

Live City, Dead City

Everything's like this. It's all living and dying.
Oh how slowly burning life goes on,
alive underneath our smoldering clothes,
heavy suits that are taken off
amidst the rustle of extinguished bones.
Only shadows or mockeries greet us on the street.
"Goodbye, Marquesa." "Goodbye, dear Lulu."
A bishop goes by in his robes.
One hard smile survives.
There's a lark nearby, sailing off.
A huge old woman passes in the shadows.
"Oh beautiful señorita, whom I have watched
all glassy in the twilight,
while my aching effusions
boil like a remembered metal.
Oh yes, desire is beautiful. I know. I'm melting it down.
Living is beautiful inside our sheaths,
with the ruined splendors
in their last throes dying, dying."
The founding colonels pass.
The sweet old scatterbrained mothers superior.
Little boys made of crackling cellophane,
and off to the side one sees, one sees, a naked
playing card sadly set down and melting.

Oh neverward city, oh quiet city.
Crowned with featherless birds,
harsh throats that would finish it off
and escape in deaf black feathers.
A big hat is casting a shadow.
Someone urinates a yellowish stream.
It's falling enormously still.
Oh, the splendid square spilling over!

(From *En un vasto dominio*, 1962)