

Poems

MANOLO PADORNO

HINDU NEIGHBOUR

You that live next to my bazaar,
said the hindu shopkeeper to me the other day
you that see how crammed with things
it is —it's almost impossible to
move, I don't know now how to hang
things up—, I'm tremendously worried, he said,
about something that I'd like

you in fact to make clear to me: when
you go past the bazaar,
d'you see anything?, Everything there is?
All I've got? By choosing me
—I thought— being you're neighbour, I said,
you want to know for sure
what you really sell:
its sound does not correspond.

THE INDIAN MERCHANT'S BAZAAR

That shop in fact
always sold something. When the town
slept it turned out that he,
the indian, would go and open up. Then
one said: *a ship must have arrived.*
For after a while, as expected,
taxis with tourists came. They'd get down.
They'd enter the open bazaar
and then he'd sell them *something.*

They, said the indian one day as
he walked along Las Canteras, *buy*
what they dream.

They take
what they dream: they never
see the bazaar empty:
that's my business.

INDIA, INDIA

India, India, church window that floods
only during the day, while the daytime
zodiac marked peasant sleeps, lonely
ploughs the night, sows in the dark,
scythes with open eyes, under the sun
and there at midday flows powerful
the forming stone, every day
the vessel and its metal watery
on the sea's edge that it crosses,
the bobbing branch sinks, compact
the barefooted girl drinks it,
the ray of fire goes slow,
but its gradual pace well-endowed
with persuasion, to which came
the surrounding morning light,
the palm grove, the beatific cow
(that returns), the rain spread in sheets
over the geometry of space,
the reclining table, submerged
in fermenting luke-warmness,
the object pours out its strength
to survive among the gods
of light, in the dissolved landscape
over such a long needed journey;
that ending hunts out
some placeless date
till meeting always, in the bay
the yellow tree open-armed
India, India, your flame was dawning.

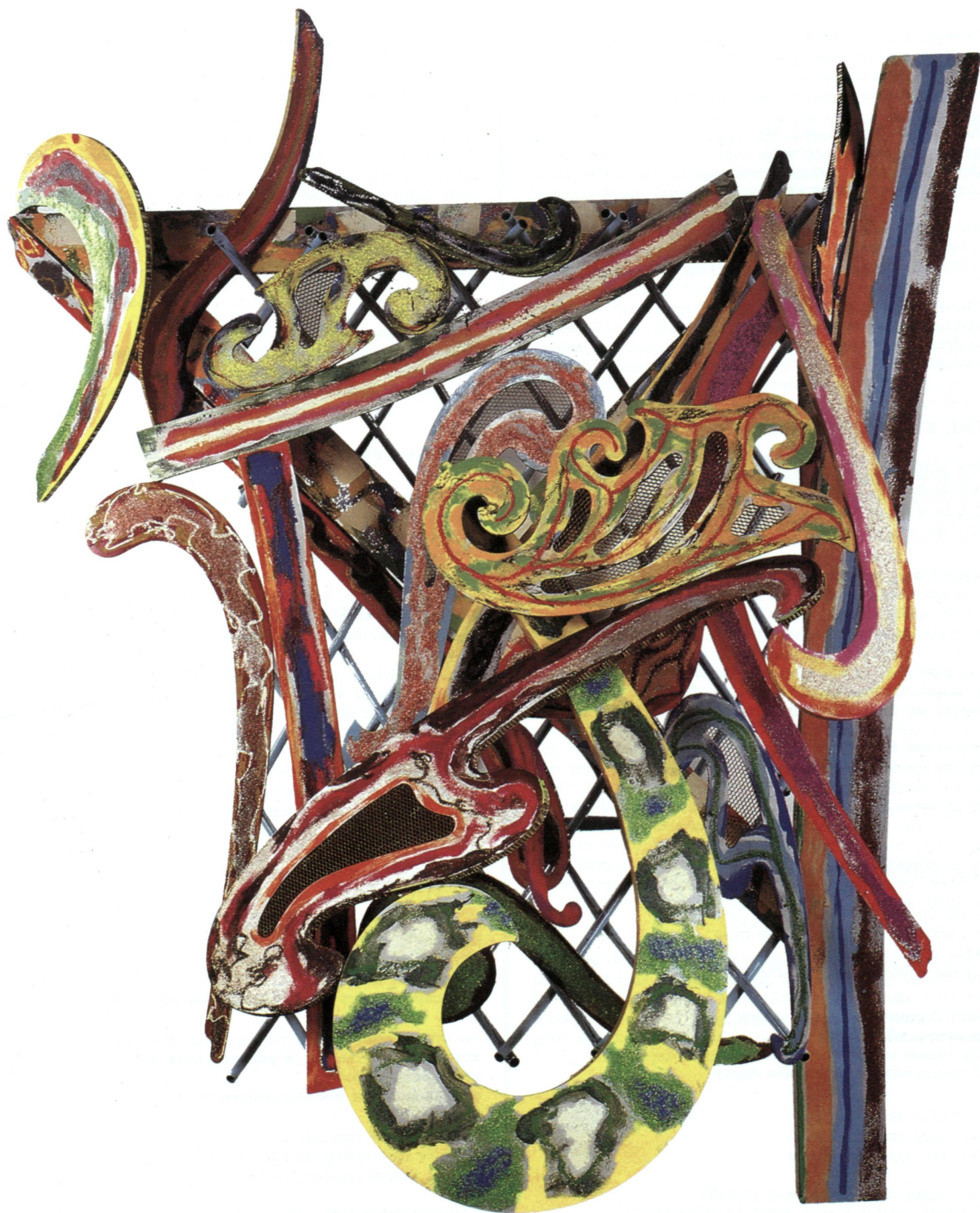
THE WESTERNIZED HINDU

The westernized hindu goes and looks
at the bottom, sees it against the light,
weighs it, holds it, values the contents
and, professionally, prices it.

He puts a price on the visible invisible,
he, the only one that can value
a different, copious merchandise, souvenir
of some islands on the way to the continent.

He prices it. He knows what he's up to.
The only one who does when he holds an
object in his hands and sees it.

He's a merchant. He knows about that
when contemplating the world, he alone
decides what the invisible is worth.



Frank Stella. Ram Gangra. 1978. Indian Bird Series. By Kind permission of the artist.

THE HINDU OFFERS A DRINK

Nowadays it's known for sure
what ware is bad, that good stuff
stands out on the table,
staring you out: *a way of showing them.*

The hindu knows it well. He
knows he's only got to sell
cheap pure gold, precious stone
trinkets, rose coral necklaces.

But he also knows, since always
(whether his goods are worthless or not)
that's false: and him its merchant too.

He opens his shop wide,
and the tourist arrives in haste
to drink up memory.
And he downs it.

THE STROLLING INDIAN

The indian that strolls along the beach
this orange twilight has
a slow walk, is crest-fallen, far away
as if he walked elsewhere.

Where? In a never ending landscape.
A landscape with such a leafy smell
that it spills the trees leaves
as it gradually penetrates light.

The light falls on the sea and mourns,
it spreads the rumour all around
cleaves the spice, pours the essences.

The indian that strolls along the beach
returns suddenly to reality
goes down the ramp,
walks asleep, disappears.

THE INDIAN BAZAAR

In the shop there's everything: both visible
and invisible: the indian deals in it.
What is seen and unseen.
It's the hindu bazaar of Albareda Road.

When I passed it by, the indian
asked me what I saw.
The bazaar is full of objects,
of merchandise, *but it's also empty.*

It's full of things people
see, fancy, buy, take away.
The real object of illusion.

The indian closes his bazaar at night
and goes out for a walk along Las Canteras
(along the shore of the Ganges)
really out there.

THE SEA'S BASKET

The hindu merchant, smartened up
dressed european style, on purpose
opens the bazaar very early in the morning,
by the Mercado del Puerto. He beholds,

head on, infinity, the prolonged quay,
a huge bridge, the horizon's line,
of transparent stone,
that dawn brings ready made over the sea.

A taxi draws up; gently
a foreign couple alight:
they gaze at the objects.
First in.

This morning, they've no idea
how much the indian will knock off the price.
They go away taking the water
in the sea's basket.

THE SOUVENIR

The hindu traded in all goods diligently
there's nothing he won't sell in the day;
maybe it's a gleaming fish, or
a fake mother-of-pearl bird.

Shop of wonders, misty bazaar by the sea
(Under the wave), it's offering
a patient clay Buddha on the shelf;

each item where it should be,
aromatic sandal wood,
rough silk, the thread should be visible.
The indian's at the door. He sees

a stray tourist, in a hurry.
He stops him; his charm takes him in:
he'll guide his future uncertainly.

THE CREMATORIUM BY THE SEA

The hindu only sells an invisible
elephant, and framed too, next
to the cow, the figuring cloud;
landscape emerges out of the religious river,

the crematorium, with fresh smouldering wood
already, where the dog is going to gnaw at
the remains of ashes;
erect complacent Buddha conjures

an arm out of thin air, under
the tulle (concealing essence) and
spilling annual roses opens his hand.

Canarian hindu that walks
in the sunlight of Las Canteras, open, chisel
away the plight of kindred roses.

THE GURU GOES BEYOND THE GATES

Window of many colours that slowly melts
the hindu handles it every day
on his house front, square on
with the light that morning brought.

The monastic hindu, man of lime,
head of the parrish, double lattice
of the Puerto de la luz; the coloured
glass offering disintegrates.

The Isleta lying in its low bed, port
of the Atlantic Ocean, ledge
along which people run, it shouts

silence in every corner, open to
the sea, this sea-breezy morning
the guru goes out beyond the gates.

NAKED

I don't know what seeing hardly at all means.
Seeing almost nothing.

Not even hearing something, seeing
something: nothing. Not even

being indian, to be from India;
to see nothing, to cleanse myself, to see

in absolute darkness
where nothing is visible, nothing

that can't be seen, emptiness
would then seem to see something, something

in the foggy river, the day
unconscious habit

I'm almost (of) that religion.
Naked. I almost see something.

Something that is invisible,
slowing coming through the shadows.

BIOBIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON MANUEL PADORNO

Manuel Padorno was born in the Canary Islands in 1933. Self-taught. As a writer he sets on a "new" course of lyrical narrativity; he develops his "poetical structures" in analogy, that together with precision, "perfection" of verse and a self-critical attitude, lead him to create a unique and personal oeuvre. In 1962 he is runner up to the *Premio Adonais* (a national poetry prize); in 1990 he is *Premio Canarias de Literatura*, (Canarian Community Literary Prize), and *Premio Nacional Pablo Iglesias* in 1991. He lives in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Published poetry: *Oí crecer las palomas*, 1955; *A la sombra del mar*, 1963; *Pape Satán* (brief anthology), 1970; *Coral Juan García*, 1977; *Una bebida desconocida*, 1986; *El naufrago sale* (that comprises three books of poetry): *Una bebida desconocida* (2nd Ed.), *El animal perdido todavía* and *En absoluta desobediencia*, 1989; *El hombre que llega al exterior*, 1990; *El nómada sale* (anthology 1963-1989), 1990; *Desnudo en Punta Brava*, 1990; *Una aventura blanca*, 1991 and *Égloga del Agua*, 1991 and a 2nd Ed., in 1992, corrected and extended.

Padorno, since his youth a clear exponent of the spirit of his times, a marginal poet of Spanish literature, is a nomad of Europe's cultural periphery. He was a member, in post-war Canaries, of an avant-garde group, with the painter Manolo Millares and the sculptor Martín Chirino; he went to Madrid with them. From the beginning, with *A la sombra del mar*, a break-through, he builds an Atlantic insular *thelos*, European, rooted in the dimension of myth, in the "religious" object, and in the culture of his times; as elements the appear, amorous and erotic desire for an oceanic man, the metaphysics of light and a determined incursion into the territory of the invisible. A poet whose language is tense and bold, his writing not only tells what he knows but also what he "doesn't know, what he hasn't experienced, what he ignores, what can't be seen". He tries to make the invisible transparent, to "extend" the reach of silence. "Poetry always tries to leap into the void; a reasonable infinite vertigo, says the poet", to cross the boundary. To enter the depths, to cut open the lucid body and go forth into the world, to reach the other side. The exterior world. To breathe the invisible. To know its secret. Poetry brings something different, from over there beyond. Words that are hewn out of analogy. "To extend silence. Something that slowly begins to be heard, to be seen, the morning's tree of light, the fleshy body of water".

Égloga del Agua, his last published book, is a good example of that long mental journey, with a different vision, jubilant and lithe where, in María Zambrano's words, "one can breathe the virginal, limpid, pure waters of creation". That great breath of joy, whose epiphany the poet records in his notes, "The empty content".