

Today's NYT (7Oct77) brings news that a little-known-outside-Spain poet has won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Vincente Aleixandre, 79, is great and not famous: something to think about, yes?

This has put the Bible, OT, Moses on p.1! The Moses poem is the only one reproduced in its entirety amid the three articles (p.A12). I've reproduced it here, for my conviction that it gets into Moses' mind as he contemplates death/future with ambivalent feelings, and therefore models biblical death. [Poor as my Spanish is, I know just enough to thrill to the original.]

Early in the century, A. dug deeper for spiritual waters beneath the rationalistic culture but also beneath the pseudoscientific psychoanalysis of Freud. A poet, he said, is a person who speaks for the earth [and therefore for God, Creator of heaven and earth] with forces that rise through the soles of his feet. For some 20 years, loneliness pervaded A.'s poems, the loneliness of the exile; and even his recent efforts have more yearning than fulfilment--an appropriate mood for our time, I think. Yet we need not so much his nostalgia for paradise as prayer and action toward paradise regained: ministry in the Spirit.

Another feature useful to the biblical person is the sense of limits. And always "a longing for the light," as in Moses [below]. Coming up from the "black light" of the sea with his 1954 THE STORY OF THE HEART, he as it were looks across to the Promised Land beyond death and loss, and moves through nature to humanity: "No, we aren't alone."

## A Poem by the Nobel Winner

**COMO MOISES ES EL VIEJO**  
*Como Moisés en lo alto del monte.*

*Cada hombre puede ser aquél  
y mover la palabra y alzar los brazos  
y sentir como barre la luz, de su  
rostro,  
el polvo viejo de los caminos.*

*Porque allí está la puesta.  
Mira hacia atrás: el alba.  
Adelante: más sombras.  
¡Y apuntaban las luces!  
Y él agita los brazos y proclama la  
vida,  
desde su muerte a solas.*

*Porque como Moisés, muere.  
No con las tablas vanas y el punzón,  
y el rayo en las alturas,  
sino rotos los textos en la tierra,  
ardidos  
los cabellos, quemados los oídos por  
las palabras terribles,  
y aún aliento en los ojos, y en el  
pulmón la llama,  
y en la boca la luz.*

*Para morir basta un caso.  
Una porción de sombra en la raya  
del horizonte.  
Un hormiguero de juventudes,  
esperanzas, voces.  
Y allá la sucesión, la tierra: el límite.  
Lo que verán los otros.*

**THE OLD MAN IS LIKE MOSES**  
*Like Moses on top of the mountain.*

*Every man can be like that  
and deliver the word and lift up his  
arms  
and feel how the light sweeps  
the old road dust off his face.*

*Because the sunset is over there.  
Looking behind him; the dawn.  
In front: the growing shadows. And  
the lights began to shine!  
And he swings his arms and speaks  
for the living  
from inside his death, all alone.*

*Because like Moses, he dies.  
Not with the useless tablets and the  
chisel and the lightning up in the  
mountains  
but with the words broken on the  
ground, his hair  
on fire, his ears singed by the  
terrifying words.  
And the breath is still in his eyes  
and the spark in his lungs  
and his mouth full of light.*

*A sunset will do for death.  
A serving of shadow on the edge  
of the horizon.  
A swarming of youth and hope and  
voices.  
And in that place the generations  
to come, the earth, the border,  
The thing the others will see.*

Translated by Lewis Hyde. From "Roots and Wings," an anthology of Spanish poetry, edited by Harold S. Martin, Harper and Row, Copyright 1975 by Harold S. Martin.