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## Kosti's Ramón

Ramón Gómez de la Serna

Richard Kostelanetz

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## Kosti's Ramón

Ramón Gómez de la Serna and  
Richard Kostelanetz

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**Editor's Note:** We present here a small selection from Richard Kostelanetz's "Kosti's Ramón," translations of Ramón Gómez de la Serna's *greguerías*, or aphorisms. (Readers might want to compare with Cummings' aphorisms, which he called "Jottings," and which may be found complete in the *Miscellany Revised* and excerpted in *i: six nonlectures*.)

Never mind if your glass is small if the bottle filling it is large.

The human head is a fish tank whose inhabitants never sleep.

Water is so clear because it has no memory.

Such pride has the toad who sings primarily to the stars.

The pen writes only shadows of words.

How can the moon travel around the Earth without a passport?

What is lost when a mouse drags its long tail?

How terrible that a muzzled dog cannot yawn.

Even if a pencil need not be sharpened, appreciate curls.

In a piano is a harp lying asleep.

Dust on a bookshelf measures time ignored.

## From Kostelanetz's *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*, 3rd ed. (2018)

**GOMEZ DE LA SERNA, Ramón** (3 July 1888 - 12 January 1963). A Spanish writer whose specialty was a fictional aphorism (as distinct from a philosophical one) that he called *greguerias*, Gómez de la Serna was probably the most original author of his generation in Spain (whose contemporaries included José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno). Though he published essays, short stories, plays, novels, biographies, memoirs, and even chronicles of the gatherings at his favorite literary café in Madrid, he is best remembered for his thousands of *gregueria*, which he claimed to have invented around 1910: "The little girl wants to dance because she wants to fly"; "Moon and sand are mad for each other"; "Tigers are somnambulists who cross rivers of sleep over bridges of leaps"; "We should take more time to forget; thus we would have a longer life." (No one would ever confuse these with philosophical aphorisms.) Miguel Gonzalez-Gerth writes, "He opposed esthetic hierarchies, advocating instead that the artist should have complete freedom and start with everything at zero level." Though Gómez thought of *greguerias* as a combination of "metaphor + humor," Spanish--English dictionaries translate his key word as "irritating noise, gibberish, or hubbub," which is less nonsense than a kind of inspired ridiculousness.

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