

## DESOLATION

Joan Alcover

I AM THE REMNANTS OF A TREE WHO YESTERDAY WAS LUSH,  
WHO SHADED THE HARVESTERS AS THEY NAPPED;  
MY BRANCHES, ONE BY ONE, BROKEN BY THE STORM,  
AND THE LIGHTNING THAT STRUCK THE EARTH SPLIT MY TRUNK IN HALF.

STUNTED LEAF BUDS TOP THE OPEN, HOLLOW  
VESTIGE OF THE TRUNK THAT'S LEFT;  
I SAW MY WOOD BURN; LIKE SMOKE TRAILS FROM A FISSURE,  
I SAW THE BEST PART OF ME INTO THE SKY DISPERSE.

BUT THE BITTERNESS OF LIFE SUCKS MY ROOTS DRY,  
AND FEELS THE LEAVES SPROUT AND THE TREE SAP RISE,  
AND HELPS ME PASS THE TIME AS I AWAIT THE CONSOLATION OF A SETTING SUN.

EACH SCAR MARKS THE LOSS OF A BRANCH:  
WITHOUT ME, NOTHING WOULD SPEAK OF THE HALF I AM MISSING;  
I LIVE ONLY TO PITY THAT PART OF ME WHICH IS DEAD.

(TRANSLATED BY JORDI TORRES)

**Joan Alcover** (Palma, 1854-1926) was a poet, essayist and politician. Together with Costa i Llobera he was one of the most distinguished Majorcan poets of the turn of the century. He published *Poesías* (1887), *Nuevas poesías* (1892), *Poemas y armonías* (1894) and *Meteoros* (1901) in Spanish, under the spell of Bécquer and Campoamor. His best poems were written in Catalan, *Cap al tard* (1909), where powerful metaphorical associations with the landscape allow him to express a deep grief after the death of his wife and two children. In *Poemes bíblics* (1918) he recreated topics from the Old Testament. His essays in *La humanització de l'art* (1904) were influential in establishing a 'Noucentista' aesthetic. His poem *La Balanguera* (with music by Amadeu Vives) was declared the official anthem of Majorca in 1996.