

To the Actors

Throw away acting;
nothing is for keeps.
Throw away speech.
Have you thrown away?
Throw away when you've thrown away.
Throw it away when it is yours.
Throw away applause.

Laugh the laughter being thrown away;
express the expression being thrown away.
Let sorrow belong to sorrow;
let action belong to action;
let speech belong to speech;
let each be each's.
Then, peace may be with you,
even if sorrow stays,
even if death gives back to you
action and speech . . .
then, and yet, then, and yet . . .

Translated by Uchang Kim

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Confession

In memory of Vicente Huidobro

I saw the spheres
felt the edges
and soiled my hands with eternity
Driven from the world by silence
I can now listen to the dead's endless gossip
in the symmetrical peace of cemeteries

I know the exact amount of hell that ticks in each grave
There are traces of ice on my lips
I keep to myself certain names and faces as I shut my eyes
and hoist up my phantometer in the wind at night

That's me ladies and gentlemen
base, outcast, reprobate
Stay away
Crucify me at the bottom of your river
for I will be reborn on the third day of your death

Barbaric Poem

I'll swaddle my steps with the shadow of some fish
to climb to the top of this mist
My voice stands up in the wind like a dream statue
I'll talk about myself my father who was devoured by grapes
my sidereal scarecrow grandfather swallowed by mist
about Guardian Angel Sweet Company Pastor of My Death
my fine stroke of a bell swelling inside from dawn to dusk
accomplice to all my sins
I'll talk about Mireya my sister who hid behind dark glasses
never to be found by the light
my mother who wasted her life knitting with fireflies
a dress that a rooster would wear in daybreaks of the beyond
In front of my face a frozen flash of lightning as settled down
An island like a live coal burns in my throat
A river flows on my hands
These hands that once let loose the chains of the sea
Through my eyes, waste lands where ancient oxen graze,
Mamburu sad and tired is returning

Panama, October, 1944

Translated by Ernesto Trejo