

BLANCA ANDREU

*from* DE UNA NIÑA DE PROVINCIAS QUE SE VINO  
A VIVIR EN UN CHAGALL

*Translated from the Spanish by Sara Gilmore*

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Look at my vitriolic mouth  
and my throat of Ionian hemlock,

look at the homeless broken-winged partridge

118 look at the trees like brittle nerves of the day,  
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My love            my mouth  
and my throat

look at the partridge  
that dies,

          at the trees  
crying water of the scythe

This is what I see            in the even hour of April,  
and in the chapel of mirrors            I see it too,

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and I can't think about the doves that live in the word Alexandria  
or write letters to Rilke.

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My love, the love I never had                      feverish and pacific,

verses for the little octopus of death,  
 verses for the strange death that makes its way between telephones,

for my feeble mind verses, for the circuit of the violin,  
 for the circuit of the heron,  
 for the confines of the south, of sleep

verses that don't shield me or are cause for life,

that don't give me the sweet umbilical snake  
 or the glucose chamber of womb.

The air around me,  
how strange it will be,  
when you are no longer,

Amor mío, amor mío, you without day for you,  
celled in between mirrors and bad things,

dead the transcendental silver  
and old anemones of eclogue,

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dead this version, that now I darken and refuse to read,  
to read it,           younger.

Amor mío, my love of never                           feverish,

verses for the little octopus,  
verses for the strange death that winds through telephone lines,

for my feeble mind           verses, for the circuit

of sleep

that don't shield me

that don't give me  
the           chamber.

How strange will seem the air around me,  
how strange it will be,

when you are no longer,

the cathedral of day,  
the cloister condensing the advanced age of light  
and character of storms.

My love, my love,  
trapped in a hive of mirrors and bad things,

dead the transcendental silver

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dead this version, that now I darken and decline,  
to read it, younger.

My love

my feeble mind, the violin,  
the confines of the south, of sleep

verses that are not cause for life.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

*Blanca Andreu's first publication, De una niña de provincias que se vino a vivir en un Chagall, was quickly recognized in Spanish literary circles after it won the Premio Adonais. Her writing was talked about perhaps as much for its illogical syntax and irrational dream-like imagery as for her provocative references to drugs and sexuality, references that gave the twenty-one year old poet a certain notoriety. But many critics argue that to sensationalize her work in this way is to undermine the scope of her poetic project and the way that, as Silvia Sherno describes, "Andreu creates imaginary worlds that are at once primitive and apocalyptic; a sense of impending catastrophe that threatens, whether by fire or water, these ambiguous environments; and the persuasive, vying strains of destruction and creation."*

Historically, her work recalls the poetry of Aleixandre, Neruda, and surrealist Lorca, combining contemporary referents with more traditional literary and artistic allusions. At the same time, the appearance of *Una niña* signals the beginnings of the postnovísima movement, in which a younger generation of poets turned their focus towards diverse philosophical or emotional concerns, envisioning themselves as a continuation in many traditions of Spanish and foreign literatures, not necessarily bound (as the novísimos were) to make a hard break with the literary past. In the case of Andreu, through her poetic project she is able, according to Sherno, to "parallel the path of mystic progress by tracing the protagonist's figurative descent into darkness, her transformation by cleansing fires, and her eventual ascent into a space illuminated by the radiance of poetic vision."

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*In this translation I have tried to get at the breakdown of language that is implicit in Andreu's poetry by spreading the English poems across multiple pages. Translation thus comes in waves, attempting to evoke the multiple meanings inherent in the original work.*