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Poetical Translations

Vicent Andrés Estellés translated by Nathaniel Smith

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POETICAL TRANSLATIONS

LLIBRE D'EXILIS (1956)

Sóc un, un qualsevol, del campament; et pregue.
M'he aixecat, lentament; m'he posat de genolls.
Et pregue, amb les mans juntes; no se m'ocorre res.
Tinc fred, i sóc ací... Senyor, Senyor. Et pregue.
Pregue pels meus germans. Et pregue pels que dormen.

From: «LLIBRE D'EXILIS» (1956)

I'm one, just any one, in this camp; I'm praying to you.
I've gotten up, slowly, then got back onto my knees.
I'm praying to you, hands joined, but nothing happens.
I'm cold and I'm still here.... Lord, Lord. I'm praying to you.
I'm praying for my brothers. I'm praying for those who are sleeping.

by Vicent Andrés Estellés, *Llibre d'exilis*
(1956), in *Obra completa* (Valencia:
Llibreria 2 i 4, 1974): II, 21.

LLIBRE D'EXILIS (1956)

He perdut mitja vida aprenent certes coses
que cap servei no em fan. Ara sé. Per això
calle o bé dic a penes. Vaig. Vaig on dec anar,
on vaig exactament. He après moltes coses.
He après sobretot que vaig. Al dematí
em llavaré la cara i tancaré la porta
i tornaré al camí. Aleshores vosaltres
sereu als vostres llits amb les vostres mullers.
Jo ja sé. Jo no em puc deturar. Jo seré
al camí. No tinc casa. No tinc llit. No tinc pàtria.

From: «LLIBRE D'EXILIS»

I've wasted half my life learning certain things
that are no use to me. Now I know. That's why
I keep quiet or hardly speak at all. I'm going, I'm going where
I have to go, exactly where I'm going. I've learned many things.
Mostly, I've learned I'm going. In the morning
I'll wash my face, I'll close the door
and get back on the road. You all, then,
will be in bed with your wives.
I already know. I can't stop myself. I'll be on the road.
I have no house. I have no bed. I have no country.

by Vicent Andrés Estellés, *Llibre d'exilis* (1956), in *Obra completa* (Valencia: Llibreria 2 i 4, 1974): II, 14.

HORACIANES, XI (1963-70)

t'has passat la vida amollant poemes, poeta.
ara et caldria meditar, en silenci,
el que feies.

guanyaries tu i guanyariem nosaltres.

creu-me

From: «HORACIANES XI» Horatians, XI (1963-70)

you've spent your life setting poems loose, poet.
now, in silence, you should think over
what you've been up to.

it would be better for you
and the rest of us too.

believe me.

by Vicent Andrés Estellés, *Horacianes*
(1963-70), in *Obra completa* (Valencia:
Llibreria 2 i 4, 1974): II, 227.

HORACIANES, XIV

no parle d'una vida interrompuda
en el moment millor, aquella joventut
o bé perfecció que, sol·lícits, els déus de vegades s'emporten,
gelosos, al seu regne,
sinó d'aquella mort o progressiu desésser,
d'aquell moment precís on comença el desésser
i hom sap des d'aleshores que l'espera la mort,
i únicament la mort.
va envers ella i no sap quin serà aquell moment
fatal en què el desésser s'acomplirà per fi,
haurà clos el seu cercle, el seu brutal anell.

parle molt de la mort aquests dies darrers.

From: «HORACIANES XIV» Horatians, XIV

i'm not talking about a life broken off
at its best moment, about that youthfulness,
or perfection if you will, which the ever-attentive gods
sometimes carry off to their own domain,
but about that death or progressive undoing,
of that very instant when the undoing begins
and we know from then on that death is waiting,
death and only death.

we go towards it without knowing that fatal
moment when the undoing at last will end
and our circle, our violent loop, will have closed.

i've been talking a lot about death the last few days.

by Vicent Andrés Estellés (1924-93),
Horacianes (1963-70), in *Obra completa*
(Valencia: Llibreria 2 i 4, 1974): II, 231.

QUADERN PER A NINGÚ

II

no m'has escrit
 i t'escric aquestes línies que deixaré després oblidades en
 qualsevol calaix,
 sense que mai no arriben a les teues mans,
 aquelles mans petites i tan fàcilment adorables.
 he pensat moltes vegades en tu.
 he recordat els teus cabells negres i els teus ulls igualment negres,
 la teua molt benigna sina,
 com el teu pas lleuger i la graciosa petulància del teu cul.
 m'hauria agradat, això no obstant, rebre unes línies teues.
 però tu no et recordes de l'home vell que sóc
 i de la meua necessitat de rebre unes línies teues
 i de llegir-les clandestinament
 i després, ah després, cremar-les com si fossen sarments.
 t'evocaria en la petita flama
 com fores, criatura.
 un petit homenatge que em feia molt de goig.

V

des de fa quinze dies no t'he escrit ni una línia.
 tenia una necessitat massa intensa de tu,
 massa gana de tu.
 ara sí, ara t'escric,
 ara que no et desitge,
 ara que puc parlar amb tu
 com aquells dies que parlava amb tu.
 tu mastegaves el xiclet.
 et reies.
 em referies les teues coses, t'escoltava.
 jo sentia el desig de deixar la meua mà damunt el teu genoll.
 difícilment em contenia.
 ho hauria pogut fer: no hauria passat res.
 i tampoc ja no volia això.
 em contenia i patia moltíssim.
 després sortíem al carrer.
 cridaves una amiga, la saludaves amb en braç en l'aire,
 tot allò, tot allò.

From: «QUADERN PER A NINGÚ»

II

you haven't written me
 and i'm writing you these lines that then i'll leave forgotten in
 some drawer
 without their ever coming into your hands,
 those small hands so easily worshiped.
 i've thought many times of you.
 i've remembered your black hair and your equally black eyes,
 your benevolent breast,
 your light step and the graceful petulance of your ass.
 all the same, i would have liked to receive a few lines from you.
 but you don't remember the old man that i am
 and my need to receive a few lines from you,
 to read them in secret
 and then, yes, then to burn them like grape branches.
 i would see you in the small flame
 as you were, a child.
 a little homage that made me very happy.

V

for fifteen days I haven't written you a line.
 i've had too great need of you,
 too much hunger of you.
 now, yes, now i am writing you,
 now that i do not desire you,
 now that i can speak with you
 as in those days when i used to speak with you.
 you chewed gum.
 you made fun.
 i made reference to the things of your life, i listened.
 i felt the desire to leave my hand on your knee.
 with difficulty i restrained myself.
 i could have done it: nothing would have happened.
 and yet, i didn't want to.
 i restrained myself and suffered a lot.
 afterward, we would go out in the street.
 you'd call to a friend and wave, your arm in the air,
 and all that, and all that.

VI

molt m'hauria agradat
 de ser el teu amant sol·lícit,
 estar el teu amant sol·lícit
 resseguint des del matí a la nit
 els moviments del teu cor
 el petit indici d'un qualsevol caprici teu.
 em pense que he nascut per a estimar-te així.
 podria ser el teu pare
 si ens ateníem a unes dades
 però impensadament em va florir
 un sentiment mortal d'amor.
 de vegades em pense que ho has endevinat
 i de vegades et recorde dèspota.
 tremolós el meu cor de perdre el teu afecte,
 potser he esdevingut indigne.
 indigne i tot, t'estime.
 surts esvelta i et veig amb els ulls complaguts.
 entre el pare que podria ser i l'amant que mai no he de ser
 deixa'm que et mire, deixa'm participar,
 per més que siga mínimament,
 d'aquesta teua torbadora intimitat,
 aquest fil que em sosté agafat a la vida.
 ets l'únic que em resta.

IX

l'has saludada sempre molt efusivament.
 o bé discretament li has pres la cintura.
 l'has mirada amb afecte paternal—hi ha altra gent.
 essencialment és per a tu una criatura.
 sis vegades tan sols li has besat les galtes.

X

passen els cels
 però és el mateix cel que sempre passa.
 als meus modestos versos, sempre passa el mateix vers,
 aquell que tracta d'evocar-te.
 tu mai no ho sabràs.

VI

i would have been very happy
 to become your official lover,
 to remain your official lover,
 searching out from morning to night
 the movements of your heart,
 the subtle sign of some caprice of yours.
 i think i was born to love you that way.
 i could be your father,
 if we paid attention to facts,
 but inadvertently there flowered in me
 a fatal feeling of love.
 sometimes i think you guessed it
 and sometimes i recall you tyrannical.
 my heart trembling at the idea of losing your affection,
 perhaps i became unworthy.
 even unworthy, i love you.
 you come out, slender, and i see you with satisfied eyes.
 between the father i could be and the lover i'll never be,
 let me look at you, let me join,
 in however small a way,
 in that troubling intimacy of you,
 that thread that keeps me tied to life.
 you are all i have left.

IX

you've always greeted her very effusively.
 or taken her discreetly by the waist.
 you've looked on her with fatherly affection—others are there.
 essentially she is, for you, a child.
 only six times have you kissed her on the cheeks.

X

skies pass
 but it's always the same sky that passes.
 in my humble verses the same verse always passes,
 the one that tries to evoke you,
 never will you know it.

XII

fou un amor
 el reivindiques
al cap dels anys amb la veu trèmula
intentaries afegir
alguna cosa
 desisteixes
evocaries un paisatge,
però desisteixes, també.
fou un amor.
 allò que vols
és deixar-ho ben clar des del
començament.
 fou un amor.
estimes molt aquesta papers.
t'estimes?

XII

this was a love
 you lay claim to it
 after years with tremulous voice
 you would try to add
 something
 you give up
 you would evoke a landscape,
 but you give up, also.
 this was a love.
 what you want
 is to make it clear from the
 beginning.
 this was a love.
 you love these papers a lot.
 do you love yourself?

Translated by Nathaniel Smith

Notebook for No One

Vicent Andrés Estellés (1924-93), «Quadern per a ningú,» in *Obra completa* (Valencia: Llibreria 2 i 4, 1974): II, 155-166. The other six poems in this series were published by the same translator in *Webster Review*, 12.2 (Fall, 1987): 18-19. The poet's dedication is to Francesc Vallverdú.