

1  
Bird Woman Of Melbourne

1. "Be simple to myself  
as the bird is to the bird"

I met her in the station foyer when looking  
out at the rain It was midnight I was reading  
Jorge Luis Borges I read a bit I stared a bit  
at the rain pouring down I was thinking about  
translation and interpreted composition  
his Spanish sonnets on the left against their  
English right-hand page so the rain sang to me  
In Jorge's silent voice and when she walked  
in under the shelter and spoke  
to the night, saying, "there are birds  
in those trees dreaming about flight  
about chirping into choir when they wake  
at first light"... because her sudden  
speech was shrouded in Jorge's singing rain  
I asked "Are you Spanish?" she said as if she

knew what I was thinking "untranslatable  
nature only sings in dreamy Spanish whether  
in moonlight or rain song or dark night elegies  
interpreted by me to you in English right now  
like new Petrarchan sonnets with some  
semi-rhyming lines among the full-  
rhyming lines make them almost-Petrarchan"

because of what she said I immediately asked  
"Would you mind if I wrote you into  
an almost-Petrarchan  
with your thoughts about birds  
being lost in translation?"

"No" she said. "But only if you're a poet."

"I'm a writer of word-rivers that make us



think of nothing in midnight moods.

My thoughts of midnight nothing are always  
poems in nature's Spanish that wake  
themselves into birdsong at first light in English  
as silently the rain becomes a word-river"

"I am Serena, Bird- Woman of Melbourne"  
she said then stepped into night  
and disappeared in the rain  
so the night was still in Spanish but  
the rain almost English and Petrarchan

Spanish dreams of birds waking in English  
(An almost-Petrarchan Sonnet  
about a bird-woman)



Serena says, the rain is just contagious  
songs of birds their wings cannot remember  
when asleep. For birds are like the members  
of a choir they cannot leave...outrageous  
when you think, they sing the silent pages  
of their dreams, mixing up December  
songs in memories of late November  
soaring out of different tunes of ages  
finding voice when flying in the sun:  
For who can know what dreams the little birds  
are wrapped-up in by rainsong-bathing wings  
when they're suspended in the trees? What fun  
is being enjoyed in hidden flights deferred  
until they shoot across the sky and sing?

Stephen Mason 2022