

ANTONIO COLINAS: POETRY AND LIFE (1967-1988),  
A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUNDATIONAL POETIC WORKS  
WITH SELECTED TRANSLATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

Maria C. Fellie: Antonio Colinas: Poetry and Life (1967-1988),  
A Critical Introduction to the Foundational Poetic Works with Selected Translations  
(Under the direction of Irene Gómez Castellano)

Antonio Colinas (La Bañeza, León, Spain, 1946) is a well-known and important contemporary poet in the Spanish-speaking world (*Premio Nacional de Literatura*, Spain 1982); however, the wide appeal of his verses makes his work a perfect candidate for an introduction and translation into English. The present critical anthology of Colinas's early and mid-career poetic works deploys the lens of translation theory to frame an image-centered analysis of his poetry. The dissertation argues that the poetic image is the most tangible medium through which poet, translator, and reader connect, through which ideas flow between languages. This study consists of an introduction to the theory and practice of poetic translation, a biographical introduction to Colinas, four chapters of critical overview and analysis of Colinas's first nine books of poetry (written 1967-1988), and a bilingual anthology of representative translated poems from each of the books discussed. My project is the first to give a scholarly overview of his poetic works in English and includes the first anthology of his poetry in English translation. Through Antonio Colinas's poetry, readers can transcend historical time and geographical space, and enter into a unique aesthetic and symbolic poetic world that constantly strives for beauty, plenitude, knowledge, and harmony.

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# **Antonio Colinas: Poetry and Life (1967-1988), A Critical Introduction to the Foundational Poetic Works with Selected Translations**

*“Escribir [mis poemarios] ha sido un proceso muy unido a mi vida, aunque no siempre el poema refleja la vida; el poema metamorfosea la realidad, la enriquece y trasciende.”<sup>1</sup>*

– Antonio Colinas

“Writing [my books of poetry] has been a process deeply connected to my life, although the poem does not always reflect life; the poem metamorphoses reality, enriches and transcends it.”<sup>2</sup>

– Antonio Colinas

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<sup>1</sup>From an interview by Manuel de la Fuente for ABC, “Antonio Colinas: ‘La poesía puede sanar y salvar’.”

<sup>2</sup>All translations in this study, including citations and poems, are mine unless otherwise noted.

### **Preface: The Goals of this Study**

The principal aim of this study is to present the poetic works of Spanish poet Antonio Colinas (1946, León, Spain) for the first time in English, accompanied by a representative collection of translations. This critical introduction and bilingual anthology will complement one another and enhance the reading experience and quality of access that English speakers and readers have to Colinas's work. As one of the best known and most popular poets of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in Spain, Colinas has published a remarkable procession of poetic works –among other texts– that have formed a symbolic universe and visual-literary aesthetic unique to him. The flow that he creates among ideas, symbols, images, words, and other elements of his poems unites individual books into a coherent and important body of work that speaks to readers of all times and cultures.

In the first chapter I engage with established theories of translation. Here I examine the ideas of scholars such as Willis Barnstone, who considers the act of translation to be both a profoundly critical and creative act; Susan Bassnett, who argues for poetic translation as a flexible and holistic process, rather than a prescriptive one; Hans Vermeer, who developed the *Skopos* theory –the idea that a text should be translated according to its purpose or audience–, and various others. Considering a variety of viewpoints from established theorists allows us to “see” more clearly the weave of ideas that can contribute to a translator's thought process and shape her methodologies. In this first chapter I participate in the discussion by contributing my own theory on the translation of poetry, whose development is based on my practice of

translating the poetry of Colinas and others.<sup>3</sup> I propose that meaning is generated in the space between an original and a translated poem, a space that contains concrete visual and sensorial images that are independent of either text. The translator-critic can facilitate the flow of these images from poet to reader by “seeing,” interpreting, and recreating them within this middle ground.

Following the chapter on translation theory and an introduction to the poet, the next four chapters include a critical overview of Colinas’s foundational books of poetry set within the historical, cultural, and literary contexts of modern-postmodern Spain, as well as elements of Colinas’s biographical history. The close readings that I carry out are centered on poetic imagery as it relates to my analyses of the poems within these contexts. Chapters three through six give an overview of Colinas’s poetic production from 1967 through 1988, including critical summaries and representative analyses from the independent books of poetry from these years.<sup>4</sup> These chapters serve to introduce Antonio Colinas and his body of poetic works to English-speaking readers throughout the world and to make introductory studies of his work accessible to academic and non-academic audiences all in one volume. The last section of this anthology is the bilingual index of poems, the first to be compiled of Antonio Colinas’s works in English. My objective is that each section of this anthology will provide the basic ideas encompassed by any one of Colinas’s books of poetry, along with examples in English translation. It is my hope that this edition of his poetry in English will promote Colinas’s reputation and help establish the importance of his lifetime of literary achievements throughout the world.

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<sup>3</sup>I have also translated poetic works by Pablo Neruda, Miguel Rocha, and others.

<sup>4</sup>By “independent” books, I mean that they are not anthologized.

*“[Reading] is a form of translation, and, conversely, translation is obviously a form of intense reading.”<sup>5</sup>*  
– Willis Barnstone

## **Chapter I: Theories of Translation and of Translating Poetry**

### **Postmodern Visions of Translation**

During the past fifty years, Translation Studies has been undergoing developments both as an academic discipline and profession. It is still in a strange position wavering somewhere between doubt and belief, insignificance and value, indefiniteness and clarity. Nevertheless, the need for skilled and professional translators is rapidly growing in many industries, including literature, and thus the demand for academic formation in translation is growing as well.<sup>6</sup>

Translation in today’s world is largely a supplementary service for commercial and government activities: it is perceived as practical and necessary, but is not generally highly regarded. Its reputation within academia and literary publishing is similar, and translators’ names are still frequently excluded from title pages, book covers, syllabi, and bibliographies. The act of translating a literary text is regularly discounted or ignored, and one of the major doubts within the academic sphere is whether or not translation should be considered a part of critical literary analysis. It is often said by literary translators, however, that the act of translation is one of the closest critical analyses that can be carried out on a text. I maintain that while literary translation is a creative activity, it is also a deeply critical endeavor.

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<sup>5</sup> From *The Poetics of Translation* (7).

<sup>6</sup>It seems likely that the growing market for and accessibility to electronic texts will increase the market for global translated literature into English, and thus increase the demand for trained and talented literary translators. For the moment, however, the percentage of literary works translated into English and sold in the United States is under one percent (“About Three Percent”).

Literary translators must consider the literal and figurative meanings and placement of each word and phrase in both source and target texts, how words work together and separately, connotation and denotation, cultural and historical factors, the author's biography and literary production, and more, in addition to employing a myriad of invisible, frequently instantaneous, simultaneous translation decisions and processes. In his essay "Translation as a Decision Process," Jiří Levý asserts that the act of translating involves "a series of a certain number of consecutive situations – moves, as in a game – situations imposing on the translator the necessity of choosing among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives" (148). Levý's idea suggests an *infinite* number of possible outcomes for a given text, each one depending on previous decisions or "moves."

Regarding the translator herself, Vladimir Nabokov, in his article "The Art of Translation," names his three "requirements that a translator must possess in order to be able to give an ideal version of a foreign masterpiece":

First of all he must have as much talent, or at least the same kind of talent, as the author he chooses. [...] Second, he must know thoroughly the two nations and the two languages involved and be perfectly acquainted with all details relating to his author's manner and methods; also, with the social background of words, their fashions, history and period associations. This leads to the third point: while having genius and knowledge he must possess the gift of mimicry and be able to act, as it were, the real author's part by impersonating his tricks of demeanor and speech, his ways and his mind, with the utmost degree of verisimilitude. (*New Republic*)

Nabokov's ideals, as he admits at the end of his essay, are in reality unattainable. Even so, the study and practice of translation can teach us about the limitless diversity of text itself, and can bring us even closer to deciphering all that a given text contains and suggests. For as many informed decisions as the translator must make, there are just as many theories attempting to explain how and why one method is most appropriate for translation in general, or for a

particular text and its unique situation. In the following pages I explore some of these theories in relation to my own ideas and practice of translation.

The claim that translation is a form of literary criticism has rarely been supported by specific evidence of the critical aspects of translating a given work of literature. This is partly because, in the words of William Weaver, theorizing “The Process of Translation” (this is the article’s title) “trie[s] to make conscious and logical something that is, most of the time, unconscious, instinctive” (117). Though there are countless translation theorists and translators, relatively few consider themselves to be translator-critics, those who approach translation as a highly analytical process, as part of literary criticism. This does not mean to discount the innumerable and valuable critical editions of translated literary texts that exist, but to point out that critical introductions rarely describe the critical process of translation itself. This is partly why translation has not gained the attention of literary critics, because the critical processes of literary translation lack significant demonstration. Susan Bassnett writes: “Rarely do studies of poetry and translation try to discuss methodological problems from a non-empirical position, and yet it is precisely that type of study that is most valuable and most needed” (*Translation Studies* 92). While in agreement with Bassnett, I also believe that it is necessary to illustrate theoretical claims with concrete examples.

Critical for the advancement of literary translation today is the need to abolish the long-held and too-often repeated ideas that translation is “impossible,” that the translator is a “traitor” (*traduttore traditore*), or that a translated text is at best a shadow or reduced version of the original.<sup>7</sup> In his article “Translating Poetry” Yves Bonnefoy states that: “The answer to the

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<sup>7</sup>José Ortega y Gasset asserts in his essay “La Miseria y el esplendor de la traducción” that translation is a utopian endeavor, impossible but worthwhile.

question, ‘Can one translate a poem?’ is of course no. The translator meets too many contradictions that he cannot eliminate; he must make too many sacrifices” (186). Bonnefoy summarizes centuries of thought on the topic, and it has only been in the past few decades (the postmodern era) that this mindset has begun to lose credence. The powerful sense of loss attributed to a translated text is a misconception, albeit an enduring one that is therefore difficult to eradicate. But, rather than lose *ourselves* in what is lost between a text and its translation, we should consider what the new text can offer to its adoptive language, time, and culture.<sup>8</sup> It is vital for today’s global and globalizing societies to change the dominant view of translated literary texts as lesser creations (or worse, as not creations at all), and to affirm their value and significance. There are so many things that a translation *can* be: it is disheartening and unproductive to focus on what it is not.

Any translation is a product of its historical, cultural, linguistic, and geographical contexts, and, more specifically, a product of the understanding and creativity of the translator. Gideon Toury, in his article “The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation,” states that “‘translatorship’ amounts first and foremost to being able to play a social role [...] within a cultural environment” (*Translation Studies Reader* 169). Like most works of literary criticism, no literary translation is definitive or timeless, and they must be redone from time to time if the work is to survive in the present.<sup>9</sup> Translations can revive and reshape older texts, allow ideas to

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<sup>8</sup>See Itamar Even-Zohar’s essay “The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem” for more details on his theory of where translated works fit into the dynamic of literature as a whole (the “Polysystem”). He writes of one possibility: “To say that translated literature maintains a central position in the literary polysystem means that it participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem. [...] Through the foreign works, features (both principles and elements) are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before. These include possibly not only new models of reality to replace the old and established ones that are no longer effective, but a whole range of other features as well, such as a new (poetic) language, or compositional patterns and techniques” (*Translation Studies Reader* 163).

<sup>9</sup>Some translations become classic texts themselves or inspire subsequent translations, such as Alexander Pope’s translations of Homer and Horace. For example, Pope’s long poem “*Eloisa to Abelard* was founded upon a

travel, and offer knowledge, narrative, images, and beauty to those who otherwise would not have access to them. Kimon Friar notes in his article “On Translation”:

The original vision [of the author] may never be regained [...] This situation is not tragic, but simply irrevocable, and even magnificently exhilarating. A fine translation [...] not only reshapes the body of a work [...], it infuses new life into this body by injecting into it the warm, living blood of its own time, place, and language. (199)

In our rapidly globalizing world, translation is also a medium through which we can offer and accept diversity and innovation. Translation is both an approach to and a result of acquiring and teaching global citizenship.

In his book *The Poetics of Translation*, Willis Barnstone asserts the importance of translation within the disciplines related to language:

The key question is whether the activity of translation itself is to be seen as separate from or intrinsic to general theories of literature and language. It is my view that when translation is considered a transforming principle, a fundamental and vital ingredient in perception, writing, reading, and rereading, then its study, by necessity, takes its place as an essential element in any general theory of literature, ranging from Aristotle to recent reading theory and semiotics. [...] [Reading] is a form of translation, and, conversely, *translation is obviously a form of intense reading*. Given these intimacies, it impoverishes us not to think of translation theory as essential in literary theory, and of both notions as necessary to a general field theory of literature. (*Poetics* 7, emphasis mine)

It seems logical that an endeavor as integral as translation to fields such as literature, education, business, international politics, law, and medicine should be well-regarded and valued. Within literary studies specifically, translation is and has been an essential tool for the spread of important works and knowledge for millennia.<sup>10</sup> Walter Benjamin states in his essay “The Task

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translation from the French, published in 1714 by Hughes, which is itself a manipulated translation from the famous Latin originals” (Stephen 34).

<sup>10</sup>Translation may owe its modest reputation in part to a concept resembling the “aura” of an original work of art that Walter Benjamin discusses in his “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (217-251). If the original piece of literature retains this “aura” in its own language, then the translation process eliminates from the translated text some or a great deal of the impression of the text’s unique creative value.



of the Translator” that, compared with translation, “criticism [is] a *lesser* factor in the continued life of literary works” (76). Literature lives on only if people are able and willing to read it—translation can provide the renewal necessary to create this continuity for many literary works.

### Translating Poetry

*Yes, translation of poetry is **conceivable**.  
In a small room with desk and keyboard,  
I am a verbal hood practicing the shameless art  
of concealing an earlier author with a new passport,  
a new language, and sharing a new voice for sale.<sup>11</sup>*  
– Willis Barnstone

The translation of poetry is a highly debated practice. As mentioned above, many critics throughout history have dismissed the possibility of translating poetry as simply and decidedly “impossible” –for example, Bonnefoy, Nabokov, and Ortega y Gasset– despite the fact that many persist in doing it. Conversely, Barnstone believes that “poetry is central, being the ultimate challenge at the complex heart of the art of literary translation” (*Poetics* 4). In her book *Translation Studies*, Susan Bassnett’s chapter “Poetry and Translation” mentions the seven translation methods explored in *Translating Poetry* by André Lefevere in order to negotiate a poem into another language. His seven methods are: phonemic, literal, metrical, poetry into prose, rhymed, blank verse, and interpretation (93).<sup>12</sup> Lefevere’s list of defined approaches suggests that a given poem should take only one form or focus in its translated state, and that the

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<sup>11</sup>Excerpt from the poem “Conceivable: Transfer Dwells in Imperfection” in *ABC of Translation* (bold emphasis is the author’s).

<sup>12</sup>Originally in Lefevere’s *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (1975). Phonemic translation “attempts to reproduce the SL [source language] sound in the TL [target language] while at the same time producing an acceptable paraphrase of the sense” (Bassnett 93). Regarding interpretation, “Lefevere discusses what he calls *versions* [...] and *imitations*” of the original poetic text, which in these cases share little with the original (93).

translator should follow one prescriptive method throughout the translation process. His idea that “one can translate [a work of literature] only in a limited number of ways” restricts both the creativity of the translator and the boundless potential of the text (4). Many past and present translators and thinkers, like Lefevere, have tried to define the best way to translate a given text. The problem with these designations is that each text, even each word within one poem, can require a different treatment.

Lefevere also comments that “literary translation is severely handicapped by the absence of any generally accepted methodology to deal with the problem as a whole” (2). What he sees as a problem here –the lack of an all-purpose approach to translation– need not be a problem at all. If we accept that literature, specifically poetry, can come in infinite forms, and that translations are themselves works of literature, then it becomes impossible for both critics and readers to desire such a unilateral methodology. Given also the changing nature of the source text according to time frame and individual perspective, it is necessary that the translated text contain this same dynamic potential. Because of this boundlessness inherent in poetic texts, an unlimited spectrum of potential methodologies for translating poetry seems most appropriate.

Bassnett follows her reference to Lefevere’s seven methods by discussing the use of *multiple* methods within a given poetic text in order to create a “balanced” translation:

[T]he deficiencies of the methods [that Lefevere] examines are due to an overemphasis of one or more elements of the poem at the expense of the whole. In other words, in establishing a set of methodological criteria to follow, the translator has focused on some elements at the expense of others and from this failure to consider the poem as an organic structure comes a translation that is demonstrably unbalanced. (Bassnett 93-94)

Bassnett’s vision of a poem (or any text) as a flexible, “organic” whole gives translators of poetry the freedom to decide what to do with a given stanza, verse, or word. The translation of

poetry requires, without a doubt, a negotiation process in which loss and gain necessarily take place. The new work benefits greatly, however, when the translator sees beyond reducing a poem to just one of its various elements, rather exploring them all and attempting to recreate as many as possible in an even manner. This balance in poetic elements is, of course, up to the translator, and can frequently cause debate over which elements are the most significant. Because translating literature is an interpretive act, the translator (like a literary critic), must decide which elements she wishes to retain, recreate, or highlight in her translation. The very act of choosing these stylistic, formal, linguistic, visual, or other elements is part of the critical commentary that the translator makes.

Bassnett's assertions coincide with aspects of the theory of *Skopos*, Greek for "aim" or "purpose," introduced into Translation Studies in 1984 by Hans Vermeer (Pym 44). Like Bassnett's idea, Vermeer's *Skopos* theory also takes into account the flexibility of a translated text, considering for whom or for what purpose a text is translated. Anthony Pym summarizes Vermeer's theory: "The basic idea is that the translator should work in order to achieve the *Skopos*, the communicative purpose of the translation, rather than just follow the start [or source] text" (44). In this way a translated text might achieve its maximum effectiveness for a particular audience, type of text, or publisher. In poetry we might consider, for example, if the translation is meant for an academic, one-author anthology published by a university press, a bilingual anthology of just the poems, an anthology of multiple poets' works, an illustrated (non-annotated) small-press edition, a reading at a library or poetry festival, a private citizen, a professor or teacher, a student, one's own class, and so on. Any of these circumstances would affect fundamentally the format, the way in which the translator chooses to translate each poem, and which, if any, supplementary information would be included. The present anthology is

conceived as an academic one-author anthology. It contains an introduction and overview directed towards primarily academic audiences and annotations with cultural, linguistic, geographical, and historical information to clarify certain words or references within both original and translated texts.<sup>13</sup>

My own methodology for translating poetry is not defined by rules (as in Lefevre's seven methods), but instead by the goals for the finished text (part flexibility in translation methodology, and part consideration of *Skopos*). The manner in which the poems in this anthology are translated tends toward the literal, allowing for flexibility in sentence structure to facilitate the flow of the verses in English. The well-known translator-critic Anne Carson writes of her translations that she uses "where possible the same order of words and thoughts as Sappho," and that "the more I [Carson] stand out of the way, the more Sappho shows through" (3). I maintain this more literal translation style for similar reasons: in order to preserve as closely as possible Colinas's poetic imagery (which in the majority of his texts is quite concrete), and to allow his own style, word order and choice, structure, and other original elements to come through in the translation.

### Translating Visually

As translators we must choose our own methodology, combined with knowledge of the original author's work and contexts, for translating a given text or even a single word within it.

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<sup>13</sup>Walter Benjamin, in "The Task of the Translator," presents a theory contrary to that of Vermeer's *Skopos*: "In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful. [...] Art [...] posits man's physical and spiritual existence, but in none of its works is it concerned with his response. No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener" (69). In the present day Benjamin's notion, conceiving of all forms of art as inaccessible, independent creations, seems incomplete and impractical, since Western culture construes art, including literature, as a *product*, in terms of its economic worth. Vermeer published his *Skopos* theory in the postmodern era, during a time in which social and economic change no longer allowed anyone (artist, publisher, museum, vendor) to ignore the "receiver," audience, or reader.

Willis Barnstone writes that “*Fidelity* is a lofty word, like *virtue* or *truth* or *good*, claimed by diverse and opposing approaches to translation” (*Poetics* 5, emphasis in original); I choose to focus my “fidelity” primarily on the poet’s imagery. The approach I have taken to produce the translations in this study is a combination of semi-literal translation tempered with close attention to imagery and the goal of *visually reproducing* Colinas’s poems. This choice of methodology results from the poet’s style and tendency towards concrete and highly visual poetic landscapes, my own aspiration to recreate these landscapes as a similar visual reflection, and the significant lexical similarity between Spanish and English.

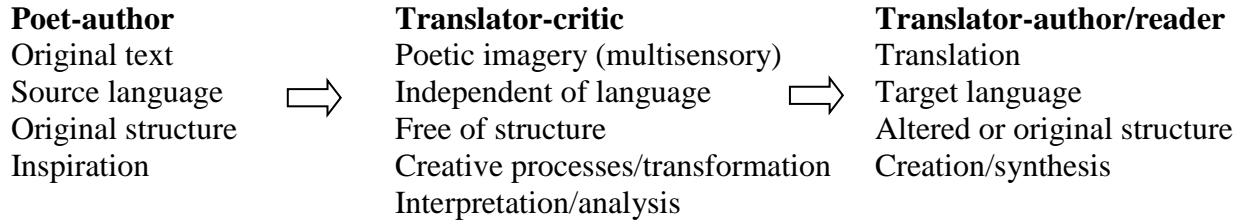
In the classic text *The Art of Translating* (1901), H. C. Tolman offers a description of a similar visually-centered process of translating imagery:

[O]ne ought to associate the words of a foreign language with the objects themselves, of which words are but vocal pictures. Take German, for instance: when the reader meets the word *Baum* there should recur at once to his mind the object itself, and not the English word *tree*; I mean by this that the mental process should be, not *Baum, tree, the object*, but *Baum, the object* and then the English *tree*. This last stage ought only to be reached when the reader assumes the role of a translator. While he is merely reading German, the English *tree* should not intrude into the thought. (Tolman 12)

Tolman’s example illustrates part of a visual-linguistic process that I believe takes place during the act of translation. In my own theory of the translation of poetry, I propose that meaning is created on several levels in the space between an original and translated text. In general, and in the words of the well-known translator and theorist Rainer Schulte: “translation is neither the source language nor the receptor language, but the transformation that takes place in between” (54). More specifically, images exist in this interlingual space, and while these images are primarily visual, they are not exclusively so. Imagery may also be auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory, depending on the individual reader. In this space between poet/original and reader/translation, the translator carries out multiple synesthetic processes in order to recreate the

images and many senses of the original poem in the translation. The following figure attempts to illustrate some of the characteristics of each phase of the act of visually or sensorially translating a poem (these may apply to other types of text as well):

**Figure 1: The Process of Visually/Sensorially Translating a Poem**



Between the original text and translated text, the translator is also functioning as a literary critic while she analyzes the imagery in the source language, interprets it, and transforms it into imagery in the target language. In her article “By the Light of Translation,” Natasha Wimmer writes that “the translated work isn’t (and can’t be) the object itself; it is a reading, an act of seeing” (24).<sup>14</sup> As such an actively analytic, dynamic, and multifaceted act, translation embodies a multisensory process.

The complex process of translation, for me, is inextricably intertwined with the process of analyzing, or “seeing,” a poetic text. The act of translating informs the interpretation of a text as much as analyzing the text informs my translation of it—these are almost never mutually exclusive activities. Describing these processes explicitly is impractical because it would require the delineation of hundreds of detailed decisions for a given text. I will, however, demonstrate some of these translation decisions in the following example. I chose this passage because it is

<sup>14</sup>Natasha Wimmer is the translator of Mario Vargas Llosa, Roberto Bolaño, and Petros Juan Gutiérrez.

particularly evocative of sensorial imagery. It is a relatively short section of the long, dreamlike poem “Sepulcro en Tarquinia,” which is also the name of the book of poems.<sup>15</sup>

[...] todo cayó en efecto, había una música  
y una luz en ojivas y arquivadas,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
techos llenos de frescos, los sagrarios,  
las ancianas maderas aromadas,  
carcomidas, lustrosas, de los coros,  
el retablo, las losas, las trompetas,  
el tropel de los ángeles, a veces  
un son de mandolino, aquella virgen  
de Botticelli con tu rostro, violas  
temblando en nuestras venas y un gran coro  
tronando enfurecido con el órgano,  
con el corazón

[...] indeed everything fell, there was music  
and light in the arches and architraves,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
ceilings full of frescoes, the sacraria,  
the ancient wood of the choir stalls,  
aromatic, worm-eaten, polished,  
the altarpiece, the tombstones, the trumpets,  
the host of angels, sometimes  
the sound of a mandolin, Botticelli’s  
virgin with your face, violas  
quivering in our veins and a great choir  
thundering mightily with the organ,  
with the heart

(“Sepulcro en Tarquinia” excerpt, 171)

My translation methodology for this specific excerpt combines semi-literal and sensorial translation, with an overarching focus on replicating the visual and auditory elements of the verses. I use cognates whenever possible, with words such as architraves, sacraria, aromatic, violas, veins, and organ. In very few cases I chose a non-cognate, such as “polished” for “*lustrosas*,” in order to more authentically evoke the imagery of a church’s shiny wooden choir stalls. I maintain a good part of the original syntax (including instances of polysyndeton), because much of it makes sense in English, and because Colinas’s original structure creates an increasing rhythm that cascades these multisensory images onto our consciousness. This flow of images creates tension with the almost staccato rhythm created by the polysyndeton and the separation or ordering of images in the verses.

Above I have listed just a few examples of how each word (or even punctuation mark) of a poem may require a special treatment during the translation process, and how a variety of

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<sup>15</sup>See chapter IV for more information on this poem and on the book that contains it, *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975), as well as detailed analyses of parts of this poem and others in the same book.

translation methods may result in a more balanced text. These are processes that I carry out on each translated text in this study.<sup>16</sup> The act of translating is a way to interpret and express creatively a renewed vision of the literary work, and is also a way to structure and inform literary criticism. While writing the following chapters, my critical analyses and translation processes often combined and transformed each other, creating meaning between the two in a way that one process alone could not.

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<sup>16</sup>There are a few instances in this study in which I do not translate a particular excerpt from a poem. In these cases, I use the untranslated excerpts as examples to illustrate broader claims for the book, as opposed to close readings of entire poems (for which I have translated and included the entire poem).



## **Chapter II: Introduction to Antonio Colinas (1946), Poet**

### **Biographical and Literary Contexts**

Antonio Colinas Lobato was born in La Bañeza, León, Spain on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Since his university days in the 1960s, he has been active in the literary world and has steadily built his reputation as one of the most prolific poetic voices in Spain of the past fifty years. Colinas's poetry, characterized by a neo-pantheistic philosophy, deep sentimentality, and the search for cosmic harmony, holds a unique place within the panorama of contemporary Spanish poetry. His body of work is united in the idea that writing poetry is a vital, fluid act that is interwoven with life and all its facets. His neo-pantheistic vision of the universe sees everything as connected: humans, animals, nature, knowledge, and art are linked through a divine flow or rhythm.

This philosophy, however, is just one of several characteristics that set him apart from his contemporaries. The content of Colinas's early poetry stands out from that of his contemporaries because of its frequent and unapologetic homage to literary tradition at a time when others were trying to escape it. His study of writers such as Unamuno, Neruda, Novalis, Hölderlin, and others, deeply influenced the mood, imagery, and sometimes subject matter of his poems. Some call Colinas a neo-Romantic, a *novísimo*, a *culturalista*, or other terms, and in reality he encompasses all of these labels to some extent. What makes his work exceptional, however, is the poet's desire to create texts that express a deep vitality and connection to his world and that exhibit qualities that make them widely accessible.

Neither an introduction to Antonio Colinas's poetic works in English nor a collection of his poems translated into English has been published. With this study I propose to begin filling these two voids by presenting here both a critical introduction to Colinas's poetry from 1967 through 1988 and an anthology of selected representative poems in translation. There is no doubt that his life's work deserves such attention. Since the 1960s, Colinas has consistently published poetry, continuously refining and developing his classic style and largely ahistorical subject matter. Through the present he has published over sixteen distinct books of poetry (not to mention numerous special editions, reprints, and anthologies), in addition to narrative, essays, translations, criticism, autobiography, and more.<sup>17</sup> In 2004 Cátedra published a collection of three of his best-known books of poetry<sup>18</sup> and, more recently, in 2011 Siruela published his *Obra poética completa*, though his most recent book of poetry was released in April of 2014: *Canciones para una música silente*. Commenting on the *Obra poética completa*, P. H. Riaño writes: "Cree Antonio Colinas que hay que restaurar la palabra herida por la rapidez con la que la actualidad la usa y la destruye, la golpea y la transforma, la debilita y hiere. Siempre escribir 'a contracorriente,' dice, [es] una de las misiones esenciales de la poesía" ("Tiritas para el paraíso"). Colinas, however, does not write "a contracorriente" simply for the sake of doing so, but because his poetic creation is deeply personal in origin and develops from independent

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<sup>17</sup>In order of creation & publication: *Junto al lago* (1967, pub. 2001), *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre* (1969), *Preludios a una noche total* (1969), *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972), *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975), *Astrolabio* (1979), *En lo oscuro* (1981), *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983), *La viña salvaje* (1985), *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988), *Los silencios de fuego* (1992), *Libro de la mansedumbre* (1997), *Tiempo y abismo* (2002), *Desiertos de la luz* (2008), *Catorce retratos de mujer* (2011), *Canciones para una música silente* (2014). Over two dozen anthologies of his poetry have been published: Susana Agustín Fernández's *Inventario de Antonio Colinas* includes an exhaustive bibliography of works by and about Colinas, updated through 2007. The *MLA International Bibliography* lists at least two dozen critical essays and books with Colinas as the main subject, and another thirty critical works authored by the poet himself. Colinas also continues to write and collaborate in writing articles for *El País* and other news and cultural publications in Spain.

<sup>18</sup>These three books (*Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, *Noche más allá de la noche*, and *Libro de la mansedumbre*) are introduced, edited, and annotated in the Cátedra edition by José E. Martínez Fernández.

thought and experience. He is frequently associated with literary groups or generations, but in reality belongs to none of them.

In 2007 Susana Agustín Fernández published the *Inventario de Antonio Colinas*, a largely annotated, comprehensive bibliography of virtually everything (books, scholarly articles, anthologies, news articles, interviews) written by or about the poet through 2007. Since then Colinas has continued to publish and to receive abundant critical attention, and his bibliography continues to grow. His voice as poet as well as literary professional (journalist, translator, critic) is becoming stronger and more established every year.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Colinas has been awarded several literary prizes, including the Premio de la Crítica de Poesía Castellana (1976), the Premio Nacional de Literatura (1982), the Premio Castilla y León de las Letras (1998), and the Premio Nacional de Traducción de Italia (2005), among others.<sup>20</sup> There have been several exhibitions in honor of his work, including events that cross the borders between literatures and other arts (such as music and sculpture), and he is continuously invited to lecture, present, and read at literary events all over the world.<sup>21</sup> The broad appeal of his poetry makes it relevant to readers from any nation and makes it an excellent candidate for translation into English. Poet Clara Janés, upon reviewing his *Obra poética completa*, comments that: “Colinas destaca ya en su modo de

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<sup>19</sup>In addition to being popular among readers of poetry in Spain in general, Colinas is also said to be a favorite poet of the recently crowned King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia: see the article “Gamonedá y Colinas, favoritos de Letizia” in the *Diario de León* (20 June 2014). This is a testament to the strength of his contributions to Spanish popular culture.

<sup>20</sup>Mención Especial del Premio Internacional Jovellanos de Ensayo 1996, Premio Internacional Carlo Betocchi 1999 (for his translations of and critical works on Italian writers), Premio de la Academia Castellana y Leonesa de Poesía 2001, Leonés del Año 2005, Hijo Adoptivo de Salamanca 2011, X Premio de la Crítica de Castilla y León 2012, among others.

<sup>21</sup>Various annual appearances at Cosmopoética (Córdoba, Spain) and the Feria del libro de Madrid and other Ferias del libro in Spain and Latin America; the 2007-2008 exhibition “Antonio Colinas: 40 años de literatura” in both the Galería de Venatía (La Bañeza) and Biblioteca Pública de la Casa de las Conchas (Salamanca), the 2012 multi-media exhibition of his book of poems *Catorce retratos de mujer* (2011) at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Ibiza, and the concert based on Colinas’s “Cinco canciones con los ojos cerrados” with music composed by Miguel Roig-Francolí (Cincinnati, Ohio, January 2013).

enfrentarse al poema, donde entronca con una totalidad literaria universal” (6). He is, without a doubt, one of Spain’s most prolific and significant contemporary poets, yet he is not as well known or as widely translated as some of his contemporaries (such as Ana Rossetti, Clara Janés, Luis García Montero, and Felipe Benítez Reyes), especially outside of Spain.<sup>22</sup> I hope that this study will promote his work within academic and public spheres both in English-speaking nations and on a global level.

Colinas has said that “escribir [la poesía] ha sido un proceso muy unido a mi vida, aunque no siempre el poema refleja la vida; el poema metamorfosea la realidad, la enriquece y trasciende.”<sup>23</sup> Poetry is an essential part of his existence—it provides him with a catalyst for change and the possibility to discover and communicate something greater than his own reality. Thus, as a basis for exploring Colinas’s poetry, this critical introduction includes biographical elements and significant life events, highlighting those related to his writing. The central chapters incorporate a review of existing studies with a critical overview of Colinas’s poetic production (1967-1988). By combining other critics’ ideas with my own analyses, I aim to give readers a comprehensive and clear vision of each book as a whole and some poems in particular that will be analyzed in detail. The analyses and examples offered will serve as a broad overview of the poet’s work for a wide audience, as well as a starting point for those who wish to study Colinas’s poetry in depth or to continue where my study ends. Each chapter will encompass a distinct era in the poet’s development, partly according to Colinas’s own vision:

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<sup>22</sup>*Tulips: Ten Poems* by Ana Rossetti (1990, translated by Nancy D. Nieman and Susan Suntree), *Incessant Beauty: A Bilingual Anthology* by Ana Rossetti (2014, edited and translated by Carmela Ferradán), *Roses of Fire* by Clara Janés (2004, translated by Anne Pasero), *The World So Often: Poems 1982-2008* by Luis García Montero (2013, translated by Katherine M. Hedeon), and *Probable Lives* by Felipe Benítez Reyes (2006, translated by Aaron Zaritzky).

<sup>23</sup>From an interview by Manuel de la Fuente for *ABC*, “Antonio Colinas: ‘La poesía puede sanar y salvar’” (also quoted as the epigraph on page one).

Colinas distingue [distintas] etapas en su obra: la inicial, marcada por la emoción, el lirismo y la pureza formal que llegaría precisamente hasta *Sepulcro [en Tarquinia]* (1975). Un segundo bloque que iría desde *Astrolabio* (1979) a *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988) y cuyo ‘centro’ sería *Noche más allá de la noche*. (Tanarro 3)

Colinas begins his poetic journey where he was born, in León, and with each book moves outward from his place of origin, exploring new geographical, artistic, and metaphysical territories. Contemporary historical identifiers, however, are largely absent in the majority of his poems—the poems are meant in most cases to transcend time. In her review of the *Obra poética completa*, Clara Janés gives us some tantalizing glimpses into how Colinas’s writing has developed over the decades:<sup>24</sup>

Siguiendo a Heidegger, que dijo que la obra es el origen del artista y el artista es el origen de la obra, sin duda podríamos rastrear estos rasgos en su escritura, concretamente en su poesía, para comprobar su ubicación plural, cruzada por un fuerte hilo conductor de dorada nostalgia que hace que no nos extraviemos. Así es, nos hallamos con él ante tumbas y templos romanos, en el momento del mayor culturalismo (*Truenos y flautas en un templo, Sepulcro en Tarquinia*), por las tierras de Castilla (*Astrolabio*), en los estudios sobre árboles o jardines, en la intensa andadura tras el enigma presidida por seductores contrastes de luz y oscuridad (*Noche más allá de la noche*), [...] en sus novelas (*Un año en el sur y Larga carta a Francesca*) o en sus ensayos donde persevera en una verdad poética ajena a las modas. (“El enigma” 6)

Janés observes that throughout his decades of poetic development, Colinas has always been outside the groups and trends of his day, pursuing an independent artistic path. As I will discuss in later chapters, Colinas is different from other poets of his historic generation because of his overarching neo-pantheistic philosophy (interconnectivity), faith in literary tradition, continuing pursuit of harmony in the universe, and classical style, among other characteristics. While J. M. Castellet posits that many of the *novísimos* and their contemporaries may tend towards sarcasm or “una clara tentación de irracionalismo y de frivolidad” (36), Colinas’s poetry never shows

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<sup>24</sup>Clara Janés: Born 1940, Barcelona. Janés is a well-known poet and prolific translator of literature from several languages, notably Czech (poetic works of Vladimír Holan), but also Catalan, French, Italian, Romanian, Portuguese, and more (Pérez González 66-69). In addition to their facet as prolific literary translators, Janés also shares with Colinas an interest in music, nature, and Eastern thought and culture.

signs of those elements. Furthermore, his foundation in humanist principles is generally not a characteristic of his contemporaries (Castellet 23).

Colinas often incorporates and weaves the five senses into cascades of images that drive his poems forward, creating a verbal-visual flow and sometimes instances of synesthesia (the uniting of two or more senses in a particular experience). If the English translation can convey the same images and literal sense as the original Spanish, readers can *experience* the poem very nearly as they would reading fluently in Spanish. The experience of the senses can, at best, transcend language itself. Throughout his well-known poem “Sepulcro en Tarquinia,” for example, Colinas offers us the sounds of a violin in the night and of an organ sounding in a church or through our veins. He gives us the visions of a red-beaked swan that moves like a lightning bolt through dark water and of an ancient corpse collapsing into dust. When translated sensorially, the images in the poem become fluid; they are no longer rooted in words but in the senses and in multi-sensory imagery. The reader is then seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching the images that the poem offers, and later, will remember these sensory images.

The combination of criticism in English and translations of the poems forms a study that may be useful to both beginning students and advanced scholars of contemporary literature, and also will be accessible to any reader interested in the subject matter or in poetry in general. One primary goal for this anthology is to reach an audience of university students and professors within the fields of Spanish or Hispanic literature, Contemporary world literature, and Spanish or European cultural studies. I have been able to review many of the included poem translations with Colinas; however, as the study has progressed, this process also has informed the selection

of poems from each book.<sup>25</sup> The criteria for selection of the texts to translate includes which poems are most representative of each work as well as which ones stand out from the norm, and which lend themselves best to analysis. The purposes, or *skopos*, of this edition are to disseminate Colinas's work as an exceptional example of contemporary Spanish poetry and, as Carmela Ferradáns writes of her translations of Ana Rossetti, "to introduce [the poet's] symbolic universe" to English-speaking readers (14).

Through translation and an introduction in English, Colinas's poetry and philosophy will expand, like his own geo-poetic frontiers, to be available to an increased audience all over the world. Translation and the act of translating embody a kind of fluidity in the communication between poet-translator-reader, in the flexibility and variety of translation methods, in the constantly shifting layers of meaning of the words themselves, and in the need for subsequent generations to re-translate texts. As both translator and critic, I see this idea of "flow" as a leitmotif to guide both my analysis and translation of Colinas's poems, and I hope that this translated edition will become part of that flow of art, nature, and life that the poet has woven, and continues to weave together.

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<sup>25</sup>Two translated poems have been published in a bilingual format: "Night in León" and "Vision of Winter" in the *International Poetry Review*, volume 37-1 (Spring 2011). I have been able to interview and review translations with Colinas several times thanks in part to the Buchan Excellence Fund Award for travel and research (2013) and was able to further develop my skills in literary translation at the "Translate in the City" short course at City University London (thanks to the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate Student Opportunity Fund grant, 2014) and at the Bread Load Translators' Conference at Middlebury College (2015).

## Antonio Colinas as Translator

It should be noted that Colinas himself is also a prolific literary translator, best known for his translations from Italian (Leopardi, Quasimodo) and Catalan (Gimferrer, Marí), however he has also translated from French and English. Gilda Virginia Calleja Medel's comprehensive study *Antonio Colinas, traductor* (2003), is a detailed account of his production as a translator. As quoted in Calleja Medel, when Colinas was awarded the Premio Castilla y León de las Letras 1998, mentioned among his various roles as a writer and artist was his "ejemplar actividad traductora al castellano" (29). He has also received various awards for his high-quality body of work translated from their cultures of origin, such as the International Carlo Betocchi Prize 1999 (Italy) and the Creu de Sant Jordi 1999 (Catalonia) (29). In addition to his extensive work and publications as a translator, he also is a noted scholar and critic of both Spanish and foreign literatures.<sup>26</sup>

In the book delineating his poetics, *El sentido primero de la palabra poética* (2008), Colinas writes of the task of translation: "Vasta empresa la del traductor" (50), here detailing his poetics as a writer, not as a translator, though for him the two vocations overlap significantly. In more recent years, however, Colinas has written more frequently on the act of translation itself. In his article "¿Por qué he traducido?" (2008) Colinas writes: "Mi interés por la traducción va unido, en sus orígenes, a mi interés por la poesía, que es mi vocación y la raíz de toda mi escritura, incluso de aquella que no es, en un sentido estricto, poética" (175). One of his goals in translating is to "salvar la música, es decir, la 'poesía' del poema," though he also argues for flexibility in translators' methods depending on certain characteristics of the original text (176).

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<sup>26</sup>In addition to having edited and/or translated several Spanish-language anthologies (Juan Ramón Jiménez, Rafael Alberti, *Nuestra poesía en el tiempo* (Siruela 2009)—a comprehensive selection of Spanish poetry, and others), Colinas has also edited the *Antología esencial de la poesía italiana* (Austral 1999), and over thirty other single-author works or anthologies of foreign authors translated into and introduced in Spanish.



Starting with his mid-career poetic works, especially *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983) and *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988), Colinas draws more attention to the fusion or complementary nature of dichotomies as opposed to their contrast. In a similar way, his poetics of translation combines what he views as the two extremes of literary translation, very literal versus free (to capture the essence or spirit of the work). He writes that fusing these two methods in practice is, for him, “la esencia de traducir” (177). As a creative writer himself, Colinas believes that “en la traducción con placer descubrimos lo que, antes que nosotros, crearon y sintieron otros autores. También leemos y traducimos en secreto esos textos que nosotros nunca llegaremos a escribir” (“¿Por qué he traducido?” 182).

### **Chapter III: Early Sentimental Poetry, 1967-1969**

*Junto al lago* (written 1967, pub. 2001), *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre* (1969),  
*Preludios a una noche total* (1969).

Antonio Colinas (1946) was born seven years after the Spanish Civil War ended with Francisco Franco's victory (1936-39): in the 1940s the country was economically ruined, closed off from the world, and had taken steps backwards in terms of sociopolitical progress and human rights. During the 1950s and '60s, Spain was experiencing significant geo-social shifts: rural populations moved towards cities, foreign tourism increased greatly, and many people were returning to Spain from working or living abroad.<sup>27</sup> Many had left the country during the Spanish Civil War or soon after, some in self-imposed or forced political exile, others for economic reasons, and they were starting to go back to Spain as the harsh poverty of the post-war 1940s eased. These population movements brought with them foreign values, ideas, and attitudes that contributed to the increasing sociopolitical agitation in Spain under the Franco dictatorship (1939-75). This stir of ideas brought about a type of "social poetry" directly connected to the unrest developing in post-war Spain, whose context is imperceptible in Colinas's early works.

Considerably removed from the avant-garde and *edad-de-plata* ambiance of the 1920s and '30s, *la poesía social* was a current of poetry, spanning the 1940s through the 1960s, written

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<sup>27</sup>For further details on this period of time in Spain, see Boyd's article in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*.

in order to connect with the social and political concerns of the people in Franco's Spain. The poet and critic Guillermo Carnero writes: "Several factors combine to produce the emergence of a type of poetry which assails the social injustice and lack of freedom endured by Spain under the Franco régime: the poetry of exile, 'rehumanized' poetry, and the evolution of a poetry dealing with religious anguish" ("Poetry in Franco Spain" 653). The force of this social poetry, however, was considerably subdued because of the strict censure governing publications and media during Franco's dictatorship. For many social poets, often grouped as the *Generación del '50*, theirs was a "testimonial poetry" whose purpose was "heightening consciousness and changing reality" (Carnero 653). While social poetry intended to bring poetry to the people, its greatest failure, according to Carnero, may be the fact that it produced a large number of "mediocre poets working in the social vein," whose commitment was not to the art so much as to political and ideological causes (654). As censorship and repression slowly diminished, so did the need for social poetry, and as Spain opened up to the world again, another poetic movement took root.<sup>28</sup>

In the late 1960s, with the end of the Franco régime in sight, a new trend emerges that rejects the tendencies and purposes of social poetry in order to introduce an aesthetically grounded, linguistically and intellectually heightened verse that in some cases is largely inaccessible to readers. This innovative language stood against the type of cultural discourse that was encouraged and produced under Franco's government. It seems paradoxical that social poetry, whose purpose was to inform and to incite change, was abandoned just before the first significant social changes in several decades were starting to take effect in Spain, around the time of Franco's death in 1975. Regarding literature and other media, we should keep in mind

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<sup>28</sup>For a detailed account of censorship, see Michael Ugarte's article "The Literature of Franco Spain, 1939-1975" in *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*.

that “from the end of the sixties to the death of Franco in 1975 and the ratification of the Constitution of 1978, censorship gradually disappeared” (Ugarte 613). On the other hand, this rupture makes more sense if we acknowledge the new generation’s awareness of the inevitability of socio-political change and their need to find a new mode of artistic expression. This assertion alone, however, cannot explain the lack of social and political references in much of the new poetry emerging in the late 1960s. The intellectual young poets of this generation, who were largely born post-war in the 1940s, were finding their own voice by breaking drastically with the poetry that had prevailed during their youths, *la poesía social*, and creating *una poesía novísima* or *culturalista*, cutting-edge or culturalist poetry.<sup>29</sup> Choosing to write an intellectual poetry that, for some poets, embraced what seemed to be “art for art’s sake” was motivated in part by the young poets’ desire to distinguish themselves from the above-mentioned aesthetic sacrifices and socio-political commitments of the older generation of social poets. Those beginning to write and publish in the late 1960s brought the language, aesthetics, and purpose of poetry in some ways back to the academy.

In her introduction to *Frames of Referents*, a study of Guillermo Carnero’s poetry, Jill Kruger-Robbins offers another, novel explanation for the rise of *novísimo* poetry in Spain and its socio-political relevance to the era and régime. First, she cites the influence or parallelism of similar artistic movements in other countries in the late 1960s that coincided with “a period of transcontinental upheaval” (13). This socio-political turmoil of “the Sixties” comprised such varied events as the Vietnam War (1955-75), the hippie movement in the United States, the end of the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959), the decolonialization of many African nations from European countries (largely 1950s-70s), the Mexican Student Movement of 1968, and many

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<sup>29</sup>I use “generation” in the historical sense of the word.

other world civil rights and cultural movements. With the simultaneous rise of mass communication and ever-increasing channels of media, this uproar all over the world could not be silenced. The Franco régime's inability to stop such news and foreign waves of thought from entering Spain, even through official censorship, is exemplified in the elements of global pop culture included in many poetic publications of the 1960s and 1970s (*culturalismo*). Robbins asserts that the *novísimo* texts from this period were far from "politically inconsequential" or "irrelevant," though they seem to be disconnected from the socio-political reality of the day (16). Instead, she defines *novísimo* or culturalist poetry as embodying a "chaotic and irreverent aesthetic [that] was the reflection of a society whose values were no longer relevant and whose rules no longer held. In an authoritarian state, which by definition depends on a rigid system of rules and values, this aesthetic is particularly subversive" (17). By totally ignoring Francisco Franco's government and simultaneously exhibiting contemporary and non-Spanish cultural elements, poets in Spain were declaring their independence from that system and defying its rules. These poets were, in fact, interacting with the socio-political environment of their time, creating a new poetry that at once expressed independence and rebelliousness in an intelligent and largely covert manner—so covert, in fact, that some have dismissed the entire generation as socio-politically irrelevant.<sup>30</sup>

Some of Antonio Colinas's early literary productions were colored, though not defined, by this wave of *culturalismo* that was popular in Spain from the late 1960s into the 1970s. Most critics who have specialized in Colinas's work, as well as the poet himself, qualify or deny his

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<sup>30</sup>Some social and aesthetic parallels perhaps may be drawn between culturalism in Spain and the neobaroque tendencies of the Boom generation in Latin American at about the same time.

participation in this trend as a kind of unofficial *novísimo*.<sup>31</sup> Colinas and his contemporaries started writing and publishing poetry toward the end of the Franco régime (c. 1970). These poets have been given various labels: *novísimos* and *culturalistas* (mentioned previously), *venecianos* (those who had a particular interest in the beautiful decay of Venice), or post-modern; they are also, but less frequently, referred to as the *Generación del 1968*, the *Generación de los setenta*, or simply the third post-war generation of poets. These terms overlap in many ways, but each has some of its own specifications. The term *novísimo*, often mistakenly applied to a whole generation of poets, is technically applicable only to the nine poets who appear in J. M. Castellet's *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (1970); Colinas is not among these.<sup>32</sup> The use of *novísimo* to term all poets of this generation can be problematic when it is used to define a poet by what he or she is not.<sup>33</sup> The *novísimos* embraced *culturalismo*, which became a widespread trend, and as such the group of poets who can be termed *culturalistas* is much broader. Culturalism is, concisely, the extensive citing of elements from both “popular and elite culture” from all over the world and from any given era (Mayhew 402).

At a time when global mass media and international communication were expanding with ever-increasing momentum, in the 1960s and '70s, Spain was opening up again, not only to tourists, but to contemporary foreign cultural influences, one of the key components of culturalism. According to Castellet, for many culturalist poets, “el peso decisivo de su formación estética parte de la base que le ha sido proporcionada a través de los medios de

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<sup>31</sup>Carnicero, Puerto, Rupérez, Olivio Jiménez, and Alonso Gutiérrez, among others.

<sup>32</sup>Castellet includes the following poets in his *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (1970): Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Antonio Martínez Sarrión, José María Álvarez, Félix de Azúa, Pere Gimferrer, Vicente Molina Foix, Guillermo Carnero, Ana María Moix, and Leopoldo María Panero.

<sup>33</sup>It is also important to keep in mind that most poetic “generations” or groups defined by critics (or by the poets themselves) tend to largely exclude women writers. Starting in the 1980s, women poets began to be recognized more in individual studies and anthologies such as *Las diosas blancas* (1985) and *Con voz propia* (2006).

información de masas,” for example: the visual images of television and cinema, music and radio, the telephone, novels, and comics, among others (27, 34-35). These elements can be seen next to such varied “exotic” references as historic events or figures, myths or legends, artists or pieces of visual art or music, religion or religious leaders, and “tactile” descriptions of objects, from any time period or geographic location, though Castellet notes “la fuerte influencia de temas y mitos norteamericanos contemporáneos” (43). All of the above-mentioned currents of thought and expression formed a dynamic literary environment overflowing with possibilities for young poets.

According to Julio Llamazares, Colinas’s poetic production during this era made “concesiones marginales a gustos y modas del momento” (103), yet the poet did not agree with a culturalist poetry that disengaged from life and experience (Olivio Jiménez 11). According to José Olivio Jiménez, Colinas is “un hondo y auténtico poeta de siempre,” not of any generation, who upholds a poetics that has always encompassed “meditación, vida, [y] experiencia” (11). This “experience,” however, is not to be confused with the *poesía de la experiencia* that emerged in Spain in the 1980s, distinguishing itself from the *culturalistas*, and continues to be popular today—this trend will be discussed in a later chapter. For now, we will continue with Colinas’s first written book of poems.

### ***Junto al lago* (written 1967, published 2001)**

Colinas’s first book, *Junto al lago* (1967), contains few cultural or culturalist references, except perhaps for those in poem IV (33), which echo the landscape and local tradition of the fictional town of “Valverde de Lucerna” as described in Miguel de Unamuno’s *San Manuel*

*Bueno, mártir* (1930).<sup>34</sup> These allusions, however, are based on the poet's location at the time of writing the poems, near the lake that most likely inspired the setting for Unamuno's novel, reinforcing Colinas's affirmation that his references to culture are more likely to be based on his life experiences than on anything else (Colinas: *Precisamente*). For Colinas, this life experience may include traveling, reading, meeting and collaborating with other writers and artists, observing art and nature in all its forms, and personal sentiment: Carnicero notes that the poems in *Junto al lago* were dedicated to María José Marcos, Colinas's future wife (28). Nevertheless, Colinas begins his literary career in a changing artistic climate coinciding with the beginnings of Postmodernism, in which culturalism is at the forefront in the poetic world in Spain. It is within this world that he seeks to set his work apart from that of his contemporaries, while at the same time incorporating what J. L. Puerto calls a "fusión de tradiciones", or "la asimilación de diversas tradiciones poéticas y literarias de distintos momentos históricos," into his poetry (43). Curiously, Colinas was "atacado por exaltar la figura de Unamuno" in the 1960s, but even so, this literary assimilation begins in *Junto al lago* with his incorporation of the Unamunian landscape found in *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* (Carnicero 26).

This may have been why Colinas did not publish his first book of poetry soon after it was written, and it then was lost for several decades. As we will see in the following pages, Colinas's earliest poetic works tended to be more stylistically traditional and thematically personal than those of many of his contemporaries. Ángel Rupérez comments on Colinas's self-

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<sup>34</sup>In poem IV of *Junto al lago*, Colinas references "las Noches de San Juan" and "el son de una campana" that rises from the lake's waters. Both of these elements clearly allude to the novel's fictionalized tradition of the Noche de San Juan and the legend of a submerged town with a sometimes visible church bell-tower in the middle of the lake. The fictional town in Unamuno's novel is likely based on the real town of San Martín de Castañeda in Sanabria, Zamora, a province that borders Colinas's native León. As mentioned in this section, this is the lake where Colinas spent some time in the summer of 1967, the very lake of *Junto al lago*. It would be interesting to develop a comparative study of Colinas's poem (or all of *Junto al lago*) in relation to Unamuno's novel, keeping in mind the poet's admiration for Unamuno's work.



imposed literary exile: “En su día [la poesía de Colinas era] excéntrica con respecto al gusto dominante, [...] resistía] sin doblegarse y [salió] adelante por méritos propios. [...] No le pusieron en las antologías, o en la antología de la época.” Rupérez attributes this ostracism and isolation to the poet’s need for solitude in order to develop his own voice (111-112).

In 1964 Colinas went to Madrid to study at the Universidad Complutense, became involved with various literary groups and journals (*El Pueblín, Lirba, Poesía española, La estafeta literaria*), and expanded his circle of artistic acquaintances, forming friendships with Vicente Aleixandre, María Zambrano, Dámaso Alonso, and many more artists and writers (Carnicero 26-29). In the summer of 1967, Colinas “pasó unos días en el Lago de Sanabria, en la provincia de Zamora, cerca de Galicia y allí escribió algunos poemas que [...] hasta 1986, creyó perdidos y que serán publicados bajo el título de *Junto al lago* en el año 2001” (28). This small book of sixteen poems has not received much critical attention, possibly because of its anachronistic publication circumstances. There are no published reviews of *Junto al lago* as an individual book and currently few articles or books exist that even mention the work. This early book of poems has at its center the themes of love, absence, sensory experience, light, shadow, and nature (water, earth, sky, plants). As mentioned above, there are few cultural references and any historical markers are absent; the majority of Colinas’s poems have this same sense of temporal abstraction. J. L. Puerto affirms that “nunca es el tiempo histórico el que adquiere carácter predominante en [la] obra [de Colinas], nunca el tiempo institucionalizado que nos rige” (67).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>It is interesting to note that Colinas’s first work of poetry is partly based on Miguel de Unamuno’s last work of prose fiction, *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*. Unamuno’s conception of *intrahistoria*, or the side of history not publicized or well known to the public, perhaps influenced Colinas to exclude temporal signs in much of his work.

One illuminating example of the overall aesthetic and sentiment of *Junto al lago* is found in this excerpt from poem “I” (they are all untitled). It is a rich beginning to Colinas’s poetic trajectory and world of imagery:

Estos poemas nacen de tu ausencia.  
Mira mis labios: están secos, solos.  
Tantas noches pasaron a los tuyos  
unidos, apurando cada poro  
de tu ser, que hoy no tienen ya razón  
para existir aquí, en el abandono.  
También el aire muere entre los robles  
y en sus copas se extinguen, poco a poco,  
los silbos de los pájaros, la queja  
emocionada del ocaso rojo.

Todo muere.

Las barcas van cansadas  
sobre las aguas muertas.

Suena ronco

el golpe de los remos.

Te diré

que, además de tu ausencia, ahora noto  
el desamor sembrado en mis entrañas  
como una muerte lenta, como un lloro.  
El desamor, las huellas del recuerdo,  
el sentir deshacerse cada gozo,  
descubierto a tu lado, sin remedio.  
Mira mis labios, mírame los ojos  
desde la estancia oscura donde sueñas.  
Piensa, por mí que aún puede haber retorno  
para estos labios mudos, para el pecho  
en soledad que te aceptó amoroso.

These poems are born from your absence.  
Look at my lips: they’re dry, lonely.  
So many nights they spent joined  
to yours, urgently enjoying every pore  
of your being, but today they have no reason  
to exist here, in abandonment.  
The air also dies among the oaks  
and in their canopies fade, little by little,  
the birds’ whistles, the emotive  
moan of the red sunset.

Everything dies.

Boats drift, tired,  
on dead waters.

The strokes

of the oars sound hoarse.

I will tell you

that, beyond your absence, I now notice  
indifference sown into my core  
like a slow death, like a lament.  
Indifference, the footprints of memory,  
feeling each pleasure found  
at your side undone, without recourse.  
Look at my lips, look into my eyes  
from the dark room where you dream.  
Think, that for me there may be a way back  
for these mute lips, for the solitary  
chest that once welcomed you lovingly.

(*Junto al lago* “I” 29)<sup>36</sup>

All the poems in *Junto al lago* (*Beside the lake*) are directed towards an unnamed “tú,” “amor,” or “mujer,” and each in its own way conveys the pain of solitude and the absence of love, both physical and emotional. Poem “I” begins with a metapoetic declaration, “Estos poemas nacen de tu ausencia,” which at once invokes the tone of the entire book and begins a dialogue with metapoetic tradition. The following synecdochal image of the lover’s lips, physically dry because they are lonely, alludes not only to the poem’s solitary tone, but also to the tradition of

<sup>36</sup>All citations of Colinas’s poetry from 1967 through 1988 will come from the *Obra poética completa* (Siruela, 2011), unless otherwise noted. All translations of Colinas’s poems within this anthology are mine.

the poet as a singer. With dry lips he cannot sing joyful lyrics—happiness and plenitude for Colinas are associated with the flow of nature in elements such as water, wind, and music. This dryness, or lack of life and its flow, has resulted from the loss or absence of his beloved, with whom he had spent “tantas noches” in the past. The dryness and profound human loneliness expressed in this poem parallels the slowing of the wind and the ending of the birds’ song (or perhaps loneliness is the cause): “el aire muere entre los robles / y en sus copas se extinguen, poco a poco, / los silbos de los pájaros.” These pauses in natural sounds and movements convey the unnatural quality of being alone, that solitude and silence are contrary to the flow and music of nature.

Even the intense synesthetic image of “la queja / emocionada del ocaso rojo” –describing the bright red color of the sunset as the sound of a moan or wail– slowly sinks out of sight. The red sunset represents both an auditory and a highly visual conception of pain and loss, while the color red might be perceived as an open wound, caused by the absence of the loved one. The sunset implies an ending or death, though a glimmer of hope may exist in the idea that the sun will rise again. All these signs of natural life (movement, color, song) are slowing or dying out: “Todo muere.” Over the course of his poetic career, Colinas often uses natural images such as those of the “aire,” “robles,” “pájaros,” and “ocaso rojo” in this poem to symbolize or allegorize human emotions.

The lake of *Junto al lago* appears in the middle verses as both a poetic and formal image: those three verses (11, 14, 16) form a jagged or wavy edge in the center of the text block. Several other poems in this book display the same type of concrete wave-like imagery with the shape of their verses. The physical structure of these lines imitates the waves of a lake and those of the music (sound waves) that is slowly dying as the verses continue and shorten (or vary in

length, as in other poems). Also imitating these waves is the alternating assonant rhyme in “o-o,” which has the sad sound of a wail or lament (the other poems in this book also employ varying types of assonant rhyme in even verses). In addition, this assonance represents the “hoarse”-sounding strokes of the oars from the boats floating listlessly on the “aguas muertas.” A loss or lack of love has induced this lethargy in the poet himself and in his surroundings, though we cannot know if this is a perceived or a true weariness in nature. The poet-lover names his ailment, “el desamor,” which has spread inside him “como una *muerte lenta*, como un *lloro*,” paralleling exactly the processes described above affecting the wind, birds, water, and other nearby elements. For him the worst part of his state is the impossibility of stopping the “desamor,” or indifference, from affecting even his memories, from undoing the good times he had with his love: “el sentir deshacerse cada gozo, / descubierto a tu lado, sin remedio.” The speaker is very tuned into the sounds and feelings of nature as well as this subtle but inevitable unraveling of his past relationship. Emotions are woven into the physical fabric of the poet’s world (both natural and man-made elements) and his own body. It is almost a synesthetic experience to feel supposedly intangible sentiments as bodily pain or sensation. The way that these emotions affect nature is certainly a metaphysical, perhaps even a fantastical phenomenon.

There remains one last hope for this broken relationship, perhaps suggested in the image of the sunset, but also in that the poet-lover addresses his beloved directly. He repeats: “Mira mis labios,” followed by “mírame los ojos,” translated as “look *into* my eyes,” because of the intensity and intimacy of the command. Looking directly into another person’s eyes is one of the most intense form of communication available to us. Unable to physically do this, however, he

imagines his beloved asleep in a dark room (“estancia<sup>37</sup> oscura”), and implores her to think or perhaps dream of him, that he might find a way back (“retorno”) to the relationship they once shared. Again, the speaker references his “labios mudos,” the mute or silent lips of the poet who can no longer sing, and his “pecho / en soledad,” the very center of his being that once welcomed, and would welcome her again. The last word of the poem, “amoroso,” functions almost as an adverb paired with “aceptó,” and is translated as such (“lovingly”), but is technically an adjective describing “pecho.” Colinas closes the poem with “amoroso” to reinforce the idea or hope that love is possible after all, in the end, and that it is the goal towards which we should strive.

Colinas believes that humanity is united with nature, a relationship clearly exemplified in this book through localized signs (lake, trees, mountains), and which, in his later works, becomes an increasingly more global conception of nature and the cosmos. In the first poem of his first book, Colinas has created an intricate weave of sounds, symbols, emotion, and images that will continue throughout his early works, and many of which will endure into his later ones as well (wind/air, water, lips, veins/blood, music). The heavy solitude and longing felt in the first fifteen poems of *Junto al lago*, however, is finally relieved in the last one, “XVI”:

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<sup>37</sup>“Estancia” means room, place, or a stay (as in period of time), but also a poetic “stanza.” Given the sorrow expressed in this poem, Colinas is probably playing with this phrase to refer to his beloved in person and also within the poem or “dark stanza.”

Pongo el alma en los labios, pongo el beso  
más allá de la luz de tus dos ojos  
y se estremece el aire, y tiembla el pecho,  
y amparado en el tuyo aspira hondo.  
Crece el aroma de la yerba, mueve  
las copas de los álamos frondosos  
este intenso verano, pero nada  
siento ya en mi interior.

Espero sólo  
de tu cuerpo la vida, la alegría  
que encendí con los sueños más hermosos.  
El agua que esperó mi sed, la fuente  
que canta por tus venas, hoy la agoto  
en la aventura de ensoñar.

Abrazo  
lo que ayer fue ilusión. [...] (45)

In this final poem the poetic voice is reunited with his love, and both human and nature are revitalized: the air and “el pecho” tremble with life and emotion as the lover takes a deep breath, sheltered in his *amada*’s embrace; at the same time, he smells the rising scent of grass and feels the movement of the trees. The feeling of *desamor* has ceased: “pero nada / siento ya en mi interior.” Ultimately, the two lovers find in each other something of a symbiotic or mutually rewarding relationship: she is his source of water, of life, and he promises that they will never again part: “sólo a la muerte le permito / que, una vez más, se lleve de mis ojos / el sueño de los míos, la ternura / de tus labios abiertos, donde poso / toda la fe del mundo, donde aprendo, / por fin, a comprender lo que es el gozo” (Colinas 45-46). *Junto al lago* comprises the first verses of a young poet finding his voice through a fusion of sentiment and environment. It is a personal expression of love, desire, and vital energy linked to nature: Colinas’s exploration of the cosmos begins within himself and, as we will see in his next book, in the place of his own origins.

### *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre* (written 1967, published 1969)

Soon after writing the poems of *Junto al lago*, Colinas pens his first published books of poetry: *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre* and *Preludios a una noche total*, both released in the spring of 1969. All six poems in *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre*, none more than two pages in length, have at their center the rich imagery and emotional gratitude that Colinas envisions for his native *tierras de León*. The title alone is highly symbolic, conveying the idea of interconnectivity among poetry, earth or homeland, and blood or life that is central to the book, even before the first verse is read.<sup>38</sup> This *poemario* is a nostalgic and Neo-Romantic tribute to the poet's origins—these are poems of Colinas's own land and blood. J. L. Puerto writes:

El espacio primordial y originario recorre toda la poesía de Antonio Colinas. De un modo restringido (la tierra natal y las tierras leonesas) o más dilatado (la Meseta toda), el poeta vuelve de continuo sobre él, en busca de mensajes que sean capaces de revelar el paisaje y la naturaleza, la historia, la tierra y sus gentes, el presente o el pasado. (54)

In this book, the poet extends his poetic vision to his native land, the province of León. In these poems he discovers the poetic in familiar surroundings: the streets, buildings, and landscape of León. These verses exhibit a heightened expression of cultural elements, for example León's cathedral, river, temples, local plants and trees, and more, all within an atmosphere of familiar love that the poet has for these places, rooted in memory:

[...] Crece mi amor hacia esta tierra  
donde sentí la luna como una fiebre. Poso  
mis manos en el aire de esta noche profunda.  
Siento su sofocado latir, siento los ronc  
estertores del río. El ruiseñor desgrana  
su queja en los zarzales. Barrios de luna... Torno  
a renovar mi amor. Barrios de mi memoria. [...] (“Barrios de Luna” 53)

In this excerpt of “Barrios de Luna,” Colinas again personifies elements of nature, the air and the river, thus emphasizing his emotional connection to the very place he describes. His repetition

<sup>38</sup>The central theme of the earth also contrasts with the previous focus of water in *Junto al lago*.

of “sentí” or “siento” in relation to these elements also emphasizes the physical aspect of this relationship between the poet and his place of birth. Following in this vein, “Nocturno en León” is the first text in *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre*, and perhaps the most representative of the book’s central elements (1969). At first glance, the title of this poem carries several implications about its style, classification, and intertextual allusions.<sup>39</sup> *Nocturno*, of course, refers to the night, but also to the nocturne, a type of musical composition predominantly from the nineteenth century, as well as the Romantic manifestations of the nocturne in poetry of the same era. Nocturnes, primarily composed for playing in the evening, generally have “a languid melody, [and are] richly ornamented,” a description that could be applied to Colinas’s poem as well (Rushton 168). Their poetic counterparts can be loosely defined as poems that treat “night as a time of beauty and profundity” or that simply take place during the nighttime, though there are no other required characteristics (Fitter 1):

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<sup>39</sup>The poem’s twenty-three verses are structured as informal unrhymed *alejandrinos*. With this complex, highly aesthetic structure, Colinas alludes to and follows Spanish literary tradition: the *alejandrino* has been used in Spain since medieval times and had a revival in nineteenth-century Romanticism (Alatorre) as well as in the mid-twentieth-century group called *Cántico*, after the journal they published out of Córdoba (Carnero 2004, 653).



Se apagó la linterna rojiza de las cumbres.  
 Ya no pueden los ojos saborear la hermosura  
 de cada rama helada, la enhiesta crestería  
 fulgiendo en el crepúsculo silencioso del invierno.  
 Noble León, los goznes de cada puerta sienten  
 también el frío. Espadas de frío en las esquinas,  
 en el pesado pecho de la muralla rota.  
 (Zarzal, zarzal amigo, si hoy ardiese la espuma  
 rosada de tu flor, si crepitase toda  
 la tarde en tu maraña, en tu hojarasca roja.)  
 Noble León, hoy nido sin susurros de pájaros,  
 llamas hubo en tus álamos, oro en las espadañas.  
 Pero ahora que la noche de invierno se avecina  
 sólo dura la piedra, sólo vencen los hielos,  
 sólo se escucha el silbo del viento en las mamparas.  
 De puro fría quema la piedra en nuestras cúpulas,  
 en las torres tronchadas de cada iglesia vieja.  
 Noble León, frontera de la nieve más pura,  
 junco aterido, espiga sustentada en la brisa,  
 ahora que viene densa la noche por tus calles  
 hazme un hueco de amor entre tus muros negros,  
 entreabre las pestañas heladas de tus ríos,  
 que se agigante el sueño para este amor que ofrezco.

The scarlet light of the summits went out.  
 Eyes can no longer taste the beauty  
 of each icy branch, the vertical battlements  
 glowing in the silent winter's twilight.  
 Noble León, the hinges of each door feel  
 the cold as well. Swords of cold in the corners,  
 in the heavy breast of the broken ramparts.  
 (Brier, friend brier, if today the rosy foam  
 of your flower burned, if the entire afternoon  
 stirred in your thicket, in your red tangle of foliage.)  
 Noble León, today a nest missing the whisper of birds,  
 flames were in your poplars, gold in the rushes.  
 But now that the winter's night approaches  
 only the stone lasts, only the ice conquers,  
 only the whistle of the wind is heard in doorways.  
 The stone burns from pure cold in our domes,  
 in the crippled towers of each old church.  
 Noble León, borderland of the purest snow,  
 frozen reed, stalk upright in the breeze,  
 now that the night comes dense through your streets,  
 make me an opening of love in your black walls,  
 open a little the frozen lashes of your rivers,  
 so that the dream of this love I offer may grow.

(“Nocturno en León” 49)

We know that this is a poetic nocturne from the first verse in which the lights suddenly go out: “Se apagó la linterna rojiza de las cumbres.” The rest of the poem describes the city in its nocturnal and wintry state, winter being parallel to night because it is a time of darkness, sleep, and silence. The synesthetic image in verse two, combining taste and vision, is imagined or remembered by the poet because it can no longer be seen in the darkness: “*Ya no pueden saborear la hermosura / de cada rama helada, la enhiesta crestería / fulgiendo en el crepúsculo silencioso del invierno.*”<sup>40</sup> The lack of light, of sound, and even movement (all is frozen) cause the poet to imagine the cityscape from memory: The images in this poem constitute a dream, confirmed in the last verses when he asks the city (*la ciudad*, his metaphor for a lover) to open

<sup>40</sup>These and all subsequent emphases in quotes from the poem are mine.

her eyes, to awaken, and to accept the love that he offers: “entreabre las pestañas heladas de tus ríos, / que se agigante el sueño para este amor que ofrezco.”<sup>41</sup>

Lines eight through ten are structured as an apostrophe to the “zarzal,” or brier bush, as a kind of meta-fantasy of summer within this dream of winter.<sup>42</sup> It is set apart from the rest of the verses with parentheses (these asides are not uncommon throughout Colinas’s verses), and the use of imperfect subjunctive “if” clauses give these lines a wishful tone; however, since the second clause is never stated, the wish remains unfulfilled: “(Zarzal, zarzal amigo, *si hoy ardiese* la espuma / rosada de tu flor, *si crepitase* toda / la tarde en tu maraña, en tu hojarasca roja.)” These parentheses hold images of live plants (*zarzal, flor, hojarasca*), bright colors and heat (*arder, rosado, rojo*), movement (“*si crepitase*”...), and implications of the fertility of nature (*espuma, flor*). The images are sensual and contrast greatly with the cold, sterile silence of the winter scenes surrounding it. The poet longs for this kind of summer because it would mean the awakening of both the city’s natural and constructed elements, or metaphorically the revival of his beloved. These visions and signs of life, however, are inverted or absent in the following two verses: “Noble León, hoy *nido sin susurros de pájaros, / llamas hubo* en tus álamos, oro en las espadañas.” The nest empty of birds and their songs reinforces a lack of fertility, music, animation, and the presence of life in general.

The apparent absence of natural life is then juxtaposed with what *is* present in León on this cold winter’s night: “Pero ahora que *la noche* se avecina / sólo dura la *pedra*, sólo vencen los *hielos*, / sólo se escucha el silbo del *viento* en las mamparas.” These verses, formed with

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<sup>41</sup>The verb *agigantar* was a challenging translation—the options in English that accurately convey its sense of almost exaggerated enormity (to increase/enlarge greatly) were not elegant. The verb I chose, *grow*, does not have this sense of immensity, but it does retain the sense of movement and expansion suggested by *agigantar*.

<sup>42</sup>Regardless of whether the poet addresses León itself or a single element of it (plants, structures, natural formations), he is communicating with the city as a whole because all of its components are connected.

anaphora (the repetition of “sólo”) and the alliteration of “s” sounds, imitate or parallel the whistling of the wind. Three of the actions in these lines (avecinar, vencer, silbar) personify night and winter as active, conquering forces, against whom “sólo dura la piedra.” In this phrase the stone is described as eternal, lasting, but the word *dura* as an adjective also means “hard,” juxtaposing this texture with the idea that the rock itself is a living being. The stones—found here in *las cumbres, la crestería, la muralla rota, cada vieja iglesia, las calles, los muros negros*—serve as a metaphor for the eternal (nature, beauty, art/architecture, poetry, and love) in this and several of the poet’s other books.

In all poems of *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre*, Colinas frequently depicts the elements of earth and the ancient structures of his homeland that, for him, embody the essence or spirit of the place: *murallas, cumbres, calles, árboles, ríos, torres*, and so on. In “Nocturno en León,” stone is a vital part of the city, whether natural or worked by hand, and as its only permanent component (“sólo dura la piedra”), symbolizes its eternal spirit. Luis M. Alonso Gutiérrez characterizes *la piedra* as a representation “de lo elemental, de lo primario” in Colinas’s poetry, and asserts that it can also symbolize reality, as opposed to the dream of this poem (63). Though the world Colinas portrays for us in this poem is a highly symbolic dream or vision, it is also a real place, and every image in this poem is based on the poet’s reality.

Colinas’s personification of the city represents his participation in León’s vital and emotional flow, a concept that, as I have argued previously, is central to his art and to this study’s vision of his poetry. As mentioned above, components of the city and its natural elements are personified and feel the cold as the poet does, creating a sympathetic bond between them: “Noble León, los goznes de cada puerta *sienten* / también el frío” (v. 5-6); “De puro *fría quema* la piedra en *nuestras* cúpulas, / en las torres tronchadas de cada iglesia vieja” (v. 16-17).

The adjective “tronchado” has several meanings: cut down like a tree or plant, cut short (time), and in some cases injured. I have translated “torres tronchadas” as “crippled towers” to maintain the personifying element that Colinas has given to parts of the city. Again, poet and stone share this feeling of cold and the ownership of the city’s many church domes (*cúpulas*). The stone is a friend or lover, a woman, as suggested in verses six and seven: “Espadas de frío en las esquinas, / en el *pesado pecho* de la muralla rota.” The image of ruins is also an essential element of Romanticism, and it is a relatively common motif in Colinas’s poetry in general, especially his earlier works. These verses also connote death with the image of a sword-pierced chest and ruined wall—the winter’s cold metaphorically kills or puts the city to sleep. Again, this deep, dark cold contrasts sharply with the hints of heat and warm colors, allusions to life and passion, found throughout the poem: “la linterna *rojiza*,” “la enhiesta crestería / *fulgiendo* en el *crepúsculo*,” “si hoy *ardiese* la espuma / *rosada* de tu flor,” “hojarasca *roja*,” “*llamas* hubo,” “oro en las espadañas,” “*quema* la piedra,” and so on (emphases mine). These bright red elements are visual even more than verbal awakenings, and support the strong emotions and passion flowing through these verses.

The images of wind and rivers physically represent the idea of flow throughout the poem, and the poet’s final plea to León expresses his desire to be part of this flow, to unite himself with the land: “Noble León, frontera de la nieve más pura, / junco aterido, espiga sustentada en la brisa, / ahora que viene densa la noche por tus calles / *hazme un hueco de amor entre tus muros negros, / entreabre las pestañas heladas de tus ríos.*”<sup>43</sup> The image of the “junco aterido, espiga sustentada en la brisa” is parallel to some of the architectural elements of the city—it is like a solid column. I chose to translate “sustentada” as “upright” to reinforce the vertical stillness and

<sup>43</sup>The image of the “pestañas heladas” of León’s rivers may also metaphorically refer to the geographical shape of the region’s rivers, which fan out in all directions from the Duero.

solid nature of the frozen plant. His city is personified this way in its wintry state so that the poet can connect with it, or her, on an emotional level. He asks her, like a lover, to wake up, to make some room for him, to open her arms and eyes to him, “que se agigante el sueño para *este amor que ofrezco*,” so that his dream can develop and perhaps become reality. All the natural elements and structures of León form a whole, living being that the poet loves—a personification that is also present in other poems of the same book.<sup>44</sup>

“Nocturno en León” is the poem that best represents this emotional flow among stone and architecture, time and history, person and place, beauty and nature, poet and homeland in *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre*.<sup>45</sup> All these elements and more flow through Colinas’s verses to unite his body of poetry, exemplifying the poet’s search for beauty, unity, and cosmic harmony. The visual images stream from one into the next, verse to verse, creating a composite, living vision of León that at once belongs to the poet and to readers. Ultimately, the poet wishes for León to open to him its walls (like arms) and frozen rivers (like eyes)—to let him join in its natural and emotional flow—and therefore to reciprocate the love that the poet feels for his city.<sup>46</sup> The notion that art, nature, and his own life are interwoven and *reflected* in one another is exemplified in the desired mutual gaze between the poet and the city (“entreabre las pestañas heladas de tus ríos”). This gaze, like the poet’s breath, the wind, the river’s current, and his own blood (alluded to in the book’s title), represent the flow that is essential in this book and in Colinas’s poetry as a whole.

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<sup>44</sup>León is present in other works by Colinas as well, such as *Días en Petavonium* (1994), *El crujido de la luz* (1999), and *Huellas* (2003) (these are all semi-autobiographical narrative), among many others.

<sup>45</sup>The “objective correlative” is “the idea that poems evoke emotions by the representation of sensory experience” through objects, events, or situations (*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 963).

<sup>46</sup>The attribution of emotions and human behavior to natural elements is known as the “pathetic fallacy” (*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*).

All six texts of *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre* focus on several concrete places within the city and province of León, exploring their natural and architectural spaces. Specific cultural, historic, or geographic elements such as the Basilica of San Isidoro, the architecture of Sahagún, the famous *vidrieras* (stained-glass windows) of the Cathedral of León, the Bernesga River, and more are described in Colinas's image-rich verses. The other landscapes he envisions are autumnal or wintry, pure, and beautiful:

[...] El Bernesga se quiebra de frío entre los álamos.  
Están puros los montes. [...]  
En las vidrieras arde toda la luz de invierno [...] (“Visión de invierno” 55)

Winter is perhaps so frequently associated with León because its cold intensity sets it apart from other, warmer Mediterranean spaces that Colinas has called home (Córdoba, Ibiza). León personified as a living being, mentioned above, can be observed in several additional poems in this book, including “Mediodía en Sahagún de Campos”:

[...] Cuando crepita el trigo van mis pasos surcando  
*el pecho de esta tierra* donde no existe el tiempo. [...]  
*Geografía amorosa*, tierras tan nobles como  
los muros de aquel templo donde al atardecer  
el sol incrusta gemas, funde vidrieras, fulge. (51, emphases mine)

In the above verses the *geografía amorosa* is portrayed as a noble, almost regal figure—she is the earth and the stone walls, crowned by the sun with gems. We also observe the repetition of *amoroso* in a somewhat strange place in “Geografía amorosa,” an echo of the last word in poem “I” from *Junto al lago*. In each of the other poems, the poetic voice repeats its declaration of love for this land in both title, “En San Isidoro *beso la piedra de los siglos*” (50) and verse (the following emphases are mine):

[...] *hazme un hueco de amor entre tus muros negros,*  
entrebre las pestañas heladas de tus ríos,  
que se agigante el sueño para *este amor que ofrezco.* (“Nocturno en León,” 49)

[...] Aquí en estas riberas, donde atisé la luz  
por vez primera, *dejo también el corazón.* (“Riberas del Órbigo,” 52)

[...] Barrios de las estrellas, barrios del trino, pozo  
por donde va la luna, barrios de luna llena,  
*aquí os dejo en paz mi corazón,* mi asombro. (“Barrios de Luna,” 53-54)

[...] En la última llaga de tu ser, en la escarcha  
de cada teja *quiero dejar mi corazón.* (“Visión de invierno,” 55)

In these poems the poet offers his own *besos*, *respiración*, and *corazón* as the intimate, vital elements with which he continues to connect with his land and culture. *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre* is Colinas’s tribute to his own geographical and cultural roots and illustrates the starting points, himself and his homeland, for his ever-expanding poetic exploration of the world and cosmos.

### ***Preludios a una noche total* (written 1967-68, published 1969)**

In a play on words similar to that in the title “Nocturno en León,” Colinas takes advantage of the double meaning of *preludio*, both as a preceding act and as an introductory piece of music. Music, as we will see, is an essential element in this book. *Preludios a una noche total* (1969) is Colinas’s first book to be organized into sections and to open with epigraphs—here he is formalizing the structure of this book and creating a format for future books. The two following epigraphs, from poets Vicente Aleixandre and Paul Valéry, are a type of prelude to the book itself:

¿Cómo llegó el Amor? Fue ya en Otoño. – Aleixandre

*Astres, roses, saisons, les corps et leurs amours.* – Valéry

(cited in *Obra poética completa* 59)

This is also the first of Colinas's books to receive significant critical attention, the one that establishes him as a recognized poet within Spain. This publication's three sections give an initial idea of the structure and trajectory of the poems; they are entitled: "...Y los bosques de otoño en fuego han de trocarse," "La presencia del mundo en mi invernal estancia," and "Epílogo desde la niñez y el sueño." The first poems of this book, among autumnal imagery, are full of the memories of a new and flourishing love, followed by poems of winter and solitude, and later memories of childhood. Julio Llamazares writes that in *Preludios*, "Colinas traza el dibujo misterioso e inaprehensible de un amor que ya no es y de un mundo infantil que ya no existe" (104). Memory and knowledge are essential in Colinas's verses, as we have already seen in his first two books, and here he continues to weave together verses on these themes, combined with music and other flowing elements.

The first poem of *Preludios*, "Nacimiento al amor" ("Birth to Love"), contains several images and symbols which link it to both *Junto al lago* and *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre* such as the *río*, *viento*, *plantas*, *besos*, *voz*, *tierra*, *otoño*, and more. Colinas's natural world has not yet changed. At the same time, certain elements foreshadow those of *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975), whose storyline begins in autumn, whose unifying themes are *el amor* and *la tristeza*, and whose dream-like aesthetics are rooted in *la música* and *la embriaguez* (among other key elements):



«Traes contigo una música que embriaga el corazón»,  
 le dije, y en mis ojos rebosaban las lágrimas.  
 Llenos de fiebre tuve mis labios, que sonaban  
 encima de tu piel. Por la orilla del río,  
 trotando en la penumbra, pasaban los caballos.  
 De vez en cuando, el viento dejaba alguna hoja  
 sobre la yerba oscura, entre los troncos mudos.  
 «Mira: con esas hojas comienza nuestro amor.  
 En mí toda la tierra recibirá tus besos»,  
 me dijo. Y yo contaba cada sofoco dulce  
 de su voz, cada poro de su mejilla cálida.  
 Estaba fresco el aire. Llovían las estrellas  
 sobre las copas densas de aquel soto de álamos.  
 Cuando la luna roja decreció, cuando el aire  
 se impregnó del aroma pesado de los frutos,  
 cuando fueron más tristes las noches y los hombres,  
 cuando llegó el otoño, nacimos al amor.

“You carry a music that intoxicates the heart,”  
 I told her, and in my eyes tears were overflowing.  
 Filled with fever were my lips, which sounded  
 on your skin. Near the bank of the river,  
 trotting in the semi-darkness, horses were passing.  
 Now and again, the wind would drop some leaf  
 onto the dark grass, among the mute trunks.  
 “Look: with those leaves our love begins.  
 In me the whole earth will receive your kisses,”  
 she said. And I was counting each sweet smothering  
 of her voice, each pore of her warm cheek.  
 The air was cool. The stars were raining  
 over the dense canopy of that grove of poplars.  
 When the red moon shrank, when the air  
 was impregnated with the heavy aroma of fruits,  
 when nights and men became sadder,  
 when the autumn arrived, we were born to Love.

(“Nacimiento al amor” 63)

Both the title “Nacimiento al amor” and the final phrase “nacimos al amor” present a problem for translation. Literally translated they sound a bit strange in English as “Birth to love” and “we were born to Love,” because the verb “nacer” and noun “nacimiento” are commonly used in Spanish, but not in English, to refer to new beginnings. I chose to leave the translations literal, however, because of the symbolic associations that the concept of “birth” has with the other natural processes and relationships detailed within the poem. “Birth” is also a natural bodily process associated with love, hope, and new life—I wanted to maintain these nuances. Furthermore, I capitalized “Love” to reinforce its status and power as a noun, and to circumvent any set-phrase associations that it has in English.

In *Preludios* Colinas, in part, continues the interpersonal sentiment of *Junto al lago*. Andrew Debicki writes that this book, “though based on a specific love plot, creates a romantic, universalized vision of human love. [...] At times the vision of love expands into a pantheistic sense of natural order” (158). Colinas maintains in *Preludios*, and will continue to maintain in future books, the relationship between elements of nature, earth, and human beings (often *el yo*

and *la amada*). In the above verses, the natural rhythms of the *caballos*, *río*, *viento*, and *lluvia de estrellas* parallel those of the “música que embriaga el corazón,” the “labios, que sonaban / encima de tu piel,” and the “sofoco dulce / de su voz.” Elements of the natural setting are interwoven with images of the lovers’ bodies, while the intimacy of the scene and of the pair’s first professions of love contrasts with the season in which they take place: “cuando fueron más tristes las noches y los hombres, / cuando llegó el otono, nacimos al amor” (63). The rhythms of life in nature, the “fiebre” of the *amante*’s lips, her “mejilla cálida,” and the “aroma pesado de los frutos” all represent the idea of a new beginning, of summer, of this new love, which is paradoxically commencing in autumn as the air becomes cool and the leaves begin to fall. The contrast between the heat and music of a new love and the first signs of fall highlights the overpowering nature of love at any time or place. Again, the connections between earth and body and the cadences and reflections of these in each other are woven together in such a way that one may become a recipient for the other: “En mí toda la tierra recibirá tus besos.” This sentiment of the universality of the love between two people continues in some of the following poems, such as “Nocturno”: “Dos cuerpos laten en la misma sombra. / Saben de amor los labios que se besan / y los brazos abrazan todo el mundo” (64).

The concepts of uniting body and earth, especially through amorous encounters, and of describing the female body with natural metaphors perhaps came to Colinas through his readings of Pablo Neruda’s earlier works. Neruda’s influence on Colinas’s poetry is mentioned in studies on his work (Amusco, Nada Tadoun) and acknowledged by Colinas himself in various articles and interviews. Colinas had the opportunity to meet and interview Neruda in Milan in 1972 and,

incidentally, during this visit he gave Neruda a copy of *Preludios*.<sup>47</sup> According to Kristine Ibsen in her article “Entre la espada y la piedra: Función exegética de la figura femenina en Neruda” (1993), several of the Chilean poet’s poetic works from the 1920s and early ‘30s explore the idea of woman as profoundly connected to nature: “se le asocia con la tierra fecunda que el hombre surca” (257). Metaphorically illustrating aspects of the feminine with natural imagery is rooted in the Golden Age tradition of poets like Góngora and Quevedo: Colinas compares Neruda’s own “fuerza verbal” to that of Góngora in his article “Los libros vivos de la memoria” (40).<sup>48</sup> As Ibsen indicates, however, Neruda distinguishes his imagery in the merging of the bodies of woman and man with nature and earth, and from these relationships poetry is born: the poet/man seeks in woman/earth the “poder creativo” for his poetry, because “ella representa la tierra fértil de la imaginación de donde nace el poema” (260-262). We can observe more concrete similarities, for example between Colinas’s poem “XVI” from *Junto al lago* and “Nacimiento al amor” from *Preludios* (see poems above or in index), in Ibsen’s example from Neruda’s early verses: “él es ‘la sed y el hambre’ y ella ‘la fruta,’ y es a través de su cuerpo que el hablante poético entra en el mundo” (257). The idea of woman, rather than a specific woman, is significant in Colinas’s poetry and narrative throughout his career, as it was for Neruda (Ibsen 260).<sup>49</sup> A comparative study of Neruda’s and Colinas’s poetic language, imagery, and metaphors could be carried out by analyzing the earlier works of both poets (Colinas’s works published 1967-75; Neruda’s 1923-50). Colinas himself writes in “Los libros vivos de la memoria,” for example, that the influence of *Tentativa del hombre infinito* (1926) “resuena subterráneamente

<sup>47</sup>See Colinas’s articles: “Neruda: Razones para una entrevista” (55-60) in *Un tiempo que no pasa: Nuevos ensayos* (2009) for more information on their meeting and friendship, and “Los libros vivos de la memoria: Mis 16 libros seleccionados” (31-45) in the same book for the works that he considers his primary influences.

<sup>48</sup>In *Un tiempo que no pasa: Nuevos ensayos*.

<sup>49</sup>An interesting example of this is Colinas’s collection entitled *Catorce retratos de mujer* (2011), in which he pays tribute to fourteen different women.

en el libro de poemas que yo estaba escribiendo por aquellos días, *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*” (1975), a book that will be discussed later (57-58).

Returning to *Preludios*, the striking poem “Madrigal para suplicar tu voz,” invokes the five senses as it also calls upon some of the same visual and sentimental elements analyzed above in “Nacimiento al amor”:

Está tensa la noche sobre los *pinos cálidos*  
y *más calenturienta está la tierra*, amor.  
También *a otoño saben tus labios en la sombra*.  
*Háblame a media voz*, dime qué hay por el *cauce*  
*sonoro de tus venas*, si es el pozo más hondo  
de tu hermosura virgen en él me perderé.  
*Es un espejo el cielo*, es una suave cúpula.  
Aquí, sobre tu piel, también supura el pino,  
*deja su denso aroma*, su plenitud, su llama.  
Por el recuesto, amor, pasa lenta la noche  
su mano de penumbra. Y el aire, solitario,  
gime entre las acículas, las conmueve, las mima.  
¡Desconsolado viento, cómo roza tu pecho  
con su perfume, cómo lo llena y lo sofoca!  
Pero, ¿qué importa el viento, su sollozo en las hojas?,  
¿qué importa el astro puro, el sueño de la noche?  
Si el invierno llegara enjaezado de oro,  
no serviría, amor, para calmar mis ansias.  
Sólo tu voz podrá remansarme la sangre.  
Tu voz: el más sutil de los vientos, el fruto  
más maduro y gustoso de este otoño encendido.

The night is tense over the warm pine trees  
and the earth is even more feverish, love.  
Your lips also taste of autumn in the shadow.  
Speak to me softly, tell me what is in the sonorous  
course of your veins, if it is the deepest well  
of your virgin beauty I will lose myself in it.  
The sky is a mirror, it is a smooth dome.  
Here, on your skin, the pine tree also sheds its sap,  
leaves its dense aroma, its plenitude, its flame.  
Over the slope, love, the night slowly passes  
its shadowy hand. And the air, solitary,  
moans among the needles, moves them, indulges them.  
Disconsolate wind, how it brushes your chest  
with its perfume, how it fills and smothers it!  
But, what does the wind matter, its cry in the leaves?,  
What does the pure star matter, the dream of night?  
If winter arrived in trappings of gold,  
it wouldn't help, love, to calm my yearnings.  
Only your voice can quiet my blood.  
Your voice: the most subtle of winds, the most mature  
and pleasing fruit of this glowing autumn.

(“Madrigal para suplicar tu voz” 67, emphases mine)

Multifaceted sensory imagery is not uncommon in Colinas's poetry: The liquid warmth of the pine trees, the heat of the earth, the taste of autumn on the beloved's lips, the soft sounds of her voice and the flow of lifeblood in her veins, a vision of oneself reflected in the sky, and the scent of the trees all follow in quick succession. All the poet's (and reader's) senses are awakened in this amorous encounter, but toward the end of the poem the poet emphasizes the senses of touch and hearing. Colinas presents parallel images of voice, blood, and wind—all flowing elements—as intertwined and co-dependent among bodies, relationships, and the cosmic flow between humans and nature: “Sólo tu voz podrá remansarme la sangre. / Tu voz: el más sutil de los

vientos, el fruto / más maduro y gustoso de este otoño encendido” (67). J. L. Puerto offers his own explanation of this complex symbolic relationship, which is present in a great part of Colinas’s work:

Y en la temporalidad, [...] el continuo fluir de *la sangre*, una presencia constante en esta poesía; sangre que alberga la luz y su reverso, elemento de ósmosis entre el ser y el todo, elemento simbólico del río de la vida en nosotros, que fluye y que nos lleva hacia el misterio, de donde, por otra parte, venimos. La sangre y el aire, con su ritmo y su música, con su fuego y su luz, mas también con su sombra. Todo el flujo que se expresa en nosotros. (Puerto 67, emphasis in original)

Colinas ends the poem with the colorful image of “otoño encendido,” reminding us of the heat of young love and the generous “fruto” that it offers. The mention of “fruto / [...] maduro y gustoso” of course invokes taste—the flavor that comes from her voice reminds us of kisses and refers back to the synesthetic verse “a otoño saben tus labios.” A kiss itself can be a synesthetic experience, intertwining sensation and heat with taste—it is this same intensity that Colinas wants to actuate in these multisensory images. There are several examples of synesthesia in this particular poem: a dense aroma (touch/taste), the flavor of autumn (taste/sight/touch), and the taste of a voice.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, “Madrigal para suplicar tu voz” is an invocation to awaken the voice of the beloved to interact with the poet and his world. The “madrigal” is both a musical and poetic form, and while Colinas does not aim to replicate its traditional form, here he is playing on the fact that madrigals are performed by multiple singers (multiple senses):

In the 16<sup>th</sup> c., the musical madrigal [...] usually consisted of *three to six voices*. [...] Many [...] made a point of *illustrating the sense or emotion of the text by means of musical conventions*, so each phrase of the text was set to its own music. The subjects tended to be *pastoral and amatory*. (*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 838, emphases mine)

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<sup>50</sup>Synesthesia or synaesthesia in literature is “the phenomenon in which one sense is felt, perceived, or described in terms of another (*The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 1398). It is also a relatively rare neurological condition in which the senses or sensory reactions are linked or intertwined in a person’s everyday experiences.

Colinas also parallels the relationship between a musical madrigal's "illustrating the sense of emotion of the text" in music by weaving his own poetic rhythm through highly sensory images, appealing all at once to our senses and emotions.

Not all poems in *Preludios* refer to a lover as in the previously analyzed poems; as mentioned above, in this book we begin to observe more concrete, yet not often culturally specific, elements of human culture. Some poems allude to buildings or various works of art or architecture, but still more frequent (even omnipresent) are natural symbols like the forest, the moon, or the lake ("La última noche" 68-69, "Fría belleza virgen" 81, "Elegía" 85, "Triste lugar" 89, and "El poeta visita la casa donde nació" 93). Nevertheless, in *Preludios* we can sense Colinas's eternal, yet ephemeral, poetic realm shifting into a world that we can imagine more concretely, and perhaps visit, touch, or even hear. "Barcarola" (the gondolier's song), for example, is one of Colinas's first allusions to Italy within his poetry (Italy will become a main focus for a period of time in the early 1970s, during his stay in Milan and Bergamo). This brief poem apostrophizes a type of man-made song (like the madrigal, it has a relation to the rhythms of nature) and its effect on the lake and surrounding environment, while being presented visually like a painting:

Ay, barcarola, plena canción de atardecida...  
Se estremecen los peces del lago al escucharte  
y el pinar más oscuro te recibe en silencio.  
Un escorzo de cisne en la azulada bruma.  
Tulipanes, castillos, el espeso brebaje  
del ciprés al ocaso, y tus manos de nieve.  
¡Oh locura del tiempo adensado en el claustro!  
Barcarola: se quiebran las olas en la orilla,  
se quiebra el corazón bajo el cielo profundo.

Ay, *barcarola*, full song of nightfall...  
The fish in the lake tremble when they hear you  
and the darkest pine grove receives you in silence.  
A foreshortened swan in the bluish mist.  
Tulips, castles, the thick potion  
of the cypress at sunset, and your hands of snow.  
Oh madness of time densified in the cloister!  
*Barcarola*: waves break on the shore,  
the heart breaks under the profound sky.

("Barcarola" 71)

The three middle verses of this poem contain no verbs; they are an inventory of images, which will later evolve into longer cascades of images in poems like "Sepulcro en Tarquinia." *Escorzo*

is an art term, translated technically as “foreshortening,” that refers to “the correct depiction in perspective of a single figure or object or part thereof in relation to its distance from the eye of the viewer” (“Foreshortening” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*). I have altered this term in the translation to be an adjective in order to preserve the smoothness and brevity of the verse. Colinas presents lines four through six as “tiempo adensado,” or a scene caught or condensed in time, a painting: readers visually scan the objects starting with the figure of the swan in the misty blue lake, and moving upwards in space to the “brebaje” (mixture, potion) of the tree and the setting sun. The word “brebaje” also hints at the mixing of paint colors and the misty imagery in this work of art (such as in a watercolor painting). While Colinas has always taken full advantage of visual imagery, “Barcarola” presents a new way of seeing or portraying the poetic image in his early works.<sup>51</sup> It is one of the first instances of ekphrasis in Colinas’s poetic works.

James Heffernan defines ekphrasis in his article “Ekphrasis and Representation” simply as “*the verbal representation of graphic representation*” (299, author’s emphasis). In his book *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (2008), Stephen Cheeke adds that “the act of describing art is always an act of interpretation” (19), and in the case of poetry describing art, an act of mutual enrichment. Heffernan exemplifies his definition with the passage on Achilles’ shield from Homer’s *Iliad*, an often-cited example in theoretical works on ekphrasis. In those verses, the poet “*animates* the fixed figures of graphic art, turning the picture of a single moment into a *narrative of successive actions*” (301, emphasis mine). Colinas’s use of the present tense for verbs in this ekphrastic poem creates continuous action, movement, and “animation” of those images, bringing the verbal-visual painting to life. In her article on ekphrasis and narrative,

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<sup>51</sup>Neruda also wrote a poem entitled “Barcarola,” found in *Residencia en la tierra* (1935).

Abigail Rischin writes that language “express[es] dynamism and temporal change [and] can convey ‘movement’; painting, by implication, only stasis. Language can depict temporal processes [...]; painting, only a single moment, fixed and unchanging” (1122). Perhaps this is why many poets employ ekphrasis –to breathe life into the visual and to add dimension to it– and why painting and poetry are said to be sister arts.

“Luna” is the last poem of the first section in *Preludios*—it leads us from autumn into winter with imagery of animals, the night, and elements of anxiety. Puerto defines winter as an “elemento simbólico para [Colinas]; como tiempo de la latencia, de la muerte, de la espera, pero también de la pureza,” and the night as “impenetrable, inmensa, enorme, insondable, ignota, misteriosa, sublime” (62-63). We might add that the slowness of winter and the solitude of night converge to create the ideal environment for contemplation, “el contemplar” –a term that Colinas has come to use often when describing his relationship to poetry and the cosmos– in addition to dreams and memory. In “Luna” the poet contemplates the light of the moon in a winter sky and the creatures affected by or gazing up at it:



Un gran copo de nieve cae de la luna pura.  
 Un gran copo de nieve, un cuchillo de luz  
 cercena la arboleda, incendia los matorros.  
 Nocturno de los sueños, profundo pozo helado,  
 enmudecida luna, fría mano, caricia.  
 Oh pájaros, no más revuelos en las copas,  
 no más ciegos chasquidos entre las hojas verdes.  
 Los pájaros nocturnos se pican en los ojos,  
 lloran sangre de cara a su figura virgen.  
 Los perros con su lengua ansiosa, desmedida,  
 ladran locos, desean mancillar su pureza,  
 llegar hasta su fuego, morderle el corazón.  
 Y el pecho sudoroso de aquel caballo tiembla,  
 contiene los relinchos, se perla de rocío.  
 Negro caballo, brasa posada sobre el heno,  
 flor de sangre, qué fiebre contienen tus dos ojos,  
 qué embebidos están bajo la luna dura,  
 bajo la catedral ardiente de los astros.  
 Luna: cristal perdido en el más noble techo,  
 sigue tu curso, nieva, gotea en los caminos,  
 en cada higuera vieja, en cada mármol roto,  
 derrama tu lechosa dulzura en nuestros pechos.

A great snowflake falls from the pure moon.  
 A great snowflake, a knife of light  
 slices through the grove, sets fire to the thicket,  
 Nocturne of dreams, deep frozen well,  
 muted moon, cold hand, caress.  
 Oh birds, no more fluttering in the canopies,  
 no more blind cracks among the green leaves.  
 The nocturnal birds peck at each other's eyes,  
 weep blood facing her virgin figure.  
 The dogs with their anxious, boundless tongues,  
 bark like crazy, wish to sully her purity,  
 to reach her fire, to bite her heart.  
 And the sweaty chest of that horse trembles,  
 contains his neighs, he beads with dew.  
 Black horse, live coal lying on the hay,  
 flower of blood, what a fever your two eyes contain,  
 how absorbed they are under the hard moon,  
 under the burning cathedral of stars.  
 Moon: crystal lost in the noblest ceiling,  
 follow your course, snow, drip onto the paths,  
 onto every old fig tree, onto every broken marble,  
 shed your milky sweetness onto our chests.

(“Luna” 76)

The image of the moon, object of contemplation and later of the poet's direct address, dominates all other objects and beings in this nightscape. It is a paradoxical image, at once letting fall a soft snowflake and a “cuchillo de luz”; it is hard and made of “cristal,” yet can spill its “lechosa dulzura” or milky sweetness, a metaphor for its soft white light, over the world and over us. Moonlight here is the element that cuts through or softens the dark of the night, allowing the trees and animals to be seen. In Colinas's later works light is the definitive symbol of knowledge, and in “Luna” it is approaching this meaning, though here it seems to be more a light of contemplation, discovery, and *potential* power (perhaps due to the fact that it is nocturnal light, surrounded by darkness, not sunshine).

Colinas likewise portrays contrasting images of birds: the noisy, active birds in the “hojas verdes” of daytime (or summer) have left, and now there are only the “pájaros nocturnos” who peck each other's eyes and weep blood as they watch the moon. The moon, “pura,”

“virgen,” “fría,” attracts the gaze of the dogs and horses as well, stirring them into a frenzy: “Los perros con su lengua ansiosa, desmedida, / ladran locos,” as the black horse sweats with fever in his eyes. It is not immediately clear why the moon has this distressing effect on the animals, though it may be touching on the concept that, in folklore, the moon can have a transformative effect on both humans and animals (such as the legend of the werewolf). The moon is undoubtedly powerful, with the ability to agitate as well as to soothe, and also may represent the ability to remember (sharpness): “un cuchillo de luz / cercena la arboleda, incendia los matojos,” or to forget: “Luna: cristal perdido [...] / sigue tu curso, nieva, gotea [...] / derrama”—the moon spills her light over everything, whether old, broken, dead, or living. As a beautiful paradox, the moon in this poem also represents the anxiety of change and loss that leads into another season, or a new era of one’s life.

The second section of *Preludios*, entitled “La presencia del mundo en mi invernial estancia,” contains past memories of love and happiness juxtaposed with images of death, solitude, and silence. It is not immediately evident in these recollections that the lovers are no longer together until the poet announces the *amada*’s absence in “Laberinto de lluvia y de tristeza”: “Ahora que no estás, dime qué hacía el pecho / con tanto corazón [...]” (80). These memories are also told in the past tense, while the poetic speaker’s uses the present tense to illustrate his “invernial estancia.” The cold winter landscapes and symbols of poetry, love, and nature are dead, mutilated, frozen, silent, or contained, as in the following excerpts (all emphases mine):

[...] / Detrás del *muro enverdecido* está  
el cristal de una *copa* conteniendo  
vino espumoso, besos o palabras.  
Besos cerca del fuego, troncos, *mudos*  
*aparejos* de caza y *flores muertas*  
hace tiempo en un *búcaro enlutado*.  
*Se hiela el lago* donde en el verano  
*cantan* las ranas en tardes profundas. / [...]

(“Fría belleza virgen” 81)

[...] / Dicen que hoy *ha nacido un niño moribundo*  
y que, en algún lugar, *no hay leña, no hay aceite*  
para el corvo candil. [...]

(“Llegada del invierno” 84)

[...] Pero aquí, en el jardín, o en las *salas vacías*  
de la casa, *no queda* ni un poco de calma,  
*ni un sonido suave, ni una gota de amor*.  
[...] Ni tú amor, ni yo, como dos *pedras*  
o *estatuas fulminadas* en el *salon vacío*,  
polvoriento, sabemos por qué cruje de *miedo*  
toda la casa vieja, por qué *han muerto los pájaros*,  
por qué *han muerto los besos* y *no hay fiebre en la noche*. (“Elegía” 85)

In “Fría belleza virgen,” there are two images of vessels: one of a goblet containing sparkling wine, kisses, or words, all symbols that for the poet represent joy and life, yet this “copa” is unreachable, hidden behind the mossy wall. The “búcaro enlutado,” like a cremation urn, contains the faded remains of kisses and dead plants. Joy and love are either inaccessible, already withered, or both. The frozen lake and absence of the frogs’ song in winter reinforce the silence and solitude of this scene, beautiful though it may be, according to the title: “Fría belleza virgen” / “Cold virgin beauty,” suggests an absence of life and fertility, symbolized by the objects in these dead winter landscapes. In this poem Colinas is moving towards a tendency to list concrete objects charged with meaning in order to create, in this case, a symbolic landscape.

Related to solitude, the concept of death in this section of *Preludios* is emphasized in striking images such that of the birth of “un niño moribundo,” a life ending just as it begins, the representation of hopelessness. In addition, the lack of firewood and oil for the lamps in this

cold season adds to the desperation felt in this scene; they indicate a lack of heat or fire, an element that is so common in previous texts. In the above excerpts from “Elegía,” this sense of desperation and loss grows without “un poco de calma, / ni un sonido suave, ni una gota de amor” (85). The exuberant sounds of life and love (wind, blood, breath, voice) that we observed in *Junto al lago* and at the beginning of *Preludios* have been replaced with silence or the ominous creaking of an empty house. But this silence doesn’t calm; like moon’s effect on the animals in “Luna,” this silence agitates and upsets the poetic voice who finds himself in a world without love (“han muerto los besos”), an eternal winter’s night: “Hoy que no quedan hojas y la noche, / muda y vacía, negará el amor” (“Luz del amanecer” 86). These image are representations of the effect of the absence of the beloved.

The last poem of this section, “Luces de primavera,” gathers many of the images that we have seen throughout the book (day and night), almost like a summary, and juxtaposes them to highlight their symbolic value:

A veces se abre el cielo plomizo y cae un rayo  
de sol sobre esta tierra húmeda, vaporosa.  
Cae un rayo de sol sobre el almendro grácil,  
cae una flecha de oro sobre las aguas muertas,  
cae una luz purísima sobre el césped oscuro.  
A veces se abre el cielo y deja de sonar  
la lluvia entre los álamos, en los tejados viejos.  
Hay un hálito fresco en las calles vacías.  
Un pájaro se atreve a cantar temeroso.  
Se rasgan las cortinas cenicientas del cielo  
y un rayo puro hiende la atmósfera invernal.  
Entonces, en la tierra, en los caminos hondos  
de la sangre, rebrota una fiebre, un ardor:  
Y pensamos gozosos que hay otra primavera  
ciñendo nuestros cuerpos con sus brazos de luz.

Sometimes the leaden sky opens and down falls a ray  
of sunlight onto this damp, misty earth.  
A ray of sunlight falls onto the graceful almond tree,  
a golden arrow falls onto the dead waters,  
a pure, pure light falls over the dark lawn.  
Sometimes the sky opens and the rain stops  
sounding among the poplars, on the old tiled roofs.  
There is a fresh vapor in the empty streets.  
A bird dares to sing, fearful.  
The ashen curtains of the sky are torn apart  
and a pure beam cracks the wintry atmosphere.  
Then, in the earth, in the deep paths  
of blood, reappears a fever, an ardor:  
And we think, joyful, that there is another springtime  
encircling our bodies with its arms of light.

(“Luces de primavera” 90)

The light that is so central to this poem is now sunlight, not moonlight—this poem is set during an early spring day after so many months of winter nights. This light tears away the greyness

and despair, letting light and music return to the world. It offers hope with the start of spring, and with this new season comes the knowledge that renewal and second chances are possible. In this poem Colinas revives the connection between earth and body: “en la tierra, en los caminos hondos / de la sangre, rebrota una fiebre, un ardor” (90). This fever or ardor is not simply that of love, but of a visceral enthusiasm for life itself that is both reflected in and affected by nature.

After the whirlwind of sentiments and imagery illustrating the love story in *Preludios* comes full circle in “Luces de primavera,” Colinas presents us with the last section, an “Epílogo desde la niñez y el sueño.” The first three poems are nostalgic reflections on the poet’s childhood home, dreams, and imagination. They connect with the previous sections through their reliance on memory and the reflection of emotion in the speaker’s surroundings. For example, in “El poeta visita la casa donde nació,” the poet visits “the mute ruins” of his childhood home and instead of finding relief in memory, the ruins induce “asombro,” “llaga,” “horror,” and “tristeza,” blended with “ternura” (93). María F. Santiago Bolaños asserts that, among the ruins, the poet “no [puede] hallar el ritmo de la sangre que [...] lo recibía entonces en el mundo. El hombre, el poeta, siente que también los objetos se han disuelto entre el manto de polvo de la temporalidad” (117). The life-giving flow is absent here. The next two poems contemplate the poet’s childhood dreams and fantasies, with “Bosque de los sueños” calling upon memories of comfort and warmth, and “Pozo oscuro de los sueños” calling upon the aid of fairy creatures from old children’s stories. Both of these dream-like poems ultimately end declaring a desire for love, linking them back to the rest of the book, from which they may seem removed at first: “Amigos todos de mis horas niñas: / librad al corazón de tanta sed” [de amor] (“Pozo oscuro de los sueños” 96).

The last poem in *Preludios a una noche total*, “Invocación a Hölderlin” (97-98), is stylistically and thematically distinct from the rest of the book, and for some critics it signals the beginning of intertextuality in Colinas’s poetry (García Martín, Nana Tadoun). J. L. García Martín writes that “[E]l mundo de *Preludios a una noche total* [es] un ámbito mágico y soñado, sin apenas nombres propios. Sólo Hölderlin –el lírico menos apegado a la tierra, el cantor de los dioses– aparece invocado en el poema final” (41). In addition to the reference to Hölderlin in this poem, we might consider that the two epigraphs opening *Preludios*, from Valéry and Aleixandre (cited above), precede or at least coincide with this last poem as intertextual references. As mentioned earlier, Colinas was already subtly incorporating such literary or cultural references in *Junto al lago*, with its Unamunian setting and references, though critics were ignorant of his first book (written in 1967) until it was published in 2001. The “Invocación a Hölderlin” has been noted frequently in studies on Colinas because it calls for attention with its radically different subject matter and style within this book of poems.

For as much attention as “Invocación a Hölderlin” has received, there are few close readings of the text itself (those critics who have done them are mentioned in the paragraphs below). In the first stanza Colinas presents a literary portrait<sup>52</sup> of the “vagabundo” Friedrich Hölderlin<sup>53</sup>: “El levitón gastado, el sombrero caído / hacia atrás, las guedejas de trapo y una llama / en las cuencas profundas de sus dos ojos bellos” (97). The contrast between physical or emotional ruin and inner brilliance is immediately apparent in these images, and is continued throughout the poem. In the second stanza, Colinas changes from third person to an apostrophe, a direct second-person address, to the figure of Hölderlin. Descriptions of the German poet’s

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<sup>52</sup>This is not an example of ekphrasis because the description is not based on an actual graphic representation.

<sup>53</sup>Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) was a German Romantic poet; he suffered from mental illness during the second half of his life.

ragged appearance and disturbed state of mind (true to his biography), such as “muñeco maltratado,” “tu carcajada rota,” and “locura,” contradict his genius, represented in phrases such as: “tus dos ojos azules,” “nido pleno de trinos,” “claro estaba escrito tu sino bajo el cielo,” and “ruiseñor.” Hölderlin’s mysterious ingenuity is expressed in images that suggest clarity and song, yet it is enveloped in a broken body pursued by “la muerte [...] en [sus] hombros, encorvada” (98). The third stanza is particularly illuminating:

[...] Cuando tú, silencioso y enlutado, leías  
latín en una celda, ya hubo duendes extraños  
sembrando por tus venas no sé qué fuego noble.  
Y antes de que acabaras hablando a las estatuas  
aves negras picaban tus dos ojos azules. [...] (“Invocación a Hölderlin” 97)

In a lonely cell, the Romantic poet reads his predecessors’ texts, from which spring the “duendes extraños,” who symbolize the traces of poetic tradition that have continued not only from the classical poets to Hölderlin, but again from him to Colinas. Hölderlin knew the classics well, and also translated from Latin and Greek. José Olivio Jiménez, commenting on this continuity of tradition, writes:

Nuestro poeta, cuya «conducta literaria» se ha revelado como sostenida siempre sobre grandes dosis de comprensión, medida y prudente evasión de extremosidades, ha sabido que toda ruptura [...] se asienta sobre la tradición, y no puede borrarla, y que el verdadero poeta, como apuntaba Novalis, no es sólo aquél que se adiestra para los «grandes saltos». (11)

For this reason, Colinas often refers back to and follows the traditions set by his poetic predecessors. Continuing with the image of Hölderlin’s genius, or “fuego noble,” being sown throughout the poet’s veins, this relates back to the flowing elements like air, blood, water, and voice that connect people to each other and to nature. The last verses emphasize the relationship between words (art, knowledge) and these flowing, life-giving elements: “Rasga los polvorientos velos de tu memoria / y que discurra el sueño, y que sepamos todos / de dónde brota

el agua que sacia nuestra sed” (98). In this poem, Colinas communicates that the poets and artists from all of history are part of this vital cycle: earth-vitality-human-love-beauty, adding here a dimension of creation and tradition to his holistic vision of life. Because, as we have seen, for Colinas poetry and life are inextricable: “En toda su obra siempre vibr[a], por entre la palabra hermosa o la referencia de la cultura, el palpito trascendido de una experiencia vivida” (Olivio Jiménez 14).

Another essential function of “Invocación a Hölderlin” is to incorporate elements from all of *Preludios* (otoño, duendes, noche, luna, fiebre, agua) and to serve as a transition to his next book, *Truenos y flautas en un templo*. It is undoubtedly placed at the end of *Preludios* with the purpose of anticipating the style of or leading into his next books, and begins an era in which Colinas looks increasingly outward for poetic inspiration: he expands geographic, literary, historical, and cultural horizons within his poetic works. Furthermore, Olivio Jiménez writes:

Se ha asociado a Colinas a los grandes nombres que abrieron esa tradición romántica—aurora de la modernidad—de la lírica alemana: Hölderlin y Novalis. [...] El sentimiento de la total unidad cósmica, tan definidor de la poesía de *Preludios*..., aparece así, exactamente como en Hölderlin, en calidad de apertura a la belleza, la divinidad, el misterio y la transcendencia. Ante todo: a la belleza. [...] Escribía el genial alemán: «Ser uno con todo lo viviente...; ésta es la cima de los pensamientos y las alegrías». (19)

While not referring specifically to the text of “Invocación a Hölderlin,” Olivio Jiménez shows that it represents the unity and underlying aesthetics of this book, and perhaps even of Colinas’s poetic production, as a whole. *Preludios a una noche* total is certainly a book in which Colinas’s style and aesthetics begin to mature and, with the “Invocación a Hölderlin,” to advance into his culturalist era.



#### **Chapter IV: Culturalist Poetry, 1972-1975**

*Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972), *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975).

##### ***Truenos y flautas en un templo* (written 1968-70, published 1972)**

In *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972), the weight of concrete details, depth of culturalist allusion, and elaboration of imagery can be felt even before the first verses begin. This book continues the musical motif that was so strong in *Preludios*—in its title we find natural sounds complementing man-made music—and leads into Colinas’s, and Spain’s, culturalist period. Olivio Jiménez notes:

Sin duda, *Truenos y flautas en un templo*, (1972) señala el momento cuando en Colinas más ostensiblemente se advierte su atención y concesión al esteticismo y el culturalismo esgrimidos por una cierta corriente de su generación como puntales básicos en la concepción y el tratamiento de la poesía. Esto aceptado, debe, sin embargo, admitirse también que el libro favorece—reclama—una lectura más en profundidad, y que esa lectura ha de permitir la natural articulación de dicho libro como un eslabón—un estadio—nada excéntrico en el desarrollo de la evolución del poeta. (20)

In other words, these culturalist tendencies develop naturally based on Colinas’s previous poetic works as his style continues to mature. The first epigraph to open this book tells us the origin of the title, which comes from the poetry of Saint-John Perse<sup>54</sup>: “*Tonnerre et flûtes...* [Thunder and flutes]” (italics in original citation, 101), which in the original poem continues “...dans les chambres! [...in the chambers!].” According to Steven Winspur, a critic of Perse, the French poet’s verses refer to “the divine sign of thunder and the flute’s traditional associations (via the Pan myth) with the power of song, [or] of poetic inspiration” (36). In his own title, Colinas has

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<sup>54</sup>Saint-John Perse (1887-1975) was a French poet & diplomat who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1960.

strengthened the power of the divine by setting the sounds of “thunder and flutes” not simply in rooms or chambers, but in the sacred space of a temple.

The second epigraph is from Antonio Machado: “*De toda la memoria sólo vale / el don preclaro de evocar los sueños*” (101). From his first three books to *Truenos*, Colinas is evolving from largely abstract sentiment and memory to dreamlike visions of real or imagined places and objects—art, architecture, gardens, cities, historical figures, and more. The poet often evokes his own dreams or memories, but also the visual imaginations of his readers. One uniting factor between *Preludios* and *Truenos* is the conception of the dream as the basis for these poems, however, the allusions made here are primarily to real places, people, works of art, and so on, with which Colinas is familiar. Somewhat in contrast to his first three books, in *Truenos* the poet focuses principally on the aesthetics of imagery within his verses, though sentiment is present as well. In several poems such as “Paisaje” and “Despedida” he addresses his wife, María José Marcos, whom he married in 1971, just after the period when he wrote this book and shortly before its publication: “Del brebaje amoroso poso en copa / de plata eres, María, que yo bebo. / Eres semilla y yo tierra que espera / tu corazón de madre y niña sabia” (“Despedida” 116). The powerful sense of emotion of Colinas’s earlier works now intertwines with a new aesthetic as his verses grow denser with imagery and culturalist details. Luis M. Alonso Gutiérrez writes of *Truenos*: “En la opinión de los críticos, [es] el libro que mayores concesiones hace al culturalismo y al esteticismo. Paradójicamente, el número de préstamos o elementos culturalistas es considerablemente menor en éste que en su siguiente poemario [*Sepulcro en Tarquinia*]” (67). *Truenos* is arguably more of a stepping stone between his first three publications and *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975), rather than his strongest culturalist work.

This book, like *Preludios*, is divided into three sections: “Poemas con un paisaje al fondo,” “Truenos y flautas en un templo,” and “Los cantos de ónice.” The first section, as its title suggests, contains poems rooted in or inspired by particular locations (predominantly within Spain), and often names them specifically: Santillana del Mar (Cantabria), Paris, Comillas (Cantabria), Galicia, Córdoba, China, and Astorga (León). The amount of attention or detail dedicated to each image becomes increasingly meticulous in this book, for example in the following images of the city walls and streets of Astorga, a town in the province of León. Notice, however, that the stanza between parentheses alludes to a past love story, similar to that in *Junto al lago*:

El pecho de un león son estos muros.  
Tiemblan las ramas de color cereza.  
Un trueno de palomas abre el día.  
Veo en las piedras vetas verdinegras.  
Tiene Teleno el lomo amoratado  
de un centauro bajo la luz primera  
y el belfo rojo de morder las flores  
húmedo por la nieve y las estrellas.  
Como un pulmón de pájaro respira  
el jardín incrustado, la arboleda.

(Cuántas noches bebimos la hermosura  
desde este mirador y qué leyenda  
de plata antigua y vírgenes cautivas  
tejía la luna entre las nobles piedras.  
Tenía los ojos mansos de los ciervos  
y una brisa de abeto entre las cejas.  
Su pupila de lago azul miraba  
con paz la catedral, las roídas verjas.)

Astorga es un silencio dilatado.  
Hecha de violines que no suenan  
qué profunda es su música, qué honda  
la pesadumbre de la yedra negra  
en los jardines últimos trepando.  
Rotundo corazón lleno de ausencia.

El pecho de un león, la frente dura  
del topacio de los muros, las vidrieras  
toscas, tintas de sangre y oxidadas,  
la ronquera del grajo, las callejas  
llenas de sombra humilde y sol antiguo...  
Rotundo corazón lleno de ausencia.  
De nobles tumbas tiene las raíces.  
De argolla y cobre amargo son sus venas,  
sus canales secretos de aguas rojas.  
Astorga suena a roca y a pureza.  
Qué sabios son sus ojos encendidos.  
Astorga ve pasar la luz, y sueña.

A lion's chest are these walls.  
The cherry-colored branches tremble.  
A thunderclap of doves opens the day.  
I see in the stones green-black veins.  
Teleno has the purplish back  
of a centaur under the first light  
and lips red from biting flowers,  
damp from snow and stars.  
Like a bird's lung the incrustated  
garden, the grove, breathes.

(How many nights we drank in the beauty  
from this outlook and what a legend  
of ancient silver and captive virgins  
the moon would weave among the noble stones.  
She had the gentle eyes of the deer  
and a breeze of the fir between her brows.  
Her pupil of blue lake was watching  
peacefully the cathedral, the disintegrating gates.)

Astorga is a long silence.  
Made of violins that make no sound  
how profound is their music, how deep  
the sorrow of the black ivy  
climbing in the remote gardens.  
Round heart full of absence.

The chest of a lion, the hard topaz  
front of the walls, the crude glass  
windows, stained with blood and rusted,  
the hoarse call of the rook, the narrow streets  
full of humble shadow and ancient sun...  
Round heart full of absence.  
In noble tombs lie her roots.  
Of shackles and bitter copper are her veins,  
her secret channels of red waters.  
Astorga sounds like rock and purity.  
How wise are her glowing eyes.  
Astorga sees the light pass, and dreams.

("Canto frente a los muros de Astorga" 112-113)

Colinas, though he travels far and wide both in real life and within this verses, often returns to his native León, to Spain (especially the various places where he has lived), and to the Mediterranean in general. In this "Canto" to Astorga,<sup>55</sup> the central image is that of its stone

<sup>55</sup>The "Canto frente a los muros de Astorga" is similar to "Nocturno en León" (*Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre*) and "A Venecia" (from *Jardín de Orfeo*, discussed later) in that all three poems personify a city as a woman (in the "Canto" the gender of the city is arguable, however, cities and countries are usually perceived as feminine).

walls, solid and powerful like “el pecho de un león,” marbled with green and black, showing its age. The reference to the lion is, of course, an allusion to León as well as a metaphor for the strength, presence, and power of the stones. These *muros* are the city walls, those of its early buildings, and the foundation of its ancient Roman infrastructure. They carry history, literally as the foundation of the town, and serve as a visual representation of Astorga’s past. As in previous books such as *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre*, the symbol of stone is central to *Truenos*, however, here it is not stone only as an element, but stone shaped by human hands (Olivio Jiménez 21). The human element is a significant factor in the development of culturalism, which focuses on the artistic creations of people and humankind’s historic roots.

Colinas’s attention to details such as specific colors has always been present, but is heightened in this book: cherry-colored branches, green-black veins in the stones, the red and purple mountaintop, an eye the color of a blue lake, black ivy, topaz-colored walls, blood and rust-stained windows, and red waters. This rich (and sometimes surprising) palette of colors opens our visual imaginations and supports the other non-visual imagery (auditory, tactile) present in this poem as well: a thunderclap of doves to start the day, the hardness of the stone walls, the disintegrating gates, a sense of silence and absence, the city’s sound of “rock and purity.” As discussed earlier, the full power of these sensory images lies outside of language, in the various senses, between the original and translation. The act of translating such images allows them to reach a different level as visions, sounds, textures, and more, within the poet’s created landscape and inside the mind’s eye (and ear). Enhancing its auditory richness, Colinas has written “Canto frente a los muros de Astorga” with assonant rhyme in every other verse, something that he has done with only two poems in this book, the other being “Paisaje” (Alonso Gutiérrez 1990, 68).

Colinas treats the locations in the other poems of this section in a similar way, envisioning for us architectural, artistic, and natural details specific to each place: stone gargoyles, intricately decorated carpets, an angel statue, the staircase of a ruined palace, among others. Included with these details are several references to mythical creatures or characters from fantasy such as mermaids and ghosts (“Ausencia”), dragons and sleeping beauty (“En un país extraño”), Eurydice (“De la consolación por la poesía”), and others. Several poems contain echoes of solitude and suggestions of silence, while a few contain violent imagery (“Escalinata del Palacio”). This section of *Truenos* has an overall fantastic, dream-like atmosphere, despite the fact that its subject matter is real places. Andrew Debicki comments on Colinas’s choice of landscapes:

In contrast to most of his generation, Colinas focuses on rural rather than urban landscapes. His view of the countryside, though concrete, is elevated and stylized, and also removed from the literal via artistic echoes. [...] Each detail and artistic echo adds to the mood of harmony and to the dreamlike evocation of an idealized paradise. Such scenes and moments of beauty become the poet’s antidote to his consciousness of temporality and mortality. (158-159)

While in agreement with most of Debicki’s assertions, I would argue that Colinas’s idealized and detailed depictions of landscapes are not exactly an “antidote to his consciousness” of time and death. They are rather a way of perceiving one’s surroundings that is enhanced by the senses, and for the poet represent *la plenitud*—the plenitude, fullness, or richness of all that life has to offer. Colinas never wishes to ignore death or temporality, but to incorporate them as a natural part of life and beauty. The ahistorical quality of his poetry as a whole, however, is one way in which Colinas does aim to *transcend* time with his words and visions.

The middle section of *Truenos y flautas en un templo* is called by the same title, and so is its title poem, which we may consider to be the central poem in this book, as it is located at its

heart. A temple is indeed the central image described in Colinas's verses, in which he explores its space, history, and memories:

Cuando mis pasos cruzan las estancias vacías  
todo el templo resuena como una oscura cítara.  
Oh mármol, si pudieses hablar cuántos secretos  
podrías revelarnos. ¿Hubo sangre corriendo  
sobre tu nieve dura? ¿Hubo besos y rosas  
o sólo heridos pájaros debajo de las cúpulas?

Vosotras, las antorchas de los amaneceres,  
¿qué visteis, qué quedó en el fondo del ánfora?  
Y el vino derramado, el vino descompuesto  
sobre los labios ácidos, ¿qué podría contar,  
qué podría decirnos que no fuese locura?  
El amor se pudrió como un fruto golpeado.  
El amor fue trenzando pesadumbre con odios.  
El amor hizo estragos en la firmeza humana.

Hoy el otoño sube muy lento por las rocas,  
por las enredaderas, por las raíces dulces,  
por los espinos rojos, a este lugar secreto.  
De las tumbas abiertas brotan las mariposas.  
Las hojas entretejen rumorosos tapices.  
El agua de las fuentes, verdosa y enlutada.

Casi tocando el cielo de los atardeceres,  
el templo de la diosa, la pureza del tiempo.  
Cuando llega la noche sostiene los racimos  
de las constelaciones, es columna del mundo,  
dintel lleno de flautas, hondo pozo de estrellas.

When my footsteps cross the empty spaces  
the whole temple resounds like a dark zither.  
Oh marble, if you could speak how many secrets  
you could reveal to us. Was there blood running  
over your hard snow? Were there kisses and roses  
or only wounded birds under the domes?

You, the torches of the dawn, what did you see,  
what remained at the bottom of the amphora?  
And the wine spilled, the wine decomposed  
on acid lips, what could it recount,  
what could it tell us that was not madness?  
Love rotted away like a bruised fruit.  
Love was braiding sorrow with hatred.  
Love wreaked havoc on human strength.

Today autumn rises very slowly through the rocks,  
through the vines, through the sweet roots,  
through the red thorns, to this secret place.  
From the open tombs blossom butterflies.  
The leaves interweave murmuring tapestries.  
The water of the fountains, green and in mourning.

Almost touching the skies of dusk,  
the temple of the goddess, the purity of time.  
When night comes, it holds up the clusters  
of constellations, it is the column of the world,  
lintel full of flutes, deep well of stars.

(“Truenos y flautas en un templo” 131)

This poem begins relating the sacred space of a temple to the intimate history or memory it contains.<sup>56</sup> The footsteps of the poet echo in that empty space, sounding like a zither with its acute trills. We are immediately drawn into this space, and therefore imagine the marble of its floor and walls, the hollowness or emptiness within the structure, and the echoes as the only sign of life or movement. The first stanza closes with questions about the events that may have taken place in this temple. These questions are largely symbolic and reflect the loss of history

<sup>56</sup>This relates back to Unamuno's conception of *intrahistoria*, the private side of history, to which Colinas may have alluded in his first book *Junto al lago*.

associated with the structure—was there blood (war), were there kisses and roses (love), or dead birds (death, loss, despair) under its domes? Spatially, our view moves from the marble floors upwards to these domes.

The meditations on the space of the temple and its past then lead the poet into more personal thoughts. The speaker apostrophizes “las antorchas de los amaneceres,” the torches of the dawn, imploring them to tell him what they saw, trying to rediscover the temple’s history, but they remain silent. Ultimately, what remains “en el fondo del ánfora,” the wine<sup>57</sup> described in the next verse, represents waste and loss. It is strangely this spilled and decomposed wine on the “labios ácidos” (not the lips themselves), that gives us some clues. The last three verses of this stanza delineate what the wine says to the poet—they combine memory and emotion to symbolize the instability and failure of love. Love rotted quickly, like a bruised fruit, and once decayed, its actions were warped and cruel: “El amor fue trenzando pesadumbre con odios. / El amor hizo estragos en la firmeza humana.” This personified Love, who wove together sorrow and hatred, and who wreaked havoc on human strength, is the product of failure and corruption. These are the results of a wasted love, which, once it has gone bad, has the power to destroy even “la firmeza humana,” human strength itself.

These images of ruined love parallel the images of the ruined temple building in the third stanza. Again our vision rises with the autumn, which emerges from among the rocks, vines, roots, and thorns that have overgrown the poet’s “lugar secreto.” The autumn symbolizes change, perhaps an ending, as do the “tumbas abiertas,” the open tombs in the temple ruins. But instead of containing the expected symbols of death, these tombs hold signs of life: the

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<sup>57</sup>There may be an allusion here to the sacred chalice of wine from the Catholic mass, though the poem describes a decidedly pagan space.



butterflies who “brotan,” literally bud or blossom, from within them. These *mariposas* represent hope, life, and beauty among the ruins, thorns, and death. Contributing to this sense of movement and life are the leaves, who weave themselves into lush murmuring tapestries. The final image, “El agua de las fuentes, verdosa y enlutada,” returns to the imagery of ruins and *el luto*, mourning. Water, which is so often a symbol of life and vital flow for Colinas, in this image is stagnated and corrupt, like the rotten love and decomposed wine.<sup>58</sup>

Mourning is not, however, the final image in this visual (and emotional) series—in the fourth stanza hope and strength return. Throughout the entire poem we repeatedly envision vertical scenes that spatially rise from floor to domes, dawn to dusk, and ground to sky. In this visual movement Colinas emphasizes the presence of the divine, but also of hope and beauty. In raising our eyes up towards the divine, the “templo de la diosa” in the poem, we regain strength and a determination to continue. Strength is symbolized in the final images of Night, who holds up the constellations and serves as the column that supports the world. *La noche* also represents aural and visual beauty as a “lintel full of flutes, deep well of stars.” These images in the last few verses can also arguably be read as metaphors for the architecture of the great European cathedrals (such as the gothic cathedral of León) that were designed vertically for divine sight and to raise human eyes toward the heavens. The most decorative elements of those ancient sacred structures are many yards high, sometimes difficult to see from the ground. It is not uncommon for cathedral columns to resemble tall trees (“columna del mundo”), or for their ceilings to be decorated with clouds or stars as in the poem’s final image, “hondo pozo de

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<sup>58</sup>Water is described in a similar way later in “A Venecia” (*Jardín de Orfeo*).

estrellas.” The image of Night as a column holding up “los racimos / de las constelaciones” is parallel to this vision of cathedral columns holding up a star-adorned ceiling.<sup>59</sup>

Even the image of the “dintel lleno de flautas” becomes clear when we put it into the context of a cathedral’s space—it is a representation of a cathedral’s organ and its many pipes, which are usually elevated quite high and are often situated over a main doorway, in the space referred to as the lintel, within a cathedral. The musicality and splendor of the night dispel any previous connotations of absence and solitude that it had, and the image of flutes takes us back to the title of the poem and the book itself: “Truenos y flautas en un templo.” Ultimately, the poem addresses the emotion (*truenos*) and beauty (*flautas*) that are constants in both divine presence and everyday life. With this book, Colinas solidifies his standing as a poet of music, sound, and space, which are complementing elements in his verses. Remember the “thunderclap of doves,” the “murmuring tapestries” of leaves, the “lintel full of flutes” in the sky. He is a poet who is capable of invoking all the senses.

The next six poems in the second section aesthetically follow the first poem—they are heavy with allusions to classical mythology, natural autumnal imagery, the marble of the temple, and references to love and death. These texts frequently refer to goddesses (Venus, Diana) and women (María José –Colinas’s wife–, Edith Piaf), sometimes as one: “Diosa o mujer, te miro y te pierdo para siempre” (“Ocaso 136). Colinas invokes earthly women and goddesses as one to represent his unified vision of them as divine beings, to present one idealized image of the feminine—this is for him a mystery and a source of beauty and inspiration, almost in the Petrarchan sense: “Mujer, mujer, preguntas encierra el corazón: / ¿Dónde encontrar palabras para escribir tu historia? / ¿Con qué alucinaciones construiré mis versos?” (“Ocaso” 136).

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<sup>59</sup>The image of the “hondo pozo de estrellas” could be applicable to mosques as well.

Whatever specific female figures he names in his work, Colinas tends to present them as abstracted or idealized beings, as the concept of Woman, rather than individual women.

The ruined classical setting and divine or fictional figures of *Truenos*'s middle section do not continue into the last section, "Los cantos de ónice," a series of eight numbered, but untitled, poems. Onyx (*ónice*) is a quartz most often associated with the color black, though it can have stripes of varying colors. In these texts Colinas refers to this stone specifically for its color—the image of this black stone contrasts with the white marble of the previous section. As the marble is associated with the temple, and therefore divinity, the onyx characterizes the opposite, the human condition.<sup>60</sup> Alonso Gutiérrez writes of this book of poems:

"Los Cantos de Ónice" enuncian una exaltación optimista del espíritu y de su poder creador y poético, entroncando ello justamente con la poesía de Friedrich Hölderlin y su pensamiento literario. En la increpación que Colinas dirige a los hombres "prácticos", ciegos ante el misterio –"Raza de débiles" [...]– encuentra J. Olivio Jiménez una intuición cercana a la de Hölderlin [...] Y si, como Hölderlin hiciera, Colinas desconfía de la razón humana, es porque, desgraciadamente, en ocasiones ha llegado a cegar la vía del sentimiento, del entusiasmo, de la fe. (71)

We see this humanity emphasized from the first poem:

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<sup>60</sup>It is interesting to note that this is the only time Colinas refers to *ónice* (onyx) in any of his books through 2011.

Vosotros, los formados en un útero de soledad y espanto.  
 Vosotros, que nacisteis ya vencidos,  
 habláis de las desgracias de este mundo  
 mientras contemplo el cielo pensando en la salud  
 y en los países dulces, extraños del Oriente.  
 Raza de débiles: van todas las rosas  
 sobre las aguas negras de la vida.  
 Venid y ved que allí  
 donde ponéis los dedos con amor  
 aún puede brotar música.  
 No verán vuestros ojos las palmeras  
 detrás de las murallas amarillas  
 y los muertos aquellos que os dieron la vida  
 ya tenían entonces gusanos en las cuencas de sus ojos.  
 El fruto pende y palpamos sus zumos.  
 La mañana se comba y ved atirantado  
 el pecho en la hermosura.  
 Llega la noche envuelta en velos aromados.  
 Sobre la frente,  
 la Cruz del Sur se enreda  
 con las constelaciones.  
 Los barcos toman rumbo  
 hacia las islas de las esmeraldas.

You, those formed in a uterus of solitude and fright.  
 You, who were born already defeated,  
 you speak of the misfortunes of this world  
 while I contemplate the sky thinking of health  
 and of the sweet, strange countries of the Orient.  
 Race of weaklings: all roses drift  
 on the black waters of life.  
 Come and see that there,  
 where you place your fingers with love,  
 music can still flower.  
 Your eyes will not see the palm trees  
 behind the yellow walls  
 and those dead who gave you all life  
 already had worms in the sockets of their eyes.  
 The fruit hangs and we touch its juices.  
 The morning bends, and see her taught  
 chest in its loveliness.  
 Night arrives wrapped in aromatic veils.  
 Above our foreheads,  
 the Southern Cross tangles  
 with the constellations.  
 The boats set their course  
 towards the islands of emeralds.

(“Los cantos de ónice, I” 143)

In the verses above “vosotros” are those people who choose to ignore the beauty and “frutos” that life can offer—instead they perceive all their own “rosas,” or blessings, as if they were just another bleak part of life, symbolized by the black waters (parallel to the black onyx). The poet weaves series of images depicting the aesthetic and intellectual delights of life (literature, nature, travel) with criticism of those who disregard them in the “Cantos de ónice”: “Maldecís, insensatos que asesináis el tiempo. / [...] / Byron le hubiera echado a las hienas / los astillados cuencos de vuestros cráneos grises” (“Los cantos de ónice, V”). This sharp reproach, directed outward from the poems, is something we have not seen in Colinas’s work up until this last section of *Truenos*—here he is clearly condemning those who waste time, ignoring the riches that the world offers. We are reminded that we have only one lifetime to enjoy them: “Pensad que nunca, nunca resucita / la carne que nos dio nuestros deleites” (“Los cantos de ónice, IV”). Luckily not all is necessarily lost: “Pero tú que has tenido la suerte de escucharme”—the person

who realizes that she or he is missing out on the beauty of music, art, and the natural world can still take advantage of these pleasures, “Y te harás dios tan sólo por un día” (“Los cantos de ónice, VI”). The poet’s advice is clearly stated in canto “IV,” and exemplified in various other verses:

Dejad atrás la envidia y la lujuria.  
Amad colores puros, los aromas  
silvestres,  
muy humildes,  
el silencio  
y la luz. [...]

Leave behind envy and lust.  
Love pure colors, the aromas  
of the wild,  
very humble,  
silence  
and light. [...]

(“Los cantos de ónice, IV” 146)

Colinas makes the following contrasts in “Los cantos de ónice,” based partly on the aesthetics of the previous section, “Truenos y flautas en un templo”: divine/earthly, learning/ignorance, white/black, life/death, colors/grayness, thriving nature/empty death, and more. Thus he helps us visualize these two poetic-aesthetic worlds that he has created in order to emphasize those elements that will lead to a life of plenitude. “Thunder” and “flutes” can be read as contrasting symbols: power and anger v. beauty and tranquility, or nature v. human.<sup>61</sup> Or they can be interpreted as *complementary* sounds created by nature and humans, which have come together in a sacred space to become one music, like the human who can become a god: “Y te harás dios tan sólo por un día” (“Los cantos de ónice, VI”).

“Los cantos de de ónice” are somewhat stylistically different from previous sections and books, offering series of symbolic images that have little narrative coherence. This is perhaps why Alonso Gutiérrez writes: “La exégesis poemática tropieza aquí con cierto hermetismo textual, sea éste consecuencia de un desbordamiento de la libertad imaginativa o [...] motivado por las incursiones en el irracionalismo que ahora se prodigan sin ninguna medida” (71). As I

<sup>61</sup>They also evoke figures from classical mythology: Zeus with his thunderbolts and Pan with this flute.

will discuss later regarding *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, what critics refer to as *el irracionalismo*/irrationalism as a characteristic of culturalist or *novísimo* poetry can be a cover for misunderstanding, difficulty in comprehending complex texts, or not reading in context—I do not believe that the term can be applied to Colinas’s poetry.<sup>62</sup> J. M. Barraji3n, in his article “El irracionalismo po3tico en la l3rica de Antonio Colinas,” claims that in some poems of both *Truenos* and *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, “algunas veces, –pocas, pero significativas–, la poes3a de Colinas deja de lado ese tono sugerente, simb3lico, meditativo, y se adentra en un territorio de dolor claro y confusi3n exacerbada” (181). I disagree, and assert that while his imagery and language can be characterized sometimes as dreamlike or even chaotic, they never abruptly change style or stop being evocative, symbolic, or meditative within these works or others—a connection is always present. “Irrationalism” is better defined as a critical term, not a technique employed by culturalist poets who often create multifaceted, intricate texts that often must be read symbolically. Instead of simplifying or discounting texts by employing the term “irrationalism,” one should analyze chaos, complexity, enumeration, and other multidimensional elements of the culturalist aesthetic. Visually-centered readings of such texts, as shown above, can help bring the many meanings of these texts to light.

Alonso Guti3rrez summarizes Colinas’s fourth book and places it within its thematic and literary trajectory in *El coraz3n desmemoriado*:

Aunque no sea libro de madurez, *Truenos y flautas...* no es un poemario menor, y en 3l se consolidan rasgos esenciales de obras anteriores –comuni3n con la Naturaleza, autenticidad, riqueza l3xica, musicalidad, simbolismo, nitidez– Y aparecen otros que ser3n constantes de la producci3n poem3tica posterior de Colinas: la ‘sensaci3n art3stica de caducidad y muerte’ y una serenidad tranquilizante, reflexiva y madura. (71)

<sup>62</sup>Rozas, Alonso Guti3rrez, Barraji3n, Olivio Jim3nez, and Mart3nez Fern3ndez (2015) have all touched on irrationalism in their writings on Colinas.

These observations are the perfect *segue* (an appropriate word, as it refers to the continuity between musical works) into Colinas's fifth book of poetry, *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, in which we will observe the continuation and strengthening of many elements from *Truenos y flautas en un templo*.

### ***Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (written 1970-74, published 1975)**

It is useful at this point to recall Colinas's contention with the ideas of poetic generation and common Poetics among a given group or "generation" of writers. He essentially rejects the "Tópicos y excesos del no menos tópico 'culturalismo', 'venecianismo', etc., que nos llevaría a recordar que no hay cultura si detrás de ella no hay vida" (*Precisamente...*).<sup>63</sup> As discussed previously, Colinas's earlier poetic productions, sometimes termed "culturalist" or "novísimo," are often directly related to life experience or knowledge (such as his time spent in Italy or the meeting with Ezra Pound) than an abstract desire to reference global or European high culture. In his article "Europa en el imaginario poético de la España contemporánea (1966-2006)," Martín Estudillo posits that the type of highbrow culturalism in vogue at the time:

[...] Vino a servir de marco para una trama de proyección utópica, en la cual la más sofisticada cultura europea representaba un horizonte hacia el cual miraban los jóvenes poetas sesentayochistas, hastiados tanto por la mediocridad imperante bajo la dictadura como por el fallido discurso emancipatorio de las poéticas de corte social que se oponían al régimen. (802)

Martín Estudillo's explanation makes sense broadly, as does his continuing argument that this young generation was attempting to reconnect with Europe on a cultural level at the same time

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<sup>63</sup>For more of Colinas's personal Poetics, see his article "No podemos levantar muros entre poesía y vida" (1997), his book *El sentido primero de la palabra poética* (2008), the collection of essays *Un tiempo que no pasa: nuevos ensayos* (2009), his pamphlet *Precisamente en Córdoba* (2012), his personal website (AntonioColinas.com), and the various introductions and commentaries that he has written for his own and others' books and anthologies.

that Spain aspired to do so on a socio-political level.<sup>64</sup> Colinas's position within this environment undoubtedly influenced his subject matter to some extent, however, the life experience surrounding each of his works and their impact upon the poet's imagination and aesthetics are central to his work. Alonso Gutiérrez writes of the poet's four years living in Italy:

Los intensos, deslumbrantes años de Italia ejercieron en Colinas una pródiga e inspiradora fascinación. Quince estaciones de vivencias, de contacto directo con el arte y la cultura del nuevo país, dejaron su poso indeleble y turbador en un espíritu sensible, apasionado como poco por los valores artísticos. [...] Colinas, habiendo vuelto a España [en 1974], publicaba su cuarto poemario, *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, con el que conmovió hasta sus cimientos el panorama lírico nacional. (72)

Though it paralleled the culturalist movement and in some ways conformed to culturalist aesthetics, *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* was indeed a phenomenon that stood out from the rest.<sup>65</sup>

Colinas won the Premio de la Crítica de poesía castellana 1976 for *Sepulcro*, and for his anthology *Poesía, 1967-1980*, he won the Premio Nacional de Literatura 1982. *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* is Colinas's only book to be republished over half a dozen times in reprints and special editions, some of which are illuminated or multi-media.

The book's popularity continues through the present, as evidenced by the 2015 volume *Bajo las raíces (40 años de Sepulcro en Tarquinia)*, edited by Spanish poet Ben Clark (b. 1984, Ibiza). This volume, conceived as an homage to *Sepulcro*, collects tribute poems from over fifty contemporary poets such as Clara Janés, Francisco Brines, Antonio Gamoneda, and many more. In an interview that I carried out by email with Ben Clark, he wrote that:

Para mí era importante subrayar la importancia que el libro tuvo –y tiene– para los poetas. Es decir, resaltar el papel de *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* como poesía que genera poesía. No quería un libro homenaje a Antonio Colinas, sino un libro homenaje a este

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<sup>64</sup>See Colinas's poem "Vamos, vamos a Europa" (164).

<sup>65</sup>See footnote 19 or the Bibliography for information on the over half-dozen reprints and special editions of this book (and its title poem) over the years.



libro, a su creación. Se trata de un libro que ha dejado una estela visible y patente en la creación en español de los últimos 40 años, y he intentando que esta antología, que abarca muchas generaciones y poéticas, refleje esa influencia. [...] Creo que su influencia en la poesía contemporánea en castellano es demostrable y fuerte. Ha sido un libro “refugio” para muchos poetas que no se identificaban con la estética de la llamada nueva sentimentalidad, y ha encontrado lectores en amantes de la poesía con gustos muy heterogéneos y formas muy distintas de entender la poesía. Es un libro sincero, fresco, joven y a la vez muy maduro, Poesía en mayúsculas que se sigue leyendo hoy. Como explico en la breve introducción que escribí para *Bajo las raíces*, una de las satisfacciones más grandes que recibí al confeccionar la antología fue recibir distintos correos de los poetas participantes contándome la ilusión que habían sentido al volver a leer *Sepulcro*. Esa ilusión, ese disfrute, es lo que hace que esta obra sea grande, y por eso hay que recordarla, para recordar, cuando nos sobrevenga la desolación, lo que es la poesía. (Clark interview)

In his book *La mirada elíptica* (2007), Luis Martín Estudillo claims that the works of poets from the late 1960s and ‘70s in Spain, including those of Colinas, exhibit a strong presence of the “Baroque” (19).<sup>66</sup> Among the Baroque qualities attributed to *culturalismo* are the great amount of detail and specificity dedicated to descriptions of both foreign and domestic cultural details such as landscapes, arts, architecture, nature, and more. At the height of popularity of culturalism, some poets also exhibited this Baroque quality in the elaborate, sometimes frenzied chaos of visual detail and cultural allusion in their verses (such as in Guillermo Carnero’s 1975 *El azar objetivo*, Luis Alberto de Cuenca’s 1971 *Los retratos*). Within Colinas’s work, the best example of this culturalist conception of the Baroque is *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, his most popular book of poems from this time, and the one that the poet and critics claim as the work most beloved by his reading public. José Enrique Martínez writes: “Pasan los años, pero su frescura, su intensa armonía, su equilibrada belleza sigue fascinando a los lectores, ganados por una palabra que roza nuestras fibras más sensibles (“Cuarenta años después” 45). In *Truenos y flautas en un templo* Colinas began his journey into culturalist aesthetics, but I propose that he reaches the height of culturalist expression in *Sepulcro*. The fact that *Sepulcro* has been

<sup>66</sup>Disillusion, refuge in art, life as a dream, the sacred/divine, the senses, among others.

republished several times throughout Colinas's career only adds to its already striking complexity, lending the work itself multiple subsequent physical and auditory manifestations.

The poems of the first and second sections of *Sepulcro* ("Piedras de Bérghamo" and "Sepulcro en Tarquinia") exemplify an approach to culturalist aesthetics in verses based on Colinas's life experiences and interaction with Italian culture during the four years he taught and lived in northern Italy (Milan and Bergamo, 1970-74). In "Piedras de Bérghamo," the opening section of *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, the first poem is an ekphrastic representation of Simonetta Vespucci, a young woman whom Sandro Botticelli (c. 1445-1510) employed as a model for several of the feminine figures in his paintings. Colinas's love for Renaissance art is evident in this book of poems, his novels *Un año en el sur* (1985) and *Larga carta a Francesca* (1986), as well as several other works (including visual aspects of his publications, such as cover art). The text of the poem "Simonetta Vespucci" is a detailed physical description of this historical figure who was so important within the art world. José Enrique Martínez asserts that Simonetta's "delicadeza, fragilidad, finura, inocencia y esbeltez se reflejan icónicamente en los versos cortos del poema, estirados sobre la página para sugerir la figura de la doncella alta y frágil" ("Cuarenta años después" 45). Verses two through four allude to the historical Simonetta's death (c. 1453-1476), while the subsequent verses refer to her aesthetic representation in Renaissance art:

Simonetta,  
 por tu delicadeza  
 la tarde se hace lágrima,  
 funeral oración,  
 música detenida.  
 Simonetta Vespucci,  
 tienes el alma frágil  
 de virgen o de amante.  
 Ya Judith despeinada  
 o Venus húmeda  
 tienes el alma fina del mimbre  
 y la asustada inocencia  
 del soto de olivos.  
 Simonetta Vespucci,  
 por tus dos ojos verdes  
 Sandro Botticelli  
 te ha sacado del mar,  
 y por tus trenzas largas,  
 y por tus largos muslos.  
 Simonetta Vespucci  
 que has nacido en Florencia.

Simonetta,  
 for your delicacy  
 the afternoon becomes a tear,  
 funeral prayer,  
 arrested music.  
 Simonetta Vespucci,  
 you have the fragile soul  
 of a virgin or a lover.  
 Already a tousled Judith  
 or damp Venus,  
 you have a fine soul of wicker  
 and the startled innocence  
 of the olive grove.  
 Simonetta Vespucci,  
 for your two green eyes  
 Sandro Botticelli  
 has drawn you from the sea,  
 and by your long braids,  
 and by your long thighs.  
 Simonetta Vespucci,  
 you have been born in Florence.

(“Simonetta Vespucci” 155)

This poem is visually and thematically significant within Colinas’s work, and in several ways represents the coherence of his body of poetry. The first five verses of the poem above allude to Simonetta’s death at a young age—José E. Martínez, notes that she was “una joven hermosa, rubia, erguida y delicada... [quien] murió de tuberculosis a los veintitrés años” (*En la luz respirada* 151). Her delicacy is perceived both Simonetta’s fragile health and delicate beauty, with her soul made of wicker, a very frail material. The music that stops upon her death represents the rupture in the flow of life and beauty in this woman, who for both Botticelli and Colinas embodies idealized beauty through art.

Her portrayal as “a virgin or a lover” begins to reveal Simonetta’s many facets as both a woman and an artistic icon who appears in several of Botticelli’s paintings. There are at least four portraits assumed to be of Simonetta that are attributed to Botticelli or associated with his workshop, painted during her lifetime and even after her death: Simonetta’s portrait (see the cover image below), *The Birth of Venus*, and more (Venturi 8). The following verse leads us into

various aspects of these artistic representations: First, “a tousled Judith,” refers to the fictional Biblical figure who pretended to seduce the enemy general, the Palestinian Holofernes, in order to kill him and save Israel. Judith gains his trust (and desire), and beheads the general one night while he is intoxicated, without compromising her own virtue (Seeman 3647). Botticelli’s painting *The Return of Judith to Bethulia* (c. 1472) illustrates a proud Judith walking with her servant, who is carrying Holofernes’s head.<sup>67</sup> In his poem, Colinas emphasizes the seductive side of Judith, though she also symbolizes virtue, strength, beauty, and victory—characteristics of Simonetta that the poet also conveys through this Biblical allusion. The image of “a damp Venus” of course refers to Botticelli’s *La nascita di Venere* (*The Birth of Venus*, c. 1486), in which the nude figure of the Roman goddess emerges from the sea upon a shell. Like Judith, Venus also represents sensuality and beauty, but also love and—in this painting—innocence, as she has just been born. The imagery in verses 14-19 recalls details of Simonetta’s various portrayals by Botticelli: “ojos verdes,” “trenzas largas,” and “largos muslos” describe this idealized Renaissance woman.

Colinas’s use of *por*, as in the following verses, expresses a double meaning that is difficult to translate: “por tus dos ojos verdes / Sandro Botticelli / te ha sacado del mar, / y por tus trenzas largas, / y por tus largos muslos.” This *por* can mean that Botticelli has chosen Simonetta “because of” her physical characteristics. It can also suggest that the artist has physically “drawn” (*sacado*), or “pulled her out” of the sea “by” her eyes, braids, or thighs. This second reading may suggest an underlying violence that hints at the exploitation of this woman’s physical appearance and relates back to her fragile health and early death, though it also

<sup>67</sup>The original painting *The Return of Judith to Bethulia* (*Ritorno di Giuditta a Betulia*) is located in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.

generates movement in a motionless image.<sup>68</sup> Conversely, Colinas attributes to Simonetta “la asustada inocencia / del soto de olivos” in verses 12-13. In his book *La llamada de los árboles* (1988), the poet explains the symbolism that he associates with a variety of trees often named in his poems. According to this book, the olive tree (*el olivo*) embodies a “Luz divina y eterna cabrilleando en la luz finita de la mirada de los mortales” (4). Since Simonetta possesses this divine light, her image indeed will be eternal in contrast with the “mortals” who gaze upon her. The last two verses also reinforce Simonetta’s immortality and rebirth (renaissance) through art: “Simonetta Vespucci, / que has nacido en Florencia.” Colinas again suggests in the final verse that—though Simonetta is dead—her image, beauty, and other characteristics have been (re)born or immortalized in Botticelli’s paintings. *The Birth of Venus* (c. 1486), for example, was painted approximately a decade after Simonetta’s death (1476), as were other paintings whose feminine figures are thought to have been inspired by her. Botticelli’s immortalization of Simonetta is then multiplied—she is “reborn” again—in Colinas’s poetry and prose, and in the works of others who also reproduce her iconic image. For *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, the Renaissance is central to its aesthetic, but also to its function as a culturalist text: Culturalist poets in diverse ways intentionally recreate, revive, or recommunicate elements of culture that are important to them, giving them new life or a rebirth in another medium, like Judith, Venus, and Simonetta.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>This is also an example of ekphrastic representation: As mentioned previously, James Heffernan explains that with poetic ekphrasis, the poet “*animates* the fixed figures of graphic art, turning the picture of a single moment into a narrative [...]” (emphasis mine, 301). In “Simonetta Vespucci,” the present perfect tense produces this movement of the central figure, and even involves the artist as a character in the narrative, who pulls her from the sea. To repeat a quote from earlier: Abigail Rischin writes that language “express[es] dynamism and temporal change [and] can convey ‘movement’; painting, by implication, only stasis. Language can depict temporal processes [...]; painting, only a single moment, fixed and unchanging” (1122). Colinas takes full advantage of the narrative benefits of ekphrasis in this and several other poems.

<sup>69</sup>The first verse from poem III of *Junto al lago* (1967) is: “Venus sobre las aguas.”

The imagery and subject matter of the poem “Simonetta Vespucci” are also recreated in the cover art of Colinas’s *Obra poética completa* (2011),<sup>70</sup> which displays part of a profile portrait of the historical Simonetta (c. 1453-1476) by Botticelli.<sup>71</sup> This image also echoes an image in the poem “Sepulcro en Tarquinia” and other similar poetic and visual representations of this same figure: “aquella virgen / de Botticelli con tu rostro” (171):



<sup>72</sup> (Figure 2)

In addition to embodying the Renaissance aesthetic, this image or symbol represents some central characteristics of Colinas’s poetry: vitality or life, beauty, art, and the idea that art and

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<sup>70</sup>Simonetta’s face, or part of it, also appears on the cover of Colinas’s *Antología* (2008), published by Caja Canarias for their Colección Voz y Papel, in a section of Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus*. The image has been recreated on the cover, muted in tones of dark gold, grey, and white.

<sup>71</sup>The original portrait of Simonetta Vespucci is in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, Germany.

<sup>72</sup>This image may be considered a type of post-modern palimpsest, described by Christopher Keep as “a manuscript on which an earlier text has been effaced and the vellum or parchment reused for another. [...] It foregrounds the fact that all writing takes place in the presence of other writings [...]. Palimpsests subvert the concept of the author as the sole originary source of her work” (Keep, et al.), similar to the concept of the rebirth or renaissance of cultural elements in new works of art. The cover image is from the publisher’s website, Siruela Editores, and is reproduced here with the permission of Antonio Colinas and Ediciones Siruela:  
[http://www.siruela.com/novedades.php?&id\\_libro=1507](http://www.siruela.com/novedades.php?&id_libro=1507).

life are intertwined and reflected in one another, or the fluidity of all elements that make up the physical universe and its vital processes. José E. Martínez describes this blending as: “la unión entre arte y vida, el entendimiento de la poesía como trascendencia y revelación” (*En la luz respirada* 20). The portrait also symbolizes the endurance of works of art, such as those of the Renaissance, for their embodiment of many of the same themes that Colinas emphasizes: love, nature, beauty, and knowledge. While uniting these concepts in Simonetta’s portrait, the poet also alludes to his faith in world literary and artistic traditions. Colinas comments on his choice of this portrait for the cover of his *Obra poética completa*, naming Simonetta as the “ideal de Belleza y Verdad” who embodies the values of: “universalidad y neoplatonismo, fidelidad a lo clásico y a lo moderno, a las letras y a las ciencias, a lo pagano y a lo cristiano” (“Un símbolo poderoso” 84). For him this combination of “belleza y valores, es decir, humanismo” is at the center of his own work—that he chose a human face to represent his work as a whole emphasizes the humanist component in his poetry (84). One reward in translating Colinas’s poetry is recreating these ideas and poetic images for a new audience, extending his humanist aesthetics and voice to other countries and cultures.

The second poem of *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, entitled “Piedras de Bérghamo,” is an aesthetic and historical celebration of the town of Bergamo itself, with its rich visual landscape: “leones de mármol,” “catedralalzada sobre el valle,” “hexagonal ventana y el muro de vinagre, / pirámides o establos, sepulcros o tapices,” “capilla Colleoni,” “Borgo Canale,” “palacio barroco,” and “La Puerta de San Giacomo, de mármol blanco y rosa” (156-157). Colinas taught for four years as a Lecturer of Spanish between the Universities of Milan and Bergamo—the architectural imagery and landscape of Bergamo’s Città Alta (the historic center, on a high

plateau) is prominent in *Sepuclro* because it was written during those years (1970-1974). Later in the book, “Lago de Trasimeno” is a fleeting verbal-visual play with colors and light:

Sólo brillaste para mí un instante  
 en la pútrida tarde de tormenta,  
 me pareciste un relámpago verde  
 sobre el mojado y tenebroso bosque de olivos  
 (fría esmeralda  
 bajo luz muy negra).

You only shone for me a moment  
 in the putrid, stormy afternoon,  
 you seemed to me a green flash of lightning  
 above the damp and tenebrous forest of olive trees  
 (cold emerald  
 under very black light).

(“Lago de Trasimeno” 158)<sup>73</sup>

This moment is a poetic snapshot, “un instante,” a landscape frozen in time as if seen only by the light of a single green flash of lightning. It is the antithesis of an ekphrastic poem (like “Simonetta Vespucci”) because it stills a potentially dynamic natural scene, unlike ekphrasis, which often gives movement and a (hi)story to still images. Colinas plays with the colors green (“relámpago verde,” “bosque de / olivos,” “esmeralda”) and black (“tarde de tormenta,” “tenebroso,” “luz muy negra”) to recreate the vision of what he saw on that stormy afternoon. In addition to the colors, the texture or feel of that moment—“pútrida,” “mojado,” “fría”—places us within those surroundings on a multi-sensory level. As in the poem “Simonetta Vespucci,” Colinas again employs the *olivo* to symbolize light—here it is lightning reflecting off the olive trees’ glossy leaves. In *La llamada de los árboles*, a book in which Colinas comments on the symbolism of trees, he writes: “Minerva, diosa de la sabiduría, dio el olivo a los humanos, pero la excesiva luminosidad de sus hojas los confundió. [...] Hasta su misma sombra es esquiva y encantada, muy sutil” (4). So, even in this brief poem that describes only a moment, we have an intense interplay between light and darkness—the light within a storm—which symbolizes the existence of hope within despair and luminous beauty emerging from darkness.

<sup>73</sup>Lake Trasimeno is located in Perugia (Umbria), Italy.



Alejandro Amusco, in his review of *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* from 1976, describes its title poem as having “[una] intensa atmósfera trágica, obsesiva, martilleante con que se desenvuelve todo el poema,” and for these reasons associates it with Neruda’s early poem “La canción desesperada” (30). This tone perhaps represents another thread of Neruda’s influence that runs through Colinas’s early works, in addition to their previously mentioned similar treatment of the image of woman in relation to nature (see comments in the *Preludios* section). *Sepulcro* is also clearly inspired by elements of Romantic poetry, an influence that we have already seen in earlier books, and one that will never completely leave Colinas’s verses: “en la emoción y en el decir intenso, en la búsqueda de lo absoluto y lo trascendente, además de en algunos temas [como] la noche, el amor, la muerte, [y] las ruinas” (Puerto 43). Consequently, in the section “Piedras de Bérnago,” Colinas includes a poem entitled “Novalis,” referring to the German Romantic poet of the pen name Novalis (his true name was Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) and his *Hymnen an die Nacht* (1800, *Hymns to the Night*). *La Noche* is apostrophized in this elaborate poem—Alonso Gutiérrez writes: “El poema titulado ‘Novalis’ es uno de los más notables del libro por su vibración, vivencial y trascendente a la vez, así como por la polimórfica aunque domeñada sensorialidad; aromas, luces, colores y sonidos se dan cita aquí de modo líricamente impecable” (76):

Oh Noche, cuánto tiempo sin verte tan copiosa  
en astros y en luciérnagas, tan ebria de perfumes.  
Después de muchos años te conozco en tus fuegos  
azules, en tus bosques de castaños y pinos.  
Te conozco en la furia de los perros que ladran  
y en las húmedas fresas que brotan de lo oscuro.  
Te sospecho repleta de cascadas y parras.

Cuánto tiempo he callado, cuánto tiempo he perdido,  
cuánto tiempo he soñado mirando con los ojos  
arrasados de lágrimas, como ahora, tu hermosura.  
Noche mía, no cruces en vano este planeta.  
Deteneos, esferas, y que arrecie la música.

Noche, Noche dulcísima, pues que aún he de volver  
al mundo de los hombres, deja caer un astro,  
clava un arpón ardiente entre mis ojos tristes  
o déjame reinar en ti como una luna.

Oh Night, how long since I've seen you so abundant  
in stars and fireflies, so intoxicated with perfumes.  
After many years I know you in your blue  
fires, in your forests of chestnuts and pines.  
I know you in the fury of barking dogs  
and in the damp strawberries that sprout from darkness.  
I imagine you full of waterfalls and vines.

How long I have been silent, how much time I have lost,  
how long I have dreamt gazing with my eyes  
ravaged by tears, like now, at your beauty.  
My Night, don't cross this planet in vain.  
Halt, spheres, and let the music rise.

Night, Night so sweet, since I must return  
to the world of men, let a star fall,  
thrust a burning harpoon between my sad eyes,  
or let me reign in you like a moon.

(“Novalis” 162)

We can sense the poet Novalis's influence in much of Colinas's early writing.<sup>74</sup> It is interesting to note that Colinas perhaps borrows a biographical element from Novalis's life—the death of his young fiancée—to include as part of the background plot in “Sepulcro en Tarquinia.” This poem, as noted above, is rich in sensory imagery and musicality. Colinas invokes vision in “Novalis” with bright images of stars, fireflies, fires, a burning harpoon, and the moon against a dark night sky. Readers smell the night's perfumes: the dampness of the strawberries and vines; we heard the hidden waterfalls and the dogs barking in the darkness. Colinas seems to follow closely the tradition of *la poesía nocturna* until the last stanza, in which he has several requests for Night: “let a star fall, / thrust a burning harpoon between my sad eyes, / or let me reign in you like a moon.”<sup>75</sup> He seemingly asks for death (in a similar manner to the Cyclops), or to

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<sup>74</sup>It would be productive to conduct a study of some of Colinas's early poetic works in light of Novalis's biography and his *Hymns to the Night*.

<sup>75</sup>Influences for *la poesía nocturna* may include Romantics such as Leopardi (“Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia” / “Night-time Chant of a Wandering Asian Sheep-herder”), Novalis (*Hymnen an die Nacht* / *Hymns to the Night*), and Hölderlin (*Nachtgesänge* / *Night Songs*), as well as mystics such as San Juan de la Cruz (*Noche oscura del alma*), and others.

become immortal and one with the Night—two ways in which he would not have to return to “the world of men.”

The second section of this *poemario* includes only one poem, “Sepulcro en Tarquinia,” whose background narrative is “separated into three parts [...] Briefly, the poem opens with memories of the later part of the relationship between the speaker and his *amada*, followed by her death. The last part is then a fantasy, in which the speaker imagines or dreams of her alive and them together once again” (Fellie 9). The poem’s cultural, formal, and aesthetic elements are framed by this tragic love story between two unnamed lovers, with the poet as the speaker. The following excerpt from “Sepulcro en Tarquinia” (poem) is a particularly rich and illuminating example of Colinas’s poetic imagery and aesthetic within this long poem:

[...] todo cayó en efecto, había una música  
y una luz en ojivas y arquivadas,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
techos llenos de frescos, los sagrarios,  
las ancianas maderas aromadas,  
carcomidas, lustrosas, de los coros,  
el retablo, las losas, las trompetas,  
el tropel de los ángeles, a veces  
un son de mandolino, aquella virgen  
de Botticelli con tu rostro, violas  
temblando en nuestras venas y un gran coro  
tronando enfurecido con el órgano,  
con el corazón [...] ]

[...] indeed everything fell, there was music  
and light in the arches and architraves,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
ceilings full of frescoes, the sacraia,  
the ancient wood of the choir stalls,  
aromatic, worm-eaten, polished,  
the altarpiece, the tombstones, the trumpets,  
the host of angels, sometimes  
the sound of a mandolin, Botticelli’s  
virgin with your face, violas  
quivering in our veins and a great choir  
thundering mightily with the organ,  
with the heart [...] ]

(“Sepulcro en Tarquinia” excerpt, 171)

These verses from “Sepulcro en Tarquinia,” the extensive title poem from the book and section of the same name (1975), offer a wealth of visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory stimuli while at the same time calling upon our cultural knowledge to enhance this sensory experience.<sup>76</sup> In my

<sup>76</sup>For a close reading of the entire thirteen-page poem, see chapter two of my previous study entitled “Antonio Colinas: The Re-Writing of ‘Sepulcro en Tarquinia’ in *Larga carta a Francesca*” (Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009; available online), or a revised version published as “Images of Death in Antonio Colinas’s ‘Sepulcro en Tarquinia’ Rewritten into Life in *Larga carta a Francesca*” in *Transitions: Journal of Franco-Iberian Studies* (Vol. 10, Fall 2014).

previous study, I explore these sensory images and many other aspects of the text in depth in relation to Colinas's second novel, *Larga carta a Francesca* (1986):

The fourth stanza introduces us to art and music, two vital elements of this poem [...]. Here, [visual] art reflects, duplicates, or immortalizes beauty, a woman's beauty. The music represents, in part, the passion of [the] relationship [between the poet-lover and the beloved]. Exemplifying this passion, the [...] verses also illustrate Colinas' tendency to relate experiences in a rapid series of images. (Fellie 12)

This flow, or enumeration, of images rich with cultural allusion is characteristic of some postmodern poetry in Spain, especially that of the *culturalistas* of the late 1960s and 1970s. Juan Cano Ballesta, however, comments that "*Sepulcro en Tarquinia* [...] initiate[s] creative techniques that avoid splendor and brilliance [for their own sake] by using less luxurious and culturalist elements in order to stress instead lyric emotion and create a new kind of poetry, in which aestheticism informs the personal experiences of the poet" ("Post-Franco Poetry" 695). In Colinas's case, this vital flow is, as we have seen, one of the essential traits of his poetry in general—in the above passage it forms a synesthetic experience uniting images, senses, and the arts.<sup>77</sup>

Colinas commences this cascade, "todo cayó en efecto [...]," and it is as if these sensory and cultural images are indeed falling all at once on the reader: The smell and texture of ancient wood, the multitude of precise allusions to music and art—which in themselves call up countless sounds and visions: "Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi" and Botticelli—, the sound of instruments and voices singing in a church plus concrete elements of its architecture, the sound and sensation of music (both heavenly and earthly) coursing through one's veins, and more, involve readers on both a physical and emotional level, building up momentum with rhythm and words until everything converges in the last image of the "heart." On a technical level, Colinas

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<sup>77</sup>The title of his 2004 Cátedra anthology, *En la luz respirada*, represents this flow throughout his work.

employs both asyndeton (omission of conjunctions) and poetic climax (an “ascending rhetorical figure,” Feinsod 268) to form the rush of images in these verses.<sup>78</sup> This accumulation of images and sensations is woven together even more tightly with Colinas’s use of synesthesia, the uniting of two or more senses in a particular experience (mentioned earlier). Sound (music) and physical sensation, for example, unite in the images of *violas-venas* and *coro-órgano-corazón*. This interconnectivity among elements of culture and the senses or body both symbolizes and underpins Colinas’s humanist ideals, leading up to the heart as a symbol of this cosmic and physical flow—the flow of the universe through each of us.<sup>79</sup>

It can be illuminating to consider, in addition to influences from past literary traditions, the works that Colinas was studying and translating at the time he wrote any given work of his own. In the early 1970s, for example, he was reading and translating several Italian poets of various eras, including one book-length translation of Edoardo Sanguineti’s (b. Genoa, 1930-2010) *Wirrwarr* (1972), whose title means “confusion” or “chaos” in German (Colinas’s translation of *Wirrwarr* was published in 1975 with later editions in 1985 and 2000). He was also preparing a bilingual edition and study of the works of the Italian Romantic poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837).<sup>80</sup> The Romantic poet’s influences have been documented extensively, but Sanguineti’s possible impact on Colinas has not been mentioned. No one has yet noted that

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<sup>78</sup>According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, poetic climax is also known as gradation or *gradatio*, Latin for “steps” (268).

<sup>79</sup>The definition of “Humanism” has changed over the centuries and varies even today: Renaissance humanism “emphasized ‘*vera virtus*’ by which they meant ‘true excellence,’ the self-wrought development of human faculties and powers” (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). In his article on humanism, Paul Kristeller further explains: “Whereas the term ‘humanism’ in current discourse often denotes an emphasis on human values unrelated to any intellectual or cultural traditions, Renaissance humanism was understood [...] as [the] broad concern with the study and imitation of classical antiquity” (113). Humanism as a secular attitude is a more recent concept.

<sup>80</sup>It is interesting to note that some elements of Leopardi’s tragic life are reflected in the background love story in “*Sepulcro en Tarquinia*”: Leopardi’s fiancée died of tuberculosis at a young age and the poet himself had both physical and psychological problems (“Leopardi, G.”). Like Colinas, Leopardi was both a poet and translator.

*Sepulcro*'s verses may have been affected stylistically by the Italian neo-avant-garde poet's disordered, indeed chaotic, poems. Even more striking, however, is the likelihood that Colinas has borrowed Sanguineti's lack of capitalization (except for proper nouns) and absence of periods or semi-colons from *Wirrwarr*; the only punctuation marks used are commas, colons, and parentheses. Observe the similarities in these two excerpts, above all in capitalization and punctuation: the first is Colinas's translation of the poem "Reisebilder, 12" from Sanguineti's *Wirrwarr* (47), and the second is a stanza from "Sepulcro":

cómo se agarran de la mano, decías, aquel hombre y  
aquella mujer  
que pasean juntos:  
se trata de Tenti y de su esposa,  
te lo he explicado: número de inventario 12547: (él es  
un sacerdote  
de bajo rango): y te lo advierto: son de piedra colorada  
y caminan dentro de una tumba:

("Reisebilder, 12" from *Wirrwarr* 47)

hay tanta nieve fuera y sin embargo...  
ven, pájaro enjaulado, veo un poco  
de mí posado en tus dos ojos mínimos,  
ven pájaro llegado con la lluvia,  
déjame que me mire, casi dos  
negrísimas cabezas de alfileres  
son tus ojos y quiero verme en ellos,  
hecho para la Muerte cantas menos  
mientras me entregas tardes abrasadas,  
quisiera apresurarme, tienes todo  
lo que perdí en tus ojos, concentrado,  
lucha el sueño y la muerte en esta estancia,  
luchan quince estaciones en mis ojos,  
mis últimos recuerdos, mis ensueños:

("Sepulcro en Tarquinia" 176-177)

Curiously, these grammatical idiosyncrasies are employed by Colinas only in his title poem "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" and the following section "Castrum Petavonium," while his style in the other poems of the same book remains generally continuous with regard to grammar and capitalization in previous and subsequent publications. Colinas seldom alters or experiments with his grammar and punctuation style, yet "Sepulcro" is a prominent example of this rare

divergence, perhaps serving as a nod to Sanguinetti's influence during that period. Though the lack of punctuation or capitalization is not uncommon in contemporary poetry, the timing of these two texts and the fact that Colinas never does this again supports the possibility of imitation in this case.

Some critics of the poem "Sepulcro en Tarquinia," such as Juan Manuel Rozas, define this long poem as irrationalist and surreal (1), words that could be used to describe the style of Sanguinetti's *Wirrwarr* (remember that *wirrwarr* means "confusion" or "chaos" in German). While its dreamlike qualities cannot be disputed, in my earlier study I argue that when the poem's background love story is superimposed over the plot of Colinas's novel *Larga carta a Francesca* (1986), these elements and seemingly "irrational" actions are clarified and make sense as a narrative.<sup>81</sup> So many elements coincide –images, key phrases, cultural allusions, symbols, plot elements, among others– that I determined that the two works, though of different genres and published eleven years apart, ultimately tell the same story about the same characters (Fellie). My essay concludes that, in spite of so many similarities, the plot conclusions within the poem and novel are ultimately different because of philosophical changes that Colinas had experienced during the decade between the two works:

While re-integrating his earlier culturalist aesthetics into his later work, in *Larga carta* Colinas has moved on from his earlier philosophy: we observe Colinas' shift to Eastern thought, reflected in the novel's ending: Jano's decision to follow "la luz del conocimiento," instead of the path of love which holds doubt and possibly pain. "Sepulcro" concludes without light, nor any symbol of hope; its very title conveys the idea of the finality of death, the darkness of a tomb: "vimos partir *sin luz* la última nave, / era el nuestro un suicidio acariciante" (vv. 390-91, emphasis mine). [...] Colinas' change in philosophy caused him to reconsider the traditional tragic love story found in "Sepulcro." He decided to reshape it so that there was no need for a tragic ending. All love stories, even those that are happy and prolonged, must end with the death of one or

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<sup>81</sup>Fellie, Maria C. "Antonio Colinas: The Re-Writing of 'Sepulcro en Tarquinia' in *Larga carta a Francesca*". Thesis. U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009. Print/online.

both lovers. The path of *la luz*, however, emphasizes a self-love that will lead to knowledge, fulfillment, and contentment. (Fellie 37)

*Larga carta a Francesca* is one of the works that marks the beginning of Colinas's profound interest in Eastern thought, which continues today and can be observed in later works such as *Cerca de la Montaña Kumgang* (2007), *Desiertos de la luz* (2008), *La simiente enterrada: un viaje a China* (2008), several articles in *Un Tiempo que No Pasa* (2009), *Catorce retratos de mujer* (2011), and more.

But before his interest in the East intensified, Colinas primarily explored in his first books the worlds he knew more intimately in Europe and, more specifically, the Mediterranean. We have seen this outward evolution starting close to Colinas's place of birth in *Junto al lago* and *Poemas de la tierra y de la sangre*, and starting to extend outwards to other parts of Spain in *Truenos y flautas en un templo*. As mentioned above and as José Enrique Martínez Fernández thoroughly illustrates in his introduction to *En la luz respirada* (Cátedra, 2004), *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* was a personal exploration of primarily Italian culture and history, written within Italy.

The third section of *Sepulcro*, "Castrá Petavonium," however, takes us back to Colinas's homeland, León, with the name of an ancient Roman city, Petavonium, whose ruins still exist today (*Castra* means "camp" in Latin). "Castrá Petavonium," a section coming after two focused on Italy, represents, both poetically and geographically, Colinas's homecoming to León (whether nostalgically imagined or real, or both) after four years abroad. Alonso Gutiérrez writes: "El contraste de ésta con la sección anterior es ostensible y rotundo: a una ebriedad de la imaginación y de la sensorialidad, propiciada por el contacto italiano –que, en adelante, marcará la cosmovisión poética de Colinas–, sucede ahora una concreción enérgica y un acento seco,



resolutivo, tajante” (77). Carnicero, however, sees similarities between Tarquinia and Petavonium: “[Las] dos ciudades [...] conforman un camino, un eje vertebrador al que se unirán elementos duales: sepulcros, luces, piedras...” (37). The tone of this section comprises, as Julio Llamazares writes, “[una] pureza que se remansa en la belleza nostálgica de los poemas” (107). The style and aesthetics are also different, focusing on dry, almost empty landscapes or ancient ruins, dreamlike visions, and a peculiarly archaeological point of view that we have not observed previously. It is possible that this drastic change in scenery was precipitated in part by “la pérdida muy temprana de su primer hijo,” after which Colinas and his wife, María José, returned to Spain (Carnicero 40). As in earlier poems, here we observe the poet’s fascination with the ruins of the past, but these are the ancient Roman ruins of Petavonium in Spain. Each poem carries the weight of the past, whether in the descriptions of ruins and archaeological remains, the imagined thoughts and actions of figures (mostly soldiers) from the past, portrayals of past and present landscapes, or the present-day reflections on these topics. The second poem in this series of eight, “Venía un viento negro,” includes most of these visual and dramatic elements:

venía un viento negro de encina  
sobre las uvas, hasta nuestra zarza,  
el candelabro de la tarde alzaba  
sus brazos, los fundía la cruenta oscuridad,  
la herrumbre en Piñotrera, el hálito  
fétido de las urnas,  
el bronce corrompido

(todavía debemos esperar, nos lo ordena  
el pulmón en tensión, el aire antiguo)

hay un imán inmenso dentro de la montaña  
que nos hace temblar y paraliza,  
aletea beodo cada pájaro, es tarde  
para encontrar la senda

en el anochecer que sangra,  
cubre el cielo  
la mortaja de lino morado  
de la sacerdotisa,  
la túnica granate  
del centurión

a black wind of oak was coming  
over the grapes, to our blackberry bush,  
the candelabra of the afternoon was raising  
its arms, the bloody darkness melted them,  
the rust in Piñotrera, the fetid  
breath of the urns,  
the corrupt bronze

(still we should wait, our tense lung,  
the ancient air orders it)

there is an immense magnet within the mountain  
that makes us tremble and paralyzes us,  
each bird flutters drunkenly, it is late  
to find the path

in the bleeding nightfall,  
the shroud of purple linen  
of the priestess,  
the crimson tunic  
of the centurion  
covers the sky

(“Venía un viento negro” 190)

The first stanza seems to encompass the images seen by modern-day people, possibly archaeologists digging at the archaeological site at Piñotrera. In the hot afternoon that looms over them menacingly like the arms of a candelabra, they discover urns and bronze artifacts while the black wind of the past approaches ominously. This black air represents the suppression or even suffocation of life, illustrated by the grapes and blackberry bush. Stanza two, within parentheses, is the thoughts of the ancient people in this same place, within view of the dominant mountain described in stanza three. These people, both past and present, wait for the *viento negro* to come, bringing with it the colors of nightfall, purple and crimson. The sunset’s colors are beautiful, but are also associated with death and injury—perhaps illustrating the loss of a child. These colors are also associated with historical figures, the priestess and centurion, who may have lived and died at this site. The *viento negro* stirs these contemplations of history, while the bleeding (colorful) nightfall represents death and the passing of history, but also the survival of historical memory and pain in the landscape. Throughout the poems there is a feeling

of suspense: “(todavía debemos *esperar*, nos lo ordena / el pulmón en *tensión*, el aire antiguo),” “hay un imán inmenso dentro de la montaña / que nos hace temblar y *paraliza*,” “*es tarde / para encontrar la senda*” (emphases mine, 190). These verses indicate stillness—a paralysis of motion and flow—that is contrary to many of the harmonious portrayals of landscapes that Colinas has created previously. Here even the birds “flutter drunkenly,” aimlessly, and the characters of the poem are lost in the coming night, unable to find the path. This poem and section of “Sepulcro” may in part represent the emotional pain and darkness of this period of the poet’s life.

The last section of *Sepulcro*, “Dos poems con luz negra,” contains just two poems that seem to encompass the Medieval period: “El primer poema nos presenta los temores de inquietudes de los antiguos peregrinos; el segundo, opone a la perennidad de la piedra catedralicia la condición pasajera del hombre; la constante mutación de la luz a la ‘quietud acongojante del Tiempo dormido en el *astrolabio*’” (emphasis mine, Alonso Gutiérrez 78). These poems express a period of uncertainty, of wandering with no end in sight. Curiously, the last word in *Sepulco* is “astrolabio” and, four years later, Colinas publishes his sixth book, entitled *Astrolabio* (1979).

## **Chapter V: Poetry of Night and Contemplation, 1976-1983**

*Astrolabio* (1979), *En lo oscuro* (1981), *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983).<sup>82</sup>

In the late 1970s the repeal of censorship of the media and arts in Spain, along with the reinstatement of personal equalities and civil liberties, combined with a newfound sense of freedom and release that offered writers and artists free reign over subject matter and style.<sup>83</sup> Young poets, most of whom had been born in Spain under the dictatorship, took advantage of this freedom in unique and often contentious ways. The late 1970s and '80s brought poetry from the elite heights of culturalism back to the people in controversial ways, largely away from erudite allusions and complex structures. María Rosal writes in *Con voz propia*:

A partir de 1980 una nueva estética hace su aparición. Son poetas que viven en una sociedad con marcados signos postmodernos, lo que lógicamente va a influir en sus producciones estéticas. Los nuevos poetas se encuentran lejos del tratamiento del lenguaje que sus predecesores novísimos manifestaron. También la realidad social es muy diferente de la que había propiciado la poesía social de los años cincuenta y sesenta. No obstante [...] algunas de las tendencias generacionales toman partido por una poesía de base realista y comprometida. (29)

Colinas participates somewhat in this movement away from culturalist aesthetics, though his relative geographical isolation from cultural centers like Madrid may have contributed to his continued separation from poetic groups. In 1977, Colinas and his family left the Peninsula again (previously they were in Italy) to live in Ibiza, where they would spend just over twenty

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<sup>82</sup>Colinas has said that he considers *Noche más allá de la noche* to be the “centro” of his body of work, and that it is his preferred book out of his own poetic publications (Tanarro 3).

<sup>83</sup>The first democratic elections were held on June 15, 1977. See Santos Juliá’s article “History, Politics, and culture, 1975-1996” for more information on the Transition to democracy in Spain (104-120). Civil liberties included the freedom to form political parties and trade unions, women’s equal rights for work and property, the right to divorce, among others.

years (1977-98). These decades were extremely productive for Colinas in terms of scholarship, narrative, essay, and poetry.

### ***Astrolabio* (written 1975-79, published 1979)**

With *Astrolabio*, Colinas presents us with his only collection of poetry that has a one-word title, yet this single word contains a depth of symbolic and historical meaning.<sup>84</sup> The astrolabe is “an ancient device for measuring the altitudes of stars,” and thus for telling time and observing heavenly bodies (*Oxford Dictionary of Astronomy*). According to James Morrison, “the history of the astrolabe begins [...] before 150 B.C., and true astrolabes were made before A.D. 400. The astrolabe was highly developed in the Islamic world by 800 and was introduced to Europe from Islamic Spain (al-Andalus) in the early 12th century” (*Astrolabe*). The word “astrolabio” also appeals to Colinas undoubtedly because of the individual and combined significance of both *astro* and *labio*, two prominent symbols within the majority of his poetic works.

Colinas’s sixth book of poetry comprises six sections, and for the most part *Astrolabio* follows his previous works seamlessly. García Martín comments:

La misma atmósfera ‘intensa y mágica’ [...] en los poemas [anteriores ...] caracteriza a los mejores textos de *Astrolabio* (1979). [...] La emoción del paisaje, el temblor ante la noche cuajada de estrellas, el gozo y el misterio del amor, la infancia evocada, todos los elementos que se entrecruzan en [*Astrolabio*], se encontraban ya en el primer libro. (41)

While a significant portion of previous thematic and symbolic content continues and is enriched in *Astrolabio* (stone, music, beauty, death), in this book Colinas focuses on several of

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<sup>84</sup>A historical note: Colinas wrote the poem “Cementerio del Père Lachaise” for *Truenos y Flautas en un templo*, and in this Parisian cemetery are the tombs of the famous 12<sup>th</sup>-century lovers Heloise and Abelard, whose only son was named Astrolabe. The lovers’ story is known because of some surviving letters.

humankind's great unanswered questions (Cano 196), shifting away from the more purely aesthetic motivations of culturalism and towards *contemplation*. It is these questions that the astrolabe symbolizes, as José Luis Cano observes: “así como el astrolabio se inventó para conocer la situación y movimientos de los astros” (196), the poet uses poetry as a medium for contemplation, projection, and even the advancement of thought. It is interesting that Colinas incorporates an instrument as intermediary between the poet and the stars—perhaps it signifies the development of knowledge that will soon be a focal point in his poetry. In his introduction to the first edition of *Astrolabio*, Colinas writes:

Hoy pienso que la poesía es algo así como el puro y llano testimonio de sentimientos expresados sobre la tierra y entre las piedras, es decir, en el espacio en que nos ha tocado vivir reducido a su mayor elementalidad. [...] Y pensar que lo que hoy es testimonio, fruto, está también en vías de ser ruina. [...] El lector acaso pueda encontrar por debajo de la anécdota [...] los problemas de siempre: el [...] vacío astral, la intemporalidad de la materia, la fatalidad, el amor, la muerte, la capacidad del sueño, la *luz* que aún asciende [...], y la vigorosa fuerza de la Naturaleza. (*Astrolabio* 7-8, emphasis is the author's)

There is less emphasis on culturalist detail in this book (despite the first colorful ekphrastic poem, “Homenaje a Tiziano”) and more on the contemplation of time, nature, the earth, and the cosmos. As readers, we often find ourselves searching or contemplating the heavens in Colinas's poems within *Astrolabio*.

The second and longest section of the book, entitled “Suite castellana,” contains eleven poems; the first is entitled “Suite castellana,” and the following ten are “Variaciones sobre una *Suite castellana*.” “Suite” as a musical term refers to “an instrumental genre consisting of a succession of fairly short, congruous movements. During the Baroque period, when the suite was a principal instrumental form, each movement took on the more or less stylized character of a particular dance; the dances were normally in the same key and were sometimes linked

thematically” (*Oxford Companion to Music*). Some of Colinas’s suites are linked in a similar way: Each of the “Variaciones,” for example, begins with an epigraph of one verse or image from the original “Suite castellana,” and expands upon it.

The poem “Suite castellana” carries various echoes of the imagery and aspects of the style of Antonio Machado’s *Campos de Castilla* (1912). Colinas, like Machado, employs the second-person plural “vosotros” to address his readers, though Machado is more conversational in tone. “Suite castellana” is nostalgic and pastoral, evoking a rural area’s landscape and hinting at its people’s local customs. The present tense is used throughout the poem, signifying its relevance to the Castilla of the late 1970s:

En Castilla, la madrugada  
se alza de pinares fríos y el que pasa  
cae de rodillas en la gleba y besa  
la última luz negra en el rocío.  
Al mediodía,  
bajo un violento coro de puñales,  
danzáis, reís.  
Esferas luminosas desorbitan el día,  
fiestas hay en el aire,  
vino, caballos (rosas  
sólo en los claustros), un almendro seco  
y cipreses pelados  
como las alas de los buitres viejos  
que sólo traen desgracias.

Hay un joven herido que no olvida  
y bodas que se llevan el amor a la muerte.  
La tarde es una lágrima  
que nunca cae,  
un tiempo de rebaños, de hornos olorosos,  
una oración en labios enlutados.  
Álamos santos, álamos  
de los adioses,  
movéis en lo alto sueños sobrehumanos.

De noche, buscamos la humedad  
de huertos pobres,  
apagamos las velas y lloramos  
porque tienen los astros allá arriba  
fuegos más hermosos.

In Castile, the dawn  
rises from cold pine groves and he who passes  
falls to his knees on the land and kisses  
the last black light on the dew.  
At midday,  
under a violent chorus of daggers,  
you all dance, you smile.  
Luminous spheres exaggerate the day,  
revelry is in the air,  
wine, horses (roses  
only in the cloisters), a dry almond tree  
and bare cypresses  
like the wings of old vultures  
that bring only misfortunes.

There is a wounded young man who does not forget  
and weddings that carry love to death.  
The afternoon is a tear  
that never falls,  
a time of flocks, of fragrant ovens,  
a prayer on mourning lips.  
Holy poplars, poplars  
of farewells,  
you move superhuman dreams on high.

At night, we search for the dampness  
of poor orchards,  
we douse the candles and weep  
because the stars up above have  
more beautiful fires.

(“Suite castellana” 283)

The spatial movement of this poem is similar to that of “Truenos y flautas en un templo” (131), in which the readers’ vision rises, from the beginning to the end of the poem, from ground to sky. Here, our mind’s eye rises with the dawn over the pine trees, and the day intensifies so much that the midday sun’s rays come down in like daggers. The “almendro seco” and “cipreses pelados” reveal that this is a description of Castilla in autumn, a time in which nature and beauty are fading. The first verses of the poem state that anyone who is present at the first light of dawn will, either desperately or reverentially, kneel to kiss “la última luz negra en el rocío.” We do not discover why this is until the last stanza of the poem, in which the importance of water is emphasized: “De noche, buscamos la humedad / de huertos pobres.” Water, as it has been before in Colinas’s poetry, is associated with spring and summer, life and fertility; here water is also linked to the darkness of night and early dawn, during a time in which it will not evaporate.

This poem, however, shows us a season of decline—the “old vultures” signify misfortune: death and the coming emptiness and dryness of winter. Interestingly, in his second poem of *Campos de Castilla*, “A orillas del Duero,” Machado uses a similar image that also raises our vision to the sky: that of a vulture flying over the Castilian landscape:<sup>85</sup>

Un buitre de anchas alas con majestuoso vuelo  
 cruzaba solitario el puro azul del cielo.  
 Yo divisaba, lejos, un monte alto y agudo,  
 y una redonda loma cual recamado escudo,  
 y cárdenos alcores sobre la parda tierra [...] (vv. 13-17, Machado 101)

While Machado personifies Castilla as “miserable, ayer dominadora,” Colinas perceives Castilla’s people, not the land itself, as sorrowful, partly because of the impending winter, symbolic of death. The people’s mood, however, also changes in the poem with the time of

<sup>85</sup>A comparative analysis of the “Suite castellana” with its following ten poems could be a productive article, as would a comparison of all eleven poems of the section “Suite castellana” with Antonio Machado’s *Campos de Castilla*.



day—this is another layer of the metaphor that Colinas builds among seasons, times of day and night, and phases of life. The first fourteen verses describe dawn and daytime, in which the *castellanos* dance and laugh, as if attending a celebration—this is the exhilaration and joy of youth. The dry, bare trees, however, are ever-present reminders of the future, of the ravages of time.

The second stanza is only nine verses long, representing the afternoon and adulthood. In these lines Colinas paints images of weddings and domestic work (“un tiempo de rebaños, de hornos olorosos”) interwoven with sadness: “bodas que se llevan el amor a la muerte.” The “joven herido que no olvida” likely mourns for a lost love and lost possibilities for life—these are also symbolized in the verses “La tarde es una lágrima / que nunca cae.” Sorrow during adulthood cannot be indulged while hope, represented by the prayer on their “labios enlutados,” is still possible. This tear, therefore, will not fall until later in life, the last stanza. The suspended tear also serves as a symbol of this mid-life period of transition between the optimism of youth and the hopelessness of one’s last days of life.

Finally “de noche,” the last part of life is shortest, like the few hours of darkness before sleep—this stanza is made up of only five verses. Here the poet speaks of “nosotros,” not the “vosotros” of the previous two stanzas. This is because we are all together in decline as we “search for dampness” in the fields and orchards, which are poor because of this lack of life-giving water. Ultimately we must “douse the candles” and allow night to dominate the land and us as well. The last phrase is ambiguous, allowing for at least two possible interpretations of the reason for weeping as darkness closes in: “lloramos / porque tienen los astros allá arriba / fuegos más hermosos.” Either we weep for sorrow because any earthly light or splendor cannot compare with those of the heavens, or for joy because in death we will rejoin the beauty of

nature and the cosmos. Given Colinas's previous neo-pantheistic representations of cosmic harmony, the latter seems more likely.

Either way, this last vision leaves readers looking at the stars, searching for answers in their brilliant lights. In this last paragraph of his introduction to *Astrolabio*, Colinas gives us an explanation of the metaphor of the astrolabe: "Parece, en definitiva, que el hombre, como el astrolabio, se comporta en el planeta, en sus momentos decisivos, como un modesto y ambicioso instrumento que evidencia su inferioridad o su inutilidad frente a la infinitud de cuanto siente, interpreta o revela" (9). Ultimately, humankind is destined to always search for answers through nature, art, and science, and will look up to the sky, forever knowing that there will be questions we cannot resolve.

The other poems in this collection demonstrate remarkable variety. Some notable poems are "Para Clara" (dedicated to his then infant daughter), "La estatua mutilada" and the well-known "Cabeza de la diosa entre mis manos" (which demonstrate the poet's interest in archaeology that began in Ibiza). They also include some poems in the fourth section, "Libro de las noches abiertas," which, according to Martínez Fernández, describes "la piedra arrasada por la historia, la vida, la carne, deseos y pasiones quemadas por el tiempo [...por medio de una lectura del] paisaje de la isla traspasado de tiempo histórico en sus ruinas y necrópolis" (56).

In addition to the symbolism of the astrolabe, we can also ultimately conceive of *Astrolabio* as the union of two essential concepts or symbols within Colinas's body of poetry: "Astro," symbolizing the mysterious/mystical/unknown/ethereal, and "labio," representing the earthly/fleeting/solid. "Astro" is also the representation of cosmic knowledge, light, and harmony, while "labio" signifies mortal love and passion. One is a cosmic symbol, the other an

earthly one, which together can facilitate the flow of emotion, communication, and love that is present and yet still yearned for in Colinas's verses. In the biographical essay *Sobre el contemplar*, Carnicero writes that *Astrolabio* "supone junto con el breve *En lo oscuro*, el abrir una nueva etapa, en la que la contemplación de la noche y de la piedra, y del mar, vuelven a exponer la unión de los dos mundos de su poesía" (Carnicero 46). The connections that Colinas makes among his own books is another element of this neopantheistic flow of life, beauty, and the cosmos present in his verses and images. The unity of his work is enhanced by verbal and visual cues that often link books together, such as keywords like "astrolabio," musical terms, and titles of poems or verses that reappear later on, like "En lo oscuro." Weaving these clues among his works shows readers that a book of poetry never stands alone, and that its effect is like a wave that carries ideas and images into future works. As mentioned previously, Colinas utilizes this repetition or echo of motifs, images, symbols and concepts to form a unique poetic universe. Motifs such as water/blood, lips, stars, night, trees, stone, and many more, create an exclusive literary space in which Colinas can maintain his originality and develop his poetry in an original way, apart from popular trends.

### ***En lo oscuro* (written 1980, published 1981)**

Curiously, one poem from *Astrolabio* is entitled "En lo oscuro." Between that poem and this short book of poems, there exists some shared imagery, especially that of the sea and seashore. This imagery is in part a product of the time during which Colinas lived with his family on Ibiza, from 1977-1998. Both the island's and sea's natural beauty appear regularly in his verses from these decades. *En lo oscuro* carries on the themes of love, temporality, and death that we observed in *Astrolabio*, but here Colinas brings them to the center of attention. *En lo*

*oscuro*, for its brevity and thematic parallels to *Astrolabio*, perhaps would have been a part of the earlier publication if the timing had been different; however, it was released independently as a collection of nine poems in 1981.

With this book, Colinas departs from primarily Castilian and Leonese landscapes and emphasizes the coastlines, valleys, and lush pine trees of Ibiza: “su actividad en la isla será muy fecunda literariamente” (Carnicero 47). *En lo oscuro* in some ways parallels more closely Colinas’s first book, *Junto al lago* (1967), due not only to their focus on natural (earth, plants, especially trees) and aquatic imagery, but also to the strong presence of an unnamed *amada* within the poem (often addressed as *tú*) and a lack of obvious culturalist allusions. One notable exception is Colinas’s reference to Góngora’s sonnet “CLXVI” (1582), whose last verse reads “en tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada” (Rivers 220), in the last stanza of poem “IV” of *En lo oscuro*:<sup>86</sup>

Os juro que tan sólo, en un instante,  
llegué a poner mis dedos temblorosos  
en los labios de amor,  
en los labios del mundo,  
en la ceniza  
y en la nada.

I swear to you that only, in one moment,  
I came to place my trembling fingers  
on the lips of love,  
on the lips of the world,  
on ashes  
and on nothing.

(*En lo oscuro* “IV” 398, emphasis mine)

The Baroque motif of *vanitas* (or *carpe diem*) that is present in many of Góngora’s poems continues here, along with the element of death and decay existent in many poems of *En lo oscuro*. The above verses emphasize the brevity of life and the swiftness with which it can and will end; ultimately all traces of one’s life will disappear. While the following *En lo oscuro* “VII” is the briefest of the book’s nine poems, it expresses similarly intense metaphorical images that convey a similar message about the inevitability of death:

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<sup>86</sup>Luis de Góngora (1561-1627).

En el silencio azul  
del valle  
y en la blanca quietud  
de los cuerpos,  
nuestros ojos maduran  
vuelos hacia la boca de la carne,  
vuelos hacia la boca de la tierra,  
la negra comunión  
de la muerte.

In the blue silence  
of the valley  
and in the white stillness  
of our bodies,  
our eyes mature,  
turned towards a mouth of flesh,  
turned towards the mouth of the earth,  
the black communion  
of death.

(*En lo oscuro* “VII” 401)

Like all poems in the same book, this one is set at night, in a comforting, yet dark and cold “silencio azul” that contrasts with the whiteness of living bodies. At the same time that blue evokes the night, it also foreshadows the cold state and color of a cadaver. In the verse “our eyes mature,” Colinas includes not only a lover, but all who read his verses, calling attention to the inevitable process of aging that we must all endure (similar to “Suite castellana”).

While in life we may see a lover’s mouth, “la boca de carne,” and experience the joys of life, we will soon turn our eyes towards the grave, or “la boca de la tierra.” In its last image, this poem differs from the above-mentioned Góngora sonnet. Instead of our bodies turning into nothing, here we will enter into “communion” with the black earth, like a lover, being consumed by it and thus become part of it forever. Though initially or perhaps superficially bleak, this image also suggests a renewal of life through the black soil—the idea that our material remains will nourish the earth and eventually live again in another form. Consequently, an image that at first may be read with religious connotations (“communion”), results in being a metaphor for cosmic unity, harmony, and even love, some of the most essential pillars of Colinas’s work. This unity with the earth can be interpreted as a kind of cosmic mysticism, parallel to but separate from religious mysticism.<sup>87</sup> Though the mouth is clearly a representation of earthly love in these

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<sup>87</sup>*En lo oscuro* certainly has an intertextual connection with San Juan de la Cruz’s *Noche oscura del alma*. Both poetic works portray a period of spiritual desolation and solitude that the poet must overcome in order to arrive at a higher consciousness, though the difference is that Colinas’s book does not have direct religious implications. None

verses, it can also symbolize the poet's voice, or the metapoetic source of verse, that Colinas sees as uniting with nature and the cosmos.

Luis Miguel Alonso Gutiérrez quotes José García Nieto as commenting that the nine poems of *En lo oscuro* are in fact one unified poem, reflecting the same concept of unity in the form of the text itself (*El corazón desmemoriado* 87). The epitaph that opens this small book offers readers a clue as to what ties these poems together: “Vino a sus ojos una noche nacida de su pavoroso miedo. – Ovidio, *Ars amatoria*, II-88” (393). The poems of *En lo oscuro*, and the symbol of *la noche*, are, in Ovid's quote, born of fear. Some biographical information on Colinas may help clarify the source of this fear during the time when he was composing the book: the passing of a friend in addition to serious family health problems could have led to the frame of mind that encompasses *En lo oscuro* (Martínez Fernández 93, Alonso Gutiérrez 162). Other poems in this collection touch on solitude and silence (I, V), the close threat of death (II), the fear of being forgotten (III), the transitory nature of love and life (IV, V, IX), confusion (VIII), and more. As mentioned above, *En lo oscuro* seems to be thematically almost part of the preceding *Astrolabio*, yet it is darker in nature. This book represents the fear, anguish, and uncertainty of the night, but it also serves as a transition, as a pathway *through* the negative aspects of *lo oscuro*, the dark, and leads the poet and readers towards new possibilities in *Noche más allá de la noche*.

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of Colinas's poetry, in fact, expresses a personal connection with Christian spirituality, though it does use some of its symbols.

***Noche más allá de la noche* (written 1980-82, published 1983)<sup>88</sup>**

*Noche más allá de la noche* (1983) is Colinas's best-known and most important book published in the 1980s. This publication coincides with some important shifts in poetic tendencies as well as a rapidly changing socio-political landscape in Spain. With the *Movida madrileña* at full strength and the Transition to democracy virtually complete in the early 1980s, Spanish intellectuals and artists were allowing themselves full license to do and produce what they pleased, often with unorthodox results.

Along with the newfound artistic freedom in Spain (official censure was abolished in 1977), younger groups of poets were actively reshaping the literary landscape. For example, *La otra sentimentalidad* (1983), a poetic manifesto written by Luis García Montero, Javier Egea, and Álvaro Salvador, published in *El País*, offers a new way of perceiving poetry and lays the groundwork for what would be termed *Poesía de la experiencia*.<sup>89</sup> The manifesto calls for poets in Spain to “romper la identificación con la sensibilidad que hemos heredado [y] también participar en el intento de construir una sentimentalidad distinta, libre de prejuicios” (Montero, *La otra sentimentalidad*). This meant that the younger generation of poets essentially wanted to avoid the shadow or influence of Spanish literary tradition, and start fresh. Some poets who had begun their writing careers in the 1970s or earlier, however, were more likely to change in other, less conspicuous ways. They were indeed shifting away from previous tendencies such as *culturalismo*, though some continued to integrate culturalist elements into their writing (such as Rossetti, Carnero, Villena, and others). During these years Colinas maintained a certain element of cultural allusion in his poetry, yet he was also changing into a more existentially concerned

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<sup>88</sup>The *Obra poética completa* lists 1980-1981 as the years during which this book was written, however, J. E. Martínez Fernández specifies that it was in fact composed between June 1980-July 1982 (93).

<sup>89</sup>*El País* was established and first published in May of 1976, about half a year after Franco's death in November 1975.

writer, moving towards more “personal” topics and the *experiencia de ser*. He does not, however, generally coincide in style nor in subject matter with the *poetas de la experiencia*, though many of these next-generation poets have considered him a teacher and model.

In his article “Post-Franco “Poetry,”<sup>90</sup> J. C. Ballesta writes that “the intimate and autobiographic remembrance, confessionalism—carefully avoided by the *novísimos*—an urban sensibility, a return to emotionalism and to metaphysical meditation became common topics” starting in the 1980s (697). In the following description from Ana Eire’s article, I have italicized additional characteristics that set *la poesía de la experiencia* apart from its immediate predecessors:

[U]na poesía íntima y meditativa, que *busca reencontrarse con el lector* y que, por lo tanto, es *accesible* y hasta *entretenida*, cuenta historias con un *lenguaje cotidiano* y usa el *humor y la ironía* para evitar caer en el sentimentalismo de sus temas preferidos, que son el paso del tiempo, el sueño de la vida, el amor, la muerte, la elusividad de la felicidad y nuestro derecho a perseguirla. Esta poesía, llena de *sentimientos y situaciones ordinarias*, *no busca saldar cuentas ni ocasionar rupturas*, pero no por ello le da la espalda a las tensiones que han ocupado tantas páginas en la literatura y la crítica postmoderna. (emphasis mine, 220)

Colinas certainly believes in carrying on literary tradition, and as such often calls upon formal and thematic elements from both Spanish and world literature from a variety of traditions. To distinguish him further from the *poetas de la experiencia*: Colinas rarely employs irony or humor, he infrequently references everyday activities in his earlier works, and sentimentality (such as that of Romanticism) has always been an integral part of his poetry. Colinas’s

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<sup>90</sup>In *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* (2004).



“experience” differs from *experiencia* as used by other poets because for him experience is a source of indirect inspiration rather than the literal basis for poetic subject matter.<sup>91</sup>

Into the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, poetry in Spain becomes harder to define and categorize, as postmodern poetry by nature allows for an unlimited variety of forms (even multimedia), styles, and topics. Colinas, however, has been and continues to be an important and influential poet among both new and established voices. Vicente Tusón summarizes the poet’s career through 1990 beautifully in *La poesía española de nuestro tiempo*:

Antonio Colinas [...] partió de un neorromanticismo intimista, para cultivar luego un culturalismo muy personal; así en el bello libro *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975). Pero en éste y en posteriores libros [...], junto a lo cultural, cobra una importancia decisiva la naturaleza, y concretamente su tierra, cargada de resonancias simbólicas. A la vez, hay hondas meditaciones sobre el tiempo, la muerte o su reverso: la perennidad de la belleza de ciertas cosas. Colinas ha alcanzado, en fin, un admirable equilibrio entre autenticidad humana y altura estética. En sus versos, la densidad de ideas y sentimientos se empareja con la fina ornamentación, la riqueza de imágenes y la sabia musicalidad. (76)

And so within the volatile artistic environment of the early 1980s, Colinas writes and publishes *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983), a series of thirty-five poems and a “Post-scriptum,” whose historic subject matter extends temporally from the classical past through the present. Martínez Fernández writes in his introduction to *En la luz respirada* that with this book, Colinas reaches “la más alta cima de su producción poética” (92).<sup>92</sup> While writing this *poemario*, Colinas was experiencing the tumult of several significant life events: the birth of his son Alejandro, the death of a close friend, health issues, and at the same time he won Spain’s Premio Nacional de Literatura 1982 for his anthology *Poesía 1967-1980* (Martínez Fernández 93, Alonso Gutiérrez

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<sup>91</sup>Some well-known *poetas de la experiencia* are Luis García Montero, Miguel D’Ors, Inmaculada Mengíbar, Felipe Benítez Reyes, Vicente Gallego, Carlos Marzal, Jon Juaristi, and more.

<sup>92</sup>Colinas’s 2004 Cátedra anthology that includes *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, *Noche más allá de la noche*, and *Libro de la mansedumbre*.

162). We observe the effects of this upheaval in the doubt and anger of poems like “Canto XXVIII,” and in the budding peace and harmony in “Canto XXXV” (both discussed below).

Within this remarkable period of social and personal upheaval, coupled with great literary success, Colinas produces a collection of poems that is deemed the heart of his poetic production by critics and also by the poet himself. Part of the quantity of critical attention dedicated to *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983) is undoubtedly due to Colinas’s winning of the 1982 Premio Nacional de Literatura. Colinas’s endorsement of the book as personally significant, however, as well as the book’s status as a turning point in his style and, to a certain extent, in his subject matter, has resulted in its pivotal status within the poet’s works. The poet notes the importance of *Noche más allá de la noche* as the product of a time when he was learning more about Eastern mysticism, especially Taoism, and using this as a stepping stone to re-read the works of Christian mystics, such as San Juan de la Cruz, in a new light (*Sobre el contemplar* 52).

In addition to moving beyond a largely cultural and literary conception of poetic creation, in this work Colinas begins to ““hacer definitivamente de la poesía algo consustancial a la experiencia de *ser*”” (Colinas as quoted in Martínez Fernández 94, emphasis in original). This is the period in which the poet began to develop a wider knowledge of currents of thought, notably Eastern thought, that renewed his perspectives not only in poetry, but in his prose as well (such as his 1986 novel *Larga carta a Francesca*, whose ending reflects new notions of art and knowledge).<sup>93</sup> Luis Moliner writes:

Lo que Colinas llama “segunda realidad” es el espacio de realidad trascendido en el que ha discurrido la palabra y la obra de una larga cadena de iniciados [... una] tradición que que arranca de las filosofías orientales (hinduismo, budismo y taoísmo) y, a través de los

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<sup>93</sup>See the conclusion of my previous study “Antonio Colinas: The Re-Writing of ‘Sepulcro en Tarquinia’ in *Larga carta a Francesca*” for a more detailed exploration of Colinas’s changing ideals in light of his second novel.

pitagóricos y Platón, llega a los neoplatónicos renacentistas, a las místicas árabe, judía y cristiana e inspira a los verdaderos románticos. (14)

Martínez Fernández notes that the thirty-five poems, or *cantos*, of twenty-eight lines each of *Noche más allá de la noche*, plus the “Post-scriptum,” add up to exactly one thousand verses (93), a number that expresses symmetry, harmony, and wholeness. Most of the poems are blank-verse *alejandrinos* (fourteen syllables), though a few follow a rhyme scheme of ABAB.

Capitalization, punctuation, and grammar are generally normalized in these verses.

*La noche* is one of the most important symbols within Colinas’s poetry and, along with the stars that it contains, encompasses a variety of symbolic values from throughout his works:

La noche se asocia a la plenitud, a lo infinito, a lo insondable, a lo mágico, a los sueños...  
La noche astral es el espacio del misterio, de lo ignoto, de las preguntas eternas del  
hombre, de la armonía, de la música estelar, de la unidad, de la luz que contiene con lo  
negro. (Martínez Fernández 57)

The night, then, is the ideal space for contemplation and, as it is in this book, for reassessment.

The night is in itself a conflicting image in which dark (sky) embraces light (stars). As Martínez Fernández notes, “Nada es simple: todo contiene en sí lo positivo y lo negativo, la plenitud y la nada” (94). As mentioned above, in this book Colinas’s trajectory, regarding the poems’ topics, advances from the past through the present, ranging from ancient Greece through modernity. In this book we find one of the first instances in which the poet explicitly alludes to contemporary culture and modern urban structures or settings. The poems as a series move in and out of the darkness and light, from sleep into consciousness, and even between the metaphysical or mythical and reality.

Some poems in *Noche más allá de la noche* are not rooted in any kind of temporal context, though the majority allude to some period of history through references to people (real

and mythical), places or structures, events, and works of art or literature. The majority of the first nine cantos are implicitly or explicitly associated with ancient or classical Greece and Rome. In canto “X,” the narrative action of the poem takes place in both Bríndisi (southern Italy) and Hispania (Roman Iberia) in the early first century AD—this represents a temporal transition between millennia as well as a spatial shift to include the ancient Iberian Peninsula. Cantos eleven through nineteen represent a roughly chronological series of historic scenes or episodes, such as: (11) the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79AD, (12) the Black Death in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, (13) Dante’s *Vita Nuova*, published in 1295, (14) Venice during the Renaissance, (15) Castilla in the *Edad de oro*, (16 and 17) the life of San Juan de la Cruz, (18) a Baroque church, and (19) a pre-Reconquista southern city in Al-Andalus. Canto twenty-six alludes to eighteenth-century thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau (according to a footnote in Martínez Fernández’s edition, 227), and cantos twenty-five and twenty-eight both allude to the twentieth century. The cantos whose numbers are not mentioned here generally lack temporal indicators. “Canto XXVIII” (entitled in a previous edition “Del siglo XX”, Martínez Fernández 231) is particularly intriguing because it is one of the first times that Colinas explicitly references modernity and a contemporary setting, in this case a train station:

Aquí, en la estación de un país extranjero,  
 esta noche del siglo XX clava las ruinas  
 de la última guerra aún sobre mi rostro.  
 Silban desesperados, a lo lejos, los trenes  
 y estoy solo debajo de una lluvia de acero.  
 El dolor se abre paso en mí como una náusea,  
 o como quemazón inmensa en este mundo  
 acuoso, y tanta soledad ya me arrastra,  
 me escarnea a través de un cosmos espinoso.  
 Yo sé que en otro sitio también será de noche,  
 sacudirá el viento las acacias floridas  
 de un camino que lleva hasta algún cementerio,  
 relámpagos que alumbran negras flores de plástico,  
 los ojos apedreados de una perra angustiada,  
 un cuerpo, o sólo nieve, sepultado en la tierra.  
 Llueve fuerte y mi mente está como el andén  
 desierto, electrizado, de esta estación del norte.  
 Llueve, llueve en el mundo sobre todas las manos  
 de bronce, entre los muslos del cemento, en los labios  
 orinados del muro, sobre cada cristal  
 quebrado entre los dientes del hombre de este tiempo.  
 Y ya el húmedo viento devora los silbidos  
 de ese último tren que verá tras los montes  
 un alba más cansada, una luz putrefacta.  
 Ese viento muy húmedo que me trae el hedor  
 de los trapos quemados, de cubos de basura,  
 que produce allá arriba, en los cables de alta  
 tensión un arpegio de dolor y de muerte.

Here, in the station of a foreign country,  
 this twentieth-century night still hammers the ruins  
 of the last war on my face.  
 The trains, in the distance, whistle desperately  
 and I am alone under a rain of steel.  
 Pain opens up in me like nausea,  
 or like an immense burn in this watery  
 world, and so much loneliness already drags me,  
 mocks me through a thorny cosmos.  
 I know that somewhere else it is also night,  
 the wind shakes the blooming acacias  
 on a path that leads to a cemetery,  
 lightning illuminates black plastic flowers,  
 the stoned eyes of an anxious dog,  
 a body, or only snow, buried in the earth.  
 It rains heavily and my mind is like the deserted,  
 electrified platform of this northern station.  
 It rains, rains in the world on all the bronze  
 hands, between the cement thighs, on the urine-stained  
 lips of the wall, on each broken pane  
 of glass among the teeth of this era's man.  
 And now the damp wind devours the whistles  
 of that last train, which will see behind the mountains  
 a wearier dawn, a putrid light.  
 That wet wind that carries the stench  
 of burned rags, of trash cans,  
 that produces up above, in the high-tension  
 cables, an arpeggio of pain and death.

(*Noche más allá de la noche*, "Canto XXVIII" 231)

First, the setting for the poetic voice is made immediately hostile and dreary by the heavy rain and the fact that the speaker is in an impersonal space, a train station, in a foreign country. We cannot be certain of the exact year, though it is likely post-World War II and post-Spanish Civil War, and so probably takes place after 1945, but prior to 1982 (the last year during which this book was written). We cannot be sure to which war the speaker refers because we do not know in which "northern" country he is located, and no other clues lead to a more precise date.

Following several cantos that allude to historically and culturally important references of centuries past, this poem offers a bleak vision of the present (or recent past). In this poem there are echoes of the modern urban imagery, disgust, and anger present in early twentieth-century works such as Neruda's "Walking around" (*Residencia en la tierra* 219-221) and Lorca's *Poeta*

en Nueva York, especially his poem “La aurora” (72).<sup>94</sup> According to Christopher Maurer, “*Poet in New York* is both a condemnation of modern urban civilization—the spiritual emptiness epitomized by New York—and a dark cry of metaphysical loneliness” (“Introduction” to *Poet in New York*, xxi). “Canto XXVIII” conveys this same feeling: “tanta soledad ya me arrastra, / me escarnece a través de un cosmos espinoso,” and this solitude is made worse by the speaker’s perception of the cosmos, the very cosmos that should unite all elements in harmony, as a treacherous place that can cause true suffering.

Instead, in this train station there is no *sueño*, no *luz*, no nature or beauty, and no cosmic unity. The speaker’s temporal and physical surroundings cause him pain: “[la noche] clava las ruinas / de la última guerra sobre mi rostro”; “estoy solo debajo de una lluvia de acero”; “el dolor se abre paso en mí como una náusea, / o como quemazón inmensa.” The emotional pain, expressed metaphorically in these verses, is exacerbated so much by the ugliness of what the speaker sees, that his mind is empty of everything but an anger that is described as a crackling current of electricity: “mi mente está como el andén / desierto, electrizado, de esta estación del norte.” This anger and anguish change the speaker’s perception of the world—he can see only manufactured structures that have been both built and ruined by people, and he perceives an eternal rain over the modern world. These structures are personified with human elements: bronze hands, cement thighs (of the platforms), and the lips of the wall that have been sullied by urine. The most striking image is that of “cada cristal / quebrado entre los dientes del hombre de este tiempo,” which reinforces the human destruction of its own creations by portraying modern “man” as a monster who willfully consumes them.

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<sup>94</sup>Also José Martí’s “Amor de ciudad grande,” from *Versos libres* (1913).

We must wonder, however, if this rejection of the present is a result of the many wars of the twentieth century (we do not know to which war the poem refers—perhaps it implies all of them), or a lament on modernity in general. The future as seen by the “último tren” is symbolized by the weary dawn and putrid light peeking out from behind the mountains, and unfortunately it seems quite bleak. In the word “putrefacta,” Colinas channels one of Lorca’s preferred words to describe and express anxiety over the modernity of his own era. *La luz*, one of Colinas’s primary symbols for knowledge and harmony, is fading and decaying in this modern urban landscape, but it is not yet gone.

In the last four verses, the wind carries to the speaker the scents of filth, destruction, and decay that emanate from his modern surroundings. There is no positive element of nature here to sweeten the air or provide music—there is only the smell of trash and charred scraps. Even the black flowers in the cemetery are plastic—nature is absent or false—and they are illuminated only by violent bolts of lightning, showing nature’s anger as well. Even music, another of Colinas’s symbols for harmony, is warped here. The sound of the wind screaming above in the trains’ cables is “un arpeggio de dolor y de muerte,” and this specification is significant: an arpeggio is “the sounding of the notes of a chord in succession rather than simultaneously; [or] the breaking or spreading of a chord” (“Arpeggio”). This musical symbol illustrates pain and death in an ever-continuing and always developing pattern. The harmonious flow that music has often represented for Colinas is polluted along with the rest of the modern world.

This contempt for the present and the destruction caused by several twentieth-century conflicts is also present in “Canto XXV,” which describes the discovery of Greek statues (Martínez Fernández 225), and the ravages of time and war on culture and knowledge. This poem, which contains four questions, asks whether or not we can rediscover or revive past

beauty and harmony. Here the present is looking to the past for inspiration, however, we observe in the last cantos of the book, especially “Canto XXXV,” a shifting mentality. The poet is no longer looking to the past or other outside elements to find answers—he is looking only within himself, contemplating the world from a new perspective, *la luz*. As mentioned previously, during this period Colinas was studying Taoist philosophies and incorporating them into his own thought and writing. The last verses of “Canto XXXV” paraphrase a saying from Lao Tsé, the founder of Taoism: “Aquel que lo conoce / se ha callado y, quien habla, ya no lo ha conocido” (Martínez Fernández 243). It is because of Colinas’s changing philosophies that overcoming doubts and the negative aspects of life can occur in this book, through poetry. *Noche más allá de la noche* ends on a positive note, in the last verse of the “Post-scriptum”: “Adiós a la palabra, escoria de la luz” (443). Martínez Fernández writes: “El verso de cierre venía a significar, en coincidencia con el taoísmo, el silencio fértil conseguido tras la entrega a la palabra. Significaba también la supremacía de lo sentido sobre las palabras que lo expresan” (245).



## **Chapter VI: Turning Point and Conclusion, 1984-1988**

In 1984, Colinas published the second edition of his complete poetic works (excluding *Junto al lago*), entitled *Poesía 1967-1981*, and also finished writing his first novel, *Un año en el Sur*. The following year he would publish *Un año en el Sur* and write its sequel, *Larga carta a Francesca*, published soon after.<sup>95</sup> The years between 1984 and 1988 were particularly fruitful in terms of publishing (poetry, novels, essays, translations, and others), and in literary and cultural events, to which Colinas was often invited (Alonso Gutiérrez 192-193).<sup>96</sup> This surge of creative and intellectual activity was heightened and supported by the success of *Noche más allá de la noche* and Colinas's winning of the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 1982. This period in Spain is largely peaceful and prosperous, and is exemplified by Spain's union with the European Economic Community in 1986.<sup>97</sup> In the late 1980s, Colinas is entering into a new phase of production, "caracterizada formalmente por la desnudez expresiva, la brevedad del enunciado poemático y la renuncia a los cánones métricos tradicionales en favor del verso blanco o, incluso, del verso libre" (Alonso Gutiérrez 25). With these new formal features, Colinas's philosophy and focus continues to evolve in new directions, and *Jardín de Orfeo*, particularly the poem "A Venecia," represents this progression.

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<sup>95</sup>These two novels are said to be the beginning of a trilogy, but the third book has not yet appeared.

<sup>96</sup>For example: "Encuentro de intelectuales españoles" (Salamanca, 1984), "Encuentro poético de las lenguas de España" (Asturias, 1985), "I Encuentro de Poetas del Mundo Latino" (Mexico, 1986), "Congreso Internacional de Intelectuales" (Valencia, 1987), "I Congreso Internacional sobre Luis Cernuda" (Sevilla, 1988), and the "Curso de poesía española contemporánea" (Universidad Complutense, Madrid, 1988) (Alonso Gutiérrez 192-193).

<sup>97</sup>The European Economic Community (founded 1957) was renamed the European Community in 1993, and later was absorbed officially by the European Union in 2009 ("The History of the European Union").

*Jardín de Orfeo* (written 1984-88, published 1988)<sup>98</sup>

For Colinas, poetry and music are central, and the epigraph that opens *Jardín de Orfeo* serves as an allusion to their power and as an introduction to the book's symbolism: "Si del infierno todos los tormentos / con su música Orfeo suspendiera... - Francisco de Quevedo, Parnaso, 194, a" (as cited in *Obra poética completa* 447). With this allusion, and in light of his reference to the river of the underworld in the title of the first section, "Jardín-Leteo," Colinas refers to poetry's status as a monument to memory and to the poet as the guardian, and to some extent creator, of historical memory. A book that was largely written in the garden behind his house in Ibiza, *Jardín de Orfeo* also partly stands as Colinas's homage to the natural beauty of the Mediterranean island. *Jardín de Orfeo* is separated into three sections: "Jardín-Leteo," "Jardín de la sangre," and "Jardín de Orfeo," which, according to Francisco Javier Díez de Revenga, are united by:

[U]na angustiada consideración del tiempo que gravita sobre el ser humano y determina su condición en el mundo, la condición de su peregrinar y su imparable destino final. [...] Historia y biografía, historia del hombre en el mundo e historia del poeta en ese mismo ámbito, serán las dos líneas intelectuales por las que ha de conducir básicamente el mundo poético de *Jardín de Orfeo*. (232)

The first section, "Jardín-Leteo," opens with several poems that Alonso Gutiérrez characterizes as "predominantemente oscuro[s], onírico[s] e irreal[es], abatido[s] por cierto pesimismo" that are also "fruto de una reflexión de carácter existencial" (101). The *Leteo*, or Lethe, is a river in the mythological underworld of Hades that causes virtually all those who drink from it to forget everything from the past. In contrast, the *jardín* alludes to Eden and other representations of earthly paradise, or the divine on earth. The first five poems of the book

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<sup>98</sup>*La viña salvaje* (written 1972-83, published 1985) is not included in the present study because it overlaps with several other books. Prior to *Jardín de Orfeo*, Colinas published *Diapasón Infinito*, releasing just twenty-five special edition copies containing three poems that later appear in *Jardín de Orfeo*: "La noche de los ruiseñores africanos," "Diapasón Infinito," and one untitled prose poem (Alonso Gutiérrez 100).

display some instances of culturalist allusion, what Alonso Gutiérrez calls a “culturalismo [...] diluido” (101). What most draws the attention in these verses, however, is the dreamlike representation of sorrow in metaphorical images such as “el pinar es una fosa en llamas” (“Jardín-Leteo” 451), “hoy ha caído derrotada mi vida” (“Égloga bárbara” 453), and “la costa infinita de los sueños extraviados” (“El desierto de lluvia” 457). These poems present images of loss and emptiness, of fear and anxiety, while the title of this section both fuses and contrasts nature (*Jardín*) with these negative, yet ethereal elements, represented by the river Lethe (*Leteo*).

In this first section, however, the most striking poems are those dedicated to the poet’s family, his home, and the natural environment on the island of Ibiza, where Colinas lived permanently from 1977-1998 (as of 2016, he still lives there during the summer). In 1980, Antonio and his wife María José had a son named Alejandro (Alonso 192), who is mentioned in the poem “La casa,” and for whom the next poem “Para Jandro” is named.<sup>99</sup> These two poems, and the following three that complete the section “Jardín-Leteo,” constitute a dramatic change in tone and subject matter when compared with the first five, and also generally avoid culturalist references (except for the final poem “Diapasón infinito: Frente a Es Vedrà” 464). These texts are largely rooted in realistic images and events, such as Colinas’s son drawing on the walls of the house, or of the family dog coming from the cold outside into the warm house. The poems take us into the poet’s home, domestic life, surroundings, and larger environment on Ibiza; they are somewhat conversational in tone and focus on the poet’s family life and the beauty of the island. This is the first time that Colinas’s main focus in a poem is on everyday topics, and this interesting shift to realism may be somewhat related to the strong currents of *Poesía de la experiencia* that were circulating in Spain in the 1980s. In addition, the relative political and

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<sup>99</sup>He had dedicated a poem to his daughter Clara in *Astrolabio* several years before, however, these are the first poems written to his son (“Para Clara” 351).

economic stability in Spain at the time may have contributed to some poets' tendency to contemplate their everyday lives, and to focus less on the larger social and political issues of the day.

The division (and fusion) of “Jardín-Leteo” into two groups of five poems is reflected clearly in the title of the section: the positive (*jardín*) and negative (*Leteo*) elements of one's life, surroundings, and even state of mind are represented by the juxtaposition of and connection between *jardín* and *Leteo*. Díez de Revenga interprets “Jardín-Leteo” as a unified symbol:

En tres estadios se desarrolla el tema central del libro: en “Jardín-Leteo” se refleja la lucha del poeta, en contra de la inexorable ley del tiempo, por mantener la memoria y por fijar en ella aquellos días, aquellos momentos que se procura salvar del olvido. El símbolo de “Jardín-Leteo,” con el eco mítico del río del infierno cuyas aguas tenían el poder de hacer olvidar el pasado a quienes las bebían, supone un reto que el poeta quiere superar. (232)

Colinas often uses natural symbols and landscapes, however, in this book the garden dominates much of the imagery. The *jardín* is a symbol of life and vitality, earthly Paradise and tranquility (emotional peace of mind), as reflected in the verses regarding the island of Ibiza, for example in the short poem “La noche de los ruiseñores africanos” (463):

Cayó el alma en el pozo de la noche  
y desde abajo, desde lo más hondo,  
ve la luna de junio madurar  
en la brisa, que trae enloquecidos  
cantos de ruiseñores africanos.

The soul fell into the well of the night  
and from below, from the lowest depths,  
it sees the June moon ripen  
in the breeze, which carries crazed  
songs of African nightingales.

The *Leteo* symbolizes the opposite—death, destruction, and ignorance—in terms of both imagery (hidden, dark) and emotional state (forgetfulness, destruction of memory). This dichotomy can be read also as a representation of personal reflection (peace of mind v. agitation) and as a sociopolitical metaphor on a larger scale (peace v. war, contentedness v. social unrest) for both Spain and the world. Colinas brings these two halves together in the title “Jardín-Leteo”

and in these ten initial poems in order to demonstrate and elucidate this contrast. In the above poem Colinas also illustrates these contradicting elements in the images of the soul gazing up from the dark, deep abyss of the night at the bright summer moon above. The repeated presence of the *jardín* throughout the section titles (and book title), however, indicates that the symbolic meaning of the garden is continuous—it is both an image of and an advocate for individual and global peace. Regarding Colinas specifically, Jesús Sepúlveda reminds us that, in general, “estas oposiciones [...] reflejan el concepto de bipolarización que domina la cosmovisión del poeta” (240). The difference with works like *Noche más allá de la noche* and *Jardín de Orfeo* is that the poet’s conceptualization is becoming more of a *global*, rather than localized, vision, exemplified in both books by the inclusion of historical and geographical references from all over the world.

The second section, entitled “Jardín de la sangre,” is the longest of the three, with fourteen poems in twenty-eight sections. The majority of the poems refer in some way to various cities, towns, and historical sites all over the world, such as Venice, Granada, Trassierra (Córdoba), Toledo, Dodona (Greece), Petavonium (ancient city in León), Teotihuacan (Mexico), three sites from ancient Greece (Mycenae, Epidaurus, and Delphos), and Athens. A few poems focus on historical figures (“A la manera de Ibn Gabirol,” “Palabras de Mozart a Salieri”) and an interesting two-part autobiographical poem entitled “Dos retratos” is found in the middle. “Dos retratos” presents two very different self-portraits: the first describes Colinas’s literary-geographical trajectory; the second curiously reflects on his physical appearance, place of origin, genetics, and the unity and universality of being (483-488). This two-part poem reveals information on Colinas’s perception of his own poetic and life journeys that can be applied to various of his texts (as we will discuss below). Another poem in this section, entitled “El poeta,”

offers readers an image of the dichotomy symbolized in the first section, “Jardín-Leteo,” and connects it with the second section: “Suma de perfecciones / y desesperaciones, / el orbe gira tenso y contiene, / por igual, vida y muerte” (469). According to the verses in this poem, it is the poet who perceives change and the “declinar de la Historia”:

Supremo testimonio del poeta  
coronado de gozo y de dolor.  
Su ojo está atento a los límites  
vacíos  
del cielo y de la tierra,  
al cíclico y fúnebre  
declinar de la Historia,  
de colmadas y extensas estaciones.

Supreme testimony of the poet  
crowned with joy and pain.  
His eye is attentive to the empty  
limits  
of the sky and earth,  
to the cyclical and funereal  
decline of History,  
of overflowing and long seasons.

(“El poeta” 469)

Díez de Revenga writes that “Jardín de la sangre” is the most dramatic section (234), and explains that Colinas establishes “una ‘poética’ del recuerdo y la memoria” that he elaborates in all sections of this book: “Convivimos con él en sus experiencias, ya que sus escenarios –paisajes externos, naturales, urbanos, por un lado; espacios interiores altamente introspectivos, por otro– nos traen mundos que el poeta ha vivido y cuya memoria nos transmite” (Díez de Revenga 230). In crossing space and time with personal memories, experiences, and knowledge, Colinas not only gives us a glimpse of his own history, but also demonstrates the very poetics that he claims in “El poeta.” He is moving outwards, creating a broader poetic experience. One important representation of this cosmic knowledge and the poet’s sharing of it is “la luz,” a symbol that, while always important in Colinas’s poetry, becomes even more so in the early 1980s, when he begins to study Eastern thought, particularly Taoism (*Sobre el contemplar* 52).

Taoism (*el taoísmo*) originated in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, B.C., inspired by the teachings of Lao Tzu and his follower Chuang Tzu (Jensen 220). J. Jensen writes in “Rhetorical Emphases of Taoism” that “The Tao, ‘the Way,’ seeks that simple, inner peace and contentment which comes

from sensing the higher realities behind life, from entering into a harmonious relationship with not only other people but also with Nature and Heaven, with the eternal and infinite origin and end of life” (220). Finding this new philosophy brought Colinas into a new era of creation, first exemplified in works like *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983) and his second novel *Larga carta a Francesca* (1985), both works that are contemporary with *Jardín de Orfeo* (written 1984-1988). These works exemplify a philosophical transformation from anxiety to peace, as well as a demonstration of and thirst for knowledge as a vehicle towards peace and harmony, as often exemplified in the symbol of *la luz*.

As I mention above, in my article on “Sepulcro en Tarquinia” (poem) and *Larga carta a Francesca* (novel), I explore this same changing philosophy through a comparison of the aesthetics and narrative of the poem from the mid-1970s and the novel from the mid-1980s: “It is due to this new way of contemplating the world [Taoism] that Colinas rewrites the ending of ‘Sepulcro en Tarquinia’ in *Larga carta a Francesca*. *La luz* is a symbol of this new-found knowledge, one that will lead to a harmonic, peaceful existence—ideas frequently emphasized Colinas’s later works” (Fellie 2014).<sup>100</sup> This change is symbolized even in the first section of *Jardín de Orfeo*, in which there is a profound change from the bleakness of the first five poems to the brightness, peace, and positive energy of the last five. Here are some examples of the contrasting imagery:

1. “[L]a tumba de la aurora”; “La ladera sepulta el cadáver de un dios.” – “Jardín-Leteo” (451-452)
2. “Cuánta sangre discurrió inútilmente / por mis venas / y qué tarde aprendí.” – “Égloga bárbara” (453-454)

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<sup>100</sup>In *Cerca de la Montaña Kungang* (2007), Colinas shows us that his search for *la luz* continues: “Al fondo de nuestras vidas –en Oriente o en Salamanca [...]–, siempre hay un único afán, un deseo de ser y de estar en el mundo [...], un afán de escribir siendo y de ser escribiendo. Al final siempre la misma meta para los humanos: el mismo afán de *conocer*” (7, author’s emphasis).

3. “Mi corazón, tan débil y turbado / de seguir en la vida las sendas extraviadas.” – “Letra para las *Variaciones* de Edward Elgar” (455-456)
4. “[E]l hombre como un látigo blasfemo / espantando los ojos misericordiosos / de las bestias” – “El desierto de la lluvia” (457-458)
5. “Silencio, sólo un negro silencio / tras el pánico, inhumano, / canto de la lechuza.” – “Otoñal” (459)

The following verses contain largely positive elements:

6. “Pinta Alejandro en los muros blancos / el hondo azul del cielo y de la mar.” – “La casa” (460)
7. “[L]a paz de este valle y de estos montes, / poseen su medida, / su cadencia, su ritmo y sus límites” – “Para Jandro” (461)
8. “Este invierno mi ánimo / es como primavera temprana, / es como almendro florido / bajo la nieve.” – “Invierno tardío” (462)
9. “[V]e la luna de junio madurar / en la brisa.” – “La noche de los ruiseñores africanos” (463)
10. “El gigantesco ónfalo de piedra / brota de un horno o mar de plata en llamas.” – “Diapasón infinito” (464)

In the second section, “Jardín de la sangre,” the word “sonámbulo” (and its variations) appears at least six times in various poems as both noun and adjective, relating this idea of walking or moving unconsciously with the notion of forgetfulness implied by the symbol of the *Leteo*. Here, the poet’s memory serves to *preserve* history (knowledge), working against the forces of time that were initially portrayed so strongly and fearfully in the first section. “A Venecia,” the first poem of “Jardín de la sangre,” is a plea to leave behind these laments over the past, and also stands as a visually beautiful, mournful tribute to a city that for Colinas represents history itself, sinking and in decay. Venice was a popular subject among culturalist poets, some of whom were even called *venecianos*. Díez de Revenga asserts that taking on this topic again posed a risk for Colinas, but that the poet ultimately succeeds in “contribuir con toda una serie de elementos innovadores en la evocación veneciana [...] La ciudad [en su poema...] ya no es



símbolo de la decadencia romántica y enfermiza, sino representación de ‘un tiempo que no vuelve’” (235). Due to Colinas’s changing philosophy in the 1980s, in this poem he actively and spatially declares his desire to move away from the past with verbs such as “Apartadme,” “Apartad ya de mí,” “Alejad”.<sup>101</sup> With this poetic *recusatio*, he attempts to leave behind pessimism and sorrow, and to continue towards a new way of thinking.<sup>102</sup> For the most part Colinas succeeds in moving beyond aesthetic preoccupations such as “los pretenciosos mámoles venecianos” (“Dos retratos” 483), however, as he further explains in the autobiographical poem “Dos retratos”: “todavía te gusta retornar / a la mar que es de todos / pues a todos nos da su libertad, / a esa luz tan blanca, / que no sabe de ideas enfrentadas / y en la que aún vemos alzarse a Venus” (484).<sup>103</sup> In these verses he tells us that, although he is conscious of moving towards a more socially and politically invested poetry (“ideas enfrentadas”), he will still revisit the culturalist aesthetics of earlier works simply for the pleasure of doing so. “A Venecia” is the perfect example of this return, though it paradoxically takes the form of a protest (*recusatio*), demonstrating both an objection to and the continuity of the culturalist aesthetic of the *poetas venecianos* or *culturalistas* in his own work.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup>These phrases may be a contrasting echo of Guillermo Carnero’s “Carpicho en Aranjuez,” in which he writes “Dejad, dejadme / en la luz de esta cúpula que riegan / las transparentes brasas de la tarde” (*Dibujo de la muerte* 156).

<sup>102</sup>*Recusatio* means refusal, objection, or protest in Latin. Patricia Rosenmeyer defines it as a “rhetorical device used to ban explicit reference to certain topics” (96).

<sup>103</sup>This last verse is a reference to the figure of Venus/Simonetta Vespucci, who is present aesthetically or symbolically in most of his early works. The continuation of Venus is also present in the cover image of the *Obra poética completa* (2011).

<sup>104</sup>Colinas is responding to poems such as those of Guillermo Carnero (“Muerte en Venecia,” “Capricho en Aranjuez,” both from *Dibujo de la muerte*, 1967, cited from *Dibujo de la muerte: Obra poética 1966-1990*), himself (“Giacomo Casanova acepta el cargo de bibliotecario que le ofrece, en Bohemia, el conde Waldstein” 159, among others), and many additional poets who wrote in the late 1960s and early 1970s about the decline of Venice. Díez de Revenga writes that: “Venecia [es] uno de los tópicos más manidos de la lírica de los años sesenta y setenta (234). For more information on the *venecianos*, see the article “La polémica de Venecia” by Marcos Ricardo Barnatán, in *Ínsula* 508 (1989).

Apartadme de ese cáliz rebosante de sangre verdosa,  
de ese racimo de labios a punto de corromperse,  
de ese sol de oro derrotado y fundido  
entre unas brasas de mármoles y de hierros.  
Apartadme de su noche, que llena hasta los bordes  
mi corazón con sus estrellas húmedas;  
apartadme de sus dulces piedras, enfermizas  
como carne de joven moribunda.

Apartad ya de mí esa lágrima contenida,  
esa perla negra  
suspendida entre los distantes faroles que lloran.  
Alejad esas aguas del olvido  
hasta el fondo de la noche,  
esas aguas en las que flotan hielos negros,  
y que con su sal agrietan las estatuas  
y las pinturas de las iglesias desconsagradas.

Entre tanto dolor,  
entre tanto sabor a tiempo que no vuelve,  
te recordaré bajo la hoguera del crepúsculo  
como una custodia quebrada  
a los pies de los nuevos bárbaros,  
o como un ramo de narcisos  
entre las manos de las muchachas adolescentes  
que amamos sin ser correspondidos.

Apartad ya de mí esta ciudad  
como el alba y la noche la arrancan a ella  
de su tumba de aguas marinas  
para dejarla flotando en el espacio sonámbulo  
como un perfume de otros días,  
como una música de otro mundo,  
como el recuerdo de la mirada piadosa  
de aquella que nos enamoró  
hasta su muerte.

Take me away from that chalice overflowing with green blood,  
from that cluster of lips just beginning to rot,  
from that golden sun, defeated and molten,  
among hot coals made of marble and iron.  
Take me away from its night, which fills my heart  
to the brim with its damp stars;  
take me from its sweet stones, sickly  
like the flesh of a dying girl.

Take from me now that suppressed tear,  
that black pearl,  
suspended between the distant, weeping lamps.  
Take those waters of oblivion away  
to the depths of night,  
those waters on which black ice floats,  
and that with its salt cracks the statues  
and paintings in deconsecrated churches.

Among so much pain,  
among so much flavor of time that will not return,  
I will remember you under the blaze of twilight  
like a monstrosity broken  
at the feet of the new barbarians,  
or like a bouquet of daffodils  
in the hands of adolescent girls  
whom we love without being loved in return.

Take from me now this city  
as the dawn and the night pull her  
from her tomb of sea water  
to leave her floating in the sleepwalking space  
like a perfume from other days,  
like music from another world,  
like the memory of the pious gaze  
of that girl who kept us in love with her  
until her death.

(“A Venecia” 467-468)

Perhaps the most striking images that run throughout the entire poem are the intertwining depictions of both architectural elements and parts of a woman’s body that combine to form a portrait of the city-woman *Venecia*. The images of her “cáliz de sangre verdosa” (stagnant waters), rotting “racimo de labios” (closely intertwined canals), and “dulces piedras, enfermizas / como carne” (crumbling buildings) create the vision of a beautiful dying young girl that both personifies and lives within the city of Venice. The ancient architectural components (“mármoles y hierros”, “piedras”) that once held the city together as an idealized “sol de oro”

have melted into one another, becoming indistinguishable and chaotic, losing their original splendor. Even symbols of opulence that one characterized the city, like the black pearl, have become a “lágrima contenida,” and both are marine representations of sorrow that also depict Venice as a small, isolated universe.<sup>105</sup> Everything within this universe is breaking down.

City and woman merge in the image of “los distantes faroles que lloran”—she is in mourning for her lost magnificent past. The same “aguas del olvido” that flowed through section one of *Jardín de Orfeo* are present in Venice as well, and here they actively destroy representations of history with their corrosive salt: “con su sal agrietan las estatuas / y las pinturas de las iglesias desconsagradas.” The religious references to the chalice, churches, and “custodia” (third stanza) all describe their objects as destroyed or defiled in some way (“cáliz de sangre vercosa,” “iglesias desconsagradas,” “custodia quebrada”).<sup>106</sup> Undoubtedly these desecrated religious objects symbolize Venice, a revered city that has also been, and continues to be corrupted by the passing of time (and, to some extent, indifference is implicated as well). *Historia-memoria* are not being preserved in the city itself, yet the poet’s words serve as a monument to its once splendid past (“tiempo que no vuelve”) and current state of decadence.

Stanza three is the only one of the four that is directed towards Venice as tú: “te recordaré bajo la hoguera del crepúsculo,” presents a stunning image of the city at sunset, which also signifies the end of life. Colinas’s one reference to contemporary times is to “los nuevos bárbaros,” contemporary people, who are in some measure responsible for the loss of Venice and even of history itself. The word “barbarian” implies a lack of education, sophistication, and

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<sup>105</sup>This recalls the verse: “La tarde es una lágrima / que nunca cae” from “Suite castellana” (283).

<sup>106</sup>The *custodia*, or monstrance, is a container used by some branches of Christianity that can hold or display the Eucharist (communion) or other sacred object, such as a relic.

regard for culture that Colinas has indicated previously in poems such as “Los cantos de ónice, I” (*Truenos y flautas en un templo*, 143).

The last stanza presents perhaps the strongest image in the poem with a simile: “Apartad ya de mí esta ciudad / como el alba y la noche la arrancan a ella / de su tumba de aguas marinas / para dejarla flotando en el espacio sonámbulo.” Colinas extends the metaphor of the city-woman Venice, manipulating both space and light in his imagery to create a moving image of both himself moving away from the city in the same way that she is synesthetically pulled out of the sea by the light of the dawn or moon.<sup>107</sup> The passing days and nights have not quite let the city rest in peace, however, and Venice is made to float like Ophelia on the water, in an undefined space (“sonámbulo”) between death and life, sleep and consciousness. Venice is one of the “muchachas adolescents / que amamos sin ser correspondidos,” and the *narcisos* that she holds are another symbol of this unrequited love (via the myth of Narcissus). Still floating between life and death, like the memory of a scent, a song, or a face, this city-woman that is Venice still has the power to enchant us: “nos enamoró / hasta su muerte.” Even in death and decay she is still beautiful—as Edgar Allan Poe wrote in his essay “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846): “The death [...] of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world.” “A Venecia” is Colinas’s monument to her.

Within Colinas’s poetry, Venice and its stagnant, black, deadly waters represents a barrier to the life-giving flow that makes his verses thrive. Water is a common motif used

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<sup>107</sup>This metaphor is partly based on real dangers that the city of Venice was (and still is) suffering since at least the great flood of 1966, which destroyed or damaged countless structures and works of art (Allsop). Having lived in Italy in the early 1970s, Colinas was well aware of how the city was suffering. Though many supporters persist in trying to bring Venice back to life, even today the task seems impossible, with rising sea levels, a decreasing local population, and not enough money coming into the city (Allsop). Ironically, in 2009, when the city’s population fell below 60,000 residents, some Venetians held a “symbolic funeral procession [for] the city they felt had died” (Allsop).

throughout his poetic career (in poems such as in “Truenos y flautas en un templo,” “Invocation of Hölderlin,” and “Sepulcro en Tarquinia”). When not flowing, it expresses a disconnect with harmony and the cosmic flow of energy that Colinas constantly seeks through his verses. With “A Venecia,” he is consciously attempting to break away from old styles and modes of thought (“Apartadme,” “Alejad esas aguas”), rejecting –at least partially– his previous love of the decadent culture personified in this city of putrid waters. The poet is crossing a threshold into a new creative and philosophical era.

In the last section of the book, “Jardín de Orfeo,” Colinas demonstrates this evolution partly by incorporating narrative prose poems for the first time, alternating them with traditionally structured poems. Díez de Revenga writes:

Podríamos decir [...] que esta última parte sería como un único y largo poema, construido con una especial armonía, combinando verso y prosa, que se alternan en las nueve estancias de que este poema se compondría. El endecasílabo blanco será elegido para cada una de las cinco partes en verso [...], mientras que una bellísima prosa poética ocupara el resto de las cuatro estancias –las pares– que construyen esta parte del libro. (236)

Through this innovative, balanced structure and the thematic unification of the poems in “Jardín de Orfeo,” Colinas does indeed communicate and exemplify a kind of harmony in this section, or what Sepúlveda refers to as “unión de contrarios” (242). Within the first two section of the book, elements are opposed, while here opposites fuse in paradoxical images (oximorons) such as these from the poem “Luna de azahar”: “gozo-olvido,” “agridulces flechas,” “vivo en muerte vida ilimitada” (515-516). Negative and positive are united, or shown in tension with one another, in order to show that the path to harmony requires knowledge of both the good and the bad that life experience offers.

The background narrative that runs through “Jardín de Orfeo,” most notably in the prose poems (which are generally narrative in character), ties the nine poems together with a common speaker/main character, recurring images (especially of flowing water), the concept of forgetfulness, and the speaker’s location in a high-walled garden. Alonso Gutiérrez asserts that these verses have an “indudable carácter místico [...] si la manifestación más característica del misticismo es el ‘ensimismamiento’,” symbolized by the closed garden wall and the speaker’s desire to stay within the enclosure (105). This type of isolated contemplation can lead to inner peace—it can be achieved by leaving the past behind and continuing on towards new horizons. According to Alonso Gutiérrez:

*Jardín de Orfeo* es, por todo ello, un camino iniciático, desde la desolación inicial de “Jardín-Leteo” hasta la plenitud final –una plenitud que consiste, paradójicamente, en un vaciamiento–. Las tres secciones del libro son tres enfoques diversos de la humana realidad, tres visiones que podrían tener una raíz de signo dantesco (Infierno, Purgatorio, Paraíso), y que marcan un itinerario desde lo oscuro y onírico de los primeros poemas del libro hasta lo luminoso y pleno de los últimos. (106)

While agreeing in general with Alonso Gutiérrez’s assertions, I believe that the first section. “Jardín-Leteo,” does not only represent the *Infierno*, as its last five poems show scenes of domestic happiness and appreciation for natural beauty. Instead, this section can represent both the positive and negative elements of memory that must be forgotten or left behind in order to follow the path to a new type of knowledge and harmony. In *Jardín de Orfeo*, Colinas exemplifies the poet’s obligation to continue to write beyond what has already been done (past, pain, anxiety). In aiming always to write towards the ideals of harmony and knowledge, Colinas exemplifies a humanist poetry that can “testimoniar en favor de un tipo de vida más pacífica y plena, más favorable para una paz universal y duradera” (*Kumgang* 12).

## Conclusion

This dissertation offers a comprehensive critical overview of Antonio Colinas's early and mid-career poetry, from 1967-1988, which has never been carried out previously in English. It includes the first bilingual anthology in English of his poems, which have never before been selected, translated, and presented in a coherent collection.<sup>108</sup> Very few studies of his work exist in English at all, and it is my hope that through this project, his poetry will reach a wider, more diverse audience, sharing and expanding his ideals of flow, cosmic harmony, and interconnectivity.<sup>109</sup>

The principal critics of Colinas whose work has been cited in this study are Alonso Gutiérrez, Martínez Fernández, Olivio Jiménez, and Luis Moliner –these four have published general critical books on Colinas's poetry as a whole– alongside many others who have added shorter or more specific works.<sup>110</sup> On a critical level, I have contributed a new consideration of the term *irracionalismo* as applied to the poet's culturalist poetry by several critics (such as Alonso Gutiérrez, Barrajón, Olivio Jiménez, Martínez Fernández 2015, Rozas), and conclude that this term does not apply to Colinas's work. Instead of moments of irrational verse, his poems often contain cascades or enumerations of images, sometimes chaotic, but never without direction and careful consideration.

This study has contributed to and strengthened the evidence of the classical and Romantic roots of Colinas's aesthetic and philosophy, but has shown also how his poetic trajectory

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<sup>108</sup>There exists a small book of selected poems translated into Italian by Francesco Luti: *Antonio Colinas: Poesie scelte (1969-2008)*.

<sup>109</sup>See works by Kay Pritchett and Maria C. Fellie. Colinas is also often mentioned in broader works on contemporary Spanish poetry such as those by Andrew Debicki, Matthew Marr, Jonathan Mayhew, and others.

<sup>110</sup>Clara Martínez Cantón (*El ritmo como clave del verso en Antonio Colinas*) and Gilda Calleja Medel (*Antonio Colinas, traductor*) have contributed important books on more focused topics that I have not cited in detail due to the scope of this project.

continues to develop in new directions (“Canto XXVIII” of *Noche más allá de la noche*, “A Venecia”). Though many academic studies and books on his work exist in Spanish, few of them include detailed analyses of individual poems. The close readings carried out in this study enrich the existing scholarship available on Colinas’s poetry on a more detailed level than has been done in the past. Furthermore, my analysis of *Junto al lago* is the first one to be carried out. I hope that by adding these critical steps to the work that has already been done on Colinas, this project will encourage others to continue studying his creative and philosophical texts.

The visual and sensorial focus that I contribute to critical perspectives on Colinas’s work is an angle that was previously underdeveloped. The vision of the translator-critic takes the analysis of his poetry into a unique space where the connections made among Colinas’s books and poems are made, often visually and sensorially, for readers of English. As both critic and translator, I have always conceived of poems as highly sensorial objects, capable of evoking not only visual images, but multisensory and synesthetic imagery as well. Translating Colinas’s poetic landscapes makes his poetry available to wider audiences and has the power to enhance his already extraordinary reputation as a contemporary literary figure.

The poet’s symbols, aesthetics, and messages strive to lend themselves to a global audience. Part of this symbolism is rooted in his use of the four elements in various ways: water, air, earth/stone, and fire. These elements, because they are a part of every living and natural being and process on earth, have the ability to connect humans, animals, plants, earth, and other elements, in a cosmic flow that, when active, facilitates peace and harmony. The poet has taken a geo-poetic journey from within himself in his first poems in the late 1960s, to his native lands in León, later Italy and the Mediterranean in the 1970s, and even further towards Asia



and Eastern thought in the 1980s, which ultimately leads back to himself. Martínez Fernández summarizes his poetic trajectory:

En el conjunto de la obra del poeta, el propio Colinas ha entendido que *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* representa la fusión de sus libros anteriores, del componente emotivo de *Junto al lago*, escrito en 1967, [...] y *Preludios a una noche total* (1969) y de la intensidad y la cultura vivida de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972). Por otro lado, *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* cerraría una primera etapa lírica [...] para abrirse después hacia la meditación, el pensamiento, el misterio y lo metafísico en *Astrolabio* (1979) y, singularmente, en *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983), y abocar [...] hacia un lenguaje más clarificado y unas preocupaciones (éticas, ecológicas, etc.) antes solo latentes. (“Cuarenta años después” 45)

This journey has led Colinas to recognize and learn how to bypass anxiety and hardship, and to seek knowledge and harmony within himself—to exemplify harmony through the search for individual knowledge and peace, symbolized by light. Colinas comments in his autobiographical poem “Dos retratos” on the unity of being that, if recognized, may lead us to this kind of global peace and cosmic harmony:

¿Tantas irisaciones puede haber en un rostro,  
espejo de mil rasgos, de mil vidas y sueños?  
Qué fundido sin más  
se encuentra cualquier rostro con la tierra  
eterna y anónima;  
la tierra que, al morir,  
a todos nos concede una misma raza  
y una patria igual.  
Y piensas con Platón,  
para no sonreír o para no dudar:  
“Todo es Uno y todo es diverso.” (‘‘Dos retratos’’ 487-488)

Antonio Colinas is a writer not just of Spanish poetry, but of world literature in an ever more globalized, yet also divided, world—his works exemplify the potential for a peace and unity that currently escape us.

## **Bilingual Anthology of Selected Poems**

**Translated by Maria C. Fellie**

### **Translator's Note**

I have known Antonio Colinas and have developed a professional relationship with him as his translator since 2007. The ability to consult with him throughout the process of writing and translating undoubtedly has informed and enriched this manuscript. Colinas's work is well deserving of a critical edition in English, and I believe that this anthology will increase significantly the international accessibility to his work. The following section consists of a selection of Colinas's poems from his first two decades of publishing poetry, a very productive time for him. This includes selected poems from his books from 1967 through 1988, representing Colinas's foundational works and the first two stages of his poetic career: these nine books represent the heart of Colinas's poetic philosophy. Each of the following poems was chosen to be translated because it is either representative of the central themes of the book, is divergent in a significant way, represents something new in Colinas's poetic trajectory, or contains particularly strong imagery.

The poems in the anthology are arranged in chronological order of when they were written as opposed to published (though there is some overlap), with the original text in Spanish parallel to the translated text on each page. Some poems are lightly annotated, if necessary, to include cultural, biographical, or linguistic information that the reader might find helpful or illuminating, thereby complementing the role of the critical introduction. The anthology of

poems is not meant to include extensive information or analysis in the form of footnotes,<sup>111</sup> but to give readers immediate access to these representative poetic texts while they are reading the introduction (and vice versa), and to serve as a reference tool. As mentioned in the introduction, the *Skopos* or communicative purpose of this text is to be an available and informative resource for students, teachers, and readers of Spanish, European, or contemporary world literature.

Because Colinas’s poetry is so rich in imagery, the images themselves are virtually always my greatest concern when translating a given poem, and I therefore translate visually and sensorially to maintain them. If the English translation evokes the same images as the source text while maintaining a similar flow (structure), then for me the translation is successful. By “flow” I’m referring to the fluidity with which the text is read, the naturalness of its texture, which encompasses meter, rhyme, and other technical elements. This excerpt from “Sepulcro en Tarquinia” (cited in chapters one and four as well) is an example of Colinas’s formation of an ascending, then descending, rhythmic flow with asyndeton and the omission of end stops (commas) in the second half. Here he is replicating the music of an intensifying song and an increasing heartbeat:

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<sup>111</sup>Though Vladimir Nabokov did write in his well-known essay that: “footnotes—on the *same* page as the text and not tucked away at the end of the volume—can never be too copious and detailed” (“The Art of Translation: On the Sins of Translation and the Great Russian Short Story”).

todo cayó en efecto, había una música  
y una luz en ojivas y arquivadas,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
techos llenos de frescos, los sagrarios,  
las ancianas maderas aromadas,  
carcomidas, lustrosas, de los coros,  
el retablo, las losas, las trompetas,  
el tropel de los ángeles, a veces  
un son de mandolino, aquella virgen  
de Botticelli con tu rostro, violas  
temblando en nuestras venas y un gran coro  
tronando enfurecido con el órgano,  
con el corazón [...]

indeed everything fell, there was music  
and light in the arches and architraves,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
ceilings full of frescoes, the sacraia,  
the ancient wood of the choir stalls,  
aromatic, worm-eaten, polished,  
the altarpiece, the tombstones, the trumpets,  
the host of angels, sometimes  
the sound of a mandolin, Botticelli's  
virgin with your face, violas  
quivering in our veins and a great choir  
thundering mightily with the organ,  
with the heart [...]

(“Sepulcro en Tarquinia” 171)

Meter is a poetic element that is difficult to approach in translation, and while I have not attempted to copy Colinas's own rhythm, I have tried to lend the English its own by listening to the way it flows. In her *Métrica y poética de Antonio Colinas*, Clara I. Martínez Cantón writes:

El fin último de la métrica [...] es la producción de un ritmo perceptible. Si partimos de la base de que el ritmo es repetición y de que esa repetición tiene una fundación estética, su estudio nos dará una idea de los valores estilísticos que una acentuación, un metro, etc., pueden adquirir, y su aplicación a una obra concreta, la de Antonio Colinas, nos ayudará sin duda a desentrañar la expresividad de sus versos. (9)

For Martínez Cantón, meter and structure are particularly significant in all of Colinas's poetic works: “el aspecto técnico refuerza la musicalidad y el ritmo poemático” (11). She notes that Colinas fuses poetic form and content through the image of “la respiración” (the breath or act of breathing). The flow of breath, among other elements, is at the center of Colinas's poetic universe: structurally in meter and rhyme, visually and sensorially in poetic images, and symbolically in the flow among these elements and their connections to life's natural rhythm. I have chosen to privilege imagery over meter and structure in my translations, however, partly because Colinas generally does the same.

Another element that I did not attempt to replicate or substitute in the English was any type of rhyme—this was not an extensive loss, as much of Colinas's work is free verse: “Colinas

es, en su primera etapa, completamente fiel a los versos tradicionales. Sin embargo, posteriormente se irá adentrando, de una manera lenta y tranquila, en el verso libre” (Martínez Cantón 142). The differences in linguistic tendencies (principally vowel patterns) and the fact that “assonance is so uniquely Spanish” (Valis 13) led me to decide that the English and Colinas’s imagery would benefit from not including any restrictions that rhyme would impose on word choice, and therefore on imagery.

In addition to rhythm, word choice is essential in translating a poetic text. Whenever possible, I use cognates or words that are as aesthetically close to the original language as possible, while retaining a similar meaning (though few can be said to be truly equal). Noël Valis states in “A Note on the Translation” of her English-language anthology of Julia Uceda’s poems that she tries “to keep the strangeness of her poetry in the (sometimes) strangeness of my translation”—for her this “strangeness” in an essential quality of the poetry as a whole (12). In Colinas’s works, one essential element that I try to preserve in English is his classic, ahistorical language. It is often impossible to identify his verses with a time period or specific moment in history (especially in his earlier books), and therefore I try to choose words that reflect this subtle intent at avoiding temporal references.

While I do not translate literally, as in word-for-word in the original order, I do attempt to maintain a basic poetic structure close to the original, continuing the original pattern of enjambment when the English permits. Poetry, however, does not have to follow the normal rules of conversational or conventional grammar or set phrases, so it often can be translated more literally without conflict. I preserve as much as possible rhetorical devices such as asyndeton (omission of conjunctions), anaphora (repetition of the same word in various verses or phrases), polysyndeton (use of more conjunctions than grammatically necessary), sometimes alliteration

(repetition of initial letter or sound in various words), and hyperbaton (irregular word order within a phrase) when the English allows for it, which it often does.

Valis also comments on her translations of Uceda that she chooses “overall ‘readability’ while suggesting through imagery [...] and other devices, the rare intensity of Uceda’s poetic vision” (12). In the following translations I follow a similar philosophy, consciously avoiding awkward structure or language because Colinas generally does not employ them, and aiming for clear (“readable”), straightforward syntax that flows well. On the other hand, I purposefully avoid clarifying ambiguous meaning or over-interpretating complex ideas or uncommon images within the translation itself, leaving that pleasure for the readers.

As I emphasized in my introduction on translation theory and methodology, there are infinite ways to translate any given text, especially poetry. The following poems have been translated visually and sensorially, and I hope that this method has enhanced the multisensory imagery present both within and in the space between the original and its translation. Literary texts offer us so many possibilities because of their purposeful ambiguity, allowances for the translator’s inevitable influence, intertextuality in both languages, and innumerable additional considerations. Francesco Luti writes in the translator’s note to his anthology *Antonio Colinas: Poesie scelte (1969-2008)*: “Ogni traduzione è una piccolo avventura, un breve viaggio nella topografia di un poeta, una radiografia, si se vuole, di un’esperienza umana e di scrittura” [*Every translation is a little adventure, a short journey through the topography of a poet, an x-ray, if I may, of an experience both human and of writing*] (15). I hope that you enjoy the following excursions into the poetic landscapes created by Antonio Colinas.

**Antonio Colinas: Selected Poems, 1967-1988**

(All poems in the original Spanish are reproduced here with the permission of Antonio Colinas and Ediciones Siruela.<sup>112</sup>)

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<sup>112</sup>All original poems are reproduced from: Colinas, Antonio. *Obra poética completa*. Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 2011. Print. All English translations are copyrighted to Maria C. Fellie (all rights reserved).

**Poema “I” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Junto al lago* (1967)**

Estos poemas nacen de tu ausencia.  
Mira mis labios: están secos, solos.  
Tantas noches pasaron a los tuyos  
unidos, apurando cada poro  
de tu ser, que hoy no tienen ya razón  
para existir aquí, en el abandono.  
También el aire muere entre los robles  
y en sus copas se extinguen, poco a poco,  
los silbos de los pájaros, la queja  
emocionada del ocaso rojo.

Todo muere.

Las barcas van cansadas  
sobre las aguas muertas.

Suena ronco

el golpe de los remos.

Te diré

que, además de tu ausencia, ahora noto  
el desamor sembrado en mis entrañas  
como una muerte lenta, como un lloro.  
El desamor, las huellas del recuerdo,  
el sentir deshacerse cada gozo,  
descubierto a tu lado, sin remedio.  
Mira mis labios, mírame los ojos  
desde la estancia<sup>113</sup> oscura donde sueñas.  
Piensa, por mí que aún puede haber retorno  
para estos labios mudos, para el pecho  
en soledad que te aceptó amoroso.

**Poem “I” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Beside the Lake* (1967)**

These poems are born from your absence.  
Look at my lips: they’re dry, lonely.  
So many nights they spent joined  
to yours, urgently enjoying every pore  
of your being, but today they have no reason  
to exist here, in abandonment.  
The air also dies among the oaks  
and in their canopies fade, little by little,  
the birds’ whistles, the emotive  
moan of the red sunset.

Everything dies.

Boats drift, tired,  
on dead waters.

The strokes

of the oars sound hoarse.

I will tell you

that, beyond your absence, I now notice  
indifference sown into my core  
like a slow death, like a lament.  
Indifference, the footprints of memory,  
feeling each pleasure found  
at your side undone, without recourse.  
Look at my lips, look into my eyes  
from the dark room where you dream.  
Think, that for me there may be a way back  
for these mute lips, for the solitary  
chest that once welcomed you lovingly.

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<sup>113</sup>*Estancia* can mean room, place, or stay, but also a type of “stanza”.



**Poema “IV” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Junto al lago* (1967)**

Y dicen que en las Noches de San Juan,  
cuando la luna vaga por el cielo,  
del fondo de las aguas sale el son  
de una campana: sólo bronce y sueño.  
Del fondo umbrío de las aguas surgen,  
poco a poco, las sombras de los muertos  
y todo el monte se amedrenta y gime.  
Son los ahogados, los que prefirieron  
el abismo fatal, la sima oscura  
de la laguna a este sufrido suelo  
donde tú y yo buscamos<sup>114</sup> la alegría.  
La Noche de San Juan, cuando es más bello  
asomarse a los astros, nos reclama  
la fuerza poderosa de los muertos.  
Una noche de junio, en que la luna  
cruce por los ramajes, partiremos  
también nosotros de estas aguas mudas  
hacia la tierra de los hombres.

Pero

no seremos los mismos.

Esta historia  
(¿de amor?) quizá la habrá borrado el eco  
de otra campana oscura.

Será el fondo  
del lago la morada donde habremos  
de reposar eternamente juntos.  
Y, a nuestro paso, seguirá el silencio.

**Poem “IV” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Beside the Lake* (1967)**

And they say that on the Eves of Saint John,  
when the moon wanders across the sky,  
from the depths of the water rises the sound  
of a bell: only bronze and dream.  
From the shadowy depths of the water emerge,  
little by little, the shadows of the dead  
and the whole mountain is frightened and wails.  
They are the drowned, those who preferred  
the fatal abyss, the dark chasm  
of the lagoon to this anguished earth  
where you and I searched for happiness.  
The Eve of Saint John, when it is most beautiful  
to lift oneself up to the stars, we are claimed by  
the powerful force of the dead.  
One night in June, in which the moon  
crosses the branches, we also  
will depart from these mute waters  
towards the land of men.

But

we will not be the same.

This story  
(of love?) perhaps will have been erased  
by the echo of another dark bell.

The bottom of the lake  
will be the resting place where we will  
lie, together for eternity.  
And, in our path, silence will follow.

<sup>114</sup>Preterite form (past tense).

**“Nocturno en León” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Poemas de la tierra y la sangre* (1969)**

Se apagó la linterna rojiza de las cumbres.  
Ya no pueden los ojos saborear la hermosura  
de cada rama helada, la enhiesta crestería  
fulgiendo en el crepúsculo silencioso del invierno.  
Noble León, los goznes de cada puerta sienten  
también el frío. Espadas de frío en las esquinas,  
en el pesado pecho de la muralla rota.  
(Zarzal, zarzal amigo, si hoy ardiese la espuma  
rosada de tu flor, si crepitase toda  
la tarde en tu maraña, en tu hojarasca roja.)  
Noble León, hoy nido sin susurros de pájaros,  
llamas hubo en tus álamos, oro en las espadañas.  
Pero ahora que la noche de invierno se avecina  
sólo dura<sup>115</sup> la piedra, sólo vencen los hielos,  
sólo se escucha el silbo del viento en las mamparas.  
De puro fría quema la piedra en nuestras cúpulas,  
en las torres tronchadas de cada iglesia vieja.  
Noble León, frontera de la nieve más pura,  
junco aterido, espiga sustentada en la brisa,  
ahora que viene densa la noche por tus calles  
hazme un hueco de amor entre tus muros negros,  
entrebrea las pestañas heladas<sup>116</sup> de tus ríos,  
que se agigante el sueño para este amor que ofrezco.

**“Night in León” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Poems of Earth and Blood* (1969)**

The scarlet light of the summits went out.  
Eyes can no longer taste the beauty  
of each icy branch, the vertical battlements  
glowing in the silent winter’s twilight.  
Noble León, the hinges of each door feel  
the cold as well. Swords of cold in the corners,  
in the heavy breast of the broken ramparts.  
(Brier, friend brier, if today the rosy foam  
of your flower burned, if the entire afternoon  
stirred in your thicket, in your red tangle of foliage.)  
Noble León, today a nest missing the whisper of birds,  
flames were in your poplars, gold in the rushes.  
But now that the winter’s night approaches  
only the stone lasts, only the ice conquers,  
only the whistle of the wind is heard in doorways.  
The stone burns from pure cold in our domes,  
in the crippled towers of each old church.  
Noble León, borderland of the purest snow,  
frozen reed, stalk upright in the breeze,  
now that the night comes dense through your streets,  
make me an opening of love in your black walls,  
open a little the frozen lashes of your rivers,  
so that the dream of this love I offer may grow.

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<sup>115</sup>In this phrase the stone is described as eternal, lasting, but the word *dura* as an adjective also means “hard,” juxtaposing this texture with the idea that the rock itself is a living being.

<sup>116</sup>The image of the “pestañas heladas” of León’s rivers may also metaphorically refer to the geographical shape of the region’s rivers, which fan out in all directions from the Duero.

**“En San Isidoro beso la piedra de los siglos” – Antonio Colinas, de *Poemas de la tierra y la sangre***

Aquí sólo se siente la piedra sobre el pecho.  
Aquí sólo se escucha el silencio sonoro.  
Enclaustrada quietud, enrarecido aroma  
que el tiempo acumuló, que los ropajes sobrios  
y el incienso dejaron rancio para los siglos.  
Tumbas de eternidad, míseras tumbas rotas,  
roídas por las uñas, manoseadas, llenas  
de muerte hasta los bordes. Tumbas ennegrecidas.  
Dintel cansado, recios frescos en las arcadas,  
acumulad el tiempo, repetid los instantes  
que se fueron gastando entre sonoros rezos,  
que embalsamó la cruz, que unos pasos poblaron.  
Aquí en San Isidoro hoy pesa más la piedra,  
arde el hierro, resiste la pasión de otros días.  
Hoy la muerte persiste obstinada en las tumbas,  
es personaje único donde el labio se posa,  
frente donde los besos repiten sus susurros.  
Enrarecido aroma, aire que respiramos  
como algo nuestro, sangre de nuestras propias venas  
perdura en estas piedras que el hombre socavó  
a golpe de cincel, de corazón transido.  
Que siempre dure el tiempo bajo estos muros fríos.  
Que el pasado resuene en estas tumbas toscas.  
Que siempre esté la muerte presente en nuestros labios,  
posada en nuestros labios, sonando en nuestros besos.

**“In St. Isidore<sup>117</sup> I Kiss the Stone of the Centuries” – Antonio Colinas, from *Poems of Earth and Blood***

Here you feel only the stone on your chest.  
Here you hear only the sonorous silence.  
Cloistered quietude, rarefied aroma  
accumulated by time, that the sober vestments  
and the incense left stale for the centuries.  
Tombs of eternity, wretched shattered tombs,  
crumbling from nails, worn down from hands, filled  
to the brim with death. Blackened tombs.  
Tired lintel, ornate frescos in the arcades,  
accumulate<sup>118</sup> the time, repeat<sup>o</sup> the moments  
that were wasted among sonorous prayers,  
that the cross embalmed, that a few steps populated.  
Here in St. Isidore the stone weighs more today,  
the iron burns, it resists the passion of other days.  
Today death persists, obstinate in the tombs,  
it is the only character where lips alight,  
brow where kisses repeat their whispers.  
Rarefied aroma, air that we breathe  
like something our own, blood from our own veins  
endures in these stones that man unearthed  
with blows from a chisel, from an anxious heart.  
Let time always last under these cold walls.  
Let the past resound in these crude tombs.  
Let death always be present on our lips,  
upon our lips, sounding in our kisses.

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<sup>117</sup>St. Isidore’s Basilica (Real Basílica de San Isidoro) in León.

<sup>118</sup>The verbs in this verse are commands.

**“Visión del invierno” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Poemas de la tierra y la sangre* (1969)**

Ojivas deshojadas, veletas y buhardillas,  
los soportales húmedos. Pienso en la fiebre lenta  
del farol esta noche. Hasta entonces qué sueño,  
qué consuelo tener la luz en mi pupila.  
¡Sonrosadas mejillas las de este amanecer!  
¡El Bernesga se quiebra de frío entre los álamos!  
Están puros los montes. Renquea por la cuesta  
del callejón la vieja. Otra vez la campana  
deja el tañido limpio, su cristal en mis labios.  
¡Campanario aterido, pecho duro del alba!  
Dentro del templo un lloro, una lágrima viva.  
En las vidrieras arde toda la luz de invierno.  
Deja, León, que ponga muy dentro de tu entraña  
de piedra oscura un beso. (¡Cómo quema tu piel,  
cómo da fuego el aire de la acacia desnuda!)  
En la última llaga de tu ser, en la escarcha  
de cada teja quiero dejar mi corazón.

**“Vision of Winter” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Poems of Earth and Blood* (1969)**

Lealess arches, weather vanes and garrets,  
dap colonnades.<sup>119</sup> I think of the slow fever  
of the lantern tonight. Until then, what a dream,  
what a comfort to have its light in my pupil.  
Flushed are the cheeks of this dawning!  
The Bernesga<sup>120</sup> ruptures from cold between the poplars!  
The mountains are pure. An old woman hobbles  
up the slope of an alley. Again the bell  
leaves behind a clean sound, its crystal on my lips.  
Frozen bell tower, hard breast of the dawn!  
Within the temple a wail, a living tear.  
In the stained glass burns all the light of winter.  
Let me, León, leave deep within your core  
of dark stone a kiss. (How your skin burns,  
how the air of the bare acacia emits fire!)  
In the last wound of your being, on the frost  
of each rooftop, I want to leave my heart.

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<sup>119</sup>These are references to the Cathedral of León, along with “bell tower” (verse 10) and “stained glass” (12).

<sup>120</sup>The Bernesga River flows through the city of León.

**“Nacimiento al amor” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

«Traes contigo una música que embriaga el corazón»,  
le dije, y en mis ojos rebosaban las lágrimas.  
Llenos de fiebre tuve mis labios, que sonaban  
encima de tu piel. Por la orilla del río,  
trotando en la penumbra, pasaban los caballos.  
De vez en cuando, el viento dejaba alguna hoja  
sobre la yerba oscura, entre los troncos mudos.  
«Mira: con esas hojas comienza nuestro amor.  
En mí toda la tierra recibirá tus besos»,  
me dijo. Y yo contaba cada sofoco dulce  
de su voz, cada poro de su mejilla cálida.  
Estaba fresco el aire. Llovían las estrellas  
sobre las copas densas de aquel soto de álamos.  
Cuando la luna roja decreció, cuando el aire  
se impregnó del aroma pesado de los frutos,  
cuando fueron más tristes las noches y los hombres,  
cuando llegó el otoño, nacimos al amor.

**“Birth to Love” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

“Yo carry a music that intoxicates the heart,”  
I told her, and in my eyes tears were overflowing.  
Filled with fever were my lips, which sounded  
on your skin. Near the bank of the river,  
trotting in the semi-darkness, horses were passing.  
Now and again, the wind would drop some leaf  
onto the dark grass, among the mute trunks.  
“Look: with those leaves our love begins.  
In me the whole earth will receive your kisses,”  
she said. And I was counting each sweet smothering  
of her voice, each pore of her warm cheek.  
The air was cool. The stars were raining  
over the dense canopy of that grove of poplars.  
When the red moon shrank, when the air  
was impregnated with the heavy aroma of fruits,  
when nights and men became sadder,  
when the autumn arrived, we were born to Love.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>“Love” here is a noun, not a verb.

**“Madrigal para suplicar tu voz” – Antonio Colinas, de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

Está tensa la noche sobre los pinos cálidos  
y más calenturienta está la tierra, amor.  
También a otoño saben tus labios en la sombra.  
Háblame a media voz, dime qué hay por el cauce  
sonoro de tus venas, si es el pozo más hondo  
de tu hermosura virgen en él me perderé.  
Es un espejo el cielo, es una suave cúpula.  
Aquí, sobre tu piel, también supura el pino,  
deja su denso aroma, su plenitud, su llama.  
Por el recuesto, amor, pasa lenta la noche  
su mano de penumbra. Y el aire, solitario,  
gime entre las acículas, las conmueve, las mima.  
¡Desconsolado viento, cómo roza tu pecho  
con su perfume, cómo lo llena y lo sofoca!  
Pero, ¿qué importa el viento, su sollozo en las hojas?,  
¿qué importa el astro puro, el sueño de la noche?  
Si el invierno llegara enjaezado de oro,  
no serviría, amor, para calmar mis ansias.  
Sólo tu voz podrá remansarme la sangre.  
Tu voz: el más sutil de los vientos, el fruto  
más maduro y gustoso de este otoño encendido.

**“Madrigal to Implore Your Voice” – Antonio Colinas, from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

The night is tense over the warm pine trees  
and the earth is even more feverish, love.  
Your lips also taste of autumn in the shadow.  
Speak to me softly, tell me what is in the sonorous  
course of your veins, if it is the deepest well  
of your virgin beauty I will lose myself in it.  
The sky is a mirror, it is a smooth dome.  
Here, on your skin, the pine tree also sheds its sap,  
leaves its dense aroma, its plenitude, its flame.  
Over the slope, love, the night slowly passes  
its shadowy hand. And the air, solitary,  
moans among the needles, moves them, indulges them.  
Disconsolate wind, how it brushes your chest  
with its perfume, how it fills and smothers it!  
But, what does the wind matter, its cry in the leaves?  
What does the pure star matter, the dream of night?  
If winter arrived in trappings of gold,  
it wouldn't help, love, to calm my yearnings.  
Only your voice can quiet my blood.  
Your voice: the most subtle of winds, the most mature  
and pleasing fruit of this glowing autumn.

**“Barcarola” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

Ay, barcarola, plena canción de atardecida...  
Se estremecen los peces del lago al escucharte  
y el pinar más oscuro te recibe en silencio.  
Un escorzo<sup>122</sup> de cisne en la azulada bruma.  
Tulipanes, castillos, el espeso brebaje  
del ciprés al ocaso, y tus manos de nieve.  
¡Oh locura del tiempo adensado en el claustro!  
Barcarola: se quiebran las olas en la orilla,  
se quiebra el corazón bajo el cielo profundo.

**“Barcarola”<sup>123</sup> – Antonio Colinas  
from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

Ay, *barcarola*, full song of nightfall...  
The fish in the lake tremble when they hear you  
and the darkest pine grove receives you in silence.  
A foreshortened swan in the bluish mist.  
Tulips, castles, the thick potion  
of the cypress at sunset, and your hands of snow.  
Oh madness of time densified in the cloister!  
*Barcarola*: waves break on the shore,  
the heart breaks under the profound sky.

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<sup>122</sup>*Escorzo* is an art term, “foreshortening,” that refers to “the correct depiction in perspective of a single figure or object or part thereof in relation to its distance from the eye of the viewer” (“Foreshortening” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*).

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<sup>123</sup>The word *barcarola* (the gondolier’s song) is either Italian or Spanish, and though in English it would be “carcarole,” I have left it in its original form to reflect its Italian origin and to preserve its musicality.

**“Luna” – Antonio Colinas**  
**de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

Un gran copo de nieve cae de la luna pura.  
Un gran copo de nieve, un cuchillo de luz  
cercena la arboleda, incendia los matorros.  
Nocturno de los sueños, profundo pozo helado,  
enmudecida luna, fría mano, caricia.  
Oh pájaros, no más revuelos en las copas,  
no más ciegos chasquidos entre las hojas verdes.  
Los pájaros nocturnos se pican en los ojos,  
lloran sangre de cara a su figura virgen.  
Los perros con su lengua ansiosa, desmedida,  
ladran locos, desean mancillar su pureza,  
llegar hasta su fuego, morderle el corazón.  
Y el pecho sudoroso de aquel caballo tiembla,  
contiene los relinchos, se perla de rocío.  
Negro caballo, brasa posada sobre el heno,  
flor de sangre, qué fiebre contienen tus dos ojos,  
qué embebidos están bajo la luna dura,  
bajo la catedral ardiente de los astros.  
Luna: cristal perdido en el más noble techo,  
sigue tu curso, nieva, gotea en los caminos,  
en cada higuera vieja, en cada mármol roto,  
derrama tu lechosa dulzura en nuestros pechos.

**“Moon” – Antonio Colinas**  
**from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

A great snowflake falls from the pure moon.  
A great snowflake, a knife of light  
slices through the grove, sets fire to the thicket,  
Nocturne of dreams, deep frozen well,  
muted moon, cold hand, caress.  
Oh birds, no more fluttering in the canopies,  
no more blind cracks among the green leaves.  
The nocturnal birds peck at each other's eyes,  
weep blood facing her virgin figure.  
The dogs with their anxious, boundless tongues,  
bark like crazy, wish to sully her purity,  
to reach her fire, to bite her heart.  
And the sweaty chest of that horse trembles,  
contains his neighs, he beads with dew.  
Black horse, live coal lying on the hay,  
flower of blood, what a fever your two eyes contain,  
how absorbed they are under the hard moon,  
under the burning cathedral of stars.  
Moon: crystal lost in the noblest ceiling,  
follow your course, snow, drip onto the paths,  
onto every old fig tree, onto every broken marble,  
shed your milky sweetness onto our chests.



**“Fría belleza virgen” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

Detrás de los cristales luna fría,  
praderíos, mimbrales, azoteas...  
Por húmedos caminos he llegado  
muy cerca de tus ojos, de la nieve.  
Cúpulas de carmín, las ateridas  
aves negras chillando: poesía.  
Detrás del muro enverdecido está  
el cristal de una copa conteniendo  
vino espumoso, besos o palabras.  
Besos cerca del fuego, troncos, mudos  
aparejos de caza y flores muertas  
hace tiempo en un búcaro enlutado.  
Se hiela el lago donde en el verano  
cantan las ranas en tardes profundas.  
Se van rebaños, duele por la sangre  
la canción del pastor, o los ladridos.  
Viene espesa la noche con sus astros.  
Cuesta mirar tanta belleza virgen.  
Encima de la casa, estremeciendo  
este rincón enfebrecido y mágico  
cruje el techo celeste, suena Dios.

**“Cold Virgin Beauty” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

Behind the glass, cold moon,  
meadows, willow shrubs, roof terraces...  
Though damp pathways I have come  
very close to your eyes, to the snow.  
Carmine domes, the frozen-solid  
black birds screeching: poetry.  
Behind the greened wall is  
the glass of a goblet containing  
sparkling wine, kisses, or words.  
Kisses near the fire, trunks, mute  
hunting gear and dead flowers  
a long time since in a mourning urn.  
The lake freezes over where in summer  
the frogs sing in deep afternoons.  
Flocks leave, the shepherd's song,  
or the barking hurt throughout one's blood.  
The night comes thick with its stars.  
It's hard to look at so much virgin beauty.  
On top of the house, shaking  
this fevered and magic corner,  
the celestial ceiling creaks, God is heard.

**“Llegada del invierno” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

Cuando llega el invierno sólo hay nubes ligeras rosadas por el frío, cuervos en los jardines y alguna estrella tímida fulge al anochecer detrás del árbol viejo que carcomió la escarcha. Pasamos embozados por las últimas calles para salir al campo y ver la luz más bella rondar por los mimbrales desnudos, por las tapias del cementerio en paz. Allí la muerte asciende por el ciprés y aún veo alguna violeta sobre las tumbas míseras. Para buscar la calma aún nos queda la muerte en este atardecer. Nos perseguía todo el pueblo con sus perros, con sus esquinas bruscas, con sus campanas lentas. Bala la oveja, cruje el hielo en el estanque. Dicen que hoy ha nacido un niño moribundo y que, en algún lugar, no hay leña, no hay aceite para el corvo candil. Quedo en el campo, poso la mirada otra vez en el pueblo que humea. Hace ya unos momentos que la Muerte pasó como una loba negra a acechar los caminos. Las nubes rojas cruzan. Estremecido está el campo y se retuercen de frío las encinas. Otra noche galopa. Va desde el monte al llano. Aquí no hay ni una gota de sangre que nos llene el pecho de vergüenza, ni una lengua que injurie, ni un corazón que lata de rabia o desconsuelo. Para buscar la paz aún nos quedan los muertos, los cipreses, la loma recamada de tumbas.

**“Arrival of Winter” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

When winter arrives there are only light clouds, rosy from the cold, crows in the gardens and some timid star glows at dusk behind the old tree that was eaten away by frost. We passed, bundled up, through the last streets to get to the country and see the most beautiful light prowl around the naked willow shrubs, around the walls of the cemetery in peace. There death ascends up the cypress and I still see some violets on the wretched tombs. To search for calm we still have death in this evening. The whole town was chasing us with their dogs, with their sharp corners, with their slow bells. The sheep bleats, the ice cracks in the pool. They say that today a dying child was born and that, somewhere, there is no firewood, no oil for the crooked oil lamp. I stay in the country, fix my gaze again on the town that is giving out smoke. Just a few moments ago Death passed by like a black she-wolf to stalk the paths. Red clouds cross. The countryside is trembling and the oaks twist in the cold. Another night gallops. It goes from mountain to plain. Here there is not even a drop of blood to fill our chests with shame, nor a tongue to slander, nor a heart that beats with rage or grief. To search for peace we still have the dead, the cypresses, the embroidered ridge of tombs.

**“Elegía” – Antonio Colinas**  
**de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

Toda la noche el viento bate mamparas rotas,  
arrasa los estanques pulidos, el carámbano.  
Un duende furibundo sacude los yerbajos  
de cada teja, llena de cólera los árboles.  
Sólo sobre los montes, donde el lucero estruja  
su puñado de luz, hay un arpegio armónico,  
un sollozo de flauta, una vívida paz.  
¡Arracimados frutos de la noche invernal,  
altas hogueras gélidas, tambor sonoro, músicas  
de los prados remotos, del firmamento inmenso...!  
Pero aquí, en el jardín o en las salas vacías  
de la casa no queda una poca de calma,  
un sonido suave, una gota de amor.  
En realidad, hoy nadie sabe lo que es la noche.  
Las hojas putrefactas del camino no saben.  
Los cristales agudos, verdosos, de la tapia  
no saben.

Ni tú, amor, ni yo, como dos piedras  
o estatuas fulminadas en el salón vacío,  
polvoriento, sabemos por qué cruje de miedo  
toda la casa vieja, por qué han muerto los pájaros,  
por qué han muerto los besos y no hay fiebre en la  
noche.

**“Elegy” – Antonio Colinas**  
**from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

All night the wind beats broken screens,  
ravages the gleaming lakes, the icicle.  
A frenzied *duende*<sup>124</sup> shakes the weeds  
on every roof tile, fills the trees with rage.  
Only over the mountains, where the star spills  
its handful of light, is there a harmonic arpeggio,  
the sob of a flute, a vivid peace.  
Clustered fruits of the winter night,  
high, icy fires, sonorous drum, music  
of the distant fields, of the immense heavens...!  
But here, in the garden or the empty rooms  
of the house there remains no bit of calm,  
no soft sound, no drop of love.  
In reality, today no one knows what the night is.  
The decayed leaves on the path don't know.  
The sharp, green glass shards in the wall  
don't know.

Neither you, love, nor I, like two stones  
or shattered statues in the empty,  
dusty salon, know why the entire old house creaks  
with fear, why the birds have died,  
why the kisses have died and why there is no fever in  
the night.

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<sup>124</sup>A *duende* can refer to a variety of magical or mythological creatures, such as an elf or goblin. The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* defines a *duende* as: “Espíritu fantástico, con figura de viejo o de niño en las narraciones tradicionales, que habita en algunas casas y causa en ellas trastorno y estruendo.”

**“Luces de primavera” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

A veces se abre el cielo plumizo y cae un rayo  
de sol sobre esta tierra húmeda, vaporosa.  
Cae un rayo de sol sobre el almendro grácil,  
cae una flecha de oro sobre las aguas muertas,  
cae una luz purísima sobre el césped oscuro.  
A veces se abre el cielo y deja de sonar  
la lluvia entre los álamos, en los tejados viejos.  
Hay un hálito fresco en las calles vacías.  
Un pájaro se atreve a cantar temeroso.  
Se rasgan las cortinas cenicientas del cielo  
y un rayo puro hiende la atmósfera invernal.  
Entonces, en la tierra, en los caminos hondos  
de la sangre, rebrota una fiebre, un ardor:  
Y pensamos gozosos que hay otra primavera  
ciñendo nuestros cuerpos con sus brazos de luz.

**“Lights of Spring” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

Sometimes the leaden sky opens and down falls a ray  
of sunlight onto this damp, misty earth.  
A ray of sunlight falls onto the graceful almond tree,  
a golden arrow falls onto the dead waters,  
a pure, pure light falls over the dark lawn.  
Sometimes the sky opens and the rain stops  
sounding among the poplars, on the old tiled roofs.  
There is a fresh vapor in the empty streets.  
A bird dares to sing, fearful.  
The ashen curtains of the sky are torn apart  
and a pure beam cracks the wintry atmosphere.  
Then, in the earth, in the deep paths  
of blood, reappears a fever, an ardor:  
And we think, joyful, that there is another springtime  
encircling our bodies with its arms of light.

**“Invocación a Hölderlin” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Preludios a una noche total* (1969)**

El levitón gastado, el sombrero caído  
hacia atrás, las guedejas de trapo y una llama  
en las cuencas profundas de sus dos ojos bellos.  
No sé si esta figura maltrecha, al caminar,  
escapa de un castigo o busca un paraíso.  
De vez en cuando palpa su pecho traspasado  
y toma la honda queja para el labio sin beso.

Oh Hölderlin, a un tiempo andrajo y vara en flor,  
nido pleno de trinos, muñeco maltratado.  
A tu locura se abren los bosques más sombríos.  
No ves cómo las fuentes se quiebran de abandono  
cada vez que desatas tu carcajada rota,  
cada vez que sollozas tirado entre la yerba.  
¡Qué claro estaba escrito tu sino bajo el cielo...!  
Antes de que pusieras tu mano en el papel  
fríos soles de invierno cruzaban la Suabia,  
dejaban por las nubes agrios trazos verdosos.

Cuando tú, silencioso y enlutado, leías  
latín en una celda, ya hubo duendes extraños  
sembrando por tus venas no sé qué fuego noble.  
Y antes de que acabaras hablando a las estatuas  
aves negras picaban tus dos ojos azules.

Hölderlin vagabundo, Hölderlin ruiseñor  
de estremecido canto, sin ojos y sin rama.  
Ahora que cae espesa la noche del otoño  
contempla a nuestro lado la enfebrecida luna,  
deja fluir tu queja, tus parloteos mágicos,  
deja un silbo tan sólo de tu canto en el aire.  
Detén, por un momento, tu caminar y espanta  
la muerte que hubo en tus hombros, encorvada, te  
acecha.

Rasga los polvorientos velos de tu memoria  
y que discurra el sueño, y que sepamos todos  
de dónde brota el agua que sacia nuestra sed.

**“Invocation of Hölderlin” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Preludes to a Total Night* (1969)**

The worn frock-coat, the hat fallen  
backwards, the ragged locks and a flame  
in the deep sockets of his two beautiful eyes.  
I don't know if this damaged figure, when he walks,  
is escaping punishment or searching for paradise.  
Every so often he touches his pierced chest  
and moans deeply for lips without a kiss.

Oh Hölderlin, at once tatters and flowering branch,  
nest full of trills, battered doll.  
The most somber forests open to your madness.  
You don't see how fountains break from abandonment  
every time you unleash your broken laughter,  
every time you sob, lying in the grass.  
Your sign was so clearly written under the sky...!  
Before you put your hand to paper  
cold winter suns were crossing the Swabia,  
were leaving traces of green among the bitter clouds.

When you, silent and mourning, were reading  
Latin in a cell, there were already strange *duendes*  
sowing in your veins I don't know what noble fire.  
And before you finished talking to the statues  
black birds were pecking at your two blue eyes.

Hölderlin vagabond, Hölderlin nightingale  
of a trembling sing, without eyes or branch.  
Now that the autumn night falls dense,  
contemplate by our side the feverish moon,  
let flow your cry, your magical ramblings,  
leave only a whistle of your song in the air.  
Delay, for a moment, your walking and frighten away  
the death that was on your shoulders, stooped, stalking  
you.

Tear up the dusty veils of your memory  
and may the dream roam, and may we all know  
from where springs the water that sates our thirst.

**“Bucólica” – Antonio Colinas**  
**de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)**

Soy el pastor de estos paganos prados.  
Veo entre los ciruelos los centauros  
y en las torres enanos de ojos verdes.  
De Tiziano y de Rubens los colores  
de esta ciudad: el oro de los muros,  
el fuego azul del campanil, las rosas.

**“Pastoral” – Antonio Colinas**  
**from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)**

I am the shepherd of these pagan pastures.  
I see centaurs among the plum trees  
and in the towers dwarves with green eyes.  
From Titian and Rubens are the colors  
of this city: the gold of the walls,  
the blue fire of the bell tower, the roses.

**“Escalinata del Palacio” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Truenos y flautas en un templo***

Hace ya mucho tiempo que habito este palacio.  
Duermo en la escalinata, al pie de los cipreses.  
Dicen que baña el sol de oro las columnas,  
las corazas color de tortuga, los pinos.  
Soy dueño de un violín y de algunos harapos.  
Cuento historias de muerte y todos me abandonan.  
Iglesias y palacios, los bosques, los poblados,  
son míos, los vacía mi música que inflama.

Salí del mar. Un hombre me ahogó cuando era niño.

Mis ojos los comió un bello pez azul  
y en mis cuencas vacías habitan escorpiones.  
Un día quise ahorcarme de un espeso manzano.

Otro día me ató una víbora al cuello,  
pero siempre termino dormido entre las flores,  
beodo entre las flores, ahogado por la música  
que desgrana el violín que tengo entre mis brazos.

Soy como un ave extraña que aletea entre rosas.  
Mi amigo es el rocío. Me gusta echar al lago  
diamantes, topacios, las cosas de los hombres.  
A veces, mientras lloro, algún niño se acerca  
y me besa en las llagas, me roba el corazón.

**“Staircase of the Palace” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple***

I have inhabited this palace for a long time.  
I sleep on the staircase, at the foot of the cypresses.  
They say that the sun bathes with gold the columns,  
the turtle-colored armor plates, the pine trees.  
I am the owner of a violin and some rags.  
I tell stories of death and all abandon me.  
Churches and palaces, the forests, the villages,  
are mine, my inflaming music empties them.

I came out of the sea. A man drowned me when I was a  
child.

My eyes were eaten by a beautiful blue fish  
and in my empty sockets live scorpions.  
One day I wanted to hang myself from a thick apple  
tree.

Another day I wound a viper around my neck,  
but I always end up asleep among the flowers,  
intoxicated among the flowers, drowned by the music  
shed by the violin that I have in my arms.

I am like a strange bird who flutters between roses.  
My friend is the dew. I like to throw into the lake  
diamonds, topazes, the things of men.  
Sometimes, while I weep, some child comes near  
and kisses my wounds, steals my heart.

**“Canto frente a los muros de Astorga”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)

El pecho de un león son estos muros.  
Tiemblan las ramas de color cereza.  
Un trueno de palomas abre el día.  
Veo en las piedras vetas verdinegras.  
Tiene Teleno el lomo amoratado  
de un centauro bajo la luz primera  
y el belfo rojo de morder las flores  
húmedo por la nieve y las estrellas.  
Como un pulmón de pájaro respira  
el jardín incrustado, la arboleda.

(Cuántas noches bebimos la hermosa  
desde este mirador y qué leyenda  
de plata antigua y vírgenes cautivas  
tejía la luna entre las nobles piedras.  
Tenía los ojos mansos de los ciervos  
y una brisa de abeto entre las cejas.  
Su pupila de lago azul miraba  
con paz la catedral, las roídas verjas.)

Astorga es un silencio dilatado.  
Hecha de violines que no suenan  
qué profunda es su música, qué honda  
la pesadumbre de la yedra negra  
en los jardines últimos trepando.  
Rotundo corazón lleno de ausencia.

El pecho de un león, la frente dura  
del topacio de los muros, las vidrieras  
toscas, tintas de sangre y oxidadas,  
la ronquera del grajo, las callejas  
llenas de sombra humilde y sol antiguo...  
Rotundo corazón lleno de ausencia.  
De nobles tumbas tiene las raíces.  
De argolla y cobre amargo son sus venas,  
sus canales secretos de aguas rojas.  
Astorga suena a roca y a pureza.  
Qué sabios son sus ojos encendidos.  
Astorga ve pasar la luz, y sueña.

**“Song Facing the Walls of Astorga”**  
– Antonio Colinas, from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)

A lion's chest are these walls.  
The cherry-colored branches tremble.  
A thunderclap of doves opens the day.  
I see in the stones green-black veins.  
Teleno<sup>125</sup> has the purplish back  
of a centaur under the first light  
and lips red from biting flowers,  
damp from snow and stars.  
Like a bird's lung the incusted  
garden, the grove, breathes.

(How many nights we drank in the beauty  
from this outlook and what a legend  
of ancient silver and captive virgins  
the moon would weave among the noble stones.  
She had the gentle eyes of the deer  
and a breeze of the fir between her brows.  
Her pupil of blue lake was watching  
peacefully the cathedral, the disintegrating gates.)

Astorga is a long silence.  
Made of violins that make no sound  
how profound is their music, how deep  
the sorrow of the black ivy  
climbing in the remote gardens.  
Round heart full of absence.

The chest of a lion, the hard topaz  
brow of the walls, the crude glass  
windows, stained with blood and rusted,  
the hoarse call of the rook, the narrow streets  
full of humble shadow and ancient sun...  
Round heart full of absence.  
In noble tombs lie her roots.  
Of shackles and bitter copper are her veins,  
her secret channels of red waters.  
Astorga sounds like rock and purity.  
How wise are her glowing eyes.  
Astorga sees the light pass, and dreams.

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<sup>125</sup>Teleno is the highest mountain in León.



**“En un país extraño” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)**

En un país extraño, la locura.  
Un corazón desmemoriado, ebrio de sueños,  
quema las horas en los prados rojos.  
Antes que el sol se vaya sucederán prodigios  
en esta primavera de mis sienas,  
en esta primavera de las rosas  
y de los alacranes.

En los estanques muertos de China peces vivos  
más hondos que la noche,  
más suaves que aquellas violetas.  
Una paloma aletea entre las violetas.  
Un ciervo desangra entre las violetas.  
El espeso sofoco del viento en las violetas.  
Y en todo la locura,  
el resonante frío de las grutas,  
el amable dragón de mi niñez,  
los extremos países del Oriente.

Una bella durmiente que no despierta nunca  
reposa en las violetas  
con las dos violetas de sus ojos.  
No vendrá más el príncipe,  
que se quedó en el bosque  
escuchando a una vieja azules cuentos.  
Noche más pura que este sueño,  
que el verdoso veneno de la copa  
y de la poesía.

Todo se enreda al punto en la memoria.  
A todo toma apego el corazón.  
Por eso acudo y bebo en cada sueño,  
hace tiempo que vivo en el país del sueño,  
de cada violeta torturada  
por la lluvia y el hosco viento de las estaciones.  
Por una violeta la locura,  
el silencio y la emoción de lo puro,  
el corazón desmemoriado.

**“In a Strange Country” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)**

In a strange country, madness.  
A forgetful heart, intoxicated with dreams,  
burns the hours in red fields.  
Before the sun leaves wonders will transpire  
in this springtime of my temples,  
in this springtime of roses  
and of scorpions.

In the dead ponds of China living fish  
deeper than the night,  
gentler than those violets.  
A dove flutters among the violets.  
A deer bleeds among the violets.  
The heavy suffocating wind in the violets.  
And in everything madness,  
the resounding cold of the grottos,  
the kind dragon of my childhood,  
the extreme countries of the Orient.

A sleeping beauty who never awakens  
lies in the violets  
with the two violets of her eyes.  
The prince will never come again,  
he stayed in the forest  
listening to an old woman’s blue stories.  
Night purer than this dream,  
than the greenish poison of the goblet  
and than poetry.

Everything is tangled now in my memory.  
The heart becomes fond of everything.  
So I take part and drink in each dream,  
I’ve lived for some time in the land of dreams,  
of each violet tortured  
by rain and the gloomy wind of the seasons.  
For a violet, madness,  
the silence and emotion of the pure,  
the forgetful heart.

**“Truenos y flautas en un templo”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)

Cuando mis pasos cruzan las estancias vacías  
todo el templo resuena como una oscura cítara.  
Oh mármol, si pudieses hablar cuántos secretos  
podrías revelarnos. ¿Hubo sangre corriendo  
sobre tu nieve dura? ¿Hubo besos y rosas  
o sólo heridos pájaros debajo de las cúpulas?

Vosotras, las antorchas de los amaneceres,  
¿qué visteis, qué quedó en el fondo del ánfora?  
Y el vino derramado, el vino descompuesto  
sobre los labios ácidos, ¿qué podría contar,  
qué podría decirnos que no fuese locura?  
El amor se pudrió como un fruto golpeado.  
El amor fue trenzando pesadumbre con odios.  
El amor hizo estragos en la firmeza humana.

Hoy el otoño sube muy lento por las rocas,  
por las enredaderas, por las raíces dulces,  
por los espinos rojos, a este lugar secreto.  
De las tumbas abiertas brotan las mariposas.  
Las hojas entretejen rumorosos tapices.  
El agua de las fuentes, verdosa y enlutada.

Casi tocando el cielo de los atardeceres,  
el templo de la diosa, la pureza del tiempo.  
Cuando llega la noche sostiene los racimos  
de las constelaciones, es columna del mundo,  
dintel lleno de flautas, hondo pozo de estrellas.

**“Thunder and Flutes in a Temple”**  
– Antonio Colinas, from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)

When my footsteps cross the empty spaces  
the whole temple resounds like a dark zither.  
Oh marble, if you could speak how many secrets  
you could reveal to us. Was there blood running  
over your hard snow? Were there kisses and roses  
or only wounded birds under the domes?

You, the torches of the dawns, what did you see,  
what remained at the bottom of the amphora?  
And the wine spilled, the wine decomposed  
on acid lips, what could it recount,  
what could it tell us that was not madness?  
Love rotted away like a bruised fruit.  
Love was braiding sorrow with hatred.  
Love wreaked havoc on human strength.

Today autumn rises very slowly through the rocks,  
through the vines, through the sweet roots,  
through the red thorns, to this secret place.  
From the open tombs butterflies blossom.  
The leaves weave murmuring tapestries.  
The water of the fountains, green and in mourning.

Almost touching the skies of dusk,  
the temple of the goddess, the purity of time.  
When night comes, it holds up the clusters  
of constellations, it is the column of the world,  
lintel full of flutes, deep well of stars.

**“Cementerio de Père Lachaise” – Antonio Colinas, de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)**

El mármol de las tumbas es más agrio este otoño.  
Bajo las hojas húmedas, oscuras, de laurel  
hay una llama verde: son los ojos de un gato.

Fragante amanecer de las enredaderas.  
Música enfebrecida de cada estatua rota.  
Música por el musgo de las escalinatas.  
Música por la noche aún de las violetas.  
El sauce de Musset no dará ya más sombra.  
La lira de Chopin ahogada entre la yerba.  
La esfinge de Oscar Wilde petrificada y sola.  
El trino de Edith Piaf extraviado en lo húmedo.

Noble, aterciopelado oro viejo del parque,  
florón de piedra, verjas, coronas y sarcófagos,  
enrojecido y frío clavel de la mañana,  
después de tanta muerte ¿qué podríais hacer  
por esta canción triste que traigo entre mis labios?

**“Père Lachaise Cemetery”<sup>126</sup> – Antonio Colinas, from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)**

The marble of the tombs is more brittle this autumn.  
Below the damp, dark laurel leaves  
there is a green flame: it is a cat's eyes.

Fragrant dawn of the climbing vines.  
Feverish music of each broken statue.  
Music by the moss on the steps.  
Music in the night even of violets.  
Musset's willow will give no more shade.  
Chopin's lyre drowned among the grasses.  
Oscar Wilde's sphinx petrified and alone.  
Edith Piaf's trill lost in the dampness.

Noble, velvety old gold of the park,  
stone rosette, iron gates, crowns and sarcophagi,  
reddened and cold carnation of the morning,  
after so much death, what could you do  
for this sad song that I bring between my lips?

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<sup>126</sup>Père Lachaise Cemetery is the largest cemetery in the city of Paris.

**“Los cantos de ónice, I” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)**

Vosotros, los formados en un útero de soledad y  
espanto.

Vosotros, que nacisteis ya vencidos,  
habláis de las desgracias de este mundo  
mientras contemplo el cielo pensando en la salud  
y en los países dulces, extraños del Oriente.  
Raza de débiles: van todas las rosas  
sobre las aguas negras de la vida.  
Venid y ved que allí  
donde ponéis los dedos con amor  
aún puede brotar música.  
No verán vuestros ojos las palmeras  
detrás de las murallas amarillas  
y los muertos aquellos que os dieron la vida  
ya tenían entonces gusanos en las cuencas de sus ojos.  
El fruto pende y palpamos sus zumos.  
La mañana se comba y ved atirantado  
el pecho en la hermosura.  
Llega la noche envuelta en velos aromados.  
Sobre la frente,  
la Cruz del Sur se enreda  
con las constelaciones.  
Los barcos toman rumbo  
hacia las islas de las esmeraldas.

**“The Songs of Onyx, I” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)**

You, those formed in a uterus of solitude and fright.

You, who were born already defeated,  
you speak of the misfortunes of this world  
while I contemplate the sky thinking of health  
and of the sweet, strange countries of the Orient.  
Race of weaklings: all roses drift  
on the black waters of life.  
Come and see that there,  
where you place your fingers with love,  
music can still flower.  
Your eyes will not see the palm trees  
behind the yellow walls  
and those dead who gave you all life  
already had worms in the sockets of their eyes.  
The fruit hangs and we touch its juices.  
The morning bends, and see her taught  
chest in its loveliness.  
Night arrives wrapped in aromatic veils.  
Above our foreheads,  
the Southern Cross tangles  
with the constellations.  
The boats set their course  
towards the islands of emeralds.

**“Los cantos de ónice, IV” – Antonio Colinas, de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)**

Dejad atrás la envidia y la lujuria.  
Amad colores puros, los aromas  
silvestres,  
muy humildes,  
el silencio  
y la luz.  
Tened como la flor el beso:  
tan sólo entre los labios, un instante.  
El vino te robó un saco de penas.  
El vino condenó tu bello estómago.  
Habéis quebrado el cántaro del mundo  
y en él no atesora  
ni bondad ni alegría.  
El polvo del camino se ha bebido  
el agua que dio vida.  
Pensad que nunca, nunca, resucita  
la carne que nos dio nuestros deleites.

**“The Songs of Onyx, IV” – Antonio Colinas, from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)**

Leave behind envy and lust.  
Love pure colors, the aromas  
of the wild,  
very humble,  
silence  
and light.  
Hold a kiss like a flower:  
only on your lips, an instant.  
The wine stole your bag of sorrows.  
The wine condemned your beautiful stomach.  
You have smashed the vessel of the world  
and within it accumulates  
neither goodness nor joy.  
The dust on the path has drunken  
the water that gave life.  
Think that never, never, will resurrect  
the flesh that gave us our delights.

**“Los cantos de ónice, VII” – Antonio Colinas, de *Truenos y flautas en un templo* (1972)**

Trae más violetas, Juan Ramón, trae más violetas.  
No dejes tu locura así, a medio camino.  
Asaetado está por los venablos Platerillo  
mientras la Niña de las Moras raya  
con una de sus manos  
el azul más morado del cielo  
y el hielo de la luna.

**“The Songs of Onyx, VII” – Antonio Colinas, from *Thunder and Flutes in a Temple* (1972)**

Bring more violets, Juan Ramón,<sup>127</sup> bring more violets.  
Do not leave your madness thus, at the halfway point.  
Platerillo is shot with darts  
while the Girl of the Blackberries scratches  
with one of her hands  
the most purple blue in the sky  
and the ice on the moon.

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<sup>127</sup>Juan Ramón Jiménez, Spanish poet who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1956 (1888-1958).

**“Simonetta Vespucci” - Antonio Colinas  
de *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975)**

*Il vostro passo di velluto  
E il vostro sguardo di vergine  
violata.*

DINO CAMPANA

Simonetta,  
por tu delicadeza  
la tarde se hace lágrima,  
funeral oración,  
música detenida.  
Simonetta Vespucci,  
tienes el alma frágil  
de virgen o de amante.  
Ya Judith despeinada  
o Venus húmeda  
tienes el alma fina del mimbre  
y la asustada inocencia  
del soto de olivos.  
Simonetta Vespucci,  
por tus dos ojos verdes  
Sandro Botticelli  
te ha sacado del mar,  
y por tus trenzas largas,  
y por tus largos muslos.  
Simonetta Vespucci  
que has nacido en Florencia.

**“Simonetta Vespucci” - Antonio Colinas  
from *Sepulchre in Tarquinia* (1975)**

*Il vostro passo di velluto  
E il vostro sguardo di vergine  
violata.*

DINO CAMPANA

Simonetta,  
because of your delicateness  
the afternoon becomes a tear,  
funeral prayer,  
arrested music.  
Simonetta Vespucci,  
you have the fragile soul  
of a virgin or a lover.  
Already a tousled Judith  
or damp Venus,  
you have a fine soul of wicker  
and the startled innocence  
of the olive grove.  
Simonetta Vespucci,  
by your two green eyes  
Sandro Botticelli  
has drawn you from the sea,  
and by your long braids,  
and by your long thighs.  
Simonetta Vespucci,  
you have been born in Florence.

**“Lago de Trasimeno” - Antonio Colinas  
de *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975)**

*... 16.00 romani perirono  
malgrado i presagi funesti.*

Sólo brillaste para mí un instante  
en la pútrida tarde de tormenta,  
me pareciste un relámpago verde  
sobre el mojado y tenebroso bosque de olivos  
(fría esmeralda  
bajo luz muy negra).

**“Lake Trasimeno”<sup>128</sup> - Antonio Colinas  
from *Sepulchre in Tarquinia* (1975)**

*... 16.00 romani perirono  
malgrado i presagi funesti.*

You only shone for me a moment  
in the putrid, stormy afternoon,  
you seemed to me a green flash of lightning  
above the damp and tenebrous forest of olive trees  
(cold emerald  
under very black light).

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<sup>128</sup>One of the largest lakes in Italy, located in the region of Umbria.



**“Novalis” - Antonio Colinas  
de *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975)**

Oh Noche, cuánto tiempo sin verte tan copiosa  
en astros y en luciérnagas, tan ebria de perfumes.  
Después de muchos años te conozco en tus fuegos  
azules, en tus bosques de castaños y pinos.  
Te conozco en la furia de los perros que ladran  
y en las húmedas fresas que brotan de lo oscuro.

Te sospecho repleta de cascadas y parras.

Cuánto tiempo he callado, cuánto tiempo he perdido,  
cuánto tiempo he soñado mirando con los ojos  
arrasados de lágrimas, como ahora, tu hermosura.  
Noche mía, no cruces en vano este planeta.  
Deteneos, esferas, y que arree la música.

Noche, Noche dulcísima, pues que aún he de volver  
al mundo de los hombres, deja caer un astro,  
clava un arpón ardiente entre mis ojos tristes  
o déjame reinar en tí como una luna.

**“Novalis” - Antonio Colinas  
from *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975)**

Oh Night, how long since I've seen you so abundant  
in stars and fireflies, so intoxicated with perfumes.  
After many years I know you in your blue  
fires, in your forests of chestnuts and pines.  
I know you in the fury of barking dogs  
and in the damp strawberries that sprout from the  
darkness.

I imagine you full of waterfalls and vines.

How long I have been silent, how much time I have lost,  
how long I have dreamt gazing with my eyes  
ravaged by tears, like now, at your beauty.  
My Night, don't cross this planet in vain.  
Halt, spheres, and let the music rise.

Night, Night so sweet, since I must return  
to the world of men, let a star fall,  
thrust a burning harpoon between my sad eyes,  
or let me reign in you like a moon.

**“Sepulcro en Tarquinia” – Antonio Colinas (1975)**

*E loderò quella che più mi piacque  
delle tue donne morte  
e il tenue riso ond'ella mi delude  
e l'alta imagine ond'io mi consolo  
nella mia mente*

*.....  
e il sogno di volontà che sta sepolto  
sotto le pietre mute*

G.A.

*Poi mi partia, consumato ogni duolo*

DANTE

se abrieron las cancelas de la noche,  
salieron los caballos a la noche,  
campo de hielos, de astros, de violines,  
la noche sumergió pechos y rosas,  
noche de madurez envuelta en nieve  
después del sueño lento del otoño,  
después del largo sorbo del otoño,  
después del huracán de las estrellas,  
del otoño con árboles de oro,  
con torres incendiadas y columnas,  
con los muros cubiertos de rosales  
tardíos  
y tú en aquel tranvía salpicado  
a la orilla del agua por las barcas,  
por las luces  
y el viento y los faroles y los remos,  
aquel rostro otoñal que no vería  
nunca más, amor mío, nunca más,  
detrás de los cristales del tranvía  
con un sueño de potros en los ojos,  
con un hato de ciervos en los ojos,  
con un nido de tigres en los ojos,  
y con la bruma de los cementerios,  
y con los hierros de los cementerios,  
y con las nubes rojas allá arriba  
(encima de cipreses y aves muertas,  
del tomillo y los búcaros fragantes)  
de los cementerios  
navegando en tus ojos

se abrieron las cancelas a la noche,  
salieron los caballos a la noche,  
se agitaron las zarzas del recuerdo,

**“Sepulcher in Tarquinia” – Antonio Colinas (1975)**

*And I will praise [her] who pleased me most  
[she] of all your dead women  
and the delicate laugh with which she deluded me  
and the high image with which I console myself  
in my mind*

*.....  
and the dream of willpower which stays buried  
under the mute stones*

G.A. (tr. Warren)

*Then I departed, every sad rite done*

DANTE (tr. Reynolds)

the gates of the night swung open,  
the horses ran out into the night,  
field of ice, of stars, of violins,  
the night submerged breasts and roses,  
mature night wrapped in snow  
after the slow dream of autumn,  
after the long drink of autumn,  
after the hurricane of stars,  
and autumn's golden trees,  
with fire-lit towers and columns,  
with walls covered with late-blooming  
roses  
and you in that streetcar, dotted  
by boats at the water's edge,  
by the lights  
and the wind and the lamps and the oars,  
that autumnal face which I would never  
see again, my love, never again,  
behind the glass panes of the streetcar  
with a dream of colts in your eyes,  
with a herd of deer in your eyes,  
with a nest of tigers in your eyes,  
and with the mist of cemeteries,  
and with the gates of cemeteries,  
and with the red clouds above  
(over cypresses and dead birds,  
over thyme and fragrant vases)  
the cemeteries  
adrift in your eyes

the gates opened to the night,  
the horses ran into the night,  
the thorns of memory stirred,

pasó un desierto (el mar) por mi recuerdo,  
lloraba aquella niña en el camino  
lleno de cruces

si me vieras junto a esta mesa oscura  
con la manta y los vidrios de colores,  
con el fuego apagado, sin más fuego  
que éste de aquí del pecho, de aquel otro  
de tus días pasando apresurada  
hacia el lago y la noche y los jardines,  
si me vieras,  
si supieras:  
ataron los leones con cadenas,  
les metieron argollas por las bocas,  
alguien llenó de plomo cada tubo  
de la fuente y el agua de la taza  
de mármol,  
el agua de la taza sonrosada,  
el agua de aquel mármol veteadado  
como serpientes verdes, como sierpes,  
la envenenaron toda y allí está  
muerta como las hojas que cayeron,  
amordazada como los leones,  
llena de argollas y de soles muertos,  
llena de sol y lunas ateridas

debieron de robarles la custodia,  
los hachones de oro y aquel cáliz  
de ónice y pedrerías muy hermoso,  
debieron de picar todos los techos,  
artesonados, púlpitos, altares  
(Tiziano, viejo amigo, había lienzos  
cubriendo las paredes y se abrían  
las tumbas que ya estaban expoliadas)  
todo cayó en efecto, había una música  
y una luz en ojivas y arquitraves,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
techos llenos de frescos, los sagrarios,  
las ancianas maderas aromadas,  
carcomidas, lustrosas, de los coros,  
el retablo, las losas, las trompetas,  
el tropel de los ángeles, a veces  
un son de mandolino, aquella virgen  
de Botticelli con tu rostro, violas  
temblando en nuestras venas y un gran coro  
tronando enfurecido con el órgano,  
con el corazón

a desert (the sea) passed through my memory,  
that little girl wept on a path  
full of crosses

if you could see me beside this dark table  
with its cloth and colored glass,  
with the fire doused, with no fire  
but that of my own breast, that burning  
of your days as you hurried  
toward the lake and the night and the gardens,  
if you could see me,  
if you only knew:  
they bound the lions in chains,  
put rings in their mouths,  
someone filled each fountain duct  
with lead and the marble bowl  
with water,  
the water in the rosy bowl,  
the water in that marble, its veins  
writhing like green serpents, like snakes,  
they poisoned it all and there it lies,  
dead like the fallen leaves,  
muzzled like the lions,  
full of rings and dead suns,  
full of sun and frozen moons

they must have stolen the monstrance,  
the golden torches and that lovely  
chalice of onyx and jewels,  
someone must have stripped the ceilings  
domes, pulpits, altars  
(Titian, old friend, canvases were covering  
the walls and the tombs  
were open, already plundered)  
indeed everything fell, there was music  
and light in the arches and architraves,  
Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,  
ceilings full of frescoes, the sacraria,  
the ancient wood of the choir stalls,  
aromatic, worm-eaten, polished,  
the altarpiece, the tombstones, the trumpets,  
the host of angels, sometimes  
the sound of a mandolin, Botticelli's  
virgin with your face, violas  
quivering in our veins and a great choir  
thundering mightily with the organ,  
with the heart

el corazón, el corazón, salías  
sin saber que ya todo había acabado  
a la noche de entonces, tan beoda  
se diría, con los cabellos sueltos,  
tan sofocada y tímida, tan triste,  
la música te hacía estremecer,  
si llorabas las calles empedradas  
te sentían pasar,  
había un eco puro si llorabas,  
algún jardín que daba pena verlo,  
si llorabas  
la ciudad encendía sus bujías,  
todo era de metal, la Vía Láctea  
crujía si llorabas, el abrigo  
azul marino, la capucha alzada,  
bajando muy despacio cada losa,  
muy deprisa frente a las hornacinas,  
si llorabas...

no eras feliz entonces, yo diría,  
después de los conciertos, yo diría  
que tu piel era suave como un cetro,  
como un cetro preciada y dura y firme,  
qué caja de viola todo el vientre,  
yo diría  
que un órgano sonaba por tus venas,  
quién lo diría, todos te miraban  
cruzando las murallas, bordeando  
el teatro romano, si llorabas  
adelfas en la sombra te sentían  
pasar, cuánta frescura, crepitaba  
la grava del sendero, eran tus pasos  
si llorabas, eran tus ojos de ágata  
los que soñaban una escena fúnebre  
entre aquellas columnas abrasadas,  
si llorabas  
había rojas túnicas prendidas  
en las zarzas, un bosque amaneciendo,  
un bosque de cipreses encendidos  
y sangre en aquel busto destrozado,  
después del río te perdías lenta,  
llovía lentamente si llorabas  
o un huracán reinaba en la ciudad  
y yo nunca sabía a dónde ibas  
si llorabas

the heart, the heart, you were leaving  
without knowing that everything had  
ended that night, so intoxicated  
one might say, with your hair down,  
so breathless and shy, so sad,  
the music was making you shiver,  
if you wept the paved streets  
felt you pass,  
there was a pure echo if you wept,  
some garden painful to look at,  
if you wept  
the city turned on its lights,  
everything was metal, the Milky Way  
moaned if you wept, a navy-blue  
cloak, the hood raised,  
descending each step very slowly,  
very quickly opposite the wall niches,  
if you wept...

you were never happy then, I would say,  
after the concerts, I would say  
that your skin was soft as a scepter,  
as a scepter, precious and solid and firm,  
and your belly like a viola case,  
I would say  
that an organ sounded through your veins,  
who would have imagined, they all watched you  
crossing the ramparts, skirting  
the Roman theater, if you wept  
oleanders in the shadows heard you  
pass, such coolness, the gravel crunched  
on the path, they were your steps  
if you wept, they were your agate eyes  
that dreamt a funereal scene  
between those burnt columns,  
if you wept  
there were red tunics tangled  
in the thorns, a forest waking in the light,  
a forest of burning cypress  
and blood in that shattered bust,  
after the river you lost yourself slowly,  
it rained slowly if you wept  
or a hurricane reigned over the city  
and I never knew where you had gone  
if you wept

(mil ramas tronchó el viento en la espesura,  
ramas de pinos, de manzanos, de álamos,  
mórbidos frutos, mazos de rosales,  
tronchó estatuas dejando cada fuente  
repleta de agua verde y azufrosa,  
arrancó campanillas y parterres,  
el viento abrió ventanas en lo negro  
y un torbellino de perfumes agrios,  
un huracán de flores machacadas,  
un resplandor de rayos violetas  
invadió las estancias de la villa,  
mil ramas tronchó el viento en la espesura  
y después de la lluvia violenta,  
del ozono mordiendo los cristales,  
después de los caballos alocados  
brincando por los prados como llamas,  
goteó el bosque lleno de lujuria,  
se llenaron de estrellas los tejados,  
tembló la fría luna en cada charca,  
un violín amordazó la noche,  
en Bérgamo, después de la tormenta,  
un cisne flota en música de Liszt,  
hunde su pico rojo en agua oscura  
bajo los pinos ebrios de perfume,  
como un blanco relámpago se mueve,  
agita los laureles con sus alas,  
grita alocado por estrellas húmedas,  
Bérgamo crece en yedras, crece en ruinas,  
la están ahogando bosques de castaños,  
faroles amarillos y cerezos,  
cisne: bulbo de nieve y lluvia y música,  
con la cabeza derrotada y flácida,  
con la cabeza rota sobre el mármol,  
su cuello es una flor mórbida, exótica,  
cisne mío, mi juventud dichosa  
expirando a los pies de Donizetti)

si me vieras ahora junto al fuego,  
penetrado de ti, de tu memoria,  
hay tanta nieve fuera y sin emargo  
aún pasa por mi mente aquella villa  
de Catulo que imaginamos juntos,  
no la villa con ruinas de Sirmione

(the wind tore a thousand branches deep  
in the woods, pines, apple trees, poplars,  
sickly fruits, bunches of roses,  
it felled statues, leaving their fountains  
full of green and sulphurous water,  
it gouged out morning glories and their beds,  
the wind opened windows in the blackness  
and a whirlwind of acid perfumes,  
a hurricane of ravaged flowers,  
a radiance of violet rays  
burst into each room in the village,  
the wind tore a thousand branches deep  
in the woods, and after the violent rain,  
after the ozone bit the glass panes,  
after the fear-crazed horses  
skittered over the pastures like flames,  
the forest dripped, full of lechery,  
the roofs filled with stars,  
the cold moon rippled in every pool,  
a violin muzzled the night,  
in Bergamo, after the storm,  
a swan floats on Liszt's melodies,  
he sinks his red beak into dark water  
under the perfume-drunk pines,  
it moves like a white flash of lightning,  
stirs the laurels with its wings,  
and cries, wild from the wet stars,  
Bergamo grows in ivy, in ruins,  
drowned by forests of chestnut trees,  
yellow lanterns and cherry trees,  
swan: bulb of snow and rain and music,  
with its head defeated and limp,  
with its head shattered over the marble,  
its neck is a sickly flower, exotic,  
my swan, my blessed youth  
breathes its last at the feet of Donizetti)

if you could see me now beside the fire,  
pierced by you, by the memory of you,  
there's so much snow outside and yet  
in my mind's eye I see Catullus' village  
as we imagined it together,  
not the village with ruins in Sirmione,

con música ligera y gente rubia  
bailando sobre el puente hecho de barcas,  
no donde Joyce y Pound se han encontrado  
(debieron de ser dulces los olivos  
de entonces, cuando el lago devoraba  
el sol y era de fuego cada ola,  
olas de verde fuego, cuántos peces  
desde los miradores y qué hermosas  
las doncellas del templo y de los baños,  
Sirmio, Sirmio de entonces, la dilecta  
entre las islas bellas de aquel lago,  
cuando la flor llegaba a los almendros  
tú, Catulo, poeta de Verona,  
viajabas a Asia, Sirmio, Sirmio,  
llena de labios rojos y de cráteras)

hay tanta nieve fuera y sin embargo  
no me distraen los perros de aquel sueño  
todo de ópalo y nubes diamantinas,  
no me distrae la última manzana  
que se niega a caer, ni los ramajes  
llenos de cuervos del nogal, ni el aire  
cuajado de humo, ni las alambradas,  
ni la gallina muerta en el sendero  
esta noche pasada, ni los cerdos,  
ni sus entrañas rojas goteando  
sobre la nieve, sangre tan violenta,  
pero me llega otro recuerdo, tengo  
un recuerdo de sangre más valioso,  
y qué dulce y qué triste recordarlo

aroma de las hojas que no ardían,  
la Venus mutilada del jardín,  
los sátiros de piedra en la escalera,  
los perros del guardián y luna fría  
besando los parterres y las torres,  
en aquel pabellón viví otra vida,  
si llegabas de noche entre los pinos  
brillaban a lo lejos los faroles,  
sus galerías de cristal azul,  
dentro los candelabros y la música  
del piano perfumado de mimosas,  
el cuadro aquel de la laguna Estigia  
(el Patinir de los verde-manzana)  
las muchachas más jóvenes bebían  
las notas de Chopin y se olvidaban

with its lively music and blonde people  
dancing on a bridge made of boats,  
not where Joyce and Pound met  
(the olive trees must have been sweet  
back then, when the lake devoured  
the sun and each wave was fire,  
waves of green fire, so many fish  
seen from the lookout, and how lovely  
the maidens of the temple and the baths,  
Sirmio, back then, beloved Sirmio,  
among the beautiful islands on that lake,  
when the almond trees were blooming  
you, Catullus, poet of Verona,  
were traveling to Asia, Sirmio, Sirmio,  
filled with red lips and wine vessels)

there's so much snow outside and yet  
the dogs of that dream made of opal  
and diamantine clouds don't distract me,  
nor does the final apple  
which refuses to fall, nor the twisted  
branches of the walnut tree, nor the smoke-  
filled air, nor the barbed-wire fences,  
nor the dead hen on the path  
last night, nor the pigs,  
nor their red entrails dripping  
over the snow, such violent blood,  
but another memory comes to me, I have  
a dearer memory of blood,  
so sweet and sad to recall

scent of leaves that were not burning,  
the mutilated Venus in the garden,  
the stone satyrs on the steps,  
the guard's dogs and the cold moon  
kissing the flower beds and the towers,  
in that pavilion I led another life,  
if you arrived at night among the pines  
the distant lanterns would shine,  
their galleries of blue glass,  
inside the candelabras and the music  
of the piano, perfumed with mimosas,  
that painting of the river Styx  
(the Patinir of the apple-greens)  
the youngest girls drank in  
Chopin's notes and forgot

del champagne espumoso de las copas,  
las coronas de rosas se pudrían  
sobre sus frentes de marfil y fiebre,  
ellos tenían libros en las manos  
que nunca terminaban de leer,  
les inquietaban las estrellas húmedas  
y el grito de los cisnes en el lago  
les anunciaba el paso de la muerte,  
la enfermedad y el Arte y el deseo  
y el no poder besar aquellos labios  
sin pensar en las flores de la sangre,  
sospecha de las barcas en la orilla,  
chapoteo en los juncos de los remos,  
cada noche llegaba la visita  
de la Muerte con rostros diferentes,  
se enlutecía el son de la viola,  
en el aire quedaba la amenaza  
y un murmullo de ramas en lo oscuro,  
pavos reales de luz de madrugada,  
ruido de campanillas en el claustro,  
azucenas trinchadas en la senda,  
rojo cojín para aquel joven rubio  
que nunca echó las cartas que escribía,  
ataúd blanco para una dama triste

hay tanta nieve fuera y sin embargo...  
ven, pájaro enjaulado, veo un poco  
de mí posado en tus dos ojos mínimos,  
ven pájaro llegado con la lluvia,  
déjame que me mire, casi dos  
negrísimas cabezas de alfileres  
son tus ojos y quiero verme en ellos,  
hecho para la Muerte cantas menos  
mientras me entregas tardes abrasadas,  
quisiera apresurarme, tienes todo  
lo que perdí en tus ojos, concentrado,  
lucha el sueño y la muerte en esta estancia,  
luchan quince estaciones en mis ojos,  
mis últimos recuerdos, mis ensueños:

luego que abriera el Arca recibió  
Noé un fétido viento entre sus ojos,  
¿ves? Valle Inclán enciende fuegos verdes,  
que cante siempre el pájaro de invierno,  
¿de qué te quejas, Beatrice d'Este  
si tienes un vestido hecho de oro?,

the sparkling champagne in their glasses,  
the crowns of roses rotted away  
on their ivory and fevered brows,  
the men had books in their hands  
which they never finished reading,  
the damp stars disturbed them  
and the cry of the swans in the lake  
was announcing death's passing to them,  
disease and Art and desire  
and not being able to kiss those lips  
without thinking of the flowers of the blood,  
suspicion of the boats on the seashore,  
the splashing of oars among the reeds,  
each night Death would visit  
with a different face,  
the sound of the viola was shrouded,  
the threat was lingering in the air  
with a whisper of boughs in the dark,  
peacocks of light in the dawn,  
a chime of bells in the cloister,  
crushed lilies on the path,  
a red cushion for that fair young boy  
who never mailed the letters he wrote,  
a white coffin for a sorrowful lady

there's so much snow outside and yet...  
come, caged bird, I see a bit  
of myself perched in your small eyes,  
come bird, arrived with the rain,  
let me see myself, your eyes  
are almost two pitch-black pinpoints  
and I want to see myself in them,  
you, made for Death, sing less  
while you give me burnt evenings,  
I would like to hurry, you have everything  
I lost in your eyes, gathered,  
dreams and death struggle in this room,  
they fight fifteen seasons in my eyes,  
my last memories, my daydreams:

later when he opened the Arc, Noah  
felt a foul draft between his eyes,  
see? Valle Inclán lights green fires,  
so that the winter bird may always sing,  
why do you complain, Beatrice d'Este  
if you have a gown made of gold?

bajaron a segar aquel verano  
los ángeles: dormían junto al pozo,  
después de la tormenta un caballito  
rojo pace en el prado azul-lunar,  
se había llenado el patio del convento  
de leones amansados y jilgueros,  
tú eres una doncella de Crotona:  
¡si no supieras que existe el Amor!  
Dufy al andar dejó huellas moradas,  
Pinki amó el huracán, la luz del bosque,  
Bucintoro, no llegues con el sol,  
no dormí aquella noche y con el alba  
llamaron a la puerta, cuando abrí  
sobre la escarcha había flor de almendro,  
la enterraron bajo un manzano enorme,  
un fragor de bambú sagrado y lotos,  
no se reconocía viendo el sol,  
se vio desnuda: ardió como una zarza

tú me entregabas lo desconocido...  
¿recuerdas aún la historia del sepulcro?  
entre el mar y las selvas de Tarquinia  
alguien abrió el sepulcro de un guerrero  
oculto desde el día de su muerte  
(etrusco noble bajo las raíces  
de almendros y olivares endulzados  
por la honda primavera de Tarquinia)  
a golpe de piqueta entraba el aire  
en aquel tabernáculo de sombra,  
de milenaria piedra resonante,  
entraba el aire y todo se mutaba  
en polvo negro y sacro que no hedía,  
se derrumbó la curva de aquel pecho,  
el cerco de la boca, la alta frente,  
la enlutecida noche de los ojos,  
hasta los brazaletes de buen oro  
se hundían en cenizas al tocarlos,  
sólo unas corrompidas vestimentas  
y una hecatombe de armas oxidadas  
quedó sobre el montón de polvo fúnebre,  
sobre las cuerdas rotas de los brazos,  
(primavera en Tarquinia sepultada)  
se marchitó la fiebre del guerrero,  
el tiempo sepultaba un lirio joven  
bajo los negros pinos,  
primavera en Tarquinia...

the angels descended to reap  
that summer: they slept beside the well,  
after the storm a red pony  
grazes in the moon-blue pasture,  
the convent's patio had filled  
with tame lions and goldfinches,  
you are a maiden of Crotone:  
if only you were not aware of Love!  
Dufy left purple footprints as he walked,  
Pinky loved hurricanes, the light of the forest,  
Bucentaur, do not alight with the sun,  
I did not sleep that night and at dawn  
they called at my door, when I opened it  
there was an almond blossom on the frost,  
they buried it under an enormous apple tree,  
the din of sacred bamboo and lotus flowers,  
it was not recognizable, looking at the sun,  
it seemed naked: it stung like a thorn

you were giving me the unknown...  
do you remember the story of the sepulcher?  
between the sea and the forests of Tarquinia  
someone opened the sepulcher of a warrior  
that had been hidden since the day of his death  
(noble Etruscan under the roots  
of almond trees and olive groves sweetened  
by Tarquinia's deep springtime)  
at the blow of a pickaxe the air entered  
that tabernacle of shadows,  
of ancient echoing stone,  
the air entered and everything was transformed  
into sacred black dust, odorless,  
the curve of that chest caved in,  
the hollow of the mouth, the high brow,  
the shrouded night in the eyes,  
even the bright gold armbands  
collapsed into ashes at a touch,  
only a few decayed garments  
and hecatomb of rusty weapons  
remained on the heap of funereal dust,  
above the torn cords of the arms,  
(springtime buried in Tarquinia)  
the warrior's fever faded,  
time was burying a young iris  
under the black pines,  
springtime in Tarquinia...



mientras arriba rasgan los arados  
pedregales ardientes, espinosos,  
mientras penetra el sol en lo más lúgubre  
de la gruta del ciclope y resuena  
el mar como una ruina en los cantiles,  
abajo, en el sepulcro descubierto,  
los ladrones de tumbas merodean,  
meten sus uñas entre las cenizas,  
rompen los vasos, buscan aquel oro  
que el tiempo no perdona

(se levanta la noche lentamente  
del lago Trasimeno, los olivos  
saben a Dios, sollozan hondos, mansos,  
bajo la luz de plata y esmeralda,  
subiremos a Gubbio en el ocaso,  
aún hay nieve y ya cuánta primavera,  
el rebaño de cabras rumia siempre  
abajo, entre las ruinas de los templos,  
abre, Noche, tus alas sobre el claustro  
de San Damiano y las torres de Assisi,  
deja en el aire el cuerpo de la Umbria,  
pobre Francesco, cuánta llamarada  
de sangre inútil, tu sayal, tus manos  
bajo un techo de estrellas temblorosas)  
tú me entregabas lo desconocido...

estás allí, remota y entrevista,  
enterrada en la tarde de septiembre  
bajo una lluvia de campanas muertas,  
bajo un monte de higueras venenosas,  
te recuerdo  
bajo una lluvia de campanas negras,  
bajo una lluvia de campanas lentas  
te arropabas las tardes del invierno,  
si posara en tus venas una mano  
sentiría la noche y sus campanas,  
cuando callas: campanas espectantes,  
si me sueñas, si esperas, te hallaré  
enterrada bajo una losa fría  
que desgastó la lluvia hecha de bronce,  
morir contigo en esta tarde única  
cantando en las murallas sonrosadas  
por las luces más frías del invierno,  
bajo una lluvia de campanas negras  
rueda la tarde como un casco de oro

while overhead the plows tear  
at the ardent, thorny, rocky earth,  
while the sun seeps into the most desolate  
corner of the Cyclops' cavern and the sea  
resounds like a ruin collapsing on the rocks  
below, in the exposed sepulcher,  
the grave robbers prowl about,  
claw through the ashes,  
smash the urns, searching for that gold  
which time does not forgive

(the night rises slowly  
over Lake Trasimeno, the olive trees  
taste like God, they sob deeply, gently,  
below the silver-emerald light,  
we will ascend to Gubbio at sundown,  
there's still snow and yet so much spring,  
the herd of goats always grazes  
below, among the temple ruins,  
Night, open your wings over the cloister  
of Saint Damian and the towers of Assisi,  
leave the body of Umbria in the air,  
poor Francis, such a blaze  
of futile blood, your tunic, your hands  
under a dome of flickering stars)  
you were giving me the unknown...

there you are, distant and barely visible,  
buried in the September afternoon,  
under a rain of dead bells,  
under a mountain of poisonous fig trees,  
I remember you  
under a rain of black bells,  
under a rain of slow bells  
you wrapped yourself in winter afternoons,  
if a hand alighted on your veins  
it would feel the night and its bells,  
when you are quiet: expectant bells,  
if you dream of me, if you wait, I will find you  
buried under a cold slab  
worn down by the bronze rain,  
to die with you this one afternoon  
singing on the walls, rosy  
from the coldest lights of winter,  
under a rain of black bells  
the afternoon rolls like a golden helmet

sobre la filigrana del asfalto  
golpeando las esquinas y las rejjas,  
serás el fuerte polen de la noche,  
el cristal de la tarde, la tormenta  
de música que Mozart compusiera  
el día de su muerte y que no oímos,  
mereces la visita de la luna,  
tienes una azotea en cada ojo,  
abres los muslos, abres las dos manos,  
tus dos pechos apuntan a la nieve,  
tu vientre es una zarza a medio arder,  
¿son ramos o racimos esos labios?  
morir sin estrujarlos qué delicia,  
verte pasar como un río colmado,  
ser ajorca en tus pies, en tu muñeca,  
no besar esos labios, no creer  
que esa boca te pertenece, es tuya  
y no racimo que se muerde y pasa,  
pasa, mujer, como una ola en lo oscuro,  
pasa, mujer, como la noche pasa,  
Amor tiene en los labios cicatrices,  
morir sin poseerte qué delicia

tú me entregabas lo desconocido,  
a qué bosques, a qué palacios altos  
me llevabas cuando nos encontrábamos,  
a qué ácido estanque, a qué palmeras,  
a qué tardes de espinos enlunados,  
a qué nave sin rumbo en la negrura,  
a qué jardín desconsolado y hondo,  
a qué terrazas...

llegaste entre las tumbas de Torcello,  
alta, con la cabeza llena de oro,  
tus pies descalzos recorrían Torcello,  
la yerba rumorosa de serpientes  
(antes de que se hundan estas islas  
—dijiste—has de cantar su pesadumbre,  
su belleza, sus sueños enterrados)  
entre tantas estatuas destrozadas  
sólo tu mármol palpitaba cálido,  
tus dos pechos gloriosos y aquel vientre  
mórbido y musical como una luna,  
y entre las torres, desde la atalaya,  
llena de capiteles y de flores,  
contemplabas la mar con calma inmensa

over the filigree in the asphalt,  
hitting corners and window grates,  
you will be the strong pollen of the night,  
the glass of the afternoon, the storm  
of music that Mozart must have composed  
the day of his death, that we never heard,  
you deserve a visit from the moon,  
you have a rooftop in each eye,  
you open your thighs, you open both hands,  
your two breasts aim up at the snow,  
your belly is a half-burned brier,  
are those lips bouquets or clusters?  
to die without pressing them, what bliss,  
to see you passing like a brimming river,  
to be a bracelet on your ankle, on your wrist,  
not to kiss those lips, not to believe  
that mouth belongs to you, it's yours  
and not a cluster that is bitten and passed by,  
it passes, woman, like a wave in the dark,  
it passes, woman, like the night passes,  
Love has scars on its lips,  
to die without having you, what bliss

you were giving me the unknown,  
to what forests, to what tall palaces  
you carried me when we used to meet,  
to what acid pond, to what palm groves,  
what afternoons of moonstruck thorns,  
what ship adrift in the blackness,  
what deep and forlorn garden,  
what terraces...

you arrived among the tombs of Torcello,  
tall, with your head filled with gold,  
your bare feet were wandering around Torcello,  
the whispering grass of snakes  
(before these islands sink  
—you said—you must sing of their sorrow,  
their beauty, their buried dreams)  
among so many shattered statues  
only your marble was beating warmly,  
your two glorious breasts and that belly,  
morbid and musical like a moon,  
and between the towers, from the lookout,  
full of columns and flowers,  
you were contemplating the sea, immensely calm

mientras ibas tejiendo con la hiedra  
una grave y bellísima corona  
que, ante mis ojos, arrojaste luego  
a la mar

fue aceitosa la noche, entre las cañas  
vimos partir sin luz la última nave,  
era el nuestro un suicidio acariciante,  
oscuridad profunda y untuosa  
de los canales muertos, las iglesias  
bizantinas con medio metro de agua,  
qué acariciante muerte, qué dulcísimas  
lámparas de la pesca en la laguna,  
Burano, San Francesco del Deserto,  
Murano, los palúdicos aromas  
de las islas, las ruinas fantasmales,  
un infinito gozo y una música  
hecha con el silencio de la mar,  
fue aceitosa la noche, entre las cañas  
vimos partir sin luz la última nave,  
toda la isla nuestra, cuánto éxtasis  
entre pagano y místico en los ojos,  
creíamos aún en la belleza,  
íbamos a enterrar la voluntad  
bajo la yerba muda de la isla

debes saberlo ahora que recuerdas:  
jamás llegará nadie a este lugar,  
aquí nos trae el mar los peces muertos  
y no hay más vida que la de las olas  
estallando en la noche de las grutas,  
soñarás una barca cada noche,  
soñarás unos labios cada noche,  
en vano escucharás junto a las rocas,  
jamás llegará nadie a este lugar,  
recorrerás las salas del convento,  
escrutarás la faz de la Diana,  
los gatos mirarán la fría aurora,  
habrá un fresco con grumos de salitre  
en la cripta, sin techo, del castillo,  
el huracán arrancará geranios,  
jamás llegará nadie a este lugar,  
jamás llegará nadie a este lugar  
y las gaviotas me darán tristeza

while you were weaving the ivy  
into a grave and exquisite crown  
which, before my eyes, you later cast  
into the sea

the night was oily, among the reeds,  
without light, we saw the last ship leave,  
suicide caressed us both,  
profound and unctuous darkness  
in the dead canals, the Byzantine  
churches in half a meter of water,  
what caresses death gave us, what sweet  
fishing lights in the lagoon,  
Burano, Saint Francis of the Desert,  
Murano, the malarial aromas  
of the islands, the ghostly ruins,  
infinite pleasure and a melody  
composed with the silence of the sea,  
the night was oily, among the reeds,  
without light, we saw the last ship leave,  
the island was all ours, such ecstasy  
between pagan and mystic in our eyes,  
we still believed in beauty,  
we were going to bury our willpower  
under the island's silent grass

you ought to know now what you remember:  
no one will ever come to this place,  
here the sea brings us dead fish  
and there's no life but that of the waves  
crashing on the night of the grottos,  
you will dream of a boat each night,  
you will dream of lips each night,  
in vain you will listen by the rocks,  
no one will ever come to this place,  
you will wander in the rooms of the convent,  
you will search Diana's face,  
cats will watch the cold dawn,  
clumps of niter will form a fresco  
in the castle's roofless crypt,  
a hurricane will rip up geraniums,  
no one will ever come to this place,  
no one will ever come to this place  
and the gulls will bring me sorrow

**“II, Venía un viento negro”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975)

venía un viento negro de encina  
sobre las uvas, hasta nuestra zarza,  
el candelabro de la tarde alzaba  
sus brazos, los fundía la cruenta oscuridad,  
la herrumbre en Piñotrera, el hálito  
fétido de las urnas,  
el bronce corrompido

(todavía debemos esperar, nos lo ordena  
el pulmón en tensión, el aire antiguo)

hay un imán inmenso dentro de la montaña  
que nos hace temblar y paraliza,  
aletea beodo cada pájaro, es tarde  
para encontrar la senda

en el anochecer que sangra,  
cubre el cielo  
la mortaja de lino morado  
de la sacerdotisa,  
la túnica granate  
del centurión

**“II, A Black Wind Was Coming”**  
– Antonio Colinas, from *Sepulchre in Tarquinia* (1975)

a black wind of oak was coming  
over the grapes, to our blackberry bush,  
the candelabra of the afternoon was raising  
its arms, the bloody darkness melted them,  
the rust in Piñotrera, the fetid  
breath of the urns,  
the corrupt bronze

(still we should wait, our tense lung,  
the ancient air orders it)

there is an immense magnet within the mountain  
that makes us tremble and paralyzes us,  
each bird flutters drunkenly, it is late  
to find the path

in the bleeding nightfall,  
the shroud of purple linen  
of the priestess,  
the crimson tunic  
of the centurion  
covers the sky

**“Homenaje a Tiziano (1576-1976)”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Astrolabio* (1979)

He visto arder tus oros en los otoños de Murano,  
en la cera aromada de los cirios de invierno;  
tu verde en madrugadas adriáticas  
y en los ciruelos de los jardines de Navagero;  
tu azul en ciertas túnicas y vidrios  
y en los cielos enamorados  
de nuestra adolescencia  
que nunca más veremos;  
los ocres en los muros cancerosos  
mordidos por la sal, en las fachadas  
de granjas y herrerías;  
tu rojo en cada teja de Venecia, en los clavos  
de las Crucifixiones  
o en los labios con vino de los músicos;  
un poco de violeta  
en los ojos maduros de las jóvenes;  
tus negros  
en las enredaderas funestas  
sobrecargadas de muerte.

**“Homage to Titian (1576-1976)”**  
– Antonio Colinas, from *Astrolabe* (1979)

I have seen your golds burning in Murano autumns,  
in the aromatic wax of winter candles;  
your green in Adriatic dawns  
and in the plum trees of Navagero's gardens;  
your blue in certain tunics and glass  
and in the enamored skies  
of our adolescence  
that never again will we see;  
the ochres on the cancerous walls  
eaten away by salt, on the façades  
of farms and smithies;  
your red in every Venetian roof-tile, on the nails  
of the Crucifixions  
or on the musicians' wine-covered lips;  
a bit of violet  
in the mature eyes of young women;  
your blacks  
in the ill-fated vines  
overburdened with death.

**“Suite castellana” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Astrolabio* (1979)**

En Castilla, la madrugada  
se alza de pinares fríos y el que pasa  
cae de rodillas en la gleba y besa  
la última luz negra en el rocío.  
Al mediodía,  
bajo un violento coro de puñales,  
danzáis, reís.  
Esferas luminosas desorbitan el día,  
fiestas hay en el aire,  
vino, caballos (rosas  
sólo en los claustros), un almendro seco  
y cipreses pelados  
como las alas de los buitres viejos  
que sólo traen desgracias.

Hay un joven herido que no olvida  
y bodas que se llevan el amor a la muerte.  
La tarde es una lágrima  
que nunca cae,  
un tiempo de rebaños, de hornos olorosos,  
una oración en labios enlutados.  
Álamos santos, álamos  
de los adioses,  
movéis en lo alto sueños sobrehumanos.

De noche, buscamos la humedad  
de huertos pobres,  
apagamos las velas y lloramos  
porque tienen los astros allá arriba  
fuegos más hermosos.

**“Castilian Suite” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Astrolabe* (1979)**

In Castile, the dawn  
rises from cold pine groves and he who passes  
falls to his knees on the land and kisses  
the last black light on the dew.  
At midday,  
under a violent chorus of daggers,  
you all dance, you smile.  
Luminous spheres exaggerate the day,  
revelry is in the air,  
wine, horses (roses  
only in the cloisters), a dry almond tree  
and bare cypresses  
like the wings of old vultures  
that bring only misfortunes.

There is a wounded young man who does not forget  
and weddings that carry love to death.  
The afternoon is a tear  
that never falls,  
a time of flocks, of fragrant ovens,  
a prayer on mourning lips.  
Holy poplars, poplars  
of farewells,  
you move superhuman dreams on high.

At night, we search for the dampness  
of poor orchards,  
we douse the candles and weep  
because the stars up above have  
more beautiful fires.

**“El camino cegado por el bosque”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Astrolabio* (1979)

Créeme, no es piedad lo que siento por ti,  
ahora que estoy lejos, sino un recuerdo herido.  
Por ti y por el camino cegado por el bosque  
que no pude seguir aquella noche joven,  
perfumada y abierta como el cuerpo de un pino.  
No es piedad, sino una sensación de fracaso,  
de suave y entrañable dolor que nunca cesa.

Fuiste buena conmigo en mis días de entonces;  
me diste cuanto soy: este veneno dulce  
que me impulsa a luchar contra el mar, contra el tiempo  
y contra el mismo amor de los que bien me quieren.  
No es piedad, aún te busco en la noche perfecta  
deseoso, sediento de tus colores ácidos,  
de tus estrellas frías, de tus ramas y ríos  
helados tras los cielos del más hermoso invierno.

Te lo digo dolido y con los ojos húmedos,  
aunque la mente esté segura, serenada:  
no te pude tener más cerca, pues mis labios  
llegaron a rozar tus nieves, tu horizonte.  
No es piedad, créeme; sólo sé que una tarde  
avanzada, profunda, descendí de aquel monte  
puro y purificado como un fuego de junio.  
Creí volver a ti definitivamente  
y me encontré el camino cegado por el bosque.

**“The Path Blocked by the Forest”**  
– Antonio Colinas, from *Astrolabe* (1979)

Believe me, it's not pity that I feel for you,  
now that I'm far away, but a wounded memory.  
For you and for the blinded path through the forest  
that I couldn't follow that young night,  
perfumed and open like the body of a pine tree.  
It's not pity, but a feeling of failure,  
of soft and deep pain that never ceases.

You were good with me during those days;  
you gave me what I am: this sweet venom  
that drives me to fight against the sea, against time  
and against the same love of those who love me.  
It's not pity, I still look for you in the perfect night,  
longing, thirsty for your acid colors,  
for your cold stars, for your frozen branches and rivers  
beyond the loveliest winter's skies.

I tell you this in pain and with damp eyes,  
although my mind is sure, serene:  
I couldn't have you any closer, for my lips  
came to brush your snow, your horizon.  
It's not pity, believe me; I only know that one afternoon,  
late, profound, I came down from that mountain  
pure and purified like June's fire.  
I believed I would return to you forever  
and I found the path blocked by the forest.

**“Como las llamas de las lucernas antiguas”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Astrolabio* (1979)

Como las llamas de las lucernas antiguas  
se encienden a lo lejos, sobre el mar, los humildes  
faroles de las barcas.  
Tu flauta abre el corazón de la noche en la isla.  
Su sonido, enajenado y pleno, derrota las palabras,  
asciende con la yerba a las cinturas.  
Si de espaldas al mar vagamos por los campos,  
tu flauta acrecienta en nuestra sangre  
el poderoso curso de las lunas;  
es su sonido una robusta lanza  
que atraviesa el cadáver de la Sombra.

En los muñones de los sarmientos,  
en los candelabros torturados de las higueras,  
en las llagas abiertas de los hombres,  
posan su alivio y pasan  
entrelazadas noche y melodía.  
Y una ansiedad y una pasión que vienen  
de otros tiempos, descubren  
ojos tras las cancelas,  
sonrisas en los labios demudados,  
creencias en los mitos del amor y la guerra,  
primitivos ensueños  
que agiganta a lo lejos, un instante,  
el asesino ojo de los faros  
y que el inmenso espacio  
repleto de agua negra  
devora.

**“Like the Flames of Old Chandeliers”**  
– Antonio Colinas, from *Astrolabe* (1979)

Like the flames of old chandeliers  
the humble lights of boats on the sea  
light up in the distance.  
Your flute opens the heart of the night on the island.  
Its sound, estranged and full, defeats words,  
rises with the grass until waist-high.  
If with our backs to the sea we wander through fields,  
your flute grows in our blood  
the powerful course of the moons;  
its sound is a robust lance  
that cuts through the Shadow’s cadaver.

On the stumps of grape vines,  
on the tortured candelabra of fig trees,  
on the open wounds of men,  
night and melody place their relief  
and pass by intertwined.  
And an anxiety and a passion that come  
from other times, uncover  
eyes behind the gates,  
smiles upon distraught lips,  
belief in the myths of love and war,  
primitive reveries  
that the murderous eye of the lighthouses  
enlarges in the distance, an instant,  
and which the immense space  
full of black water  
devours.



**“El río de sombra” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Astrolabio* (1979)**

Este camino bordeado de abrumadoras higueras  
centenarias,  
¿a dónde me conduce en esta noche incierta?  
El calor derrotó a las palomas sobre el trigal  
y sólo alza la noche su gigantesco vuelo  
sobre las frescas, innumerables, cascadas de las  
parras,  
sobre el ojo sin esperanza de la perdiz enredada  
y herida en una trampa del claro del bosque,  
sobre el sudor de los caballos.  
La sombra crea un río dulcísimo de sombra,  
un hondo curso entre los troncos negros  
que trazó una mano de inspiración divina.  
Una espada enorme me persigue  
en cada anochecida, desgarrar el cielo, silba  
endemoniada entre las ramas.  
Pero hoy estoy seguro; adiós, agotadoras,  
insistentes insidias de la vida.  
Seguro estoy en el curso insondable  
del camino nocturno, entre las infinitas  
líneas que alguien trazó hace ya siglos.  
Un curso en el que sólo me confunde  
el enfermizo, sublime aroma  
de una procesión de rosales segados.

**“The River of Shadow” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Astrolabe* (1979)**

This path bordered by breathtaking centenary fig  
trees;  
where is it leading me on this uncertain night?  
The heat overpowered doves on the wheat field  
and the night only raises its gigantic flight  
over the fresh, innumerable, cascades of  
vines,  
over the hopeless eye of the partridge, tangled  
and wounded in a trap in the forest clearing,  
over the horses' sweat.  
The shadow creates a sweet river of shadow,  
a deep course among the black trunks  
traced by a divinely-inspired hand.  
An enormous sword pursues me  
each nightfall, tears the sky, whistles  
demonically among the branches.  
But today I am safe; goodbye, exhausting,  
insistent deceptions of life.  
I am safe on the unfathomable course  
of the nocturnal path, between the infinite  
lines that someone traced centuries ago.  
A course on which I am mystified only  
by the sickly, sublime aroma  
of a procession of severed rosebushes.

**“En lo oscuro” – Antonio Colinas  
de *Astrolabio* (1979)**

Buenas noches, deseo.  
Traes flores sobre la frente y vienes caminando  
por la orilla del mar, salpicada  
bajo la verdinegra membrana del crepúsculo.

Buenas noches, y pasa.  
Pasa para que quede este instante que tuvo  
sabor a olvido,  
a sueño consumido  
o a fuego inconsumado.

Buenas noches, deseo,  
mientras todos los huertos se conmueven  
con la frescura de los laureles mojados  
y brillas, a lo lejos, como brasa en lo oscuro.

**“In the Dark” – Antonio Colinas  
from *Astrolabe* (1979)**

Good evening, desire.  
You wear flowers on your head and you come walking  
down the seashore, splashed  
under the dark green membrane of twilight.

Good evening, and pass.  
Pass by so that this instant may last,  
with its taste of oblivion,  
of ravaged dreams  
or unconsummated fire.

Good night, desire,  
while all the orchards shiver  
with the coolness of the wet laurels  
and you shine from afar, like a fiery coal in the dark.

**“Cabeza de la diosa entre mis manos”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Astrolabio* (1979)

(654 a. de C.)

(A Barry Flanagan, *in memoriam*)

Barro oscuro conforma tu figura  
que mantiene el tiempo detenido.  
Ser hombre o ser dios hoy es lo mismo:  
sólo un poco de tierra humedecida  
a la que un sol antiguo dio dureza,  
hermosura mortal, luz muy madura.  
Pero lo que ha durado esta cabeza  
frágil que ha contemplado tantos siglos  
la muerte de los otros, que en mis manos  
descansa, se hace fugazmente eterno.

En su rostro moreno cae la noche,  
cae mucha luz de ocaso en sus dos labios  
y cae un día más de nuestra vida.  
Misterio superior este de ver  
cómo su cuerpo acumula siglos  
mientras el nuestro pierde juventud.  
Misterio de dos barro que han brotado  
de un mismo pozo y bajo un mismo fuego.  
Mas sólo a uno de ellos concedió  
el Arte la virtud de ser divino  
y, en consecuencia, no morir jamás.

**“Head of the Goddess in My Hands”**  
– Antonio Colinas, from *Astrolabe* (1979)

(654 B.C.)

(To Barry Flanagan, *in memoriam*)<sup>129</sup>

Dark clay forms your figure  
that keeps time still.  
To be man or to be a god today is the same:  
just a bit of dampened earth  
that an ancient sun once hardened,  
mortal beauty, very mature light.  
But what has endured this fragile head  
that has contemplated for so many centuries  
the death of others, that rests  
in my hands, is made fleetingly eternal.

On her dark face the night falls,  
ample light from the sunset falls on her two lips  
and one more day falls from our lives.  
This superior mystery of seeing  
how her body accumulates centuries  
while ours loses youth.  
Mystery of two clays that have sprung  
from the same well and under the same fire.  
But only to one of them did Art  
grant the virtue of being divine  
and, consequently, of never dying.

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<sup>129</sup>Barry Flanagan (1941-2009) was a Welsh sculptor who made a bronze sculpture based on “Cabeza de la diosa entre mis manos,” which he donated to the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Ibiza. Colinas describes the sculpture as “un torso con la cabeza al lado apoyada sobre el libro de versos” [“a torso with its head resting on a book of verses”] (*Sobre el contemplar* 49).

**“I” de *En lo oscuro* (1980)  
– Antonio Colinas**

Arrastrado por un gran vendaval de estrellas,  
regresaba el barco aquella noche  
bajo la luna nueva  
y parecía  
como si el silencio,  
la extensión de las aguas,  
sellaran nuestros labios,  
nos hicieran extraños y presentes  
el uno para el otro.

Yo extraviado en la luz de la noche de estío  
sin saber que tú entonces  
me soñabas mirándome  
en la luz de la luna.

**“I” from *In the Dark* (1980)  
– Antonio Colinas**

Drawn by a strong gale of stars,  
the boat was returning that night  
under a new moon  
and it seemed  
as if the silence,  
the vastness of the waters,  
sealed our lips,  
made us strange and present  
to each other.

I, lost in the light of the summer night,  
without knowing that you  
were dreaming of me then, gazing at me  
in the light of the moon.

**“IV” de *En lo oscuro* (1980)  
– Antonio Colinas**

¡A qué extremos de placer  
y de desolación  
me llevó aquel gesto  
de mi mano!

Os juro que tan sólo, en un instante,  
llegué a poner mis dedos temblorosos  
en los labios de amor,  
en los labios del mundo,  
en la ceniza  
y en la nada.

**“IV” from *In the Dark* (1980)  
– Antonio Colinas**

To what extremes of pleasure  
and of desolation  
did that hand gesture  
take me!

I swear to you that only, in one moment,  
I came to place my trembling fingers  
on the lips of love,  
on the lips of the world,  
on ashes  
and on nothing.

**“VII” de *En lo oscuro* (1980)  
– Antonio Colinas**

En el silencio azul  
del valle  
y en la blanca quietud  
de los cuerpos,  
nuestros ojos maduran  
vuelos hacia la boca de la carne,  
vuelos hacia la boca de la tierra,  
la negra comuni3n  
de la muerte.

**“VII” from *In the Dark* (1980)  
– Antonio Colinas**

In the blue silence  
of the valley  
and in the white stillness  
of our bodies,  
our eyes mature,  
turned towards a mouth of flesh,  
turned towards the mouth of the earth,  
the black communion  
of death.

**“Canto X” – Antonio Colinas, de *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983)**

Mientras Virgilio muere en Brindisi no sabe que en el norte de Hispania alguien manda grabar en piedra un verso suyo esperando a la muerte. Éste es un legionario que, en un alba nevada, ve alzarse un sol de hierro de entre los encinares. Sopla un cierzo que apesta a carne corrompida, a cuerno quemado, a humeantes escorias con oro en las que escarban con lanzas los bárbaros. Un silencio más blanco que la nieve, el aliento helado de las bocas de los caballos muertos, caen sobre su esqueleto como petrificado. «Oh dioses, ¿qué locura me trajo hasta estos montes a morir y qué inútil mi escudo y esta espada contra un amanecer de hogueras y de lobos? En la villa de Cumas un aroma de azahar madurará en la boca de una noche azulada y mis seres queridos pisarán ya la yerba segada o nadarán en playas con estrellas». Sueña el sur el soldado y, en el sur, el poeta sueña un sur más lejano, mas ambos sólo sueñan en brazos de la muerte la vida que soñaron. «No quiero que me entierren bajo un cielo de lodo, que estas sierras tan hoscas calcinen mi memoria. Oh dioses, cómo odio la guerra mientras siento gotear en la nieve mi sangre enamorada». Al fin, cae la cabeza hacia un lado y sus ojos se clavan en los ojos de otro herido que escucha: «Grabad sobre mi tumba un verso de Virgilio».

**“Canto X” – Antonio Colinas, from *Night beyond the Night* (1983)**

While Virgil dies in Brindisi he does not know that in the north of Hispania someone waiting for death orders one of his verses engraved in stone. This man is a legionary who, one snowy dawn, sees an iron sun rise from among the holm oaks. A north wind blows that reeks of rotten flesh, of scorched horns, of smoldering ashes in which the barbarians dig with their spears for gold. A silence whiter than snow, the frozen breath on the mouths of dead horses, fall over his skeleton as if petrified. “Oh gods, what madness brought me to these mountains to die and how useless are my shield and this sword against a dawning of fire and wolves? In the town of Cumae the scent of orange blossoms will ripen in the mouth of a blue night and my dear ones will still walk on the cut grass or swim at starry beaches.” The soldier dreams of the south & in the south, the poet dreams of a more distant south, but both only dream, in the arms of death, of the life of which they dreamed. “I don’t want them to bury me under a muddy sky so that these grim sierras burn my memory to ash. Oh gods, how I hate war as I feel my enamored blood drip onto the snow.” Finally, his head falls to one side and his eyes pierce the eyes of another wounded who hears: “Engrave a verse from Virgil on my tomb.”

**“Canto XXV” – Antonio Colinas, de *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983)**

¿Pero es que ya no va a volver aquel tiempo  
en que desenterraban sonámbulas estatuas?  
Naturaleza entonces mordía en la soberbia  
de los hombres –las ruinas– con zarzas, con cicutas.  
Todo el Mediterráneo lo cercaban ciudades  
en ruinas, y rebaños instauraban la paz  
en el mundo de nuevo. Todo era signo y símbolo:  
aquel poco de griego borroso sobre un mármol,  
los surcos que trazaba una reja forjada  
con lanzas derrotadas, el rayo que caía  
en el centro del pecho de un pastor casi niño.  
Los arados sacaban estatuas mutiladas  
de entre aquellas cenizas de la guerra y la mar.  
Estatuas, ¡tan deformes!, instauraban el orden  
en el mundo, a la luz silente de las lunas.  
Firmamento astillado en ruinas despertaba  
deseos del más allá, renunciaba a la ciega  
ambición, la constante amiga de las armas.  
¿Pero es que ya no va a volver aquel tiempo  
de la resurrección, el campo a ser fundado?  
¿Mañana con qué estatuas enterradas podrás  
resucitar el Sueño, la ilusión de los hombres?  
¿Pastarán, esta vez, los rebaños encima  
de cemento, de acero? ¿Qué dioses o qué espíritu,  
qué fuego transmitir a las nuevas antorchas?  
Y, sin embargo, aún entreveo esperanza  
recordando una isla: cipreses, ruiseñores  
sembrando la armonía en un valle de Grecia.

**“Canto XXV” – Antonio Colinas, from  
*Night beyond the Night* (1983)**

But will the time when they used to unearth  
sleepwalking statues never return?  
Nature, in those days, would bite into the pride  
of men –the ruins– with brambles and hemlocks.  
All the Mediterranean was ringed by cities  
in ruins, and flocks brought about peace  
in the world again. Everything was sign and symbol:  
that bit of faint Greek on a piece of marble,  
the furrows traced by a plow wrought  
with defeated spears, the ray that fell  
on the center of a shepherd’s chest, almost a child.  
The plows pull mutilated statues  
out from those ashes of war and the sea.  
Statues, so deformed!, brought about order  
in the world, in the silent light of the moons.  
Firmament shattered into ruins awakened  
desires for the beyond, renunciations of blind  
ambition, the constant friend of weapons.  
But will the time of the resurrection, of the founding  
of the field, never return?  
Tomorrow with what buried statues could they  
resurrect the Dream, the hopes of men?  
This time, will the flocks graze  
on cement, on steel? What gods or what spirit,  
what fire can be passed on to the new torches?  
And, still, I can glimpse hope  
as I remember an island: cypresses, nightingales  
sowing harmony in a valley in Greece.



**“Canto XXVIII” – Antonio Colinas,  
de *Noche más allá de la noche* (1983)**

Aquí, en la estación de un país extranjero,  
esta noche del siglo XX clava las ruinas  
de la última guerra aún sobre mi rostro.  
Silban desesperados, a lo lejos, los trenes  
y estoy solo debajo de una lluvia de acero.  
El dolor se abre paso en mí como una náusea,  
o como quemazón inmensa en este mundo  
acuoso, y tanta soledad ya me arrastra,  
me escarnea a través de un cosmos espinoso.  
Yo sé que en otro sitio también será de noche,  
sacudirá el viento las acacias floridas  
de un camino que lleva hasta algún cementerio,  
relámpagos que alumbran negras flores de plástico,  
los ojos apedreados de una perra angustiada,  
un cuerpo, o sólo nieve, sepultado en la tierra.  
Llueve fuerte y mi mente está como el andén  
desierto, electrizado, de esta estación del norte.  
Llueve, llueve en el mundo sobre todas las manos  
de bronce, entre los muslos del cemento, en los labios  
orinados del muro, sobre cada cristal  
quebrado entre los dientes del hombre de este tiempo.  
Y ya el húmedo viento devora los silbidos  
de ese último tren que verá tras los montes  
un alba más cansada, una luz putrefacta.  
Ese viento muy húmedo que me trae el hedor  
de los trapos quemados, de cubos de basura,  
que produce allá arriba, en los cables de alta  
tensión un arpeggio de dolor y de muerte.

**“Canto XXVIII” – Antonio Colinas,  
from *Night beyond the Night* (1983)**

Here, in the station of a foreign country,  
this twentieth-century night still hammers the ruins  
of the last war on my face.  
The trains, in the distance, whistle desperately  
and I am alone under a rain of steel.  
Pain opens up in me like nausea,  
or like an immense burn in this watery  
world, and so much loneliness already drags me,  
mocks me through a thorny cosmos.  
I know that somewhere else it is also night,  
the wind shakes the blooming acacias  
on a path that leads to a cemetery,  
lightning illuminates black plastic flowers,  
the stoned eyes of an anxious dog,  
a body, or only snow, buried in the earth.  
It rains heavily and my mind is like the deserted,  
electrified platform of this northern station.  
It rains, rains in the world on all the bronze  
hands, between the cement thighs, on the urine-stained  
lips of the wall, on each broken pane  
of glass among the teeth of this era's man.  
And now the damp wind devours the whistles  
of that last train, which will see behind the mountains  
a wearier dawn, a putrid light.  
That wet wind that carries the stench  
of burned rags, of trash cans,  
that produces up above, in the high-tension  
cables, an arpeggio of pain and death.

**“Canto XXXV” – Antonio Colinas, de  
*Noche más allá de la noche* (1983)**

Me he sentado en el centro del bosque a respirar.  
He respirado al lado del mar fuego de luz.  
Lento respira el mundo en mi respiración.  
En la noche respiro la noche de la noche.  
Respira en labio el labio el aire enamorado.  
Boca puesta en la boca cerrada de secretos,  
respiro con la savia de los troncos talados,  
y como roca voy respirando en silencio,  
y, como las raíces negras, respiro azul  
arriba en los ramajes de verdor rumoroso.  
Me he sentado a sentir cómo pasa en el cauce  
sombrió de mis venas toda la luz del mundo.  
Y, al fin, yo era un gran sol de luz que respiraba.  
Pulmón el firmamento, contenido en mi pecho,  
que inspirando la luz va espirando la sombra,  
que renueva los días y desprende la noche,  
que inspirando la vida va espirando la muerte.  
Inspirar, espirar, respirar: la fusión  
de contrarios, el círculo de perfecta consciencia.  
Ebriedad de sentirse invadido por algo  
sin color ni sustancia, y verse derrotado  
en un mundo visible por esencia invisible.  
Me he sentado en el centro del bosque a respirar.  
Me he sentado en el centro del mundo a respirar.  
Dormía sin soñar, mas soñaba profundo  
y, al despertar, mis labios musitaban despacio  
en la luz del aroma: «Aquel que lo conoce  
se halla callado y, quien habla, ya no lo ha conocido.»

**“Canto XXXV” – Antonio Colinas, from  
*Night beyond the Night* (1983)**

I've sat down in the middle of the forest to breathe.  
I have breathed fire-light by the seaside.  
The world breathes slowly in my breath.  
At night I breathe the night of night.  
The lip breathes on a lip the enamored air.  
Mouth covering the closed mouth of secrets,  
I breathe with the sap from felled trunks,  
and like a rock I keep breathing in silence,  
and, like black roots, I breathe blue  
above in the branches of murmuring green.  
I've sat to feel how all the light of the world  
passes through the shadowed course of my veins.  
And, in the end, I was a great sun who breathed.  
Lung is sky, contained in my chest,  
inhaling light and exhaling shadow,  
that renews day and sheds night,  
inhaling life and exhaling death.  
Inhale, exhale, breathe: the fusion  
of opposites, the circle of perfect consciousness.  
Intoxication of feeling invaded by something  
without color or substance, and seeing oneself defeated  
in a visible world by invisible essence.  
I've sat in the middle of the forest to breathe.  
I've sat in the middle of the world to breathe.  
I slept without dreaming, but slept soundly  
and, upon waking, my lips murmured slowly  
in the light of the aroma: "He who knows  
is quiet and he who speaks still has not learned."

**“Égloga bárbara” – Antonio Colinas, de  
*Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

Entre el robledal con aullidos  
y el pinar lleno de cantos melódicos,  
hoy ha caído derrotada mi vida.  
Cuánto tiempo de ansiedades inútiles,  
cuántas horas perdidas y oscuras,  
cuántos sueños machacados entre la razón y el corazón.

Y precisamente ahora que estoy en el centro del mundo,  
ahora que es tan fácil vencer en las batallas  
y que me rodea un amor infinito,  
este viento áspero y bravo me derrota,  
araña mi corazón con su perfume,  
y al arañarlo lo desgarrar, y sangra,  
y al sangrar toda mi vida se purifica.

Cuánta sangre discurrió inútilmente por mis venas  
y qué tarde aprendí.  
Así me lo recuerda esa fuente entre piedras  
que al manar no remueve su buen agua sombría:  
cristal sereno que refleja y aspira  
mi dolor.

Pero caído, y herido, y derrotado,  
hoy vuelvo a ofrecer mi vida a unos labios  
distantes.

Este áspero viento de aullidos y de trinos  
conducirá hasta esos labios  
mis labios,  
mi desesperación.

**“Barbarous Eclogue” – Antonio Colinas,  
from *Garden of Orpheus* (1988)**

Between the oak grove with howls  
and the pine grove filled with melodious songs,  
today my life has fallen defeated.  
So much time with useless anxieties,  
so many lost and dark hours,  
so many dreams crushed between reason and the heart.

And precisely now that I’m in the center of the world,  
now that it’s so easy to conquer in battle  
and to be surrounded by infinite love,  
this harsh and fierce? wind defeats me,  
scratches my heart with its perfume,  
and by scratching, breaks it, and it bleeds,  
and by bleeding my whole life is purified.

So much blood flowed uselessly through my veins  
and how late I learned.  
This is how that fountain among stones reminds me  
that when flowing, its good dark water doesn’t stir:  
serene glass that reflects and breathes  
in my pain.

But fallen, and wounded, and defeated,  
today I return to offer my life to some distant  
lips.

This harsh wind of howls and trills  
will lead to those lips,  
my lips,  
my desperation.

**“Para Jandro” – Antonio Colinas, de  
*Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

Nunca la vida fue tan exultante  
en cuerpo tan pequeño.  
La savia de tu noble corazón  
arrastra con su fuerza invisible  
hasta la misma luz  
en llamas  
del pinar,  
y creces como el álamo  
que cuando tú naciste  
plantamos y que ahora  
supera la azotea,  
y das paz con tu abrazo  
a tu perro feliz,  
y das vida a la paz  
del rebaño sonámbulo  
que ha encontrado la sombra más fresca  
debajo de la higuera.

Mas nunca olvidas, hijo,  
que también esta luz  
del mundo y de tus ojos,  
y la paz de este valle y de estos montes,  
poseen su medida,  
su cadencia, su ritmo y sus límites  
en la vida que empiezas,  
en tu cuerpo encendido.

**“For Jandro” – Antonio Colinas, from  
*Garden of Orpheus* (1988)**

Never was life so exultant  
in such a small body.  
The sap from your noble heart  
draws with its invisible force  
towards the same light,  
in flames,  
of the pine grove,  
and you grow like the poplar  
that we planted  
when you were born and that now  
surpasses the roof,  
and you give peace with a hug  
to your happy dog,  
and you give life to the peace  
of the sleepwalking flock  
that has found the coolest shade  
under the fig tree.

But never forget, son,  
that this light  
of the world and of your eyes,  
and the peace of this valley and these mountains,  
also possess their measure,  
their cadence, their rhythm and their limits  
in the life that you are beginning,  
in your glowing body.

**“La noche de los ruiseñores africanos”**  
– Antonio Colinas, de *Jardín de Orfeo*  
(1988)

Cayó el alma en el pozo de la noche  
y desde abajo, desde lo más hondo,  
ve la luna de junio madurar  
en la brisa, que trae enloquecidos  
cantos de ruiseñores africanos.

**“Night of the African nightingales”**  
– Antonio Colinas from *Garden of Orpheus* (1988)

The soul fell into the well of the night  
and from below, from the lowest depths,  
it sees the June moon ripen  
in the breeze, which carries crazed  
songs of African nightingales.

**“A Venecia” – Antonio Colinas, de *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

Apartadme de ese cáliz rebosante de sangre verdosa,

de ese racimo de labios a punto de corromperse,  
de ese sol de oro derrotado y fundido  
entre unas brasas de mármoles y de hierros.  
Apartadme de su noche, que llena hasta los bordes  
mi corazón con sus estrellas húmedas;  
apartadme de sus dulces piedras, enfermizas  
como carne de joven moribunda.

Apartad ya de mí esa lágrima contenida,  
esa perla negra  
suspendida entre los distantes faroles que lloran.  
Alejad esas aguas del olvido  
hasta el fondo de la noche,  
esas aguas en las que flotan hielos negros,  
y que con su sal agrietan las estatuas  
y las pinturas de las iglesias desconsagradas.

Entre tanto dolor,  
entre tanto sabor a tiempo que no vuelve,  
te recordaré bajo la hoguera del crepúsculo  
como una custodia quebrada  
a los pies de los nuevos bárbaros,  
o como un ramo de narcisos  
entre las manos de las muchachas adolescentes  
que amamos sin ser correspondidos.

Apartad ya de mí esta ciudad  
como el alba y la noche la arrancan a ella  
de su tumba de aguas marinas  
para dejarla flotando en el espacio sonámbulo  
como un perfume de otros días,  
como una música de otro mundo,  
como el recuerdo de la mirada piadosa  
de aquella que nos enamoró  
hasta su muerte.

**“To Venice” – Antonio Colinas from *Garden of Orpheus* (1988)**

Take me away from that chalice overflowing with green  
blood,

from that cluster of lips just beginning to rot,  
from that golden sun, defeated and molten,  
among hot coals made of marble and iron.  
Take me away from its night, which fills my heart  
to the brim with its damp stars;  
take me from its sweet stones, sickly  
like the flesh of a dying girl.

Take from me now that suppressed tear,  
that black pearl,  
suspended between the distant, weeping lamps.  
Take those waters of oblivion away  
to the depths of night,  
those waters on which black ice floats,  
and that with its salt cracks the statues  
and paintings in deconsecrated churches.

Among so much pain,  
among so much flavor of time that will not return,  
I will remember you under the blaze of twilight  
like a monstrance broken  
at the feet of the new barbarians,  
or like a bouquet of daffodils  
in the hands of adolescent girls  
whom we love without being loved in return.

Take from me now this city  
as the dawn and the night pull her  
from her tomb of sea water  
to leave her floating in the sleepwalking space  
like a perfume from other days,  
like music from another world,  
like the memory of the pious gaze  
of that girl who kept us in love with her  
until her death.

**“El poeta” – Antonio Colinas, de *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

Quien mida y valore la existencia  
con arreglo a verdad, debe tener  
en cuenta todo aquello que madura  
y luego se corrompe.  
Suma de perfecciones  
y desesperaciones,  
el orbe gira tenso y contiene,  
por igual, vida y muerte.

Supremo testimonio del poeta  
coronado de gozo y de dolor.  
Su ojo está atento a los límites  
vacíos  
del cielo y de la tierra,  
al cíclico y fúnebre  
declinar de la Historia,  
de colmadas y extensas estaciones.

Todo dura en la vida y es eterno  
mientras el hombre no interpreta o cante.  
Para aquél que ha soñado intensamente  
arde el mundo y se agota.  
Siente la savia y siente la ceniza  
aquél que osa hablar con el Misterio.  
Llamas negras se escapan del cerco de los labios.  
Y son los labios urnas en la noche.

**“The Poet– Antonio Colinas, de *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

Whoever measures and values existence  
with the appearance of truth, should bear  
in mind all that matures  
and later rots.  
Sum of perfections  
and desperations,  
the orb turns tautly and contains,  
equally, life and death.

Supreme testimony of the poet  
crowned with joy and pain.  
His eye is attentive to the empty  
limits  
of the sky and earth,  
to the cyclical and funereal  
decline of History,  
of overflowing and long seasons.

Everything in life lasts and is eternal  
while man does not interpret or sing.  
For him who has dreamed intensely  
the world burns and dries up.  
He feels the sap and the ashes,  
he who dares to speak with Mystery.  
Black flames escape from the enclosure of his lips.  
And his lips are urns in the night.

**“En Granada (F.G.L.)” – Antonio Colinas, de *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

Una vez más me hundiré en el sueño.  
Cerraré los ojos y los labios  
para escuchar la música misericordiosa  
del agua que salta entre la nieve,  
que baja de la nieva.

No sé, acaso sea sólo sangre  
lo que salta en la nieve,  
lo que desgasta la piedra del surtidor,  
lo que respira el perfume de los jazmines.

Olvidaré las palabras de los hombres,  
el falso rumor del mundo,  
para que el labio del agua  
deje toda su música  
junto a mis tristes sienas ya con nieve,  
con otra nieve impura.

**“In Granada (F.G.L.)”<sup>130</sup> – Antonio Colinas, from *Garden of Orpheus***

Once more I will sink into sleep.  
I will close my eyes and my lips  
to hear the merciful music  
of water leaping through the snow,  
descending from the snow.

I don't know, maybe it's only blood  
that leaps in the snow,  
that wears down the rock of the fountain,  
that breathes the jasmines' perfume.

I will forget the words of men,  
the false hum? of the world,  
so that the water's lip  
leaves all its music  
beside my sad temples that already have snow,  
with another impure snow.

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<sup>130</sup>F.G.L. refers to the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936), who was born and killed in Granada.



**“Carta al sur” – Antonio Colinas,  
de *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

*Trassiera*

Cuando agua verde horade negra roca  
allá en la umbría de los avellanos  
y sonámbulo vuelva a vuestras sierras  
como el adolescente que fui un día,  
cuando el agreste trino y el sofoco  
del desvelado ruiseñor de mayo  
haga temblar la sombra de las ruinas  
y sangre herido el tronco de los pinos,  
cuando mansa y espesa la nevada  
de las flores reseca de la acacia  
caiga con su perfume en vuestras manos,  
que el tiempo se detenga,  
que la dicha en vosotros nunca pase  
y que con mi recuerdo emocionado  
arda, inagotable, una hoguera  
de estrellas fugitivas  
allá en vuestros jardines  
de amistad verdadera.

**“Letter to the South” – Antonio Colinas,  
from *Garden of Orpheus* (1988)**

*Trassiera*

When green water perforates black rock  
there in the shade of the hazelnut trees  
and when, sleepwalking, I return to your sierras  
like the adolescent that I one day was,  
when the wild trill and the sigh  
of the wakeful nightingale of May  
causes to tremble the shadow of the ruins  
and blood, the wounded trunk of the pine trees,  
when the gentle and heavy snowfall  
of the acacia’s dry flowers  
falls with its perfume in your hands,  
may time stop,  
may your own good fortune never end  
and may with my exhilarated memory  
burn, unquenchable, a fire  
of fleeting stars  
there in your gardens  
of true friendship.

**“Ocaso” – Antonio Colinas,  
de *Jardín de Orfeo* (1988)**

Sólo saber que no se sabe nada  
y que no se desea saber nada.  
(Aunque, sintiendo así, sepamos *todo*.)  
¿El muro como límite absoluto  
o lo absoluto circuyendo el alma?

Adiós, adiós, estrella de la tarde,  
que en las estrellas vienes a fundirte.  
Ya no eres grito, ni dolor, ni eres  
el verso que musita el solitario.  
Ya no eres la brisa entre los ojos,  
la santa sangre antigua del azahar.  
Viene lo negro, espejo de lo blanco.  
La luz en luz fundida da lo negro.  
La luz en luz es música muy negra  
y la expande las ondas del estanque.

Adiós, adiós, estrella del ocaso.  
Sólo eres el reflejo infinito  
de la nada infinita y misteriosa.

**“Sunset” – Antonio Colinas,  
from *Garden of Orpheus* (1988)**

Only knowing that no one knows anything  
and that no one wishes to know anything.  
(Although, feeling this way, we know everything.)  
The wall as the absolute limit  
or the absolute surrounding the soul?

Goodbye, goodbye, afternoon star,  
as you come to melt into the stars.  
You are no longer a cry, nor pain, nor are you  
the verse that the solitary man mutters.  
You are no longer the breeze between my eyes,  
the holy, ancient blood of the orange blossom.  
The black comes, mirror of the white.  
Light melted in light yields black.  
Light in light is very black music  
and the waves of the lake expand it.

Goodbye, goodbye, sunset star.  
You are only the infinite reflection  
of the infinite and mysterious nothing.

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<sup>131</sup>This bibliography is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to guide readers to all works referenced or mentioned in this dissertation. For a complete list of works by and related to Antonio Colinas, see Susana Agustín Fernández's *Inventario de Antonio Colinas* (2007). Many works published post-2007 are included in these works cited lists.

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