

Ars Poetica

Pablo Neruda (trans. Stephen Kessler)

Between shadow and space, between harnesses and virgins,
endowed with singular heart and fatal dreams,
impetuously pale, withered in the forehead
and in mourning like and angry widower every day of my life,
5 oh, for every drink of invisible water I swallow drowsily
and with every sound I take in, trembling,
I feel the same missing thirst and the same cold fever,
an ear being born, and indirect anguish,
as if thieves were arriving, or ghosts,
10 and inside a long, deep, hollow shell,
like a humiliated waiter, like a bell gone a bit hoarse,
like an old mirror, like the smell of an empty house
where the guests come back at night hopelessly drunk,
and there's an odor of clothes thrown on the floor, and an absence of flowers
15 – or maybe somehow a little less melancholic –
but the truth is, suddenly, the wind lashing my chest,
the infinitely dense nights dropped into my bedroom,
the noise of a day burning with sacrifice
demand what there is in me of prophetic, with melancholy
20 and there's a banging of objects that call without being answered,
and restless motion, and a muddled name.

From:
The Essential Neruda: Selected Poems (Ed. Mark Eisner)

Arte Poetica

Pablo Neruda

Entre sombra y espacio, entre guarniciones y doncellas,
dotado de corazón singular y sueños funestos,
precipitadamente pálido, marchito en la frente
y con luto de viudo furioso por cada día de vida,
5 ay, para cada agua invisible que bebo soñolientamente
y de todo sonido que acojo temblando,
tengo la misma sed ausente y la misma fiebre fría
un oído que nace, una angustia indirecta,
como si llegaran ladrones o fantasmas,
10 y en una cáscara de extensión fija y profunda,
como un camarero humillado, como una campana un poco ronca,
como un espejo viejo, como un olor de casa sola
en la que los huéspedes entran de noche perdidamente ebrios,
y hay un olor de ropa tirada al suelo, y una ausencia de flores
15 –posiblemente de otro modo aún menos melancólico–
pero, la verdad, de pronto, el viento que azota mi pecho,
las noches de substancia infinita caídas en mi dormitorio,
el ruido de un día que arde con sacrificio
me piden lo profético que hay en mí, con melancolía
20 y un golpe de objetos que llaman sin ser respondidos
hay, y un movimiento sin tregua, y un nombre confuso.

Dawn's Debility

Pablo Neruda (trans. Donald D. Walsh)

The day of the luckless, the pale day peers
out

with a chill and piercing smell, with its
forces gray,

without rattles, the dawn oozing everywhere;

it is a shipwreck in a void, with a
surrounding of tears.

5 Because the moist, silent shadow departed
from so many places,

from so many vain caviling, so many earthly
places

where it must have occupied even the design
of the roots,

from so many sharp and self-defending
shapes.

I weep amid invasion, among confusion,
10 among the swelling taste, lending and ear

to the pure circulation, to the increase,

making the pathless way for what arrives,

what comes forth dressed in chains and
carnations,

I dream, enduring my mortal remains.

15 There is nothing precipitous, or gay, or proud
in form,

everything appears, taking shape with
obvious poverty,

the light of the earth comes from its eyelids

not like the stroke of a bell but rather like
tears:

the texture of the day, its feeble canvas,
20 serves as a bandage for the patients, serves to
make signs

in a farewell, behind the absence:

it is the color that wants only to replace,

to cover, swallow, conquer, make distances.

I am alone among rickety substances,
25 the rain falls upon me and it seems like me,

like me with its madness, alone in the dead
world,

rejected as it falls, and without persistent
shape.

From:
The Poetry of Pablo Neruda (Ed. Ilan Stavans)

Débil del alba

Pablo Neruda

El día de los desventurados, el día pálido
asoma
con un desgarrador olor frío, con sus fuerzas
en gris,
sin cascabeles, goteando el alba por todas
partes:
es un naufragio en el vacío, con un alrededor
de llanto.

5 Porque se fue de tantos sitios la sombra
húmeda, callada,
de tantas cavilaciones en vano, de tantos
parajes terrestres
en donde debió ocupar hasta el designio de
las raíces,
de tanta forma aguda que se defendía.

Yo lloro en medio de lo invadido, entre lo
confuso,

10 entre el sabor creciente, poniendo el oído
en la pura circulación, en el aumento,
cediendo sin rumbo el paso a lo que arriba,
a lo que surge vestido de cadenas y claveles,
yo sueño, sobrellevando mis vestigios
morales.

15 Nada hay de precipitado ni de alegre, ni de
forma orgullosa,
todo aparece haciéndose con evidente
pobreza,
la luz de la tierra sale de sus párpados
no como la campanada, sino más bien como
las lágrimas:
el tejido del día, su lienzo débil,
20 sirve para una venda de enfermos, sirve para
hacer señas
en una despedida, detrás de la ausencia:
es el color que sólo quiere reemplazar,
cubrir, tragar, vencer, hacer distancias.

Estoy solo entre materias desvencijadas,

25 la lluvia cae sobre mí, y se me parece,
se me parece con su desvarío, solitaria en el
mundo muerto,
rechazada al caer, y sin forma obstinada.

To Fidel Castro

Pablo Neruda (Trans. Miguel Algarín)

Fidel, Fidel, the people are grateful
for words in action and deeds that sing,
that is why I bring from far
a cup of my country's wine:
5 it is the blood of a subterranean people
that from the shadows reaches your throat,
they are miners who have lived for centuries
extracting fire from the frozen land.
They go beneath the sea for coal
10 but on returning they are like ghosts:
they grew accustomed to eternal night,
the working-day light was robbed from them,
nevertheless here is the cup
of so much suffering and distances:
15 the happiness of imprisoned men
possessed by darkness and illusions
who from the inside of mines perceive
the arrival of spring and its fragrances
because they know that Man is struggling
20 to reach the amplest clarity.
And Cuba is seen by the Southern miners,
the lonely sons of la pampa,
the shepherds of cold in Patagonia,
the fathers of tin and silver,
25 the ones who marry cordilleras

extract the copper from Chuquicamata,
men hidden in buses
in populations of pure nostalgia,
women of the fields and workshops,
30 children who cried away their childhoods:
this is the cup, take it, Fidel.
It is full of so much hope
that upon drinking you will know your victory
is like the aged wine of my country
35 made not by one man but by many men
and not by one grape but by many plants:
it is not one drop but many rivers:
not one captain but many battles.
And they support you because you represent
40 the collective honor of our long struggle,
and if Cuba were to fall we would all fall,
and we would come to lift her,
and if she blooms with flowers
she will flourish with our won nectar.
45 And if they dare touch Cuba's
forehead, by your hands liberated,
they will find people's fists,
we will take out our buried weapons:
blood and pride will come to rescue,
50 to defend our beloved Cuba.

From:
The Poetry of Pablo Neruda (Ed. Ilan Stavans)

I Explain a Few Things

Pablo Neruda (trans. Galway Kinnel)

You will ask: But where are the lilacs?
And the metaphysics covered with poppies?
And the rain that often struck
his words, filling them
5 with holes and birds?

I am going to tell you what's happening to me.

I lived in a barrio
of Madrid, with bells,
with clocks, with trees.

10 From there you could see
the parched face of Castile
like an ocean of leather.

My house was called
the house of flowers, because from everywhere
15 geraniums burst: it was
a beautiful house,
with dogs and children.

Raul, do you remember?
Do you remember, Rafael?
20 Federico, do you remember
under the ground,

do you remember my house with balconies
where the June light drowned the flowers in your
mouth?

Brother, brother!

25 Everything
was loud voices, salt of goods,
crowds of pulsating bread,
marketplaces in my barrio of Arguelles with its
statue

like a pale inkwell set down among the hake:

30 oil flowed into spoons,
a deep throbbing
of feet and hands filled the streets,
meters, liters, the hard
edges of life,

35 heaps of fish,
geometry of roofs under a cold sun in which
the weathervane grew tired,
delirious fine ivory of potatoes,
tomatoes, more tomatoes, all the way to the sea.

40 And one morning all was burning
and one morning bonfires
sprang out of the earth
devouring humans,

and from then on fire,
45 gunpowder from then on,
and from then on blood.

Bandidos with planes and Moors,
bandidos with rings and duchesses,
bandidos with black friars signing the cross
50 coming down from the sky to kill children,
and in the streets the blood of the children
ran simply, like children's blood.

Jackals the jackal would despise,
stones the dry thistle would bite on and spit out,
55 vipers the vipers would abominate.

Facing you I have seen the blood
of Spain rise up
to drown you in a single wave
of pride and knives.

60 Treacherous,
generals:
look at my dead house,
look at Spain broken:
from every house burning metal comes out
65 instead of flowers,
but from every crater of Spain

comes Spain
from every dead child comes a rifle with eyes,
from every crime bullets are born
70 that one day will find out in you
the site of the heart.

You will ask: why doesn't his poetry
Speak to us of dreams, of leaves
of the great volcanoes of his native land?

75 Come and see the blood in the streets,
come and see
the blood in the streets,
come and see the blood
in the streets!

From:
The Poetry of Pablo Neruda (Ed. Ilan Stavans)

Explico Algunas Cosas

Pablo Neruda

PREGUNTARÉIS: Y dónde están las lilas?
Y la metafísica cubierta de amapolas?
Y la lluvia que a menudo golpeaba
sus palabras llenándolas
5 de agujeros y pájaros?

Os voy a contar todo lo que me pasa.

Yo vivía en un barrio
de Madrid, con campanas,
con relojes, con árboles.

10 Desde allí se veía
el rostro seco de Castilla
como un océano de cuero.

Mi casa era llamada
la casa de las flores, porque por todas partes
15 estallaban geranios: era
una bella casa
con perros y chiquillos.

Raúl, te acuerdas?
Te acuerdas, Rafael?
20 Federico, te acuerdas
21 debajo de la tierra,

te acuerdas de mi casa con balcones en donde
la luz de junio ahogaba flores en tu boca?
Hermano, hermano!
25 Todo
eran grandes voces, sal de mercaderías,
aglomeraciones de pan palpitante,
mercados de mi barrio de Argüelles con su estatua
como un tintero pálido entre las merluzas:
30 el aceite llegaba a las cucharas,
un profundo latido
de pies y manos llenaba las calles,
metros, litros, esencia
aguda de la vida,
35 pescados hacinados,
contextura de techos con sol frío en el cual
la flecha se fatiga,
delirante marfil fino de las patatas,
tomates repetidos hasta el mar.
40 Y una mañana todo estaba ardiendo
y una mañana las hogueras
salían de la tierra
devorando seres,
y desde entonces fuego,

45 pólvora desde entonces,
y desde entonces sangre.
Bandidos con aviones y con moros,
bandidos con sortijas y duquesas,
bandidos con frailes negros bendiciendo
50 venían por el cielo a matar niños,
y por las calles la sangre de los niños
corría simplemente, como sangre de niños.

Chacales que el chacal rechazaría,
piedras que el cardo seco mordería escupiéndolo,
55 víboras que las víboras odiaran!

Frente a vosotros he visto la sangre
de España levantarse
para ahogarse en una sola ola
de orgullo y de cuchillos!

60 Generales
traidores:

mirad mi casa muerta,
mirad España rota:
pero de cada casa muerta sale metal ardiendo
65 en vez de flores,
pero de cada hueco de España
sale España,
pero de cada niño muerto sale un fusil con ojos,
pero de cada crimen nacen balas
70 que os hallarán un día el sitio
del corazón.

Preguntaréis por qué su poesía
no nos habla del sueño, de las hojas,
de los grandes volcanes de su país natal?

75 Venid a ver la sangre por las calles,
venid a ver
la sangre por las calles,
venid a ver la sangre
por las calles!

Ode to a Pair of Socks

Pablo Neruda (trans. Mark Strand)

Maru Mota brought me
a pair
of socks
that she knitted with her
5 shepherdess hands,
two socks soft
as rabbits.
I put my feet
into them
10 as into
two
cases
knitted
with threads of
15 twilight
and sheeps wool.

Wild socks,
my feet were
two wool
20 fish,
two big sharks
of ultramarine
crossed

by a golden braid,
25 two giant blackbirds,
two cannons:
my feet
were honored
in this way
30 by these
heavenly
socks.
They were
so beautiful
35 that for the first time
my feet seemed to me
unacceptable
like two decrepit firemen, firemen
unworthy
40 of that embroidered
fire,
of those shining
socks.

Anyway
45 I resisted
the sharp temptation

to save them
the way schoolboys
keep
50 lightning bugs,
the way scholars
collect
rare books,
I resisted
55 the mad impulse
to put them
in a golden
cage
and each day
60 to feed them birdseed
and the meat of a rosy melon.
Like explorers
in the forest
who give up the finest
65 young deer
to the roasting spit
and eat it

with regret,
I stretched out
70 my feet
and put on
the
lovely
socks
75 and then
my shoes.

And this is
the moral of my ode:
beauty is twice
80 beautiful
and goodness is doubly
good
when
it concerns two wool
85 socks
in winter.

From:
The Poetry of Pablo Neruda (Ed. Ilan Stavans)

Ode to the Dictionary

Pablo Neruda (trans. Margaret Sayers Peden)

Ode to the Dictionary
Back like an ox, beast of
burden, orderly
thick book:
5 as a youth
I ignored you,
wrapped in my smugness,
I though I knew it all,
and as puffed up as a
10 melancholy toad
I proclaimed: "I receive
my words
in a loud, clear voice
directly from Mt. Sinai.
15 I shall convert
forms to alchemy.
I am the Magus"

The Great Magus said nothing.

The Dictionary,
20 old and heavy in its scruffy
leather jacket
sat in silence,
its resources unrevealed

But one day,
25 after I'd used it
and abused it,
after
I'd called it
useless, an anachronistic camel,
30 when for months, without protest
it had served me as a chair
and a pillow,
it rebelled and planting its feet
firmly in my doorway,
35 expanded, shook its leaves
and nests,
and spread its foliage:
it was
a tree,
40 a natural,
bountiful
apple blossom, apple orchard, apple tree,
and words
glittered in its infinite branches,
45 opaque or sonorous,
fertile in the fronds of language,
charged with truth and sound.

I
turn
50 its
pages
caporal,
capote,
what a marvel
55 to pronounce these plosive
syllables,
and further on,
capsule
unfilled, awaiting ambrosia or oil
60 and others,
capsicum, caption, capture,
comparison, capricorn,

words
 as slippery as smooth grapes,
 65 words exploding in the light
 like dormant seeds waiting
 in the vaults of vocabulary,
 alive again, and giving life:
 once again the heart distills them.

 70 Dictionary, you are not a
 tomb, sepulcher, grave,
 tumulus, mausoleum,
 but guard and keeper,
 hidden fire,
 75 groves of rubies,
 living eternity
 of essence,
 depository of language.
 How wonderful
 80 to read in your columns
 ancestral
 words,
 the severe and
 long-forgotten
 85 maxim,
 daughter of Spain,
 petrified
 as a plow blade,
 as limited in use
 90 as an antiquated tool,
 but preserved
 in the precise beauty and
 immutability of a medallion.
 Or another
 95 word
 we find hiding
 between the lines

that suddenly seems
 as delicious and smooth on the tongue
 100 as an almond
 or tender as a fig.

 Dictionary, let one hand
 of your thousand hands, one
 of your thousand emeralds,
 105 a
 single
 drop
 of your virginal springs,
 one grain
 110 from
 your
 magnanimous granaries,
 fall
 at the perfect moment
 115 upon my lips,
 onto the tip of my pen,
 into my inkwell.
 From the depths of your
 dense and reverberating jungle
 120 grant me,
 at the moment it is needed,
 a single birdsong, the luxury
 of one bee,
 one splinter
 125 of your ancient wood perfumed
 by an eternity of jasmine,
 one
 syllable,
 one tremor, one sound,
 130 one seed:
 I am of the earth and with words I sing.

Only Death

Pablo Neruda (trans. Donald D. Walsh)

There are lone cemeteries,
tombs filled with soundless bones,
the heart passing through a tunnel
dark, dark, dark;
5 like a shipwreck we die inward,
like smothering in our hearts,
like slowly falling from our skin down to
our soul.

There are corpses,
there are feet of sticky, cold gravestone,
10 there is death in the bones,
like a pure sound,
like a bark without a dog,
coming from certain bells, from certain tombs,
growing in the dampness like teardrops or
raindrops.

15 I see alone at times,
coffins with sails
weighing anchor with pale corpses, with
dead-tressed women,
with bakers white as angels,
with pensive girls married to notaries,
20 coffins going up the vertical river of the dead,
the dark purple river,
upstream, with the sails swollen by the sound of
death,
swollen by the silent sound of death.

To resonance comes death

25 like a shoe without a foot, like a suit without
a man,
she comes to knock with a stoneless and fingerless
ring,
she comes to shout without mouth, without
tongue, without throat.

Yet her steps sound
and her dress sounds, silent, like a tree.

30 I know little, I am not well acquainted, I can
scarcely see,
but I think that her song has the color of moist
violets,
of violets accustomed to the earth,
because the face of death is green,
and the gaze of death is green,
35 with the sharp dampness of a violet leaf
and its dark color of exasperated winter.

But death also goes through the world dressed as a
broom,
she licks the ground looking for corpses,
death is in the broom,

40 it is death's tongue looking for dead bodies,
it is death's needle looking for thread.

Death is in the cots:
in the slow mattresses, in the black blankets
she lives stretched out, and she suddenly blows:
45 she blows a dark sound that puffs out sheets,
and there are beds sailing to a port
and there are beds waiting, dressed as an admiral.

Sólo la Muerte

Pablo Neruda

HAY cementerios solos,
tumbas llenas de huesos sin sonido,
el corazón pasando un túnel
oscuro, oscuro, oscuro,
5 como un naufragio hacia adentro nos morimos,
como ahogarnos en el corazón,
como irnos cayendo desde la piel al alma.

Hay cadáveres,
hay pies de pegajosa losa fría,
10 hay la muerte en los huesos,
como un sonido puro,
como un ladrido sin perro,
saliendo de ciertas campanas, de ciertas tumbas,
creciendo en la humedad como el llanto o la
lluvia.

15 Yo veo, solo, a veces,
ataúdes a vela
zarpar con difuntos pálidos, con mujeres de
trenzas
muertas,
con panaderos blancos como ángeles,
con niñas pensativas casadas con notarios,
20 ataúdes subiendo el río vertical de los muertos,
el río morado,
hacia arriba, con las velas hinchadas por el
sonido
de la muerte,
hinchadas por el sonido silencioso de la muerte.

A lo sonoro llega la muerte

25 como un zapato sin pie, como un traje sin
hombre,
llega a golpear con un anillo sin piedra y sin
dedo,
llega a gritar sin boca, sin lengua, sin garganta.
Sin embargo sus pasos suenan
y su vestido suena, callado, como un árbol.

30 Yo no sé, yo conozco poco, yo apenas veo,
pero creo que su canto tiene color de violetas
húmedas,
de violetas acostumbradas a la tierra
porque la cara de la muerte es verde,
y la mirada de la muerte es verde,
35 con la aguda humedad de una hoja de violeta
y su grave color de invierno exasperado.

Pero la muerte va también por el mundo vestida
de
escoba,
lame el suelo buscando difuntos,
la muerte está en la escoba,
40 es la lengua de la muerte buscando muertos,
es la aguja de la muerte buscando hilo.

La muerte está en los catres:
en los colchones lentos, en las frazadas negras
vive tendida, y de repente sopla:
45 sopla un sonido oscuro que hincha sábanas,
y hay camas navegando a un puerto
en donde está esperando, vestida de almirante.

So That You Will Hear Me Pablo Neruda (trans. W.S. Merwin)

So that you will hear me
my words

sometimes grow thin
as the tracks of the gulls on the beaches.

Necklace, drunken bell
for your hands smooth as grapes.

And I watch my words from a long way off.
They are more yours than mine.
They climb on my old suffering like ivy.

It climbs the same way on damp walls.
You are to blame for this cruel sport.
They are fleeing from my dark lair.
You fill everything, you fill everything.

Before you they peopled the solitude that you occupy,
and they are more used to my sadness than you are.

Now I want them to say what I want to say to you
to make you hear as I want you to hear me.

The wind of anguish still hauls on them as usual.
Sometimes hurricanes of dreams still knock them
over.

You listen to other voices in my painful voice.

Lament of old mouths, blood of old supplications.
Love me, companion. Don't forsake me. Follow me.
Follow me, companion, on this wave of anguish.

But my words become stained with your love.
You occupy everything, you occupy everything.

I am making them into an endless necklace
for your white hands, smooth as grapes.

Para Que Tu Me Oigas Pablo Neruda

para que tu me oigas
mis palabras
se adegazan a veces
como las huellas de las gaviotas en las playas.

Collar, cascabel ebrio
para tus manos suaves como las uvas.

Y las miro lejanas mis palabras.
Más que mías son tuyas.
Van trepando en mi viejo dolor como las yedras.

Ellas trepan así por las paredes húmedas.
Eres tú la culpable de este juego sangriento.
Ellas están huyendo de mi guarida oscura.
Todo lo llenas tú, todo lo llenas.

Antes que tú poblaron la soledad que ocupas,
y están acostumbradas más que tú a mi tristeza.

Ahora quiero que digan lo que quiero decirte
para que tú me oigas como quiero que me oigas.

El viento de la angustia aún las suele arrastrar.
Huracanes le sueños aún a veces las tumban.
Escuchas atrás voces en mi voz dolorida.

Llanto de Viejas bocas, sangre de Viejas súplicas.
Ámame, compañera. No me abandones. Sígueme.
Sígueme, compañera, en esa ola de angustia.

Pero se van tiñendo con tu amor mis palabras.
Todo lo ocupas tú, todo lo ocupas.

Voy haciendo de todas un collar infinito
para tus blancas manos, suaves como las uvas.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines

Pablo Neruda (1924) (trans. W.S. Merwin)

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, "The night is starry
and the stars are blue and shiver in the distance."

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

5 Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms.
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.

10 How could one not have loved her great still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more immense without her.
And the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture.

15 What does it matter that my love could not keep her.
The night is starry and she is not with me.

This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.
My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

My sight tries to find her as though to bring her closer.

20 My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.

The same night whitening the same trees.

We, of that time, are no longer the same.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.

My voice tried to find the wind to touch her hearing.

25 Another's. She will be another's. As she was before my kisses.
Her voice, her bright body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but maybe I love her.

Love is so short, forgetting is so long.

30 Because through nights like this one I held her in my arms
my soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer
and these the last verses that I write for her.

From:
Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair

Puedo Escribir

Pablo Neruda

Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.

Escribir, por ejemplo : “La noche está estrellada,
y tiritan, azules, los astros, a lo lejos.”

El viento de la noche gira en el cielo y canta.

5 Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
Yo la quise, y a veces ella también me quiso.

En las noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos.
La besé tantas veces bajo el cielo infinito.

Ella me quiso, a veces yo también la quería.

10 Cómo no haber amado sus grandes ojos fijos.

Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.
Pensar que no la tengo. Sentir que la he perdido.

Oír la noche inmensa, más inmensa sin ella.
Y el verso cae al alma como al pasto el rocío.

15 Qué importa que mi amor no pudiera guardarla.
La noche está estrellada y ella no está conmigo.

Eso es todo. A lo lejos alguien canta. A lo lejos.
Mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Como para acercarla mi mirada la busca.

20 Mi corazón la busca, y ella no está conmigo.

La misma noche que hace blanquear los mismos árboles.
Nosotros, los de entonces, ya no somos los mismos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto pero cuánto la quise.
Mi voz buscaba el viento para tocar su oído.

25 De otro. Será de otro. Como antes de mis besos.
Su voz, su cuerpo claro. Sus ojos infinitos.

Ya no la quiero, es cierto, pero tal vez la quiero.
Es tan corto al amor, y es tan largo el olvido.

30 Porque en noches como ésta la tuve entre mis brazos,
mi alma no se contenta con haberla perdido.

Aunque ésta sea el último dolor que ella me causa,
y éstos sean los últimos versos que yo le escribo.

Walking Around

Pablo Neruda (trans. Donald D. Walsh)

It so happens I am sick of being a man.
And it happens that I walk into tailor shops and
movie houses
dried up, waterproof, like a swan made of felt
steering my way in a water of wombs and ashes.

5 The smell of barbershops makes me break into
hoarse sobs.
The only thing I want is to lie still like stones or
wool.
The only thing I want is to see no more stores, no
gardens,
no more goods, no spectacles, no elevators.

It so happens that I am sick of my feet and my
nails
10 and my hair and my shadow.
It so happens I am sick of being a man.
Still it would be marvelous
to terrify a law clerk with a cut lily,
or kill a nun with a blow on the ear.

15 It would be great
to go through the streets with a green knife
letting out yells until I died of the cold.
I don't want to go on being a root in the dark,
insecure, stretched out, shivering with sleep,
20 going on down, into the moist guts of the earth,
taking in and thinking, eating every day.
I don't want so much misery.
I don't want to go on as a root and a tomb,
alone under the ground, a warehouse with corpses,

25 half frozen, dying of grief.
That's why Monday, when it sees me coming
with my convict face, blazes up like gasoline,
and it howls on its way like a wounded wheel,
and leaves tracks full of warm blood leading
toward the night.

30 And it pushes me into certain corners, into some
moist houses,
into hospitals where the bones fly out the window,
into shoe shops that smell like vinegar,
and certain streets hideous as cracks in the skin.
There are sulfur-colored birds, and hideous
intestines
35 hanging over the doors of houses that I hate,
and there are false teeth forgotten in a coffeepot,
there are mirrors
that ought to have wept from shame and terror,
there are umbrellas everywhere, and venoms, and
umbilical cords.

40 I stroll along serenely, with my eyes, my shoes,
my rage, forgetting everything,
I walk by, going through office buildings and
orthopedic shops,
and courtyards with washing hanging from the
line:
underwear, towels and shirts from which slow
45 dirty tears are falling.

From:
The Poetry of Pablo Neruda (Ed. Ilan Stavans)

Walking Around

Pablo Neruda

Sucede que me canso de ser hombre.

Sucede que entro en las sastrerías y en los cines
marchito, impenetrable, como un cisne de fieltro
Navegando en un agua de origen y ceniza.

- 5 El olor de las peluquerías me hace llorar a gritos.
Sólo quiero un descanso de piedras o de lana,
sólo quiero no ver establecimientos ni jardines,
ni mercaderías, ni anteojos, ni ascensores.

- Sucede que me canso de mis pies y mis uñas
10 y mi pelo y mi sombra.
Sucede que me canso de ser hombre.

- Sin embargo sería delicioso
asustar a un notario con un lirio cortado
o dar muerte a una monja con un golpe de oreja.
15 Sería bello
ir por las calles con un cuchillo verde
y dando gritos hasta morir de frío

- No quiero seguir siendo raíz en las tinieblas,
vacilante, extendido, tiritando de sueño,
20 hacia abajo, en las tapias mojadas de la tierra,
absorbiendo y pensando, comiendo cada día.

No quiero para mí tantas desgracias.
No quiero continuar de raíz y de tumba,
de subterráneo solo, de bodega con muertos

25 ateridos, muriéndome de pena.

Por eso el día lunes arde como el petróleo
cuando me ve llegar con mi cara de cárcel,
y aúlla en su transcurso como una rueda herida,
y da pasos de sangre caliente hacia la noche.

- 30 Y me empuja a ciertos rincones, a ciertas casas
húmedas,
a hospitales donde los huesos salen por la ventana,
a ciertas zapaterías con olor a vinagre,
a calles espantosas como grietas.

- Hay pájaros de color de azufre y horribles intestinos
35 colgando de las puertas de las casas que odio,
hay dentaduras olvidadas en una cafetera,
hay espejos
que debieran haber llorado de vergüenza y espanto,
hay paraguas en todas partes, y venenos, y
ombligos.

- 40 Yo paseo con calma, con ojos, con zapatos,
con furia, con olvido,
paso, cruzo oficinas y tiendas de ortopedia,
y patios donde hay ropas colgadas de un alambre:
calzoncillos, toallas y camisas que lloran
45 lentas lágrimas sucias.

We Are Many

Pablo Neruda (trans. Alastair Reid)

1 Of the many men who I am, who we are, always sure of themselves.
I can't find a single one; I die with envy of them;
they disappear among my clothes, 25 and in films full of wind and bullets,
they've left for another city. I goggle at the cowboys,
I even admire the horses.

5 When everything seems to be set
to show me off as intelligent,
the fool I always keep hidden
takes over all that I say. But when I call for a hero,
out comes my lazy old self;

10 At other times, I'm asleep
among distinguished people,
and when I look for my brave self,
a coward unknown to me
rushes to cover my skeleton
with a thousand fine excuses. 30 so I never know who I am,
nor how many I am or will be.
I'd love to be able to touch a bell
and summon the real me,
because if I really need myself,

15 When a decent house catches fire,
instead of the fireman I summon,
an arsonist bursts on the scene,
and that's me. What can I do?
What can I do to distinguish myself? 35 I mustn't disappear.
While I'm writing, I'm far away;
and when I come back, I've gone.
I would like to know if others
go through the same things that I do,

20 How can I pull myself together?
All the books I read
are full of dazzling heroes, 40 have as many selves as I have,
and see themselves similarly;
and when I've exhausted this problem,
I'm going to study so hard
that when I explain myself,

45 I'll be talking geography.

From:
The Poetry of Pablo Neruda (Ed. Ilan Stavans)

Muchos somos

Pablo Neruda

De tantos hombres que soy, que somos,
no puedo encontrar a ninguno:
se me pierden bajo la ropa,
se fueron a otra ciudad.

5 Cuando todo está preparado
para mostrarme inteligente
el tonto que llevo escondido
se toma la palabra en mi boca.

Otras veces me duermo en medio
10 de la sociedad distinguida
y cuando busco en mí al valiente,
un cobarde que no conozco
corre a tomar con mi esqueleto
mil deliciosas precauciones.

15 Cuando arde una casa estimada
en vez del bombero que llamo
se precipita el incendiario
y ése soy yo. No tengo arreglo.
Qué debo hacer para escogermé?

20 Cómo puedo rehabilitarme?
Todos los libros que leo
celebran héroes refulgentes

siempre seguros de sí mismos:
me muero de envidia por ellos,
25 en los filmes de vientos y balas
me quedo envidiando al jinete,
me quedo admirando al caballo.

Pero cuando pido al intrépido
me sale el viejo perezoso,
30 y así yo no sé quién soy,
no sé cuántos soy o seremos.

Me gustaría tocar un timbre
y sacar el mí verdadero
porque si yo me necesito
35 no debo desaparecerme.

Mientras escribo estoy ausente
y cuando vuelvo ya he partido:
voy a ver si a las otras gentes
les pasa lo que a mí me pasa,
40 si son tantos como soy yo,
si se parecen a sí mismos
y cuando lo haya averiguado
voy a aprender tan bien las cosas
que para explicar mis problemas
45 les hablaré de geografía.