

## MUERTE DE ABEL MARTÍN

*Pensando que no veía  
porque Dios no le miraba,  
dijo Abel cuando moría:  
Se acabó lo que se daba.*

Juan de Mairena: *Epigramas*.

## I

Los últimos vencejos revolean  
en torno al campanario;  
los niños gritan, saltan, se pelean.  
En su rincón, Martín el solitario.  
¡La tarde, casi noche, polvorienta,  
la algarazara infantil, y el vocerío,  
a la par, de sus doce en sus cincuenta!

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¡Oh alma plena y espíritu vacío,  
ante la turbia hoguera  
con llama restallante de raíces,  
fogata de frontera  
que ilumina las hondas cicatrices!

\*

Quien se vive se pierde, Abel decía.  
¡Oh, distancia, distancia!, que la estrella  
que nadie toca, guía.  
¿Quién navegó sin ella?  
Distancia para el ojo—¡oh lueña nave!—  
ausencia al corazón empedernido,  
y bálsamo suave  
con la miel del amor, sagrado olvido.  
¡Oh gran saber del Cero, del maduro  
fruto, sabor que sólo el hombre gusta,  
agua de sueño, manantial oscuro,  
sombra divina de la mano augusta!

Antes me llegue, si me llega, el Día,  
la luz que ve, increada,  
ahógame esta mala gritería,  
Señor, con las esencias de tu Nada.

## II

El ángel que sabía  
su secreto salió a Martín al paso.  
Martín le dio el dinero que tenía.  
¿Piedad? Tal vez. ¿Miedo al chantaje? Acaso.  
Aquella noche fría  
supo Martín de soledad: pensaba  
que Dios no le veía,  
y en su mudo desierto caminaba.

DEATH OF ABEL MARTIN<sup>1</sup>

*Thinking he could not see  
since God wasn't looking at him,  
Abel said as he was dying:  
What was given has ended.*

Juan de Mairena: *Epigrams*.

## I

The last swifts are circling  
around the bell tower;  
children are shouting, jumping and scuffling.  
A solitary Martin, in his corner.  
The dusty afternoon, almost over,  
the childish uproar and the hubbub,  
their twelve years of life next to his fifty!

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A full soul and an empty spirit,  
before the smoking fire  
with the crackling of burning roots,  
a campfire on the borderland  
that sheds light on his deep scars!

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Whoever lives, is lost, Abel would say.  
Oh, far away, far away!, the guiding star  
that no one reaches.  
Who has ever sailed without it?  
Distance for the eye—oh faraway boat!—  
absence for the hardened heart,  
and a gentle balm  
with the honey of love, sacred forgetfulness.  
The great wisdom of the Zero, of the ripe  
fruit, whose taste only man can savor,  
water of dreams, a dark well-spring,  
a divine shadow cast by the exalted hand!

On the Day—the uncreated light that sees—  
before it arrives, if it does arrive, Lord,  
drown out my selfish whining,  
with the essence of your Nothingness.

## II

The angel who knew  
his secret confronted Martin.  
Martin gave him all the money he had.  
Charity? Perhaps. Fear of blackmail? Maybe.  
On that cold night  
Martin experienced loneliness: he thought  
that God did not see him,  
and he moved on in his silent desert.

## III

Y vio la musa esquiva,  
de pie junto a su lecho, la enlutada,  
la dama de sus calles, fugitiva,  
la imposible al amor y siempre amada.  
Díjole Abel: Señora,  
por ansia de tu cara descubierta,  
he pensado vivir hacia la aurora  
hasta sentir mi sangre casi yerta.  
Hoy sé que no eres tú quien yo creía;  
mas te quiero mirar y agradecerte  
lo mucho que me hiciste compañía  
con tu frío desdén.

Quiso la muerte  
sonreír a Martín, y no sabía.

## IV

Viví, dormí, soñé y hasta he creado  
—pensó Martín, ya turbia la pupila—  
un hombre que vigila  
el sueño, algo mejor que lo soñado.  
Mas si un igual destino  
aguarda al soñador y al vigilante,  
a quien trazó caminos,  
y a quien siguió caminos, jadeante,  
al fin, sólo es creación tu pura nada,  
tu sombra de gigante,  
el divino cegar de tu mirada.

## V

Y sucedió a la angustia la fatiga,  
que siente su esperar desesperado,  
la sed que el agua clara no mitiga,  
la amargura del tiempo envenenado.  
¡Esta lira de muerte!

Abel palpaba  
su cuerpo enflaquecido.  
¿El que todo lo ve no le miraba?  
¡Y esta pereza, sangre del olvido!  
¡Oh, sálveme, Señor!

Su vida entera,  
su historia irremediable aparecía  
escrita en blanda cera.  
¿Y ha de borrarte el sol del nuevo día?  
Abel tendió su mano  
hacia la luz bermeja  
de una caliente aurora de verano,  
ya en el balcón de su morada vieja.  
Ciego, pidió la luz que no veía.  
Luego llevó, sereno,  
el limpio vaso, hasta su boca fría,  
de pura sombra—¡oh, pura sombra!—lleno.

## III

And he saw the elusive muse  
standing next to his bed, the mournful one,  
the evasive lady of his streets,  
who was beyond his love, yet always loved.  
Abel said to her: Lady,  
because I hoped to see your face uncovered  
I thought I would live until the dawn,  
until I felt that my blood scarcely flowed.  
Today I know you are not the one I expected;  
but I wished to see you and to thank you  
for all the time you kept me company  
with your cold disdain.

Death tried to smile  
at Martin, and she didn't know how.

## IV

I lived, I slept, I dreamed and even created  
—Martin thought, as his eyes grew dim—  
a man who watched over  
sleep, something better than just dreaming.  
But if the same fate  
awaits the dreamer and the watcher,  
the one who traced out the roads,  
and the one who followed them, heedlessly,  
then the only creation is your pure nothingness,  
your gigantic shadow,  
the divine concealment of your gaze.

## V

And after his anguish he felt the fatigue  
caused by his desperate anticipation,  
the thirst that water does not satisfy,  
the bitterness of an impure life.  
This lyre of death!

Abel's hand felt  
his weakened body.  
Wasn't the one-who-sees-all watching him?  
And this apathy, the blood of oblivion!  
Please save me, Lord!

His entire life,  
his unalterable history, appeared before him  
written in soft wax.  
And will you be eclipsed by the sun of a new day?  
Abel reached out his hand  
toward the vermillion light  
of a warm summer dawn,  
now on the threshold of his former abode.  
Blind, he asked for the light he could not see.  
Then he calmly lifted up  
to his cold mouth the clear glass,  
with pure shadow—yes, pure shadow!—overflowing.

## OTRO CLIMA

¡Oh cámaras del tiempo y galerías  
del alma tan desnudas!,  
dijo el poeta. De los claros días  
pasan las sombras mudas.

Se apaga el canto de las viejas horas  
cual rezo de alegrías enclaustradas;  
el tiempo lleva un desfile de auroras  
con séquito de estrellas empañadas.  
¿Un mundo muere? ¿Nace  
un mundo? ¿En la marina  
panza del globo hace  
nueva nave su estela diamantina?  
¿Quillas al sol la vieja flota yace?  
¿Es el mundo nacido en el pecado,  
el mundo del trabajo y la fatiga?  
¿Un mundo nuevo para ser salvado  
otra vez? ¡Otra vez! Que Dios lo diga.  
Calló el poeta, el hombre solitario,  
porque un aire de cielo atarecido  
le amortecía el fino estradivario.  
Sangrábale el oído.  
Desde la cumbre vio el desierto llano  
con sombras de gigantes con escudos,  
y en el verde fragor del oceano  
torsos de esclavos jadear desnudos.  
Y un *nihil* de fuego escrito  
tras de la selva huraña,  
en áspero granito,  
y el rayo de un camino en la montaña...

ANOTHER CLIMATE<sup>2</sup>

Oh, chambers of time and corridors  
of the soul, how naked!,  
the poet said. The silent shadows  
of bright days are passing by.

The music of the old hours dies out  
like a prayer of cloistered joys.  
Time brings a parade of dawns,  
with a trail of extinguished stars.  
Is a world dying? Is a world  
being born? In the watery  
belly of the planet is another ship  
leaving its diamantine wake?  
Has the old fleet turned belly up?  
Is it the world that was born in sin,  
the world of toil and weariness?  
A new world that must be saved  
again? Again! May God tell us.  
The poet, a lonely man, was silent  
because a cold wind out of the sky  
muted his delicate Stradivarius.  
His ears were bleeding.  
From the heights he saw the deserted plain  
with shadows of giants bearing shields,  
and in the green clamor of the ocean  
the naked torsos of panting slaves.  
And a *nihil* of fiery letters written  
on the sheer granite  
beyond the hostile forest,  
and the ribbon of a road on the mountainside...

<sup>1</sup>For an interpretation of "The Death of Abel Martin" see Chapter III of my book *The Religious and Philosophical Thought of Antonio Machado*, also posted on this web site.

<sup>2</sup>For an interpretation of "Another Climate" see Chapter IV of my book *The Religious and Philosophical Thought of Antonio Machado*, also posted on this web site.