



TRANSLATORS' RINCÓN de TRADUCTORES CORNER



Poems from *Hasta que no haya luna*

by Alan Smith Soto

translated by
Katherine Hannula Hill

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Introduction

Alan Smith Soto was born in San José, Costa Rica, where he lived until the age of 10 when his family moved to Washington, D.C. Raised bilingually, he earned a BA in Spanish from the University of Maryland and an AM and PhD in Romance Languages, with a concentration in Spanish, from Harvard University. When he was 20, he travelled to Spain to study for a year, where he has returned ever since. Its land and people have been a constant reference in his life and poetry, as are his childhood in Costa Rica and the variegated world of his Boston neighborhood, Jamaica Plain. Professor emeritus of Boston University, Smith Soto has shared and studied Spanish and Latin American Literature all his life.

Smith Soto has published three collections of poetry: *Fragmentos de Alcantía* [Treasure Jar Fragments] (Cambridge: Asaltoalcielo editores, 1998), with a cultural grant from the Spanish consulate in Boston; *Libro del lago* [Lake Poems] (Madrid: Árdora, 2014); and *Hasta que no haya luna* [Till the Moon is No More] (Madrid: Huerga y Fierro, 2021). His translation of *Life and Death*, by Robert Creeley, *Vida y muerte*, was published in 2000 (Madrid: Árdora Ediciones). His translation and edition of a special issue of the *International Poetry Review*, *Spain's Poetry of Conscience*, was published in the Spring of 2006.

Poetry spoken and embodied on stage has been a keen interest of Smith Soto. In March and April of 2017, he directed and acted in *Tres episodios y un incendio* [Three Episodes and a Fire], a work of dramatic poetry he wrote with the Spanish poet Pilar González España. His current creative work-in-progress includes a collection of poetic pieces for the stage.

A selection of poems from his latest book, *Hasta que no haya luna*, is presented here in English translation; in them the reader finds a couple of fleeting moments in Madrid, a besieged house, an entry into town from a train window, a cafe in Jamaica Plain, with its innocent generosity, and a childhood memory that could not be taken by the waves in Costa Rica. In straightforward language, Smith Soto offers us the understanding that the ordinary is extraordinary.



About the translator

Katherine Hannula Hill is a writer, translator, and editor. Born and raised in Seattle, she has lived in cities across the U.S. as well as Spain and France. She holds a B.A. from Boston University in Hispanic Language and Literature and French Language and Literature and attended the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and the Université Stendhal de Grenoble. After working as a language assistant in a public school in A Coruña, Spain, Hannula Hill spent ten years in the U.S. working with children in foster care. She has published short stories in anthologies and journals and has been a contributing writer and editor for a book and magazine designer.

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I am the last old woman in this house,
the school children
throw rocks at the windows
but not mine.
What sense does it make
to leave this place
without my feet up?
I still look at the sky
in the afternoons
under the swallows.
I'll resist the complaints
and demands
from landlords surrounded by flies;
I'm tougher than they imagine.
If you're reading this letter
it's because I've died
in this very spot.



The Generous Waiter

If I don't stop his pouring
he'll fill my glass with cognac
and
kill me.



In the bookstore,
with books both old and new,
each shelf
displays a small sign.
I approach one and read:
used poetry.



This is the back of the city; no one sees it, aside from the passengers on
this train, but, incredibly, a window with curtains appears,
a human being lives there, a residence, a home, someone who has
reached the limits of brick, someone who doesn't care about the last
uneven street, when coming out into the cold morning, without cat or newspaper
rolling around, I see a fleeting lamp, a bald or sad man, in the
evening soot, where there is no one, absolutely no one.



Daybreak on Centre Street

How wonderful is my neighborhood baker,
blond, ruddy, with a seven-month belly
beneath his domed, floured apron.
His light eyes,
when I arrive first thing in the morning,
have been open for a long time,
sentinels atop his round shoulders, his elbows, forearms,
the rosy bases of his fleshy palms
that have kneaded the dawn.



I go to my innocent neighborhood's cafe,
where the worst that
can happen to an unsuspecting customer
is death.
Cacophony of various races
in The Daily Bread,
Sundays
in Jamaica Plain, my sweet
slice
of Boston,
where not long ago
miracles arrived on streetcars
and by the lake
sirens sang.



Waves

Hello, pretty girl by the sea!
Your lace, whiter than snow,
falls to the sand
when you come to undress,
I don't know which whisper will detain you
before you dress yourself in green hours
and return from where you came.



Out To Sea

I'm sure
when I go to the sea,
for there's no higher certainty
than its being,
no distinction more
dark and delicate
than when my knees
scan its infinity
like two cautious
hunters.
In an instant
my back and sorrow coincide,
and then my fall
falls with me
and my hands note
nothing
I swim
dividing
its powerful loin.



Man and Wood

And: coordinating conjunction,
nail.



The Hammock

In the purple
shadows
I sway
among the voices
of family who,
on the sand,
contemplate the sea.
The toasted husks,
dark, cracked,
cover the ground
beneath the black
branches.
Now and then,
a blue crab
hobbles, quick,
towards the waves.
It smells like suntan lotion,
like green coconut
opened by the
sure slash of the machete.



Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner

Disponibles en/available at: <http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/en/translation-corner>

1. RT/TC 001 (2019). "A Letter of Federico García Lorca to his Parents, 1935". Author: Federico García Lorca (Spain); Translator: Christopher Maurer; Genre: Letter.
2. RT/TC 002 (2019). "Like a Night with Legs Wide Open". Author: José Alcántara Almánzar (Dominican Republic); Translator: Luis Guzmán Valerio; Genre: Short Story.
3. RT/TC 003 (2019). "In the Parks, at Dusk" and "I Only Think of You". Author: Marina Mayoral (Spain); Translator: María Socorro Suárez Lafuente; Genre: Short Story.
4. RT/TC 004 (2020). "The Guide through Death" and "The Fat Lady". Author: Guadalupe Dueñas (Mexico); Translator: Josie Hough; Genre: Short Story.
5. RT/TC 005 (2020). "The Case of the Unfaithful Translator". Author: José María Merino (Spain); Translator: Erin Goodman; Genre: Short Story.
6. RT/TC 006 (2020). "The Guerrilla Fighter" and "May as Well Call it Quits". Author: Albalucía Ángel Marulanda (Colombia); Translator: Daniel Steele Rodríguez; Genre: Short Story.
7. RT/TC 007 (2020). "Miguel Hernández' Speech to His Companions in the Ocaña Jail". Author: Miguel Hernández (Spain); Translator: Constance Marina; Genre: Speech.
8. RT/TC 008 (2020). "On the Road to Houmt Souk". Author: Soledad Puértolas (Spain); Translator: Francisca González Arias; Genre: Short Story.
9. RT/TC 009 (2020). *Rincón de Traductores / Translators' Corner – Volume 1: Compilation 2019-2020*. Various Authors; Various Translators.
10. RT/TC 010 (2020). *Waiting for the Revolution: Cuba, the Unfinished Journey* (excerpt). Author: Gustavo Gac-Artigas (Chile); Translator: Andrea G. Labinger; Genre: Chronicle.



11. RT/TC 011 (2020). “A Bad Girl”. Author: Montserrat Ordóñez (Colombia); Translator: Clara Eugenia Ronderos; Genre: Short Story.
12. RT/TC 012 (2020). “Claudia and the Cats”. Author: Ivanna Chapeta (Guatemala); Translator: Lindsay Romanoff Bartlett; Genre: Short Story.
13. RT/TC 013 (2021). *Song of Being and Nonbeing*. Author: Santiago Alba Rico (Spain); Translator: Carolina Finley Hampson; Genre: Poetry.
14. RT/TC 014 (2021). “Christmas Eve in the Hills of Jaruco”. Author: Robert F. Lima Rovira and Robert Lima (Cuba/USA); Translator: Robert lima; Genre: Chronicle.
15. RT/TC 015 (2021). *Three Poems*. Author: José Luis García Martín (Spain); Translator: Claudia Quevedo-Webb; Genre: Poetry.
16. RT/TC 016 (2021). *A Manifesto for reading* (excerpt). Author: Irene Vallejo (Spain); Translator: Erin Goodman; Genre: Essay.
17. RT/TC 017 (2021). *Parallel 35* (three excerpts) and “The Dead Woman”. Author: Carmen Laforet (Spain); Translator: Roberta Johnson; Genre: Chronicle/Short Story.
18. RT/TC 018 (2021). “Torn Lace” and “Native Plant”. Author: Emilia Pardo Bazán (Spain); Translator: Francisca González Arias; Genre: Short Story.
19. RT/TC 019 (2021). *Rincón de Traductores / Translators’ Corner – Volume 2: Compilation 2020-2021*. Various Authors; Various Translators.
20. RT/TC 020 (2021). *Three Poems*. Author: Julia Barella (Spain); Translator: Sarah Glenski; Genre: Poetry.
21. RT/TC 021 (2021). *Five Galician Songs*. Author: Emilio Cao (Spain); Translator: Robert Lima; Genre: Poetry.
22. RT/TC 022 (2022). “The KIO Towers”. Author: José Luis Castillo Puche (Spain); Translator: Douglas Edward LaPrade; Genre: Poetry.
23. RT/TC 023 (2022). “One Hundred Cornfields of Solitude”. Author: Melanie Márquez Adams (Ecuador); Translator: Emily Hunsberger; Genre: Chronicle.
24. RT/TC 024 (2022). *Eight Poems*. Author: Luis Alberto de Cuenca (Spain); Translator: Gustavo Pérez Firmat; Genre: Poetry.
25. RT/TC 025 (2022). *Pilgrimage to Santiago (1610)*. Author: Diego de Guzmán (Spain); Translator: George D. Greenia; Genre: Chronicle.



26. RT/TC 026 (2022). *Short stories from Ábrete sésamo*. Author: Clara Eugenia Ronderos (Colombia); Translator: Mary G. Berg; Genre: Short Story
27. RT/TC 027 (2022). *Rincón de Traductores / Translators' Corner – Volume 32: Compilation 2021-2022*. Various Authors; Various Translators.
28. RT/TC 028 (2022). “Carabanchel Blues”. Author: Lorenzo Silva (Spain); Translator: Kevin Gerry Dunn; Genre: Short Story.
29. RT/TC 029 (2022). Poems from *Under Leonardo's Wing*. Author: Clara Janés (Spain); Translator: Ana M. Osan; Genre: Poetry.