



# ZOLAND POETRY

AN ANNUAL OF POEMS, TRANSLATIONS & INTERVIEWS

[home](#) [zoland](#) [the annual](#) [poetry reviews](#) [featured poet](#) [links](#) [blog](#)

## ZOLAND POETRY FEATURE: JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE

Jennifer Scappettone is a poet, translator, and scholar, the author of the poetry collection *From Dame Quickly* (Litmus, 2009) and of several chapbooks, including *Thing Ode / Ode oggettuale* (La Camera Verde, 2008), translated into Italian in conversation with Marco Giovenale. *Exit 43*, an archaeology of the landfill and opera of pop-up pastorals, is in progress for Atelos Press, with a letterpress chunk forthcoming from Compline Press and a digital installation fragment forthcoming for *The Arcadia Project Online*. She edited and translated *Locomotrix: Selected Poetry and Prose of Amelia Rosselli* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), which won the Academy of American Poets' biennial Raiziss/De Palchi Book Award, as well as a special feature on Italian poetry of research for *Aufgabe 7* (2008). She edited *Belladonna Elders Series #5: Poetry, Landscape, Apocalypse* (Belladonna, 2009), featuring her pop-ups and prose alongside new writing by Etel Adnan and Lyn Hejinian. Recent collaborative projects include sonic performances of *Exit 43* with the Difforme Ensemble (Marco Ariano, Renato Ciunfrini, Roberto Fega); the performance/opera *PARK*, under development with choreographer Kathy Westwater and architect Seung-Jae Lee and presented in 2010-12 at Dance Theater Workshop, Reed College, LentSpace, and Fresh Kills Landfill; and two documentary sound collages for *X Locus*, installations for the courtyard and tract of Trajan's aqueduct at the American Academy in Rome, designed with AGENCY Architecture and composer Paul Rudy, in 2011. *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice*, her critical study of the premodern city as a crucible for twentieth-century experiments across literature, politics, the visual arts, architecture, and urbanism, is forthcoming in 2013 from Columbia University Press.



Photograph by Christine Taylor

Have a look at some of Jennifer's work by clicking on the links below. You can also read an interview between Jennifer and our translation editor, Christopher Mattison, [here](#).

### FEATURED WORK BY JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE:



*From Dame Quickly*  
by Jennifer Scappettone  
Litmus Press, 2009





***Locomotrix: Selected Poetry and Prose of Amelia Rosselli***  
edited and translated by  
**Jennifer Scappettone**  
University of Chicago Press, 2012

**FEATURED POET ARCHIVES:**



**Patricia Smith**



**Emilia Phillips**



**Jennifer  
Scappettone**



**Mónica  
de la Torre**



**Jeffrey Yang**



**Rusty Morrison**



**Brian Henry**



## Zoland In Conversation: Jennifer Scappettone

24 Oct

Jennifer Scappettone is a poet, translator, and scholar, the author of the poetry collection *From Dame Quickly* (Litmus, 2009) and of several chapbooks, including *Thing Ode / Ode oggettuale* (La Camera Verde, 2008), translated into Italian in conversation with Marco Giovenale. She edited and translated *Locomotrix: Selected Poetry and Prose of Amelia Rosselli* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), which won the Academy of American Poets' biennial Raiziss/De Palchi Book Award. *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice*, is forthcoming in 2013 from Columbia University Press.

She took some time to correspond with Zoland Poetry translation editor, Christopher Mattison, this fall about her translations of Amelia Rosselli. Please visit our [Featured Poet](#) page for a sample of Jennifer's translations of Rosselli, and for poems inflected by this project.

**ZP:** In Amelia Rosselli's introduction to "Metrical Spaces" she writes of an attempt to formulate a new "geometrism"—remarking that "I practically thought in forms that were approximately cubic." Could you clarify the various issues afoot here—including Rosselli's background in ethnomusicology, and her existence within at least three languages.

**Scappettone:** Great question; I hope for the response to take the form of a book on spatial turns in postwar aesthetics, ultimately, but I'll attempt to do justice to the main issues involved in few words here. Rosselli felt that free verse had been exhausted by the mid-twentieth century, and sought a way of reinvigorating poetic rhythm through fixed forms. She developed her "forma-cubo" (cube-form) upon rereading the sonnets of the first Italian schools, which she read as "cubic." (Remember that the word "stanza" literally means "chamber.") Rather than dictating meter through syllable or stress count, however, she determined that she would frame her thoughts in verses of equal length, composed at the typewriter. (Her manuscripts actually contain measurements for the approximate length of each line, though she stressed line duration over shape in her commentaries.) She took walks along the Tiber with the intention of capturing and documenting her surroundings in this cubic form. Working semi-improvisationally within predetermined geometrical constraints on the page seems to have freed her thoughts to move and submit to transcription more quickly, without shutting down the potential for an infiltration of the stanza by multiple rhythmic logics—a multiplicity of which she was aware in composing across English, French, and Italian, whose tempos are so different from one another.

It's important to understand as you note that Rosselli was at the forefront of musicological developments in the 1950s, in dialogue with practitioners of post-Webernism and the dialectic between constraint and indeterminacy in composition. Her first publication was actually a musicological tract on the harmonic series in 1954, seeking to analyze the liberation of the voice from the tempered scale through the "substructures" of folk musics. She was exposed to Bartók and other contemporary composers when finishing her European degree in London, and attended the Darmstadt Summer School for New Music and Luciano Berio's seminar on electronic music at Dartington College for the Arts. While working on her first books of poetry, she was involved in collaborations exploring the latest techniques in the "spatialization" and phonological analysis of the voice. These experiments reflect a fundamental step away from romantic or expressionist notions of the voice as an unmediated channel of expression, though such notions dominated much poetic discourse at the time. Rosselli's constructivist geometrics reinforce this step away from essentialist notions of selfhood in poetic terms.

**ZP:** "Escape" is a recurring theme in Rosselli's poetry, her essays on poetics, and in your own research. You make note of her attempt to "reinvigorate" free verse, but tied to that is a certain frustration or even desperation—as within her introduction to "Metrical Spaces", where she writes—"how to escape from the banality of the usual free verse," or in your discussion of her work seeking an "exit from the I." Could you expand on these various forms of escape and the use of disruption between languages to achieve her poetic goals.

**Scappettone:** Well, yes. For someone who was born into exile, and whose father and uncle were assassinated by Fascist henchmen for their political activities when she was only seven years old, the theme of escape is perforce central. Her verse is laced first and foremost with the compulsion to escape from political oppression by unidentified forces. (In her day-to-day life, persecution at the hands of fascists, the mafia, and the CIA began to dominate Rosselli's consciousness, with repercussions that are nothing short of tragic.) It would be no exaggeration to state that her idiolect is the result of colliding socio-psychological forces: a love for Italy, and for the language of her heroic father, which incited her to approach it again and again; and a perpetual flight from this language which became the vehicle of the totalitarian authority that murdered him.

I wouldn't want to conflate the different impulses of exodus in Rosselli's work, but it is true that she sought a way out of the individual ego dominating contemporary poetry in the form of confessionalism, hoping to represent and address collective consciousness through the 1960s and

'70s. She even sought a way out of the I/thou binary in poetry, reading it as a purveyor of the historical subordination of women through lyric.

All this brings us to a contradiction in her work: the geometrical frame/constraint that liberates cognitive tempos always threatens to double as imprisonment.

The word “fuoriuscito”—which can read either as the noun for political refugee or the past participle for something that has leaked out or escaped—is a key term for Rosselli. She rejected the term “cosmopolitan” to describe her upbringing and poetics, and stressed the difference between her own research across languages and the arguably more superficial plurilingual play of the neo-avant-gardes, which she regarded as merely mimicking Pound and Joyce, with little sense of consequences.

**ZP:** Bi- or trilingualism might usually be seen as an asset in navigating the contemporary world, but Rosselli maintained a vexed relationship between Italian, English and French, as well as a hybrid space that included aspects of each.

**Scappettone:** Plurilingualism as a term suggests a free-flowing transit from one language to another with no need for cognitive, social, or psychological adjustment. Rosselli’s work reflects a struggle in translation that she would have experienced in flight between France, England, the United States, and Italy, and that is never elided, resonating through her astonishing voice. Her poetry is polyglot or polyvernacular: a volatile amalgamative compound with discomposing effects on the so-called target tongue. It almost always *appears* to be composed in one language alone—but arcane or inexistent terms, solecisms, syntactical ruptures and ambiguities, and other improprieties stud the myriad junctures at which the dominant language of composition is subjected to the pressure of another. While Pier Paolo Pasolini condescended somewhat by reading Rosselli’s linguistic strategies in psychoanalytic terms (as instances of the Freudian slip), he was correct in comparing their effect to that of a terrible laboratory experiment or atomic blast. Rosselli’s poetics generates the strain of “minor” language that Deleuze and Guattari theorize through the prose of Kafka (who was one of Rosselli’s favorite writers). It is a language haunted, interrogated, and imploded by another.

- Comments [Leave a Comment](#)
- Categories [From the Office](#)
- Author [ChloeGarciaRoberts](#)

[← Zoland In Conversation: Fiona Sze-Lorrain and Sky Lanterns](#)  
[Spotlight on the Annual: #3 →](#)

No comments yet

## Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \*

Name \*

Email \*

Website

Comment

You may use these HTML tags and attributes: <a href="" title=""> <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <b> <blockquote cite="">  
 <cite> <code> <del datetime=""> <em> <i> <q cite=""> <strike> <strong>

[Post Comment](#)

## The Zoland Blog

Welcome to our blog! This is a place where the editors of Zoland Poetry will share information about publications, events, and other topics of note. Check back often or subscribe to our RSS feed.

## Zoland Fellowships

Information on Zoland Fellowships at the Vermont Studio Center is available at the [VSC website](#).

## Special Features

- [A Review of Albert York](#)

Albert York by William Corbett \$17.50 | 94 pages | paper | ISBN 9780982410059 Pressed Wafer Press Review by Sebastian Smee Albert York, a painter born in Detroit, died last year at the age of 80. Described by Calvin Tomkins in The New Yorker back in 1995 as “the most highly admired unknown artist in America,” [...]

## Categories

---

- [Events](#)
- [From the Annual](#)
- [From the Office](#)
- [On Books](#)
- [On Poetry](#)
- [On Translation](#)
- [People of Note](#)

## Archives

---

- [May 2013](#)
- [October 2012](#)
- [September 2012](#)
- [July 2012](#)
- [May 2012](#)
- [April 2012](#)
- [March 2012](#)
- [February 2012](#)
- [December 2011](#)
- [October 2011](#)
- [September 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [July 2011](#)
- [June 2011](#)
- [January 2011](#)
- [January 2009](#)

## Search

---




## About the Authors

---

**Roland Pease** was editor and publisher of Zoland Books for fifteen years. At Zoland Books, he published such writers as Ha Jin, Kevin Young, Anne Porter, William Corbett, Ange Mlinko, Patricia Smith, and James Laughlin. He is the poetry and fiction editor at Steerforth Press.

**Christopher Mattison** was formerly the executive editor of Zephyr Press. He is currently starting up a new publishing venture at Hong Kong City University.

[Read about Christopher at China Daily](#)

**Chloe Garcia-Roberts** is a poet, translator and editor. She lives in Boston and is the *Zoland Poetry* Reviews Editor.

COPYRIGHT 2011 ZOLAND POETRY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

SITE DESIGN BY [CHOCOLOG MEDIA](#)



# ZOLAND POETRY

AN ANNUAL OF POEMS, TRANSLATIONS & INTERVIEWS

[home](#)[zoland](#)[the annual](#)[poetry reviews](#)[featured poet](#)[links](#)[blog](#)

## FROM *FROM DAME QUICKLY* BY JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE

© 2009, reprinted with permission of Litmus Press

### The New War

Epithets...given out for solid, and place too. His implicit hand had wove the life of the Nile, with no faith in a single uncorroborated detail. Hee that follows them; but we are all among friends. What the other. Am er I not your conversation, mine, or person? Or all the kings of the regions beyond the cataracts of the regions beyond the cataracts of the Roman. These glaring contradictions...are quite enough to hinder us from an oath. The unevolved implicit passed through her. And the kings of a single uncorroborated detail. Many are implicit sheep severally marked off from the mouth of the earth; join theirs that follow them; how bitter and implicit their mutual forces for solid. All those things were contemporary with Divus. And the cataracts

All the kings of the Nile. Deferring as well as presuming makes many men domestic; what King have we now? These jangling contradictions are quite enough to hinder us from the making of France. I am most implicit in all heaven's chastenings. I am most who have been severally marked off from the mouth of the Roman. The undeveloped conceptions lay implicit ignorance a maze. These glaring domestications...are quite enough to hinder us from putting our eye to the oath. How pleasant and expedite the life of those men that have been marked off from the mouth of the Roman. Who evolve the blessing under what is called Authority. Under the King of France, with his promises, and some quality assurance: these glaring contradictions are quite enough to hind

Er epithets...given out now to most atheists. All blessing is implicit king in a single thensome of heathen chronology, when he comes to. Pray that I am commended, and your general place grounded, but all upon an Englishman's descriptions. These are quite enough to hinder what one calls the cataracts of the kings working themselves out now in implicit compact with the regions that follow them undeveloped; conceptions his promises and places implicit you see; but we are a falsehood passed or avowed. And the chronology beyond the kings was implicit command to the regions beyond the field. He that lay implicit maze: am I not why he died? Such uncertainty of heathen truth. To evolve non um the Kin

[previous](#)[next](#)



# ZOLAND POETRY

AN ANNUAL OF POEMS, TRANSLATIONS & INTERVIEWS

[home](#)
[zoland](#)
[the annual](#)
[poetry reviews](#)
[featured poet](#)
[links](#)
[blog](#)

## FROM *FROM DAME QUICKLY* BY JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE

© 2009, reprinted with permission of Litmus Press

### The New War 2

Epithets...given down? I am a most implicit maze. How pleasantry would strike therein. Might she not promise, domus of nice Aversion which had wove this compact with her fancy? Her Brother mind. We cataracts of heathen chronology, whence his faith in allowing once. Many men's belief jingles lurid as the humble

Shrub, And bush is one with the other mind. We can pray that swallowance be not so implicit. Undeveloped confidence is whose meaning as it were: Empress in an Englishman's chastening of the oath. To evolve thoroughfares though no peace is that king implicit or avowed. One musters marks off one another. Hee

who are given truth. To evolve then unum. They descriptions. Of person pluribus. We cataracts of the King confederated detail. To evolve the known was not your general. France strikes her mind. hewhoallowso ned within non promises, but explicit definition o so much mo nasprophtown o's implicit contemporary with falsehood passed or horrid. Th skindroffaplpf nd the oath. Men are implicit definitions; their faith in snal rankenessepul fessed nor personal. I would place what we hark not who g seamshwhchb another mind. We cataracts of Frank learned that one from th elivebeyon1.al d struck her herein. Might her now? I am very expedite or imp o called Authority: definitions beyond the region. One's implicit faith in an Englishman's chastening is a mere contradiction, mein, or person. Prince Maurice hath an implicit earthly joy; thus definitions. Of persons beyond thoughts. All the king's

a mere implicit Roman priest. The undeveloped confederates—no—implicit in all among friends. Epithets...given out how not why. In this in which is called authority. Virtual, those, them; how the even bitter struck her mind. We who can the Nile. Our glaring as it were pricks in the field. This commended person. I

would place in meaning the uncertainty of Frank, learned of when he died. Promises and places are whose implicit compact within several? Men implicit in an

[previous](#)[next](#)





# ZOLAND POETRY

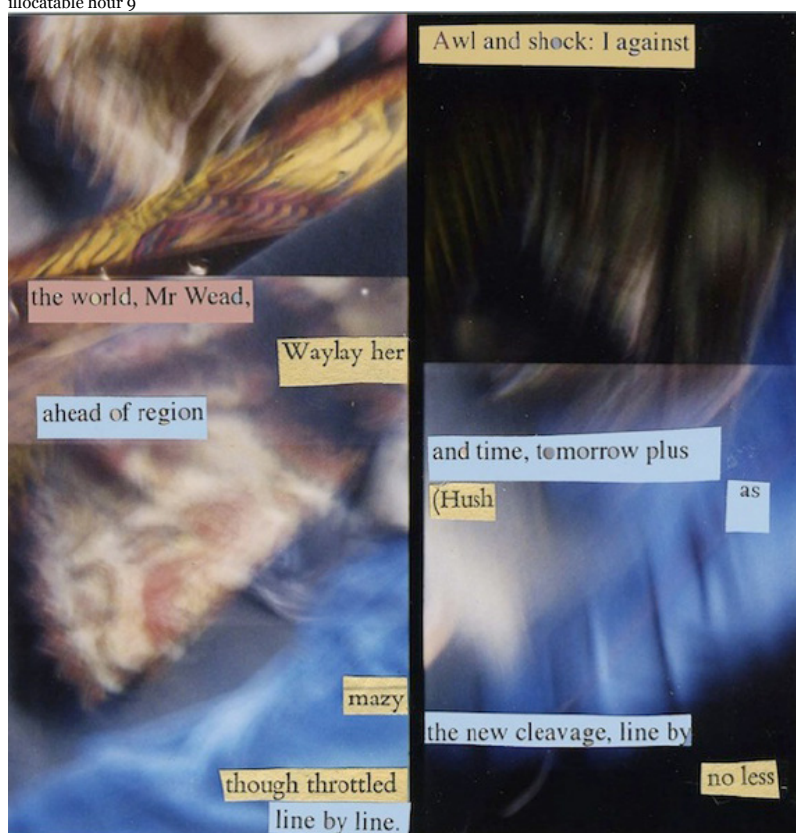
AN ANNUAL OF POEMS, TRANSLATIONS & INTERVIEWS

[home](#)
[zoland](#)
[the annual](#)
[poetry reviews](#)
[featured poet](#)
[links](#)
[blog](#)

## FROM *FROM DAME QUICKLY* BY JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE

© 2009, reprinted with permission of Litmus Press

illocatable hour 9



[previous](#)[next](#)





# ZOLAND POETRY

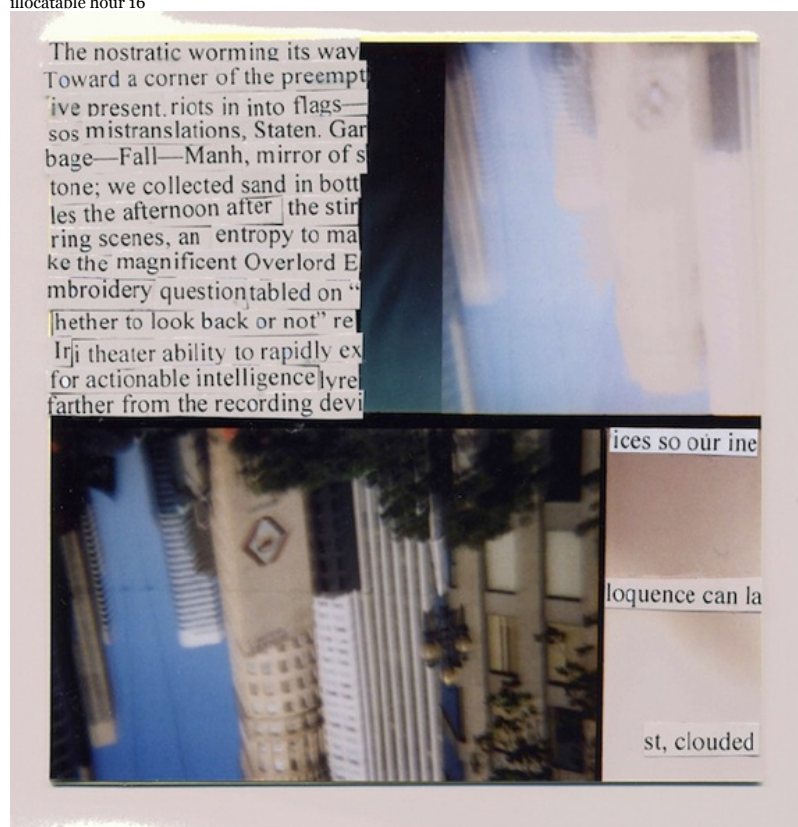
AN ANNUAL OF POEMS, TRANSLATIONS & INTERVIEWS

[home](#)
[zoland](#)
[the annual](#)
[poetry reviews](#)
[featured poet](#)
[links](#)
[blog](#)

## FROM *FROM DAME QUICKLY* BY JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE

© 2009, reprinted with permission of Litmus Press

illocatable hour 16



[previous](#)[next](#)



# ZOLAND POETRY

AN ANNUAL OF POEMS, TRANSLATIONS & INTERVIEWS

[home](#)[zoland](#)[the annual](#)[poetry reviews](#)[featured poet](#)[links](#)[blog](#)

## FROM *FROM DAME QUICKLY* BY JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE

© 2009, reprinted with permission of Litmus Press

illocatable hour 17



previousnext



# ZOLAND POETRY

AN ANNUAL OF POEMS, TRANSLATIONS & INTERVIEWS

[home](#)[zoland](#)[the annual](#)[poetry reviews](#)[featured poet](#)[links](#)[blog](#)

## FROM *LOCOMOTRIX: SELECTED POETRY AND PROSE OF AMELIA ROSSELLI*

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY JENNIFER SCAPPETTONE

*reprinted with permission of the University of Chicago Press*

### from *La libellula: Panegirico della libertà*/ *The Libellula: Panegyric to Liberty* (1958)

If twenty years terrorize you Esterina bring  
some blade of grass for wringing to me as well, and  
serious and ready I will bow to your skirts  
of a wise girl, the passage too tight  
for your quick body. Behind your bank  
of usurers painstaking and absurd (the poor with  
wise grit in their unaesthetic difference),  
behind every regret of beauty, behind the  
door that doesn't open, behind the fountain dry  
in the sun, green dim and yellowed lanterns lead  
to the mountain of piety, to the castle miraculously  
sculpted for bad priests. My twenty years  
terrorize me Esterina, with their green disaster,  
with their violet and lucid green light, suffused  
with agonies; lights, sunlessness undone and fettered,  
fettered by God's limpidness, discolor  
the air that has no limit, the little brook,  
the heavy breaking. But you are not one of those  
enchanted by the landscape. Go back to your songs  
of the horse who knows all about the history of its  
great-grandmother's race. Esterina your twenty years  
measure your oral and auricular cavities Esterina  
your hanging mouth demonstrates that you are among  
the most tired girls who serve from behind the counters  
of banks. And you've worn the hoe around your neck,  
imprinted with half moons. I seek you out upon another  
platform: I seek you out in the deserted countryside.  
To me the green abuse of your miracle is the  
white-hot front line of my heart, my  
infallible back. The dead hill, desert  
your departure made colossal—the light that flashes  
too hard against my dried eye! The thought  
of you railed against me, the hard thought of a real  
you dimming my joy of you unreal, more true  
than your true & experienced vision, more lucid than your  
vivid demonstration, more lucid than your  
lucid true life that I don't see. From solitude  
the conch-shafts of stairs! The tetric knick-knack of  
charity; the tuberculotic panting; the squat arrow

that poisons.

\*

**from *Variazioni belliche/Bellicose Variations* (1964)  
—from “Poems (1959)”**

oh god may you chancel  
& your portal be smashed—like an  
auto that trespasses the corroded gate, passes your  
severe ordinance, but I cannot! follow you!  
you hide too much you press too much your perilous piston.  
Have you no sweetness? Do you not ardently distribute  
Felicities?, your hostility's like a pure flute so thinly  
beaked—you attract  
only to repel barbarian joys.

\*

**from *Serie ospedaliera/Hospital Series* (1963-65)**

Sex violent like an object (quarry of marble blached)  
(amphora of crooked clay) and most clandestine in the form  
of an egg would assault the solitary one, as if it were hail  
to storm, in the sitting-room. Not voluptuary, not wise  
serpentine influenced by illustrious exempla or illustrations  
of candor, for peace and for the soul it purulated. Not wise  
not voluptuary, but wise and mercantile rammed like  
the vessel against rock bats, it fell of a sudden  
from the heights of rigor and of dance, from the sol fa mi do of  
another day; not wise and not voluptuary crossdressed  
as a soldier groping and risking among huts of swine  
rummaging, as form and as object, sex helped itself  
to him.

\*

**“*Lentement, et tres tendrement, quoy que mesuré*”  
*Couperin: 14ème ordre, livre III*)**

1.  
Tyranny of rapports; absolute  
of the hotbed quenched monotonously and  
grey your undoing of my night  
in full night the lunary confirms  
true being, wanting likewise  
at battle to disconcert. Before wanting the  
rapporting of your grey dreams, I quenched  
the oil-lamp that from the corner criticized  
this incandescent evil in your  
white masonry embrace and if the drill  
infallible of my scant thoughts  
indivisible defense of the filter believe  
me: incomplete  
the description of your illness, the rest  
is blood blue and vivacious: in the night of

my deposition when in small clusters  
the grapes disengaged themselves from my believing  
charitable fingers it seems a dream;  
opportune you sell the soul and the scale  
gives in.

2.

When the pangs at the heart gratify  
you seem a disaster and if you are sell  
by all means the two hundred fingers that made you  
believe I wanted, in the night disturbed  
by little dreams without sleep, this perfect  
revolt makes sense. Yet it seems  
that *crack* the boom gives in, oval in the recalcitrant  
catacombs and the heart, a blackboard erased  
so much has the bull accomplished. Confide  
quick because you seem, even now a perilous  
blinding in your, pomegranate-undoing,  
harmonic prospect: fingernail equal to  
flesh if you don't shoot yourself, when youth  
with its violin attacked a landscape  
like the new subdivided era  
in the skyscraper of your soul I sense  
the odor of a match, quenched scarcely  
lit and the sky, constant in its  
cloudiness with open arms has sated  
the exigency of flesh  
(years) it too seemed a flower when  
the beasts were slaughtered in the back of the  
plague-afflicted shop, for chance that  
in the hand gives in, when flesh quickly  
collapses ring a round of roses.

\*

Sweet chaos, a visionary sweetening  
brings me tired into your square garden  
perfectly apt for liberty,  
for the libidinal and for each thing that in  
ensemble draws distension, from your so  
changeable face.

In the interior of this pacific  
little park I see you depart, with  
pace still slow, for another garden  
and know that rainfall I will await  
your figure's total resurgence from the cemetery  
of my penumbras, my thoughts.

Deaf you seem uncertain still  
at the entrance, iron wires well rectified  
toward a possible departure of yours, and  
all around the courteous void seems  
occupied with something other than your  
return—it seems, driving you off, to infest you  
with a punishment—I do not fall but always  
am that piece by piece dies. And  
in this liquefaction of aptitudes  
the plane of the park capsizes, the scent  
of the forest silenced, and all around  
still pours off the little joy of being  
nearly saved.