

Lorca, I see you

reaching

out, across

the quiet, across
storms of time
and distance,
writing, not a poem,
not a play,
but a letter—

Saluting with a sailor, you say
“This sad sailor smokes his pipe and reminisces...”

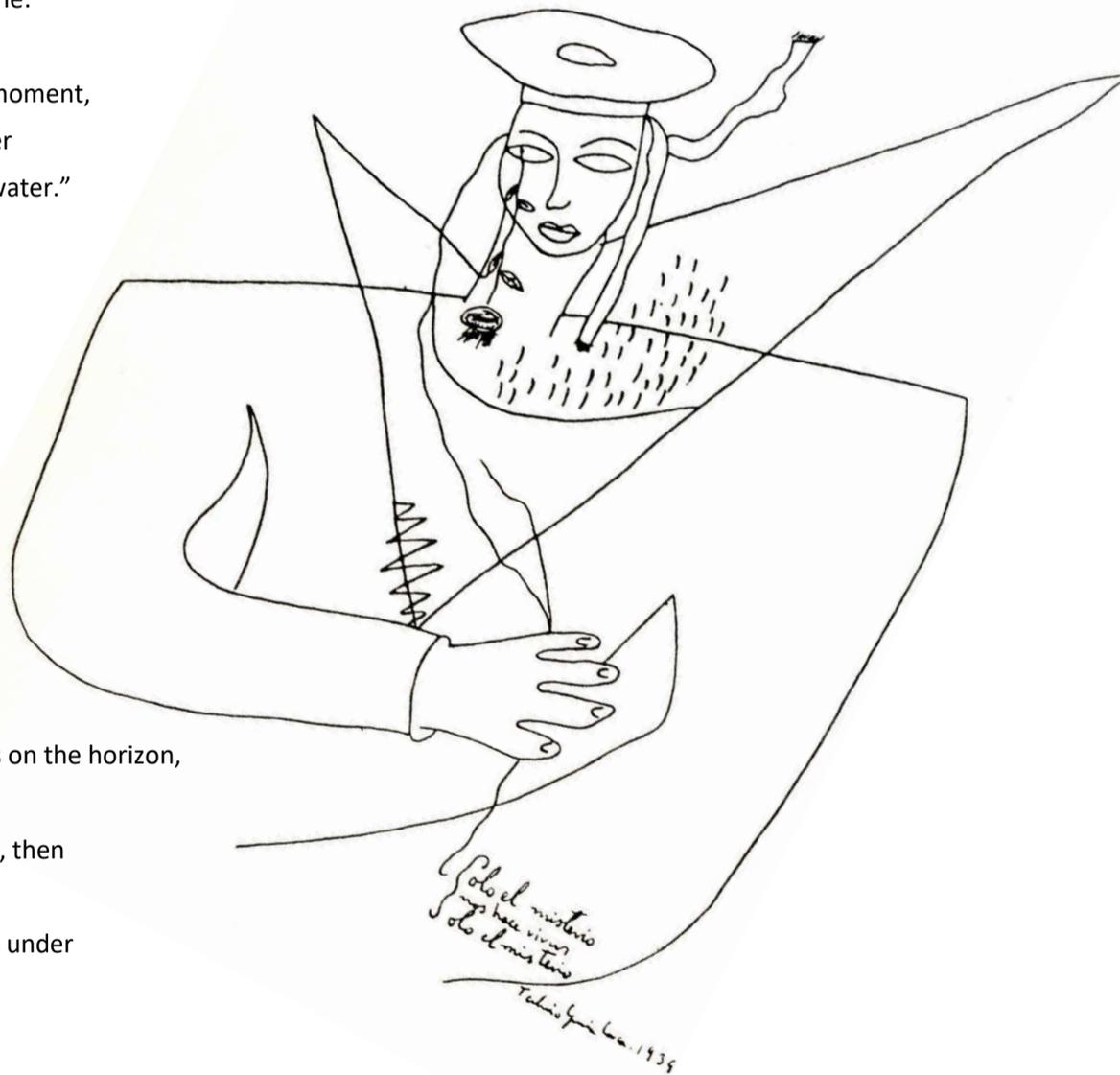
Oh, Federico,
we are sailing the shipwreck
of
what is, what has been,
what can not be undone:

“careless for a single moment,
his eyes will fall forever
to the bottom of the water.”

You warn the sailor
against
carelessness—

Don't look down
Don't look down
Don't...
Into the water,
into the deep,
fathoms
of where you are;
rather, keep your eyes on the horizon,
up, out
You can always dream, then
about tomorrow,
never wonder, what is under
the right now
of the sea
below.

And what becomes
of those who fall
in love
with
living there.



J. Rigney

Avant-Garde: A Manifesto*

The avant-garde doesn't ask for permission.
It does not have a structure, a roster or an application form.
The poetry of the avant-garde has sources but no footnotes.
It seeks no justification in academic hallways.
There are no blessings in dissertations.
And no one is saved by criticism except the critic.
The avant-garde is not seeking publication.
The avant-garde is not a synonym for cutting-edge, hip or au-courant.
Avant-garde is not an adjective one can use about oneself.
I am told that the term avant-garde was first used by Olinde Rodrigues
in 1825 to describe the artist's duty to lead the way to a new and better humanity.
I cannot verify this as a translation of the essay is not readily available.
Does your avant-garde lead anyone anywhere
other than to the wine and cheese spread at a well-funded reception?
The avant-garde does not accept honorariums.
The avant-garde does not want a job.
The avant-garde is not a container for empty aesthetic posturing.
The avant-garde lives at the forward edge of history—
not on the promontory of stacked-up art objects
held together with the mortar of academic jargon
and made toxic by radioactive, self-congratulating elitist attitudes.
The avant-garde is not a prerequisite for a Fullbright.
The avant-garde has no use for a stipend.
The avant-garde is a reconnaissance force for possibility.
The avant-garde occupies the space between the now and its then—
because that is the location where humanity loses sight of its dreams.
If the avant-garde looks anywhere but forward it will be shot in the back of the head,
according to the logic of its foundational metaphor.
When the avant-garde is dead it is given a name and included in an anthology.
The avant-garde is unconcerned with irrelevant chatter.
The avant-garde is unconcerned with courting stability.
The avant-garde is unconcerned with your tenure-track position.
The avant-garde is unconcerned with the avant-garde.

* I am not now, nor ever have been a member of the avant-garde.

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