed doors

THINGS ARE BORED

In the room
Behind the window where the garden is dying leaves weep
And in the hearth

everything crashes

Everything is black
Nothing lives

except in the cat’s eyes

ON THE ROAD

A MAN IS GOING AWAY

The horizon speaks
And beyond they vanish

The mother

has died without saying a word
And in my throat a memory
TA FIGURE
au feu s’illumine
Quelque chose voudrait sortir

Quelqu’un tousse
dans l’autre chambre
UNE VIEILLE VOIX
   Comme c’est loin
Un peu de mort tremble dans tous les coins
YOUR FACE

lit by the fire
Something would like to emerge

Someone coughs

in the other room

AN OLD VOICE

As if so far away

A little bit of death trembles in every corner
L’HOMME GAI

Il ne pleuvra plus
Mais quelques larmes encore
Brillent dans ta chevelure

UN HOMME SAUTE DANS LE SOLEIL

Ses yeux sont pleins de la poussière
de tous les chemins
Et sa chanson ne pousse pas sur ses lèvres

Le jour se casse contre les vitres
Et les angoisses
   se sont évanouies
Le monde est plus clair
   que mon miroir
Le vol des oiseaux
   et les cris des enfants
   Sont de la même couleur

PAR DESSUS LES ARBRES
   PLUS HAUTS QUE LE CIEL
On entend les cloches
THE HAPPY MAN

It won’t rain any more
But some tears still
Shine in your tresses

A MAN JUMPS INTO THE SUN

His eyes are full of dust
   from all the roads
And his song does not push past his lips

The day breaks against the windowpanes
And the disquiet
   has faded away
The world is clearer
   than my mirror
The flight of birds
   and the cries of children
Are the same colour

ABOVE THE TREES
   HIGHER THAN THE SKY
You can hear the bells
AUTOMNE

Je garde dans mes yeux
La chaleur de tes larmes
Les dernières
Maintenant
tu ne pourras pleurer
Jamais plus

Par les chemins
qui ne finissent pas
L’automne vient
Des doigts
blancs de neige
Arrachent toutes les feuilles

Quelle fatigue
Le vent
Le vent

UNE PLUIE D’AILES
COUVRE LA TERRE
AUTUMN

In my eyes I retain
The heat of your tears
The final ones
Now
you will not be able to weep
Ever again

On roads
that do not end
Autumn is coming
Fingers
white with snow
Snatch away all the leaves
What weariness
The wind
The wind
A SHOWER OF WINGS
COVERS THE EARTH
AVEUGLE

Au delà de la dernière fenêtre
Les cloches du Sacré-Cœur
Font tomber les feuilles

SUR LE SOMMET

UN AVEUGLE

Les paupières pleines de musique
Lève les mains
au milieu du vide

Celle qui vient de loin
Ne lui a pas donné son bras

Il est tout seul

Et avec sa gorge coupée
Il chante une mélodie
que personne
n’a comprise
BLIND MAN

Beyond the last window
The bells of Sacré-Cœur
Make the leaves fall

AT THE TOP
A BLIND MAN

Eyelids full of music
Raise your hands
amid the void

The woman who comes from afar
has not given him her arm

He is all alone

And with his slashed throat
He sings a song
that no-one
has understood
MINUIT

Les heures glissent
Comme des gouttes d’eau sur une vitre

Silence de minuit

La peur se déroule dans l’air
Et le vent
se cache au fond du puits

OH

C’est une feuille
On pense que la terre va finir
Le temps
remue dans l’ombre

Tout le monde dort

UN SOUPIR

Dans la maison quelqu’un vient de mourir