

“In That Luminous Darkness”: The Poetry of Vicente Pascual Rodrigo

WILLIAM WROTH

And these stones.
How much love did they already waste?
In wanting to be pebbles.¹

There are a few poets who don't wear the mask. They present little or no outer persona to the world, their urgency and honesty is too great for such pretenses. One is reminded in their work of the words of the Japanese poet Ryōkan (c. 1758–1831): “If you don't write of things deep inside your own heart/ What's the use of churning out so many words?”² One is also reminded of death poems of Zen monks, poignant last words when none of the rest of it matters. The work of such a rare poet as Vicente Pascual Rodrigo mirrors these deep concerns. It deals not only with death but encompasses a universe of being and becoming in which we all live and die and love, as the title of the book that includes the poem above suggests: *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada* (“To Life, to Death and to my Beloved”).

In this essay I want to introduce the reader to the work of a Spanish poet who, although highly regarded in his native land, is little known in the English-speaking world. At a time when much poetry is self-concerned, topical, or mundane—or worse, lacks meaning or means of access, Vicente Pascual Rodrigo's work is refreshing in its contrast to more superficial verse and refreshing in the sense of revitalizing—a refreshment to the spirit and the soul. In Pascual's work one may find a teaching which contemplates the most elemental questions of life, love, and death—yet it is neither didactic nor sectarian. His verse does not give final answers to these questions—for who can presume to do so?—but vividly presents them to the reader. Through his evocative and musical language he communicates these timeless human issues which concern all of us regardless of language or culture.

Vicente Pascual Rodrigo was both poet and painter. He was born in 1955 in Zaragoza, Spain. He studied at the Escuela de Artes of Zaragoza and at the Escuela de Bellas Artes of Barcelona and held his first solo painting exhibition in 1971. From 1970 to 1988, he worked with his brother Ángel Pascual Rodrigo in the two-man collective, La Hermandad Pictórica. After travels to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India in 1974 and 1975, Pascual established his



Through the Nothing Glass. Courtesy of Joël Dézafit

own studio in Campanet, Mallorca. In 1992, he moved to the United States and lived there until 2003 when he moved back to Spain. He died in Zaragoza in 2008.

His work is held in many public and private collections in Spain and the United States.³ In 2009 a major retrospective exhibition of his paintings was mounted in Zaragoza, accompanied by a catalogue raisonné of 240 pages.⁴ This catalogue includes, in addition to scholarly essays on his work, a selection of 45 of his poems. In 2006 his book of poems and paintings, *Las 100 vistas del Monte Interior: En Recuerdo de los Antiguos Locos*, was published by the Government of Aragón, in collaboration with Olifante Ediciones de Poesía. It was followed in 2007 by *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada: Cancioncillas y cancionejas* (Papeles de Trasmoz, Olifante Ediciones de Poesía). A third book, *De la Nada Nada Viene*, was published in 2010 (Colección Veruela Poesía de Olifante).

His book *a la Vida, a la Muerte y mi Bienamada* has a prologue by the renowned Spanish poet José Corredor-Matheos (winner of the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 2005), and was edited by another leading Spanish poet, Ángel Guinda. Concerning Pascual, Guinda suggests that “Vicente Pascual, in addition to being an ineffable painter, has always been a worthy and exemplary secret poet. His paintings enclose an atmosphere of profound and transcendent lyricism. The secret of his poetry was only revealed when his precarious physical health obliged him to paint with words, leaving us poems of exquisite simplicity, depth and spirituality.”⁵

The power and beauty of his verse places Pascual within the great tradition of Spanish poetry. José Corredor-Matheos, in his introduction to *a la Vida, a la Muerte y mi Bienamada*, favorably compares his verse to that of the sixteenth-century Carmelite friar, San Juan de la Cruz:

The vision of the visible world, and, if I may say so, of the invisible—which in poetry must always be made visible in one way or another—and the tremor and glow of his verse have the flavor of the poetry of San Juan de la Cruz: “Like that doe among the crags. / Such is/ the lullaby of my beloved.”⁶ But we know that the great mystic poet, one of the most sublime of world literature, is part of a long tradition of understanding poetry as a manifestation of a sacred feeling, relating, on some level, with Sufism. . . .

One can also see influences from other maestros of the past century, such as the sparing lyrics of Juan Ramón Jiménez, or Antonio Machado’s powerful elegy on the execution of Federico García Lorca. Yet in Pascual’s work, as Corredor-Matheos suggests, there is a quality that transcends nationality, a spiritual directness that goes to the heart of the matter. Pascual found sustenance in several religious and aesthetic traditions and expressed it in both his visual work and his poetry. In the introduction (which he titled “Obligatory Warning”) to his first book, *Las 100 vistas del Monte Interior*, he wrote in typically self-deprecating manner about the variety of influences which inform his work:

I have copied the Pre-Socratics, the Neo-Platonists and the songs of the Native Americans. . . . I have imitated the Taoists, the Hindus; I have drawn upon those, like Rumi and Nizāmī, who understood the coherent beauty of the formulations of Sufism. I have imitated the Spanish Carmelites, the Fideli d’Amore, the medieval Rhenish mystics. . . . ⁷

The range of sources he enumerates here suggests the depth of his devotion to the inner search for understanding, for knowledge, for a path that would draw closer to God. His spiritual search began in earnest in the early 1970s when he lived among traditional peoples in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan

whence he embarked on a lifelong devotion to study of the spiritual traditions enumerated in his statement above: Greek philosophy and Neo-Platonism, Taoism, Hinduism, Sufism and medieval and later Christian mysticism.

He was equally inspired by the oral and material expressions of indigenous peoples. In a preface to the catalogue for a 1994 exhibition of his paintings, he wrote of his admiration for the Tuaregs of Africa, the Native Americans, and the Mongolians, whose artistic expressions have

shaped my work for the last few years . . . what arouses my interest is not the customs of any particular ethnic group, but the universal element which they have in common. This is what produces an echo in my being and rebounds in a form of expression which is shaped by my artistic development, a European education, by a set of experiences and memories. As Basho might have said: “I do not follow the ancient nomads, I am looking for what they were searching for.”⁸

Clearly he was searching for and trying to express in his work the “universal element” which all these traditions, appearing so varied on the surface, share in common.

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His painting during a career of more than thirty years went through a slow process of change as he gradually shed reliance on the exterior world of objects and landscapes, simplifying his vision, yet at the same time maintaining a consummate mastery of forms and colors at their most elemental levels. In the 1994 preface cited above he wrote: “my paintings have been stripped of the veil, the landscape’s forms which covered them.”

This process of essentialization also took place in his poetry. It is the verbal expression of the changes taking place within himself. The gradual deepening of his understanding of the nature of reality and the place of human beings in this world found expression in his verse. For Pascual poetry could not be a mental game or shallow self-revealing: his words hit home because they are real.

Although made of words, poetry—like painting—must communicate that which is beyond words. How is this possible? Poetry performs this magic through the combination of *meaning* and *sound*. Meanings such as those conveyed in Pascual’s verse raise questions unanswerable by rational thought—otherwise poetry would not differ in any significant way from prose discourse. Sound is the form and the means by which meaning is conveyed: the music of the poem is redolent with meanings. Here we say meanings because poetry is heightened language that embodies levels of significance that take the reader or listener beyond rational thought. The music of the poem evokes feelings in

the heart of the reader, feelings that in turn evoke meanings because they come as words. To reach the heart, such music must come from the heart. Pascual summed it up thus: “*Ab Intra Ad Intra.*” The translator and scholar Bill Porter (Red Pine) noted regarding Chinese poetry: “The original meaning of the Chinese word for poetry (*shih*) was ‘words from the heart.’”⁹

Words from the heart of the poet to the heart of the reader. In Pascual’s work, heart must be understood in a deeper sense than merely the place of the emotions. The heart in many religious traditions is the center of the being and as such is the locus where understanding takes place. Understanding, knowledge in a full sense, must of course include the emotions. “Know thyself” means to know fully one’s own heart. For the poet, words from the heart bring forth something deeper than surface concerns or the superficial ego, and thus they have a transformative power. Vicente Pascual wrote the following concerning the act of painting, also applicable to his poetry:

Art makes sense precisely because man has the need to free himself from the ego which restrains him and the world which fragments him. Through creation, he exteriorizes what he loves or knows in order to interiorize and assimilate it through a process of objectivation.¹⁰

The creative process for him was the expression of what he loves and knows, and its re-assimilation for both himself and for the reader or viewer: *ab intra ad intra.*

* * *

Pascual through the medium of words provides the means to escape from the tyranny of words, of language itself. In our everyday world words tend to have univocal meanings. They have precision, yes, but that very quality can limit us to the mundane, the practical, the socially agreed-upon meaning. To escape the tyranny of words through multi-vocal meanings is for Pascual a means to approach closer to the Divine, to the Nameless that is beyond names, thus beyond words.

Here Pascual frequently touches on one of the exigencies of the path of early Christian and other mystics who followed the *via negativa*: that which can be named, or defined by a name, is not the ultimate reality. The Dionysian texts, for instance, state: “And so it is that as Cause of all and as transcending all, he is rightly nameless and yet has the names of everything that is.”¹¹ This approach is found in other religions, for instance, the method called *neti, neti* (not this, not this) in Hinduism.

Vicente Pascual’s poems apply the *via negativa* to the most basic elements of the human condition: what is the meaning of life, of love, of death? What

finally is the nature and purpose of human existence? In simply-worded poems he asks these questions:

Es muy temprano
y el agua está fría.

It is so early
and the water is cold.

¿Oís mis latidos?
Pues ni aun ellos, ni aun ellos,
ni aun ellos son míos.

Do you hear my heartbeats?
Well not even they, not even they,
not even they are mine.

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Here he sets the stage in concrete terms: early morning, cold water which shocks and sets the heart beating so hard that perhaps even the reader can hear it. Then through powerful sonorous repetition, which evokes the beating heart (*Pues ni aun ellos, ni aun ellos, / ni aun ellos son míos*), he takes the reader to another level of questioning: if heartbeats are not mine, whose are they? And, if not heartbeats, then what, if anything, actually *is* mine? This leads to the deeper question: what am I finally, what is the essence of being human? Such poignant questions are evoked in concise powerful verse that reaches more directly to the heart than any prose essay could possibly do.

The cry of the one on a path toward God is often characterized by periods of absence, sometimes seen in mystical writings as periods of dryness in which the Divine seems impossibly far away and unreachable. And in other times it is expressed as a nostalgia for the lost home, the lost center that can perhaps be approached but never reached in this life. Pascual's poems often touch on this central concern:

En tu ausencia
nada encuentro.
Ni aun siquiera la nostalgia,
ni aun siquiera larga espera.

In your absence
I find nothing.
Not even longing,
nor even expectation.

Mas me han dicho lo que dicen,
lo que dicen los que saben,
que el ausente te conoce,
que te ama y que te siente.

But they have said to me what they say,
what they say, the ones who know,
is that the absent one knows you,
he loves and feels for you.

Y los sauces cómo danzan,
cuando el cierzo los encuentra.

And the willows how they dance,
when the north wind finds them.

The cause of absence may seem unfathomable, but “the ones who know”—those seekers who have traveled this way before—assure the poet that God has not forgotten him and still cares for him. One is reminded here of the Islamic saying that one must “worship God as though you are seeing Him; for even though you do not see Him, He surely sees you.”¹² This thought brings



Haukadalur, Iceland. Courtesy of Nadia Pandolfo

hope to the seeker who knows that God has not forgotten him. The poem ends with a powerful image of the vivifying effect of the Divine presence upon the soul: the “north wind” brings the willow shoots alive in joyous dancing.

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Many of Pascual’s poems are contemplations upon the Beloved, and following traditional ideas, especially in Christianity and Islam (also found in Hinduism and other religions), the human lover or spouse embodies Divine attributes. Love of another causes the individual to step out of the imperious confines of the ego, to die to the natural egocentricity of the little self for the sake of the other. The selfless love for the other reflects the love of the spiritual seeker for God. What is loved in the other in its deepest signification are his or her qualities which reflect on the human level Divine attributes. For the lover, the loved one becomes an image or embodiment of God.

This sentiment forms the core of the ancient Arabic tale of Majnūn and Laylā (best known in the version recorded by the Persian poet Nizāmī in the twelfth century). The “madness” of Majnūn (“majnūn” means “crazed” in Arabic) for his beloved Laylā (“layl” means “night” in Arabic) is an allegorical reflection of the love the seeker feels for God. Madness from the point of view of the everyday world is the “unreasoning” abandonment of the concerns of

the little self in response to the overwhelming love one feels for the other. Laylā as “night” is the embodiment of the unknowable Divine essence, ever sought by the lover.

Pascual introduces *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada* with his thoughts on the deeper meaning of the tale of Majnūn and Laylā. The association of love and death, as in many classic love stories (for instance, Romeo and Juliette and Tristan and Isolde), is found in that of Majnūn and Laylā, for finally, in spite of their burning love for each other, they can never be united in this world.¹³ On the human level this appears to be a tragedy, but their archetypal love is beyond the temporal world, as Pascual concludes: “But thankfully, there is no doubt that there above they met and loved each other in a very simple cottage, drunk in the perfume of the eternal.”

The identification of the human beloved with the Divine Beloved is a theme in many of Pascual’s poems. Both refresh the spirit “like that tree giving coolness in the desert” and both “show the way to light,” and are the source of “love, joy and peace”:

Como ese árbol
que en el páramo da fresco

Like that tree
which gives coolness in the desert.

Como ese claro
que a la luz abre camino,
en un bosque muy sombrío

Like that clearing
which in a dark wood
shows the way to light.

Así es mi bienamada:
amor, dicha y reposo.

Such is my beloved:
love, joy and peace.

Pascual does, however, make clear the distinction between the two levels of love, Divine and human:

No penséis en disparates
cuando digo Bienamado,
del espíritu es que hablo.

Do not think it’s nonsense
when I say Beloved.
it is of the spirit that I speak.

Y si digo bienamada,
es de ella de quien hablo.
Es de ella, sólo de ella.

And if I say beloved,
it is she of whom I speak.
It is she, only she.

Other poems directly concern crucial issues of life and death:

Dime tú, anciana muerte.
¿Eres alba?, ¿eres ocaso?
Y la muerte va y me dice:
Eres tú quien lo decide.

Tell me, honored death.
Are you dawn? Are you sundown?
And death comes and says to me:
You are the one to decide.

Me puse a reír,
me puse a temblar.

And I began to laugh,
I began to tremble.

Here are deceptively simple musings on the nature of death: is it the final end or the beginning of something, perhaps unknowable, but new? And the response of death is to hand the question right back to the poet: *Eres tú quien lo decide*. This in turn evokes an equivocal response, simultaneously laughter and fear. There is no easy answer to the question posed here, but rather a response that we can all identify with: who has not given thought to what will happen after death? This question is made more poignant by the fact that the poem was written shortly before the poet died. He was faced more immediately and vividly with the question than many of us are, we who prefer to ignore it until it can no longer be ignored.

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Pascual's work is clearly inspired by the great spiritual traditions in many religions : Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, American Indian and others. Immersion in these traditions and understanding of what they share in common played a necessary role in his maturation. He came to understand from them that the purpose of life was not to search for material gain or worldly accomplishments, but to embark upon a quest to find deeper understanding of what it means to be human. He saw both his painting and poetry not merely as art forms, but as practices having a larger meaning, a way of understanding the meaning of life. Thus for him these exterior expressions have foremost an interior purpose. They add a form and a leavening to that inner alchemy so essential in the search for self-knowledge. The first quoted poem above ("Es muy temprano. . .") perhaps echoes Buddhist ideas about the lack of reality of the material being: we are not identified with this body, nor even with the very life of it: the beating heart.

This self-naughting applies equally to the process of poetic inspiration, to the very source of the poem:

Ay, de quién, yo me pregunto.
¿De quién son estos mis versos?
¿De quién son si es que son ciertos?
Siendo entonces sólo un eco.

O, whose verses, I ask myself,
whose are these verses of mine?
Whose are they, if they are true?
For my verses are only an echo.

Of what are the verses “only an echo”? As poets and mystics in all traditions have said over the centuries, inspiration must come from something deeper than the human ego. Poetry thus inspired expresses the giving up of the ego, the dying to the world that every spiritual path requires.

In some poems Pascual finds his inspiration directly in a tradition or a sacred text:

<p>Lo vacío se llena, los indoctos conocen, el pecho se dilata. En esa oscuridad luminosa. Negra pero hermosa, como cantan los cantares.</p>	<p>The empty fills itself, the ignorant know, the breast opens up. In that luminous darkness. Black but beautiful, as the Songs sing.</p>
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Here the poet poses a series of seeming contradictions: how can the empty fill itself or the ignorant know or the darkness be luminous? Conundrums such as these are found in many spiritual paths, Zen Buddhism for instance, or in writings of Christian mystics. Speaking of the “eternal fountain,” San Juan de la Cruz writes: “I know all light shines from it,/ Though it is night.” He also speaks of “Silent music/ Resounding solitude” (*La música callada/ La soledad sonora*).¹⁴ Such are the paradoxes of the spiritual path, and in this poem Pascual suggests an answer to them with a profound image from the Song of Songs: “I am black but beautiful” (Cant. 1. 5), which expresses the mysterious nature of darkness, the unknowable dark night: how can darkness which is without discernible qualities be beautiful? The answer lies in the last image he proposes: *esa oscuridad luminosa*, an image that finds echoes in Christian mysticism. We ponder what it is that could make the darkness luminous, and perhaps realize it is an image for the unmanifest Godhead which contains in potential all qualities not yet in created discernible form.

It may also lead to addressing the unknown within us, the unrealized potential of one’s own soul which contains the whole universe: “The universe within us;/ and we a drop of dew.”¹⁵ Here we can also refer to Pascual’s statements regarding his painting, equally applicable to his poems. The transformative power of the work affects not only the creator but also the person who sees a painting or reads a poem:

As a reflection of that process of internal alchemy . . . the finished picture will have accomplished its purpose for the artist, but according to its perfection, the work will, like an echo, arouse a memory of the archetypes in the receptive viewer.¹⁶

The viewer will benefit in function of the spiritual depth of the work and his own contemplativity. . . .¹⁷



Coat Tails © Sarah Hadley

What is the meaning for the artist or poet of “that process of internal alchemy”? It is an inner transformation that goes beyond self-observation in the sense that it is an active process, a purification and a transcending of the exterior ego, which is subject to both self-delusion and the delusions of the world. The first step is to observe dispassionately one’s own faults and limitations, one’s own forgetting. For this to have permanence, as Pascual suggests in the following poem, there is the need for active vigilance:

Y este ego.
¡Cómo se hincha! Cuánto manda!

Cuando olvida.

And this ego.
How it puffs itself up! How much it
demands!
When it forgets.

Finally the poet is concerned with the end result of the process of inner alchemy that leads to self-knowledge:

Que mis huesos se evaporen
en el aire muy inmenso.
Que mis carnes alimenten
muy menudas criaturas.

May my bones vanish
in the immensity of air.
May my flesh be food
for the smallest creatures.

Y ojalá que este romero
en muriendo siempre, encuentre
el sendero de retorno.

And may this pilgrim
by always dying, find
the path of return.

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In this powerful meditation on impermanence and self-naughting, he first dispenses with attachment to the physical body. Then in a brief prayerful stanza he encapsulates the essence and final purpose of spiritual practice: dying to the things of this world—even those as intimate as bones and flesh—he prays will lead to the path of return. In another writing he speaks of *el camino de retorno del exilio* (the path of return of the exile), the wandering pilgrim who has been exiled from his true home in the world of archetypes and must now seek a way to return. These thoughts have resonance with the Buddhist idea of liberation from suffering, from the endless round of birth and death in this world, but in fact they are central to the spiritual path found in Christianity and many other traditions. For the poet and painter his craft is the means through which he may find the path of return: “Art, all art, is above all a means to know ourselves and to realize in the heart what we have fleetingly intuited, or have mentally discerned, of that place from which we were exiled.”¹⁸

Here he addresses the great spiritual and existential question posed in the third poem quoted above: death in this sense must be a dawn, not a sundown. By inviting us to embrace the “luminous darkness,” the poet encourages us to open our hearts and set aside the mask. His invitation is the beginning of the journey, the search for the path of return.

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Sources of the poems:

Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Es muy temprano . . .” Previously unpublished.

Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “En tu ausencia . . .” *De la Nada Nada Viene*, (Colección Veruela Poesía de Olifante, 2010), 68.

Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Como ese árbol . . .” *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada* (Olifante Ediciones de Poesía, 2007), 36.

- Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “No penséis en disparates . . .” *Vicente Pascual 1989/ 2008: Opusculum*. (Diputación de Zaragoza, 2009), 238.
- Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Dime tú, anciana muerte . . .” *De la Nada Nada Viene*, 30.
- Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Ay, de quién, yo me pregunto . . .” *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada*, 37.
- Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Lo vacío se llena . . .” *Las 100 vistas del Monte Interior* (Gobierno de Aragón & Olifante Ediciones de Poesía, 2006), XCVII.
- Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Y este ego . . .” *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada*, 53.
- Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Que mis huesos se evaporen . . .” *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada*, 52.

NOTES

1. Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Y estas piedras. / ¿Cuánto amor gastaron ya? / En queriendo ser guijarros.” From *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada* (Zaragoza: Olifante Ediciones de Poesía, 2007), 50.
2. *Dewdrops on a Lotus Leaf: Zen Poems of Ryōkan*, Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, John Stevens, trans. (Boston & London: Shambala, 1993), 2.
3. Pascual’s work is in numerous international collections including The Hispanic Society of America in New York; Calcografía Nacional in Madrid; George Washington University, Washington DC; Indiana University Art Museum; Museu d’Art Modern i Contemporani, Palma de Mallorca; Museo Pablo Serrano, Zaragoza; and La Caixa, Barcelona.
4. *Vicente Pascual 1989/ 2008: Opusculum*. Zaragoza: Palacio de Sástago—Diputación Provincial de Zaragoza, 2009. Other recent exhibitions in Spain include: “Vicente Pascual: Imago Silenti,” Galería Edurne, Madrid, 2007; “No Hay Vino Si No Hay Agua,” Centro Cultural Mariano Mesonada, Utebo, Zaragoza, 2008; and “Vicente Pascual: Pinturas y Dibujos, 2000–2008, Museo Salvador Victoria, Rubielos de Mora, Teruel, Aragón, 2011.
5. Ángel Guinda, “Vicente Pascual, poeta secreta” in *Vicente Pascual 1989/ 2008: Opusculum*, 195: “Vicente Pascual, además de pintor inefable, ha sido siempre un poeta secreto, digno y ejemplar. Su obra plástica encierra una atmósfera de lirismo profundo, trascendente. El secretismo de su poesía sólo se vio roto cuando la precariedad física, que no intelectual, le obligó a pintar con la palabra, dejándonos poemas de una sencillez, hondura y espiritualidad exquisitas.”
6. Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, “Como esa corza entre riscos./ Así es/ el arrullo de mi amada.” From *a la Vida, a la Muerte y a mi Bienamada*, 40.
7. Vicente Pascual Rodrigo, *Las 100 vistas del Monte Interior*, 19. Among the Pre-Socratic and the Neo-Platonist philosophers Pythagoras and Plotinus were inspirations, especially for Pascual’s later visual work. He read Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu among Taoist works, and Hindu scriptures such as the *Rig Veda* and the *Upanishads*, as well as Zen and other Buddhist works. In Sufism he read not only the poets Rūmī and Nizami, but also the Andalusian philosopher Ibn ‘Arabi. Among the *Fideli d’Amore* he studied Dante and Guido Calvacanti and some of the Troubadours. The Rhenish mystic he was most influenced by was Meister Eckhart. Among modern writers on the world’s religions, he read Thomas Merton, Huston Smith, Frithjof Schuon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and others. Native American influences include the arts of the Plains Indians, Plains Ghost Dance songs, and the visions of the Sioux holy man,

Black Elk, as well as the Pueblo Indian cultures Pascual encountered on a visit to New Mexico in 1996.

8. Essay for his *Nómadas* exhibition catalogue. Madrid: Galería Edurne, 1994.
9. Bill Porter, *Zen Baggage* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009), 26. Bill Porter has further elaborated on the act of creation: “Poetry is not simply ‘words from the heart.’ A poet doesn’t make a poem so much as discover a poem. . . . In poetry, we go beyond ourselves to the heart of the universe, where we might be moved by something as small as a grain of sand or as great as the Ganges.” (“Dancing with the Dead: Language, Poetry, and the Art of Translation” in *Cipher Journal*, http://www.cipherjournal.com/html/red_pine.html).
10. *Nómadas* exhibition catalogue.
11. Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, eds. and trans., *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 56 (“The Divine Names,” 596D).
12. ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibrāhīm and Denys Johnson-Davies, trans., *An-Nawawī’s Forty Hadith* (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1997).
13. The connection of love and death is universal and has also its biblical roots: “For love is strong as death” say the Song of Songs (Cant. 8.6). My thanks to Mark Burrows for pointing out this connection.
14. One is reminded here of other lines by Pascual, perhaps inspired by San Juan de la Cruz: “And silence, how it roars,/ with a silent roaring” (Y el silencio cómo ruge,/ con rugido silencioso).
15. “El universo en nosotros;/ y nosotros, una gota de rocío.” *Vicente Pascual 1989/ 2008: Opusculum*, 234.
16. *Nómadas* exhibition catalogue.
17. Vicente Pascual interviewed by Agustín López Tobajas, “Conversación con Vicente Pascual” reprinted in *Vicente Pascual 1989/ 2008: Opusculum*, 69–79.
18. Tobajas, “Conversación con Vicente Pascual,” 75.