



Rodolfo Häsler

translated by Katherine M. Hedeem, Víctor Rodríguez Núñez and Roger West



Quill View

... to Blanca Andreu

I find myself in a well-tended garden
with two lanceolate cypresses, a peach tree
in bloom and a fountain. In its perfection I take it
for a Persian orchard. As I ponder the
bursting of a rose lost in thought
a voice brings me back to the beauty of the grove,



a voice strange, hermaphrodite: take up the quill
and write, take up the quill and write all you know.

Tuesday

The word magpie: I read it in the mirror.
A smooth cut in the glass, what does it suggest to you?
The image slips through the mercury slot
and runs to a subway entrance, destination Jabaquara.
The land's statuary shadow smooths down the lens,
uncovers nothing, only strangeness and pain.
A bird's cawing,
and one cloudy day, perhaps today, maybe tomorrow,
its intention ends before the rhythm of the universe.

Wednesday. The Poet

What's shining in his head? It must be a sounding violin,
an instrument that knows how to order, dictating to the ear
constant confidences, details of life dissolved in water,
I don't know if he knows how to swim, still, it's a traveler's life,
a timbre, an indisposition of Maldoror.

Monday. The Rain

A daring phrase, at low hour, at midnight,
summons the magpie's cosmology. With a slight
tilt it unloads the tiny boxes where sound vibrates,
spreads its insistent meddling.
Pain is rain, rises and falls, roars,
sweat swinging between the reader and you
smudges the notebook with a grisly diction.
A foam, an incline breaking it all,
inconformity brings about the same question,
floods a calcinated place,
a swallow of anguish is the change, is the shadow,
a certain way of latching on to what it doesn't know.
Don't believe what it is, it's not true,
it's always surprised, spring arriving,

translated by Katherine M. Hedeem and Víctor Rodríguez Núñez



Szczecin

The vast, misty plain, iced over, earth and sky solidified for months at a time, impervious to the pickaxe. Giant saplings lining the canals indicating farms nearby; one of these farms, interlaced brick and wood, sprawling around a huge yard, bearing my family name, Sophienhof. The flocks of white geese searching for worms scratch at straw mixed with manure.

The carthorses drum their hooves against the stable walls at the approach of their masters who work them until they bleed,

dragging wood to the central market in Szczecin, The cows, exquisite, black, glassy-eyed, seeming to polish the hands of my great grandparents who milk them, astride their stools. Farmworkers cart away the churns and dogs, who know these routes, draw close to the dairy. From the surrounding forest, unsettling noises, the clash of stags' horns against tree trunks, the cawing of crows, the grinding of the wood cutting machinery. The children go there with baskets

which they fill with cadmium-coloured mushrooms, to go in the stew, small, brown wonders of nature, thickening the soup, mushrooms that evoke the memory of childhood.

translated by Roger West

Tel Aviv

Sitting on the balcony I don't know what to say about the architecture of this white town without laying my outstretched hands on the table and seeing how it makes the the honey-sweet sky bitter. The style of Vienna, of Berlin, of Brno and of Zurich transplanted here after the fall of Europe. But where does Europe end?

The front of my house is a poem in the shape of a figure of eight.



It's this curse that has followed me since childhood that makes me recognise straightaway in this architecture the full belly of the whale where everything is hidden and where we kneel before the past.

The poet does not know if all this reflection is necessary in a crowded space. There are terraces where you can drink hibiscus tea and listen to the noise of the streets.

Let's rouse our friends in Soutine St from their sleep and take them down to the beach. Even if they don't swim, these marvellous beings will leave their footsteps and traces of their presence for eternity. The corn will not ripen, it will be just a sudden burst of creativity falling back into oblivion, snuffed out for all time. Is there anyone there who relishes so much beauty?

The light shatters into millions of cross-hatched lines in front of the windows designed to keep the sun out. The flowers of insomnia fall gently from our fingers and the rain clouds wake us and urge us to distance ourselves from all this splendour.

Body and soul looking for a way of translating the impression of abundance.

translated by Roger West

Rodolfo Häsler is a Swiss poet, born in Santiago de Cuba in 1958, son of the Bern poet Rudolf Häsler. He has been living in Barcelona since 1968. He studied at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. He works as a translator from the German to the Spanish. He has translated the complete works of Novalis and Kafka etc.

He has published the following poetry books: *Poemas de arena* (1982), *Tratado de licantrópía* (1988), *Elleiffe* (1993, Barcelona Poetry Aula Prize), *De la belleza del puro pensamiento* (1997, Oscar B. Cintas Foundation scholarship in New York), *Paisaje, tiempo azul* (2001) and *Cabeza de ébano* (2007, translated into French, Italian, Macedonian and Portuguese), and *Diario de la urraca* (2013, translated into French, Italian, Portuguese and parts in German). His works have been gathered in two books in Caracas and Tenerife. Some of his poems have been included in several anthologies of Spanish and South-American poetry. He is regularly invited to numerous poetry festivals around the world.