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9 de Octubre, 1943, Quito

It is six o'clock  
In Quito,  
After a long white day of sun.  
There are clouds now, ghostly white,  
Shouldering up against the enormous sky.

I hear three sounds together:  
Cannon firing from across the town,  
The mooing of a cow, quite nearby,  
The ringing of the vesper bell in La Teresita, down the street.

These three make a world,  
Have made a world here for centuries past.

These three will be together till Time dies  
Here in Quito  
At six o'clock,  
After long white days of sun,  
And clouds moving against the soundless sky.

## Weary

Weary of city pavements,  
Weary of steel and stone:  
My heart is sick for the mountains,  
For a wooded place, alone.

I would go deep in the forest,  
Seek out a strong, dark tree,  
Bury my heart in its roots:  
Fall asleep quietly: free.



## Without Sun

I do not know about the Inca gods,  
Nor about the ancients of this land;  
There are histories, and legends,  
There are artifacts in the ruins,  
And many mysteries still;

But they were right to worship the sun,  
Those lost men and their emperors, in this place:  
Without sun, Quito is a ghost weeping against  
Its own terrifying hallucinations;  
Without sun, Pichincha is always Death,  
Tremendous and inviolate, waiting very near.

## The beauty of the earth today

The beauty of the earth today  
Is too great to look upon  
With calm, slow-moving gaze:  
I must shut eyes quickly,  
As against the white-hot sun:  
In each sharp spike of grass,  
In each lark's high, thin cry,  
In each flower's fragile grace  
There is the sudden pain  
Of piercing needle, or of flame.

## Quest

Lonely heart, lonely heart,  
Where would you go?  
«Where love's no matter:  
Into deep snow.»

Lonely heart, lonely heart,  
What would you do?  
«Lie there in darkness,  
All winter through.»

Lonely heart, lonely heart,  
What would you be?  
«Deer-trodden fern bed  
No man should see.»



## Cotocollao

From the earth-warm wall where I sat  
The breeze shook the white bells on the penco  
At the edge of the road;  
The grey burro and the brown stood very quietly in the sun,  
Moving only their ridiculous furry ears;

The two black pigs tied under the straw thatch behind me  
Suddenly became a squealing frenzy,  
Then subsided into snuffles and grunts.

Beyond the white walls and the lichen-tiled roofs  
A man in white worked down the farthest row  
Of his potato field.

The eucalyptus and the cedars held back the sky:  
Dry and hard as a bone,  
Hard as the far blue mountains,  
Hard and clear as the sun,  
Hard as the cold, clear sound of the plane  
Coming from Tulcán.

There is no music:  
There can be no music here.

There is time, centuries of time,  
There is silence,  
There are hands the color of wet clay.  
There are many children, and the sounds they make,  
There are dogs, oranges, empty busses in the square.  
But there can be no music in this clay-colored village:  
The tremendous slopes of Pichincha above it  
Command silence, not song.

## No Gods Any More

There is no one to whom I can turn  
In this of time desolation;  
There are no gods any more  
To whom I can pray.  
There is only myself:  
Torn and twisted and bewildered,  
Knowing my own weakness,  
And therein, devoid of hope.



## Quito - Morning and Afternoon

The morning was clear crystal—  
A fragile glass, exquisitely cut  
To prism and shatter into a thousand shining fragments  
The strong white light and the burning blue sky—

The morning was church bells ringing—  
Insistent,  
Urgent,  
With frenzied zeal,  
Ringing over the Alameda,  
Over Santo Domingo,  
Over San Juan, over Aguarico,  
Over Chimbacalle and far over La Magdalena—

The morning was Iliniza's terrible white needle in the sun.

Now come the long cannonades of thunder over the town,  
And the purple cloud moves down with the wind.  
Only the horizon, the far sky,  
Keep the pearl, the silver, the slate  
That shut out the sun just after noon.  
The rain cloud is the color of ripe plum  
At is moves down,  
down on the town.

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Out of silence, suddenly  
Hail pecks at the panes  
In its moment of staccato madness;

And then the rain is full and soft over the town,  
Blue rain, rich, sweet, and softly falling:  
With gentleness, with grace...

Then,  
With a rush,  
Furiously pounding down,  
Taking all, possessing utterly,  
There is nothing anywhere but the rain pouring down,  
The tremendous glory of rain, strong rain, rushing down  
(The heart stops: don't breathe, don't move)  
And then, it is done.  
The passion spent.  
And the rain comes again softly, sweetly  
Drifting down, until there is a dream  
On the town.  
There is rest, there is peace, there is sleep.



## Near to These Dead

(In the Baños Cemetery)

White crosses and black against clamorous green.  
White sheep and black to crop weeds and grass.  
I walked, and read the names, the dates,  
And looked down on the tile roofs of the town.  
I walked, and read the dates, the names,  
Marking small, inconsequent things:  
«There's just one willow, one...  
And three cypresses, only three..  
On this rosy monument, no name no date...»

Time stopped; the wind rose;  
The mountains were strong and close.  
I could not go.  
What held me, what was it I must find?

(The exquisite spider in her web, and the wind:  
These compelled me, and the rose,  
And I lay down on the warm tomb,  
Near the spider, near the dead.)

What had the wind lost on the mountain,  
To roar in such anger against its stone, its flesh?

What was it I found in the shut eyes, the upturned hand?  
Only this:  
I am near to these, the silent now,  
Who speak out of silence of clear and simple lives,  
Of reverence, and grace.

I am near to these dead, very near.  
Listen. What are they saying?  
Nothing now, nothing at all.  
But I am very near.  
Something of me will always be here.



## Shadow Secret

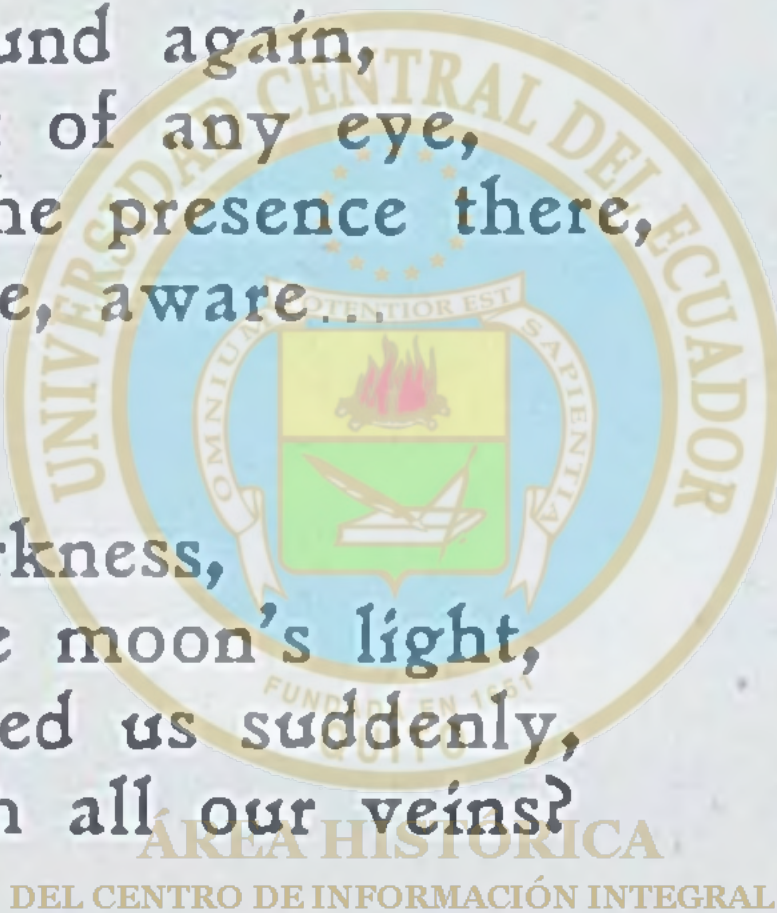
What was it,  
There in the shadows,  
Near the low-trickling stream,  
Startled us, stilled us utterly,  
Quivered through all our veins?

Silent as stone, we stood  
Drenched in the full moon's flood,  
Alert for a tell-tale sign:

Snap of twig, flash of eye;  
Eagerly we strained to know  
What dear or fearful creature  
Of this canyon, wild and deep,  
Moved now to drink: cat, or doe?

We heard no sound again,  
Caught not sight of any eye,  
Yet we sensed the presence there,  
Felt it near, alive, aware.

What was it,  
There in the darkness,  
Out of the white moon's light,  
Startled us, hushed us suddenly,  
Quivered through all our veins?



## On Such a Night As this

On such a night as this,  
Deep in the desert's silence  
Under a frost—encrusted February moon,  
You came into my heart forever.

Forever: I am so sure, so sure  
That every February's frost-white moon  
Will find me—wherever I am—  
And tell me exactly how it was.



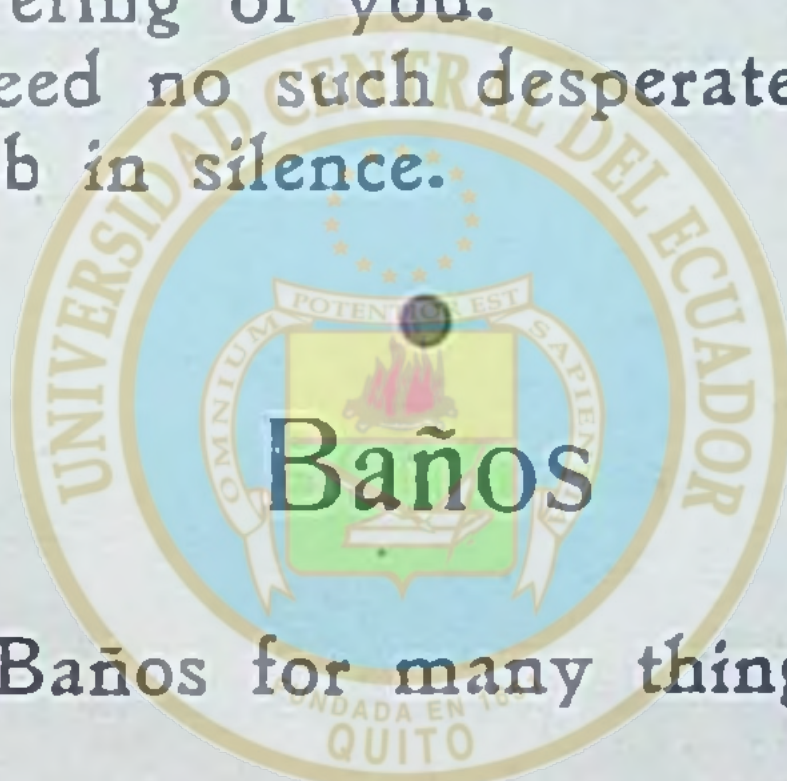
## For Cándida

There is no melody enough like dreams remembered,  
No harmony weaving enough minor-cadenced mysticism,  
Nor any rhythm enough like an underground stream  
Flowing unseen towards the far-lying salt sea marshes;

There is no line enough like spun-glass fibre,  
None enough fragile tenuosity,  
No color with enough intensity,  
Nothing in molded clay, cast bronze, or chiselled stone;

There is no artifice of words keen enough,  
No simile or metaphor in any tongue  
Set apart with enough sensitive precision;  
No sound from any throat, nor word from pen

In which whatever artist could distill an essence  
Of the secret flowering of you.  
I love you, and need no such desperate craft:  
Let the pulse throb in silence.



I shall remember Baños for many things.

For the first day, spent alone among the crosses on the hill.

(Alone? What of the home-made angel, and the sheep?  
What of the spider in the rosebush? What of these?)

For the second, drowned in the roar of the river  
where it cuts the rock.

For the painted miracles I did not see;  
For the paths I took, and did not take;  
For the cat Pedro, and the fraudulent cake.

But most of all, for sound:

Wind and restless water own this place,  
Possess it utterly.  
These Niagaras of sound  
Will roar through my brain, remembering:  
Wind from the Oriente,  
Waterfalls from Tungurahua,  
Descend in terrible violence upon the town;  
Against them even these stone mountains go down,  
And the Indians are quiet in the streets.



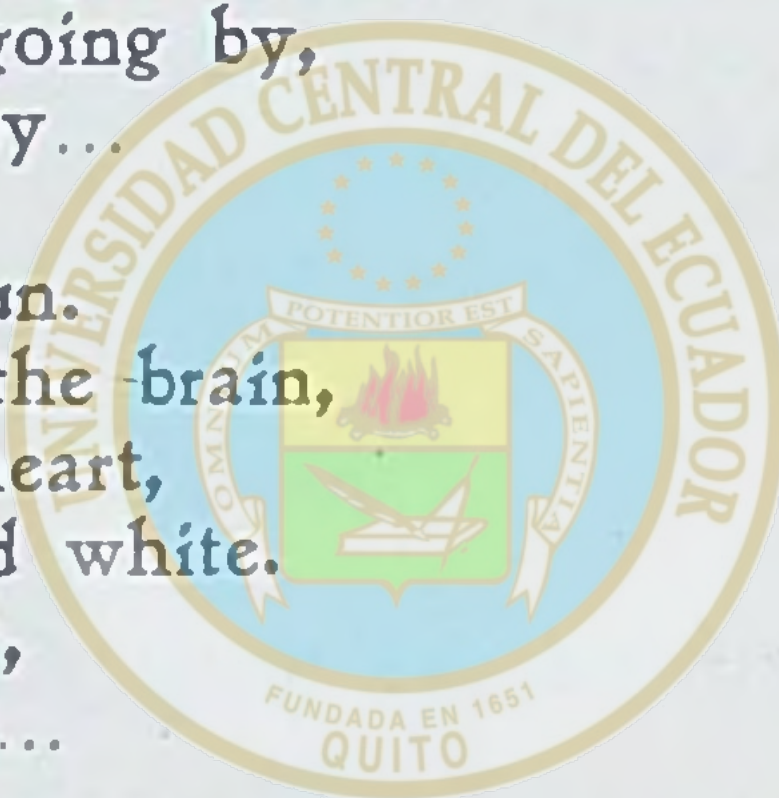
## Lying face down in the warm grass

(Baños)

Never mind the rest.  
 There is the sun, and the cricket  
 In the grass, and the river below,  
 Roaring down its black gorge.  
 Toss a pebble on the pilgrims' heap  
 At the foot of this stone cross;  
 Lie face down in the warm grass,  
 And let all else go,  
     All else go...

Never mind the wind.  
 Here in the grass, near the cricket,  
 The wind can only pass over,  
 Is only the wind going by,  
     Going by...

Never mind the sun.  
 Let it burn black the brain,  
 Let it blister the heart,  
 Let it stay hot and white.  
 Let it stay all day,  
     All day...



This is the river's, ÁREA HISTÓRICA  
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 All this, now:  
 Gone down to the river, given over,  
 Lost in the roar and the foam,  
 Far down...  
     Far down...

## Lovers Need Silence

Lovers need silence and separation,  
 Suffer their love best then.

Caresse, words, the too-usual presence  
 Tame the leopard, lead out the lamb.

Alone, each lover knows  
 He is mixed of fire and air,  
 Knows he is of the sun.



## Invocation

Let the rain come  
And cover the ground,  
Let it seep down  
To the roots of this tree  
Where I've buried my heart  
Away from all light,  
Away from all sound,  
That it may nevermore  
Cry out in travail  
At a high dream undone  
And scattered to dust.

Let the dark earth  
Fold the heart close,  
Let the strong roots  
Keep it secure  
In its still, secret place

Away from all sound,  
Away from all light,  
That I may go free,  
To travel a path  
Safe from the quicksands  
The heart draws not near.

Let the rain come  
And cover the ground,  
Let no trace remain  
For anyone's sight  
Of this I have done  
Under cover of night  
With the sky bending down.  
The secret be mine  
In silence to keep:  
Death for the dreamer,  
Life cool and clear.



## A Wave Broken

In that half-world that lies between dawn and morning,  
When sleep and dreams are slowly melting away,  
There is a tightening of the heart,  
A burning core of brightness near at hand;  
There is calling from far places  
Somehow known and felt, but never seen;  
There is a the faint yet ice-clear sound of music  
Heard long ago in a forgotten time and place;  
There is the memory of all fragile moments  
That lie deep as the heart's sure beat, the temple's throb:  
A bird-call, the lighting of a candle, a cloud passing,  
A rose given, a wave broken, a stream crossed, an echo,  
A name spoken once, and now no more.



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