

Alfonsina Storni

Argentina, 1892-1938

Born in Switzerland but reared in provincial Argentina, Alfonsina Storni went to Buenos Aires at the age of twenty-one and briefly entered the business world before switching to journalism and literature, which she found immensely more satisfying. Her poetry expresses a strong feminism, sees women enchained in a male-dominated world, decries the double standard, and finally becomes a cry of agony when she concludes that men and women are living in a hostile universe.

Man

He has no notion how, but one day man appears,
A being fully made; born blind, within the dark he turns
His waxen eyes. An arm embraces him, he learns,
He sobs. A breast deceives him. He sucks, he perseveres.
Later, his sight will focus and dissolve the dark,
And he will see two eyes, a mouth, a brow and hair,
The muscles of his mobile face give back his stare.
He imitates, he smiles, his lamp has found its spark,
Dream, instinct; soul with coils of fire enfold it;
He frees them in the wind, he sings, he praises,
Miles overhead there is a light in space:
He sees a star; aroused, inspired, he reaches up to hold it,
And then another hand cuts off the hand he raises.

JOHN A. CROW

El hombre

No sabe cómo: un día se aparece en el orbe,
hecho ser; nace ciego; en la sombra revuelve
los acerados ojos. Una mano lo envuelve.
Llora. Lo engaña un pecho. Prende los labios. Sorbe.

Más tarde su pupila la tiniebla deslíe
y alcanza a ver dos ojos, una boca, una frente.
Mira jugar los músculos de la cara a su frente
y aunque quién es no sabe, copia, imita y sonríe.

Da una larga corrida sobre la tierra luego.
Instinto, sueño y alma trenza en lazos de fuego,
los suelta a sus espaldas, a los vientos. Y canta.

Kilómetros en alto la mirada le crece
y ve el astro; se turba, se exalta, lo apetece:
una Mano le corta la mano que levanta.

Vicente Huidobro

Chile, 1893-1948

Huidobro lived for an extended period in Europe, mainly in France, and his first two books of poems are in the tradition of French symbolism. He wrote a considerable number of poems in French. Then he moved into the area of cubism and created poems in "pictorial shapes" reminiscent of Guillaume Apollinaire. His principal contribution to Hispanic poetry is found in his rather vanguardist poems. He founded the movement known as creationism, which later merged into ultraism. Huidobro's essential idea in creationism was to create a poem as Nature creates a tree. Typical of his approach are these lines:

Why do you sing the rose, O, Poets?
Make it flower in the poem.
Only for you live all things under the Sun.
The poet is a small God.³⁶

Sometimes he carries the point too far, and in writing some poems he reached into a shoe-box filled with adjectives on little cards, and pulled these out at random in order to construct strange images. When the young writers of Chile found this out, they lost faith in him.

36. Onís, *Antología*, 1129. (The quotation is from Huidobro's poem "Arte poética.")