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NUEVA ESCRITURA DE LAS AMÉRICAS • NEW WRITING FROM THE AMERICAS

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MANDORLA

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Partitura Rojo #1, Cherry
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MICHAEL DAVIDSON

FOUR POEMS

THE ASSUMPTION

Although I engage and populate and attend conferences
I am not without significant borders; although I require medication
and sleeping attire I am prepared to travel long distances
and uncomfortable portage; last year
I was embarrassed to find myself the afflatus
among wilted cauliflower and dour turkey roulades,
this year I can no longer observe my knees
retreating from their customary indecision
whether to stand or kneel as befits a senator
before an oil rig; last night
there were luminaries at the table, I was handed
the list and made subtle movements
known only to the waiter, music
disturbs my sleep, and I spend much of the night
banging on the wall for assurance
that these squeaks of ardor are not sighs
of the assassin spreading his mulch of anxiety
in a field of pumpkins; swelling violins,

I think I can speak for all of us, intimate
those lost bedsits and furtive afghans
in attached garages as we swell
toward the font, the misery of grout
in a tile countertop brings us back
to these shattered alveolii, golgi bodies
that we share with newts, my project this year
is to make of this hollowed creche
a more perfect assumption
that you could take with you
in a canoe, the viola signals that it's time
for them to close the casement
in a room, used only on formal occasions
of which this
has been merely a prospectus.

REBARBATIVE

I repudiate rebarbative,
a word surrounded by microbes
wanting to enter the enigma like an asteroid
and causing panic among the follicles
followed by a fluid emitted
at the first sign of coagulation,
naming is a queer connection
between a missing arm and its ghostly pain
that the word excites when encountered
in a trench or under a bridge,
I was once a whole name
in a neighborhood of partials,
I remembered their faces
from the photos attached to their chests:

you were the one "with hair"
you were known as "the diver,"
many meanings have traveled to Asia
where, refreshed, they emerge in Kensington
their lanterns
a panopticon of nostalgia, Penny Lane
a clean machine, even when the lyrics fade
the space they occupied returns in a float,
over there
we had a China you could pay people to sweep,
no can do anymore, the digital link
rejects the teahouse, Pinkerton
is applauded in Houston
while Bechtel rebuilds a bank,
we have been in this place for going on
nine hundred years and still
I get a kick out of language
it's so like

POOR YORICK

I'm in receipt of these formula missives
that washed in with the tide
and littered the littoral, provoking
troop leader to jeremiad:

ballast of comfort, bloated Mc
national simulcast soundbyte
and deregulated spam filter public auction
for public shared with...

the histories they recount have left their listeners
blanched, but the damage they inflict

on this card house of rectitude
endures in the early hours

when they play the original version,
I was once you, but you have detached
yourself from my invention
to take up the pen

and write back in a sputtering font,
pitiful spirit,
a voluntary of indignation that casts its shade
on my adamantine torso

Dead Head of the Pope, Eye of Cyclops
then came the deaf period
followed by Gainsborough
Boy with Dog,

from a distance we thought they were mangos
or shipwrecked papaya, how disappointing
to find the Duomo under scaffold
(open file, select "dust")

their subject is Rome, Imperium
among vassals and migrants
still crossing the Alps in search
of technology and healthcare,

nothing changes but the quality of rage
you anticipate in the smile
once seen among the middling sorts
where everyone has lost her accent,

first light, lost friend,
send key, find map,

the person I was born with
is walking the ramparts

with the person he was dying to become
please stay on the line
and the next representative
will amuse you.

BAD MODERNISM: THE WHITE CITY

When the rotor hums for a long time
among the gawkers
I fall into a ghost trance
and become a white man again,
nothing must penetrate this history
because nothing can be distinguished
from itself, down
on Midway Plaisance, amidst the lights,
the dark beauties offer darkness, the eyes
go there while the will stands still,
in the Hall of Dynamos
the dead warriors will return
in a language no one remembers,
they have a stall in the Pavilion of Silence,
the ears go there
searching for treaties, tales of the elders,
from up here
the land is all parcels
like one of the new paintings,
nothing penetrates this illusion, prose
covers the brown earth
and in the hum of its scroll

can be heard a crowd of the visitors
clamoring at the entrance
with their tickets
to the white city. ☒

JEROME ROTHENBERG

NUEVE POEMAS / ANTOLOGÍA

EL VIAJE ENTRE VERANOS

Para Robert Kelly y Octavio Paz

disolución de sus nombres
dos ciudades

ocultas en los labios de ella, un
polvo atemorizado

y la parte de mi ojo
que aún ve
mira la mañana, esta
luz verde

a través de la cama.
La montaña nos deja.

Estremecimientos. Pienso
en

París, blanca
agua

y negros árboles. La
sostengo a ella cerca.

Dormimos: el
movimiento

entre poemas
es la mitad de mi vida

la otra mitad
sus voces.

Un pensamiento. Un nervio
separado del sueño,

forzando un pasadizo,
llueve

contra la puerta ulterior.
La forzamos.

Extraños permanecemos
desconociendo

en la casa de un extraño.
Somos

desconocidos, extraños
a tu amor.

Sin embargo, el mismo pasto nos sostiene,
donde tú duermes nosotros

también dormimos, el pasto
está caliente de tus formas.

Con extraños. Mi cuerpo
cubre al suyo. El pasto

está lleno de antiguos alfabetos.
Una vez un dios caminó ahí,

Inclinado a sus voces.
Y cuando está oscuro
en el porche de alguna
vieja granja,

debido a que el cielo
está tan oscuro

o escuchando las voces
de abajo de la tierra

de los animales, formo
las letras de tu nombre

en luz. O las tomo
de sus labios.

Así es de quieta.
La muerte nos espera

en lo que es más cercano.
Sólo una voz.

Es suficiente. Es
suficiente.

No dura. Nosotros
dejamos esta montaña

también. Es suficiente.
Espero aquí

y la vieja,
casi muerta atravesando el camino

grita. Otro nombre.
No tengo voz

para decirlo. Es
suficiente, no hay nombre para darle

sino muerte, este
resplandor

a través del cuarto
al cual vamos

mientras tomo sus mejillas
mis manos

lo alcanzan
y se enlazan

como dirían ustedes,
en el sueño.

Traducción de Heriberto Yépez

UN POEMA PARA LA CRUEL MAYORÍA

¡La cruel mayoría emerge!

¡Salve la cruel mayoría!

Castigarán a los pobres por ser pobres.
Castigarán a los muertos por haber muerto.

Nada puede hacer que lo oscuro se vuelva luz
para la cruel mayoría.
Nada puede hacerlos sentir hambre o terror.

Si la cruel mayoría sólo destapara sus oídos
el mar los cubriría.
El mar los ayudaría a olvidar a sus caprichosos hijos.
Les urdiría una canción de cuna para jóvenes y viejos.

(Ve a la cruel mayoría con las manos detrás de los oídos,
un pie en el agua, el otro en las nubes.)

Uno de ellos es lo suficientemente alto para sostener una nube
entre el pulgar y el dedo medio;
para exprimirla una gota de sudor antes que él duerma.

Él es un pequeño dios pero no un poeta.
(Véase cómo se eleva su cuerpo.)
La cruel mayoría ama los gentíos y los días de campo.
La cruel mayoría llena sus parques con banderines.
La cruel mayoría celebra un cumpleaños.

¡Salve la cruel mayoría otra vez!

La cruel mayoría llora por sus niños nonatos,
lloran por los hijos que nunca criarán.
La cruel mayoría está agobiada de pena.

(Entonces, ¿por qué la cruel mayoría siempre ríe?
¿Es porque la noche ha recuperado los muros de la ciudad?
¿Porque los pobres yacen escondidos en la oscuridad?
¿Los lisiados ya no vienen a enseñar sus heridas?)

Hoy la cruel mayoría vota por agrandar la oscuridad.

Votan para que las sombras tomen el lugar de los estanques
Cualquier cosa por la que voten se realizará.
Las montañas saltan como corderos para la cruel mayoría.

¡Salve la cruel mayoría!
¡Salve! ¡salve! ¡la cruel mayoría!

Las montañas saltan como corderos, los cerros como carneros.
La cruel mayoría destruye la tierra para la cruel mayoría.
Luego la cruel mayoría hace fila para ser enterrada.

Aquellos que aman la muerte amarán a la cruel mayoría.

Aquellos que se conocen a sí mismos conocerán el miedo
que la cruel mayoría siente cuando se mira al espejo

La cruel mayoría ordena a los pobres permanecer pobres.
Ordena al sol que sólo brille los fines de semana.

El dios de la cruel mayoría cuelga de un árbol.
La voz de su dios es el árbol gritando mientras se arquea.
La voz del árbol es tan rápida como un relámpago atravesando del cielo.

(Si la cruel mayoría se va a dormir dentro de sus sombras,
despertará para encontrar sus camas llenas de vidrio.)

¡Salve el dios de la cruel mayoría!
¡Salve los ojos en la cabeza de su dios que grita!

¡Salve su cara en el espejo!

¡Salve sus caras mientras flotan alrededor de él!

¡Salve su sangre y la de él!
¡Salve la sangre de los pobres que necesitan para alimentarse!
¡Salve su mundo y su dios!

¡Salve y adiós!
¡Salve y adiós!

¡Salve y adiós!

Traducción de Laura Jauregui Murueta

UN ASPECTO DE LA CARNE DE RES

1
Los ganchos de la carne son negros, cubiertos
de moscas lambiendo
la sangre, estos negros ganchos de la carne

En el aire una mosca tardía
sobrevuela: encontrará una ventana
y ahí descansará

Yo no encontraré a nadie:
nadie nos encontrará
¡acércate! Siéntate conmigo aquí

Las ventanas arden

2

Los ganchos de la carne son negros
con moscas blancas
Ellas los lamben, ah
los negros ganchos de la carne

Ah los negros ganchos de la carne
con moscas negras
Ellas miran encima de ellos, ah
los negros ganchos de la carne

3

Pero escucha, ¿acaso no?
escucha al cuchillo
cuando blande
y a los ganchos de la carne

y los negros ganchos de la carne
donde la luz del sol
desciende desde el techo

donde el fuego arde,
¿cuántos animales
vienen a comer de tu mano?

Una cara cortada en dos:
en la sangre que cubre a cada ojo
un negro gancho de la carne

4

Vienen hacia donde estoy
pero estamos más lejos
más lejos aún
cada vez que nos alcanzan
estamos más lejos
por estar aquí, por mirar
los negros ganchos de la carne

No es luz suficiente
verte, cuando miro alrededor
tu sombra arde
tu sombra me da la espalda
los negros ganchos de la carne blanden alrededor
de una esquina ulterior

5

Y la carne atrapada bajo un clavo
que es un sueño,
los ganchos de la carne que son un sitio
hacia el cual viajamos
y un sitio donde el fuego arde

y los ganchos de la carne que son negros
y que las moscas cubren
los ganchos de la carne que yo miro
a solas, sin ti

sintiendo el sol contra la ventana
el mar, este lamento
de mi nacimiento que me ahoga
que dejará a mi cuerpo algún día
abierto, esperando a sus moscas

Traducción de Heriberto Yépez

NOKH AUSHVITS (DESPUÉS DE AUSCHWITZ)

el poema es feo y lo hacen más feo aún
 donde el poder reside
 que duncan entendió —o no entendió—
 al escuchar leer esa tarde al otro poeta
 dijo “eso fue fealdad pura” y oh fue

FUE E HIZO QUE MI CORAZÓN OMITIERA UN LATIDO

ya que el poema no lo permitía no
 ni un solo momento de gracia ni belleza a obstruir
 cualquier cosa que la época demandara o el poema
 mierda embarrada en la pared y el piso
 el sexo hecho trizas genitales arrancados por garras de perros
 y la fealdad que sufrirías
 más tarde que ellos habían sufrido
 no como dante lo soñó sino en la chimenea
 que atravesaban y que los otros llamaban
 el camino al cielo pequeñas colinas y pozos ahora
 y debajo sobre entre ellos
 espejos rotos ollas cacerolas teteras esmaltadas
 las velas trenzadas del sabbath
 pedazos de chales sacerdotales y pedazos de cuerpos huesos
 de su hijo él dijo está saltando
 dentro del lodo la piscina de huesos
 y légamo los frágiles miembros separándose
 cada vez que jala uno el misterio del cuerpo
 no es un misterio cuerpos desnudos luego cuerpos
 huesudos y podridos cómo debe él luchar
 su furor por la belleza debe hacer un poema
 tan feo que pueda expulsar a las otras voces
 como el chillido de artaud el poema se ocupaba
 de la fealdad debe resistir
 incluso la habilidad de la muerte un escenario

en treblinka taquilla de boletos un gran reloj
el letrero que dice: cambio de tren para bialystok
pero el hombre grita quién ha visto
los apiladeros de ropa judíos
no es buena es tu propia triste carne
lo que cuelga aquí pobre y embolsada como animales
la sangre coagulada en una gelatina
una axila a través de la cual un ventrículo ha irrumpido
y lo dejó pendiendo gritando
una cruda punta clavada en su lengua
otra en su escroto ve
una boca un hoyo un hoyo rojo
los restos escarlatas de la carne de los niños
sus ojos como pequeñas veneras
tan succulentas que el rubio guardia ucraniano
emberrinchado bajo su sombrilla brinca
y los succiona hacia dentro de sus dientes de fierro
y dentro de su esófago, cagando
glóbulos de grasa y mierda
que gotean en el pozo donde la víctima—
la muchacha sin lengua —mira hacia arriba fijamente
y ve su descorazonamiento final

Traducción de Heriberto Yépez

9

AQUELLOS QUE SON HERMOSOS Y AQUELLOS QUE

NO LO SON

cambian lugares para revivir
una muerte por excremento

víctimas arrojadas dentro del pozo y ahogándose
en sus heces
sofocándose en la escoria de su cuerpo

esto es lo extremo

estas imágenes de la mierda, demasiado crudas
para el sentimiento,
que gotea sobre sus rostros

mujeres acucilladas en tablones
para cagar “como pájaros
posados en un cable de telégrafo”

embarrándose unas a otras

no tienen un lenguaje para el horror
que queda por decir, el hedor
ha retacado sus gargantas,

ellas quienes vivirían con mierda
y la rasparían
de las tazas

esto es lo extremo este lugar

es donde el deseo termina
donde el flujo tibio dentro del cadáver
se hace piedra

Traducción de Laura Jauregui Murueta

EL DOMINIO DE LO TOTAL SE CIERRA ALREDEDOR

DE ELLOS ya que aún hay
 totalidad aquí una parodia de *telos* de completitud
 en la monstruosa mente de los amos aquellos que se dan a sí mismos
 autoridad
 sobre el resto de la vida que se reparten la vida y la muerte proporcional-
 mente
 a sus apetitos de artífices ellos falsifican un mundo una imagen
 sombruna del nuestro
 y que son los artífices del nuevo infierno los ángeles de lo posible
 la visión
 trasmitida por ellos hasta el presente acerca de lo que el arte puede hacer
 qué obras de la mente
 son pensables cuando el poder socorre sus manos en la ilusión
 de lo absoluto
 “un universo de muerte” donde el empuje del infierno hacia arriba hacia
 la superficie se convierte en el hecho vital
 una fila de chimeneas escupiendo llamas a la noche humo brotando
 de pozos y zanjas arremolinándose cimbrándose enroscándose sobre
 sus cabezas
 “las chispas y las carbonillas nos cegaron” (dice el pergamino) “a través
 de la cerca alambrada del segundo crematorio podíamos ver
 figuras con horquillas moviéndose contra el fondo de
 flamas
 “encimando los cadáveres en los hoyos tan densamente apretujados que parecía
 que la muerte los había soldado”
 los rostros de los muertos destapados se tuercen entre las flamas que los
 recorren
 como si revivieran exudando linfas y grasa
 que brotan de ellos ojos explotando como el vientre
 de una mujer embarazada reventándose ahora expulsa
 su feto que se consume entre las flamas

pero en la parte exterior del campo nuevos edificios erigen un paraíso de
 puertas pintadas
 una hilera de flores una charca en la que hay una rana de piedra en una pequeña
 banca de madera al borde con animales de pastoreo valerosos
 pastores
 en este otro campo que lo obsesiona ahora me obsesiona a mí este
 con sus esculturas de judíos
 los rostros bien definidos y claros que no muestran rastro de sufrimiento pero
 con los ojos vislumbrando su futuro
 y cantan valerosamente la canción del trabajo y de la muerte que los amos
 impusieron que el oro había escrito para ellos
 judíos extáticos en madera y siempre reverenciando apuntando hacia el estado
 judío que está adentro
 tuyo es el mundo del gran arte unido a la vida hasta que
 los límites se abran
 la medida interpretada por la orquesta del oro un sonido tan suave que
 incluso los amos eran arrullados por él
 así a los judíos se les llenaron los ojos de lágrimas ya negros de humo así
 que los judíos se llenen de lágrimas otra vez
 quienes después en el mercado en krakow veríamos renacidos
 sus nobles rostros de madera y ojos de mármol cumpliendo el sueño
 de la vida
 los judíos de oro y los judíos de la muerte intercambiando lugares
 ellos para quienes el dinero reposa debajo del campo bajo el piso del
 cuartel y les compra tiempo
 los cadáveres se pudren los judíos comercian basura en la plaza
 los judíos desventurados lentamente caen de espaldas y son enterrados en la
 zanja
 la banda trae puestas chaquetas blancas de vestir adornadas de azul
 en las solapas y pantalones rayas azules a lo largo de las costuras
 la corte judía vive en cuartos privados y educan a sus hijos
 esperando
 que la noche vuelva que el cabaret empiece su lastimosa
 música donde el mal arte

está unido al mal arte el corazón rompe en sollozos sombríos por sus
propias pérdidas pero sigue zumbando

14

DI TOYTE KLOLES (LAS MALDICIONES)

Deja que el hombre muerto clame en ti porque él es un hombre muerto
Deja que vea tus manos en la luz que se filtra hasta la mesa donde se sienta
Deja que te diga lo que piensa y deja que tu garganta amordace su voz
Deja que sus palabras sean el poema y que el poema sea lo que tú no dirías por ti mismo
Deja que diga que todo hombre es un asesino y que él es un asesino como todo el resto
Deja que diga que le gustaría golpear y matar golpear y matar déjalo decir que no es nada
nada nada
Que él está viviendo en una *selvajidad* (deja que lo diga) pero que no hay leñas ni árboles
Que cualesquiera casas que había ya no están o si las casas están ahí él no puede entrar en
ellas o verlas
Que él no puede ver a los niños que sabe que estaban ahí que no sabe si sus propios hijos
estaban también ahí
Que busca a los hijos de su enemigo y le gustaría matarlos
Deja a los que se sientan alrededor de ti no oír nada de lo que él dice déjalos oír todo lo que
les dices
Deja que un gran dolor suba a tus piernas (siéntelo moviéndose como la tierra se mueve
debajo de ti)
Deja que la tierra se desplome dentro de tu barriga cayendo cayendo hasta que quedes
en el espacio
Deja que su grito te siga a través de los milenios de regreso a tu mesa
Deja que un gusano del tamaño de una monedita salga de la mesa en la que estás
sentado
Deja que sea cubierto con los mocos rojos chorreándose de su nariz (pero sólo tú los
verás)
Deja que los hoyos de su cuerpo se abran deja que sus excreciones se derramen por todo
el cuarto

Deja que inunden el fondo de las jaulas de las mujeres deja que se chorree por las grietas sobre el rostro de las mujeres hasta abajo
Deja que grite en una lengua que no puedes entender deja que la palabra "khurbn" quede al final de cada frase
Deja que una imagen comience a formarse con cada grito
Deja que los gritos te digan que el mundo se formó en oscuridad que termina en oscuridad
Deja que los gritos te conduzcan a un cuarto con pequeñas baldosas blancas
Deja que las baldosas desaparezcan bajo el agolpamiento de cuerpos deja que el vómito y la mierda estén por todos lados deja que el semen y la sangre menstrual escurran por sus brazos
Deja que sus gritos describan un cuerpo (un cuerpo es como una piedra un cuerpo está encimado sobre otro cuerpo y lo agobia un cuerpo aplasta el cráneo que está debajo de él un cuerpo tiene brazos y se estira hacia el cielo un cuerpo tiene ojos y conoce el terror en la oscuridad un cuerpo ardiendo despide calor y luz)
Deja que 10,000 cuerpos sean amontonados en un lugar hasta que se desvanezcan deja que la tierra y el cielo se desvanezcan con ellos y luego regresen
Deja que un campo vacío se llene con monedas y deja que los vivos se agachen a recogerlas
Deja que todo tenga su precio deja que haya un precio para la muerte y un precio para la vida para que todo pueda ser registrado
Deja que registren el valor de un cuerpo (un alma no tiene registro) y deja que los vivos rechacen a los vivos a menos que un precio sea pagado
Deja que la traición tome el lugar del amor y deja que el asco sea puesto por delante de la belleza
Deja que ella quien es muy bella se arrodele deja que aquellos que se toman entre sí por amor sean asesinados
Deja que los muertos supliquen por la destrucción de los vivos hasta que no haya más muerte y no más vida
Deja que un fantasma en el campo apague la luz del sol (no tengo brazos él se lamenta Mi rostro y la mitad de mi cuerpo se han desvanecido y todavía ¿estoy vivo?
Pero el movimiento de mi alma a través del tiempo y el espacio me lleva dentro de ti La inmensurable parte de una lengua es lo que hablamos él dice ¿quién soy? dayn mammas bruder farchvunden in dem khurbn un muz in mayn eygenem loshn redn loz mikh es redn durkh dir dos vort khurbn
Mayne oygen zaynen blind fun mayn khurbn ikh bin yetst a peyger) un cadáver al cual

la luz nunca regresará para quien la luz se ha perdido
Deja que la luz se pierda y las voces supliquen por siempre en lo oscuro y deja que no
conozcan júbilo en ella
Deja que los asesinos se multipliquen y las torturas deja que los campos se pudran y los
bosques se encojan deja que los niños desentierren huesos debajo de la plaza
Deja que los tontos manejen el poder deja que los santos y los mártires arraiguen dinero
en un campo de sangre
Deja que la locura sea la más alta virtud deja que la furia estrangule a todos los que no
enfurezcan
Deja que los niños asesinen niños deja que bombas lluevan deja que las casas caigan
Deja que los fantasmas y los *dibbiks* avasallen a los vivos
Deja que lo invisible avasalle lo visible hasta que nada más sea visto o escuchado

Traducciones de Heriberto Yépez y Laura Jauregui Murueta

OBRA-SUEÑO CHAMÁN UNO

Le cortaron el brazo y se carcajearon y él les devolvió las carcajadas
Le cortaron el otro brazo y se carcajearon y él les devolvió las carcajadas
Le cortaron la pierna a la altura del muslo y se carcajearon y él les devolvió las
carcajadas
Le cortaron la otra pierna y se carcajearon y él les devolvió las carcajadas
Le cortaron la cabeza y se carcajearon y entonces su cabeza les devolvió las carcajad

Traducción de Heriberto Yépez ☒

UN POCO DE LO QUE NO ESTABA

PRIMER POEMA

Veníamos narrando la desventura
entre la maleza verdeazulada oro,
un triste paso por el esponjoso medio
que tira de un lado del túnel y del otro.
Lo que me gusta de agosto es que nació
mi hija, clara luz que surte el mes,
el cesto con plátano, manzana y mango.
Queda la cosa hecha,
la mandarina no, picada por los pájaros,
el higo estallado en su fermento no,
de la narración anterior sólo un rumor,
un destilado miel-de-abeja.

SEGUNDO POEMA

Deja un margen en blanco de tres líneas
por si quieres asentar un sentimiento
antes que se vuelva palpable, indetenible
material de seguimiento la palabra,
curva, elipsis de cintura, hipnosis
de cuerpo que te atrae más que ojos,
más que mirada, contorno.
Después ya no te soltará, llevado
rumor de los ausentes que te incluye.
Deja un vacío de canto de pájaro
por si la presencia quiere un crecimiento.

TERCER POEMA

Más que recordarla hazla presente:
ésa es la emergencia del poema,
su salirse de pecho.
Pecho de página cuya comparación resiste
con pecho de mar, esa emergencia
de pájaro que tiene un montoncito.
El abismo niega el pecho de la nada
pero el poema insiste en su lugar:
pecho de la nada, forma de todo
ponle pecho al canto para que surja así
sin mancha de memoria. Un día iluminará,
un día todavía sin noticia fresca,
día de brisa de pino, de brío empinado hacia afuera.
Emergencia, surgimiento, súbito,
no imperioso suceder como este Imperio
que grava, hunde, horada, agrava la hendidura,
harta la sed, el sedimento base.

CUARTO POEMA

Tejer un lenguaje objeto, tejedores
de estas albas, tejer un lenguaje-cosa,
moverla con el aliento del habla
para que se desplace en las palabras viva,
las ahonde como luz, luz-cosa ahondada,
luz, ahondada cosa de un perdido borde,
sin límites alondra, sin contorno canto,
sin vuelo, sin alas, sin pico, una alondra
sin alondra y sin pájaro, sí con canto,
concavidad, oscuro ávido de claro interno
que avanza a tientas —atención al árbol, a las ramas,
a la trampa del venado, al cazador, al bosque.
Bien delimitada el área semántica,
por el ámbito el sonido se espacia:
es el deseo con su séquito de ganas
permanentes de escribir, entrar en seco.
Estamos cerca de la casa,
a menos de una milla, a menos de una distancia.
En la intemperie hay una ausencia que reclama,
no estar ahí canta haber estado:
no-estar-ahí, no-estar-ahí.
Sucede en la naturaleza, en la física
de la conversación-ciudad, luces de prosa.
Estamos ante el canto que se dice
por necesidad de intimidad, de adentro,
sin el afuera verde de los árboles
que ha dejado en compañía de los árboles
símbolos que saben qué.

QUINTO POEMA

Las tres quebraduras de la rama:
la económica,
la espiritual-mental,
la física.

Canta el mirlo sobre la económica,
canta sobre la espiritual-mental,
canta sobre la física:
el mirlo canta sobre las quebraduras
de la prolongación, sobre el cuerpo que desea
continuarse en otro cuerpo, su infinito al tacto.
Si está quebrada no está tensada,
no calla en su interior una espera, una víspera,
una inminencia de sucederá,
no quiere el pueblo saber qué es lo que pasa
aunque ciertos grupos, ciertas poblaciones:
canta el mirlo sobre la ausencia de tensión.

SEXTO POEMA

Sólo es posible, de la ciudad en prosa,
un extracto, un recorte, un rostro
—y esto es suerte—, tus manos.
Significa salirse, extremar la identificación,
extremar, que entrega el mar completo
que es extremo y tiembla. Y ya salimos
de parcelar lo parcelado en su control
de calidad: una cresta a rescatar del habla informe
que se deleita con tres o cuatro gotas, plena.
Hay un rumor de vida en prosa que recorre
todo cuerpo, el cuerpo de cada cual, único,
como si habláramos de un solo cuerpo, triunfo

finalmente conseguido, un cuerpo ya de todos
finamente acoplado, una carpa de circo.
Párrafo interminable que posterga el margen.
Ciudad del cuerpo con sus voces encendidas,
cuerpo-ciudad, pájaro-mirlo, flor-girasol,
animal-pulpo, especie-culpa en extensión,
carne que no encuentra su pulpa.

SÉPTIMO POEMA

Y lo tenso, que era sensual,
se ha vuelto denso, masa.
Ininteligible como bruto
—puñal que no se explica,
no se entiende el caballo,
referidos a sí mismos,
cada cual a su acto—
no filigrana de hilo fino que destina.
Frontal, un modo de honor,
ahora es muro que avanza,
ahora es fuerza de choque,
ahora es nunca –no bosque,
mole, muro que avanza,
bloqueo en este sentido:
barrera, barrotes, barro
cocido antes de nacer,
un burro en la inteligencia
puesto, ocupando espacio.
Sobre el pastizal de pastizales
verde –menos que amor, sólo-
el burro avanza despacio
por otras sensualidades:
las rozaduras del pasto. ☒

RAE ARMANTROUT

THREE POEMS

INCORPORATION

1

Casual at the check-out counter,
a man buys three kinds
of candy bar

and a pack of sausages.

2

Having arisen effortlessly
and without sensation,

the mind will seem
to haunt the organs.

3

Each viewer
is the solitary driver

trying to evade the commercial's
marching-band

but confronted
at each intersection
by his doppelganger,

a wild-eyed drum major
mad for this new car.

Your job
is to make the drum-major
vanish.

YOOHOO

Sun lights up a pelt
of dust on the receiver.

Being unexpected,
this is a kind of call.

Cross names out
and things are all made up

of contrary, percussive,
adjectival tugs.

I remember someone
wrestled an angel,

a signal.

*

The present's chronic
revision

which a poem
re-enacts.

The open vowel
(peek-a-boo)
pelvis

through which you
"came into this world"

sits on the shelf

in a mausoleum
now,

world on either side of it

PROMISE

1
Canary yellow of the school bus;
school bus yellow of the SUV.

2

I was thinking that the saying
"I'll sleep when I'm dead"
is dead wrong.
But then accuracy
is a moot point
in this context. Moot points
exude a certain charm—
although the transition
from mattering to not
is generally quite painful.

Then we broke through the cloud cover
and I saw what I called
a bracelet
of yellowish lights
extended over water.
Headlights of cars
on a bridge, as it turned out.
And still beckoning.
A promise that can only be kept
by being made and made again ☒

JOSELY VIANNA BAPTISTA

TRES POEMAS

COIX LACRYMA

sobre o sisal
um corpo nu entre
fieiras de esferas
lisas-frutos cinzas
que o sol enegreceu
em lágrimas-de-
nossa-senhora, contas
-de-santa-maria-:
breve rosário de biurás,
te souro fúnebre
de urubus

os frutos duros
com que os dedos
grão a grão
sangram no corpo
o luto, o rosto
mudo sobre folhas

murchas (lágrimas),
miúdas, rubras,
úmidas

COIX LACRYMA

sobre el sisal
un cuerpo desnudo entre
hileras de esferas
lisas —frutos cenizas
que el sol ennegreció
en lágrimas-de-
nuestra-señora, cuentas
-de-santa-maría-:
breve rosario de biurás,
te soro fúnebre
de urubús

los frutos duros
con que los dedos
grano a grano
sangran en el cuerpo
el luto, el rostro
mudo sobre hojas
mustias (lágrimas),
menudas, rubras,
húmedas

EXERCÍCIO ESPIRITUAL

*Aquí pocas letras bastan,
pues todo es como papel en blanco.*
MANUEL DA NÓBREGA. Carta 8 (1549)

risco
no portulano
da areia
o roteiro do error (do latim *errore*):
viagem sem rumbo
e sem fim,
como a dos ascetas
e dos apaixonados,
fadados ao êxtase
e ao naufrágio

EJERCICIO ESPIRITUAL

*Aquí pocas letras bastan,
pues todo es como papel en blanco.*
MANUEL DA NÓBREGA. Carta 8 (1549)

surco
en el portulano
de la arena
el derrotero del error
(del latín *errore*):
viaje sin rumbo
y sin fin,
como el de los ascetas
y los apasionados,
predestinados al éxtasis
y al naufragio

ONDE O CÉU ENCONTRA A TERRA

o breu devore à noite
o próprio rasto;
no solo ocre, de rojo,
o escuro escureça,
noite tão noite
que se dobre em dia

os charcos zoem
outra vez insetos;
virem os regos
de lodo
em que chafurdo
–com o sol–
pó púrpuro,
ou longos rolos
que o vento
eleva e enovela

a prumo o sol ofusque
a si mesmo,
e a tarde entardeça
num crepúsculo

bojo de sombras,
lusco-fusco de névoas
(frutos apodrecendo
na gamela)

DONDE EL CIELO ENCUENTRA A LA TIERRA

la brea devore a la noche
el propio rastro;
en el suelo ocre, de bruces,
lo oscuro oscurezca,
noche tan noche
que se doble en día

los charcos suenen
otra vez insectos;
viren los regueros
de lodo
en que chapoteo
—con el sol—
polvo púrpura,
o largos rollos
que el viento
eleva y devana

a plomo el sol ofusque
a sí mismo,
y la tarde entardezca
en un crepúsculo

núcleo de sombras,
nieblas entre dos luces
(frutos brunos pudriéndose
en el cuenco)

Traducciones de Reynaldo Jiménez y Josely Vianna Baptista ☒

HOMELAND INSECURITY

I grew up with a view—literally—of the border: *la frontera*, or in my more personal interpretation, the frontier. My parents' home backed up to the Rio Grande, or Río Bravo when viewed from the other side. This lack of agreement between the cultures or countries, differing name in one language for the same river, still seems appropriate. This hometown—Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas—is one of the oldest communities on the border today. In 1839 with the drawing of the new river boundary between Texas and Mexico, “Laredo” and the surrounding border communities refused to take sides and consequently created their own city-state and country: a little known federalist effort within the history of the Americas, the Republic of the Rio Grande. This belligerence and intolerance lasted briefly and in the end of its short-lived border independence, families who felt an irrepressible allegiance dug up their graves and moved over to the other side of the river to create the new Laredo. Such border-conflict exotica is relatively unimportant today, other than to recognize the emotional equilibrium of those who live along this cauterized zone. Those to whom I choose to refer as “border rats.” I especially like to use this term in reference to people from the region who feel at times that they have escaped its demise and provincial character, instead of recognizing all of the privileges that it has given them. I use the term to describe myself.

One moves in different directions as a rat. Scurrying culturally one way, then in retreat, defending the opposing direction the next. Never really satisfied with what one understands or feels comfort with in one community, while justifying the other side and its positive effects. In the healthy sense of the idea, a “border community” traditionally has one foot on both sides. Unfortunately for some of us growing up within this environment, this gives way to a sense of insecurity, of not really belonging to either side. A gray zone; a gray rat.

Although I speak questionably of this region’s environment, I feel very fortunate to have grown up within that diversity. Not simply the exotic nature of cultural differences but the pushing and pulling of hybridization in general.

Recently I flew to San Diego, only to find myself going in and out of the airport’s security system in Mexico City, trying to secure my exit and, ultimately, my reentry visa. I currently live in Mexico with an FM2 visa, an immigrant status that in my visa document identifies me with an early-twentieth-century-looking black and white photo taken in a document facilitator’s studio adjacent to the immigration offices where it was issued, on the street of Ejército Nacional. With my hair slicked back by the photographer’s comb and water pistol to expose my forehead and ears, and its grainy high contrast black and white finish, I feel that, every time I open the booklet, I am looking at an image of my grandfather having arrived at Ellis Island. Unfortunately, on that Wednesday the booklet was no longer in my possession, having been withheld during my last entry into the country—it had too many entrance and exit stamps and was in need of replacement, a process that has been delayed and which consequently prompted the necessity to procure a tentative document at the airport, one I was told would take but a few moments to expedite. Upon finally finding the appropriate office and desk, forty-five minutes prior to my departure, it was explained that the procedure would in fact take twenty-four to forty-eight hours. This failed to unnerve me, even as it slightly aroused my irritation, aware that the supervisor was watching me and that the attendant, through his inter-office window, was my only hope; depending on how coolly I proceeded, it was ultimately in his hands. Negotiation: a basic tool learned through years and a lifetime of cultural hybridization. In the previous days I had rigorously researched the process needed to travel without my appropriate papers. Had I simply acted indignant

in the face of so much disinformation, had I taken on the classic "gringo" role, I surely would've been punished by a much more exorbitant form of inconvenience. Instead, I was treated royally to the process of signing, copying, and paying for my temporary exit and entrance visa, including one document in which I had to give oath that I was not under any penal process and not a criminal in flight. Generally I wouldn't have even bothered to go through such degrees of paperwork and legality of residence if it could be avoided, as it can be by any sensible, irresponsible, culturally oriented human being. Being an artist working in Mexico was hardly such a threat that one felt the need to secure one's papers, at least not in the past for me. I only "regularized" myself a couple of years after my son was born there six years ago, realizing his vulnerability in relationship to my lack of formality—I had lived in the country on a tourist visa for eleven years at that point. In the end, why would I even bother? Having another passport to travel with in certain parts of the world, where a US passport holder might feel stressed after this current government is done with its war on terror, might be one reason. Another is the simple perversity of claiming a stake to a fatherland where I have spent a large percentage of my life at this time. (Hailing from the border I have always felt that if the US is my motherland, Mexico is in turn the father, or vice versa.)

Thinking of this also makes me reflect on a situation that took place nine years ago. For simple ease of securing funding for the public arts project InSite, co-executive director Carmen Cuenca suggested to CONACULTA, the equivalent in Mexico of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), that some of the artists invited under the rubric of Mexican artists, including myself, Francis Alys, and Melanie Smith, all of us, be naturalized: a term I have always found disturbing. In this case it would have meant a relatively simple process like those expedited for soccer stars who immigrate quickly so as to play on international teams. Obviously there was some dissent as to the number of Mexican artists included and the legitimacy of those on the list (after all, even Rubén Ortiz-Torres had entrenched himself in the US, *no?*). This is a classic situation in which I find myself to this day, and it is reflected in what follows. Be it the exoticism and influence of my practice as an artist in what, to some minds, seems ironically like an inverse migration or the simple pigeonholing of culture: a Texas

artist, southwest, Chicano, Chicanglo (or was that chic Anglo?), Mexican, US or the dreaded expatriate status of "American living in Mexico." Obviously in the end I don't feel any of this should matter, but over drinks of tequila last night with others involved in the Mexico City scene of the 1990s, I realized that one can only bring what one has to the table. If you weren't there fifteen years ago and didn't live the moment and what that led to, in political, social and cultural developments, then you needed someone else to tell you about it. So, ultimately, I assume my position.

Mexican social life is strong and traditional. Family life, social bonding through environment, education, and group formations are prevalent. On any given Sunday afternoon one is expected to be having lunch and spending time with family. Inevitably, this same rigor has led many individuals living in Mexico to form their own family units—in this case, those of foreigners living in Mexico City in the beginning of the 1990s. There emerged a happenstance setting: a congregation formed in 1990 by a group of artists, writers, and historians arriving in Mexico from different locations. Many of us chose to live in the city center, the historical, the down trodden and rough, but invigorating heart of the Centro. This was not a place inhabited by the privileged social and cultural classes of Mexico, but simply visited during the day or on weekends to absorb its history and to revisit the old cantinas and restaurants. Another reason that we chose this area was for its abundance of space in the colonial structures, cheap rent, an excess of visual stimuli, and potential materials at every turn. The influence of this very rich and historical conglomeration impregnated the work we began to produce there. The center's past, the oldest historical and ongoing urban environment in the new world and its many layers built upon each other, had its impact. Moreover, there was a rich access to materials and *talleres* or shops to fabricate parts and elements of our work.

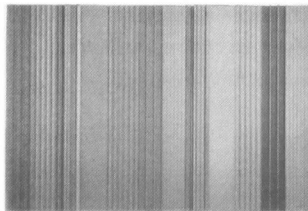
So, then, to return to forms of kinship: It is very complicated to rent property in Mexico without a family. All contracts must be signed by a *fiador*, or a property-owning co-signer, who will guarantee that the rent be paid and the rental property preserved. Obviously, some of us found this favor to ask difficult, and arranging to rent out a floor in a building as an artist was not exactly the ideal for some of the proprietors (much less if you happened to be a foreigner). Con-

sequently, there were a couple of buildings in particular in the Centro, one being on the side street off the Zócalo, called Licenciado Verdad, the other a few blocks further north on the Plaza Santa Catarina, where inevitably we found ourselves ensconced after other artists had arranged previous relationships with the owners and established what in one case in particular, with señora Susana, served as an extension to the family as well. While we would often share meals together, drink together, and live in each others' spaces, we also began to organize exhibitions and projects because we hadn't found many other alternatives to show our work. Through this community of *extranjeros en el centro*, we began to exert some influence within the cultural/social infrastructure of the city, sharing our studio-homes by means of exhibitions, meals, parties, and other disorganized events. When we began to show our work along with other Mexican artists in more formal settings and galleries, we also became more entrenched as a separate movement due to our style of work and method, but primarily as a family unit or artistic circle. At certain moments we were accused of being cultural colonizers. On one memorable occasion the gallery owner who today represents my work in Mexico was irritated that we were disrupting the style of work she then sold. She christened me "the artist who lived in *la ratonera* (rat hole) *de Licenciado Verdad*." Hence, back to being a rat.

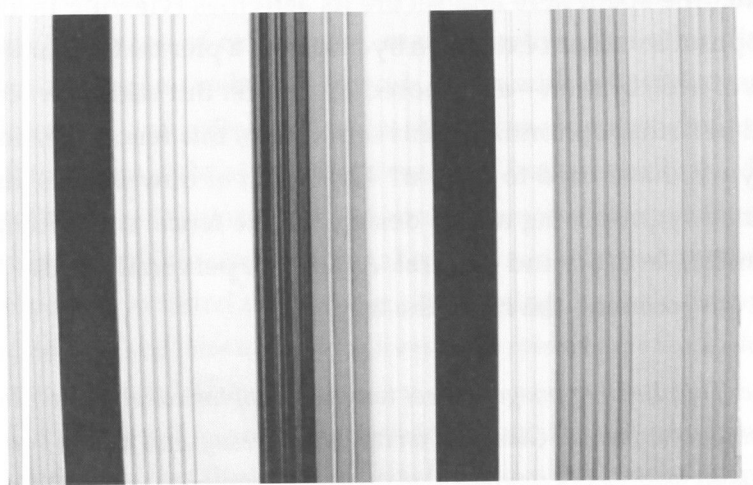
Today I find myself in another opposing vista. I am working presently on a project for InSite in the Tijuana-San Diego region, positioned literally on the border again, this time primarily with a view from the south. This locality troubles me but with another set of parameters. The project is a permanent park along the fence in Tijuana's Playas neighborhood. The northwest corner of the city and country where the Gulf War tarmac fence plunges into the waves of the Pacific, and what has become one of the most iconic man-made divisions and borders in the world today. In the past I personally would have avoided this site like the plague, especially as an artist working for a project like that of InSite, which brilliantly imposes itself on a binational region. For many artists and scholars invested in cultural studies, this site is easy pickings on the wounds of the border, a further exploitation. Inevitably, we found that it was impossible to avoid this site as we searched for an area on which to build a park and, in this case, to transform the location into the cultural icon that it has become: a place for the

community, beachgoers, Mexican national tourists, and others who come to this very specific site to see the wreckage of such division. Again, the opportunity to afford a view, in this case a view of the Borderfields State Park, with its massive acreage and estuary beyond, a deep contrast to the overpopulated foothills and parched landscape of Tijuana. Given the lack of physical space by which to extend ourselves with a park in this location, we began to think of ways to compensate and develop a turnaround and gathering place for the people who naturally gravitate there. In essence the site is a cul-de-sac, and we decided to simply elevate this into a series of spiraling, connected platforms that would stimulate the time spent here and secure its activities (viewing the other side). We also proposed a western extension by means of a pier that remarks the border in the form of a celebration—as opposed to a knife. But still: how could we get so involved in further epitomizing this separation, this fence, this icon of death for so many who have tried to cross it? The extent of how far this has gone can be determined by proposing a new design for the fence: something somehow more humanized, artistic, and cultural. Again, the perversity of the border, and within that environment, the rat in the trap.

Editors' Note: The following images reflect two aspects of the collaborative InSite project: the landscape design of which Glassford writes in this essay, and the the Partituras. The Partituras, using wall pieces composed of anodized aluminum, parallel the work in the Tijuana Garden. They make reference not only to the actual border fence but to protected environments used by privileged classes.



See *Mandorla* cover image:
Partitura Rojo #1, Cherry
Col. Marcela Ramírez
México D.F.
2001



Thomas Glassford
Sherbert Stripe Partitura
Colección del Artista
México D.F.
2003



Thomas Glassford with José Parral
La Esquina
Playas de Tijuana 4
Tijuana
InSite_05 Project Gallery



Thomas Glassford with José Parral
La Esquina
Playas de Tijuana 5
Tijuana
InSite_05 Project Gallery



Thomas Glassford with José Parral
La Esquina
Playas de Tijuana 6
Tijuana
InSite_05 Project Gallery



Thomas Glassford with José Parral
La Esquina
Playas de Tijuana 7
Tijuana
InSite_05 Project Gallery

ROSA ALCALÁ

FOUR POEMS

SEA BODY

Everything hung on the point of being lost.
—William Carlos Williams

This compass. This faulty wiring.

This needle trembling South. This is what lost looks like.

This is way North of progress.

This is experiment, a dangerous
ride, a belly of rocks to pelt late summer

This dark salt shipwreck.

My, my! Aren't you a ruthless captain!

This is you netting bright fish from the spine.

This is the dust of unsentimental waters.

This, a bottomless constellation of bones, dog's juicy memory

Stretching this home

Stretching this home.

MIGRATION

*They pass the invigoration of the night and the chemistry of the night,
and awake.*

—Walt Whitman

In sleep, two unlikely
countries bordering

Bodies vigilant
to attack: at times

Axis, at times
Ally. Tonight we

lie awake, one hand
on each other's

gate. How far
to open it, how far

to slip through
What casualty

will this bed
bring. Our chests idle

their tired patrol
In confusion

we might smuggle
each other

past all regret
And we are only

one foot into the other's
long walk home

Which direction
to take:

forward or forfeit?

CENSUS (2)

O love,
district us
blind
into regions
of a new
science

Our talk
undocumented:
or who
could
transcribe this
loss

O love,
erect graphs
of mutant
nations
press bodies
and names
into
the front
seat
of a speeding
category

FRAMED

The language
of pictures

if we are to
read them

as text
make light

of years
or money spent

in Prague
or health

wasted
in Paterson

so who
we marry

can only
be understood

as we interpret
a good deal

the photographer's
motives,

the dress's
trail

getting caught
in the limo

door. But,
I'd hate to

contemplate it
further

than this page.
Let's have

your students
read the

import
of these visual

cues, affective
advertisements

for making
a run for it

for selling the baby 🚫

FROM COUNTER DAEMONS: ORACLE AND 4D

There are a few computer science ideas that form part of the basis of this poem. Letters such as i,j,k,a,b,c,m,n,x,y and z are commonly used by novice computer programmers as variables, especially as "counter variables," hence, and for other reasons, the "i." Counter variables are used by computer programmers to count how many times a program has gone through a processing loop. Loops are a common notion in computer programming, as well as being a variation on a circle, something I use often in my work. Counting, in this case, also obliquely refers to the North American Plains Indian notion of "counting coup," which values touching an enemy over killing them in the midst of battle. In computer jargon, a "daemon" is a program that works for the operating system, instead of for the user. Some other programming terminology and ideas made their way into this project, though they are usually used in an ambiguous or polysemous way, and do not require the reader to know much about computers. Many of the computer terms in this work are used in the database query language known as SQL, or are used as common word processing terms, or can be found in the relational database language known as 4th Dimension.

FROM COUNTER DAEMONS—ORACLE

[LIVE CHAT]

¿are you
on the other side
waiting
for alarms
in a desert
of sleepless
evaporations?

¿are you
beside yourself
in the aisles
that distance
makes shorter

than light waves
in the daylight
that pounds
a lead slab
in the soup
that the winter
dissolves?

¿are you
the signal
that another plane
carves into wings
in rounded contusions
of a late afternoon
storm,

full of sparks
that the night hurries out
on Locust and serial
cheeks
shrouded
in shiny costumes?

¿are you
a circle
like juntas
that the winter makes clear
on the shaved orbiting molecule
that the ear revolves
around,
in a retreat
of explosive
fossils?

¿are you
memorizing
the connections
between the hand
and the foot
and the torso
in reverse
of the automatic?

¿are you
materializing
the unknown
without weather
to increase
the planet
otherwise?

¿are you
pocketing
the insurance claims
that parkas
and snow equips
with sutures
and hand grenades?

¿forever?

¿are you
increasing
the tackle box
full of piers
to widen the sea
and shorten
circuits
full of trees?

¿are you
feeding the unworn
through a parallel
shapelessness
in desert blooms
on the roots
of a tarp
milking masks?

¿are you
remodeling
the world
as a breathing
action doll?

¿are you
calm for knots

like the guardian hell
that a sewer makes
for angels
in their last testimony
skewered
like the pony
was?

¿are you
freezing in the open
course that half
of everything
enumerates
like clouds?

¿are you
unwound in a fear
that a jacket
stores
for feed, in easy
shows
and rented
faces on the pain
of entry?

¿are you
good
like ovens?

[I GRIEGA]

i beam you my profile, my message is split with a save to the ground
the island that carries the alley with flowers is crawling with light

the birds that unravel the air are set to dissolve
a sky that is black will be round for a bundle of bombs
an emptied out town sits still with the heat of a knot
the eyes of a leaf are all that the windows put out
when hands make more money than bread
when the apple that downs every missile is shining
when doors frame an opening meant to untie
warm, greenish puddles grow out
with a smile that volcanoes pile up
each face that the weather cuts down, each torso that falls
in the season that whispers like children pushed into a bug
in the frozen remark that the need of a pattern holds up
in the sparkling leak of a tear

i crawl through the cracks in an everyday song
even the shoulders that plant with an infant are wrong
the rocks that are broken rub into the rigs of a storm
inside the apparent effusion of light there are sentences
waving and weaving through angular traps
that a field in the hole in a face might accept
with bullets and big letter screeches
through fishing line weights that the water wears down
with death for a peel-off of reason, with sleep for an image of warmth
that friends move without
that the scores of attrition pile up into gifts
that a fender destroys
and memory targets to bury the bags of discarded replies
like whistles
like spots on the base of a home
like the kisses i grow for the end
for the gentle, a cut and recourse
for the laughter that sees you as mineral waste
in unpacked collusions that fill up the sun

i incubate gutters for molasses that mark all the skins in a log with a plant
with animals feeding a pitch that turns steel to the end

with halves that are gold for a breath that is lost
all the returns that are deer in the city are watching the light
in tracks by the side of a river
in herons that sparkle with white
in the hawks that are good for the network of signs
each path through the button comes down
each memory bleeds with a server that carries the cold
when the caller is never the number
when the voice of intention is truth, like the fear of the torn
or the herds that the plains do without
they are memorized, polished, and gone
feeding the ghosts in the snow sunk with blood
reading the scratches marking the sky

IF time is made into a phase
IF the during is lost
IF angles are turned into curves with a door
IF the address is all wrong

i mark in the winds of insertions

i stop on the fins of a word

i sleep with the broken in 1 and the 7 and 4
under the trees that the sun never sees
on the plains of a bus
mothers tie up
the circuits of milk for long trails
around the release of the sand
over the clouds and out into space
inside the incision that cuts through the wall

i flee for the captives of time

i dig into grief that is hard as a bone

i dip into wells for the noise
the evil that skims on the surface of sparks
is knotted in fabrics of everyday ghosts
its source is the fruit of a pebble
it goes through the eyes to the skies
and makes up a question to topple the trails
to split all the words into halves
to put them together again, the last to the first
making an infinite number of circles
begin from the breath

i feed all the snakes that hunt for the light

i thank you for drops of spring rain, for
your soil in the ears of the dead
your plants on the accidents meant to deliver
your roots in the wound of the flesh of the growth on a tree
your hemorrhages growing a fungus that feeds all the flies
your electrocutions for love, in the frame of a series of prompts
your deafness that shouts in the jungle
your facts that make epics grow long
your puzzles of words for the growth of an egg
your prayers full of staleness and negative warmth
your plants in the windows that thrive through the mirrors
your faces that float to the sea

i finish the score in the curl of a grub
the past is attached to a tunnel
the present is made into mounds
the future is quickly dissolving
the read-only memory saves with a sound
the pockets of dust are the launchers
the forest that eats its own foliage is taller than grass
the grass is more cyclic than caves
the city is all that the deer move around
the roads are more flat than the tropics

the coast of the end is more drawn than a boat
the missiles are stopped with small branches
the end has come down again here for a crown
the pigeons are startled
the doves fill the skies with interior crosses
the snake knows the corn
the rabbit the night
the horse is still breathing
the jaguar is making the soil's curves be right

i meet with the sounds
of the visits
of gifts on the islands
of zeros to be with a one
by the water that counts with the mounds and moves out

[EL CABALLITO CHOLO]

i put air in the tires of the hearse that removes all the plans
for dashes inside of the blind
envelopes flat
trailer tracks fail
a crack fills the head
of a voice that puts out
with the outlines of pistons
in vain, in two, and in breathing
down by the avenues, shoulders in patterns
by the hole in the face of an end
a feast that retries its steel cage
like locks on a nail
like a number in lashes
like dividers in handles
what the lake will not tell in a song

with mud for the aphid, a beam
under promising Runs
and a campaign of westerns
alone, the canal
retrieved in a blast
only sales, and the fronts, and the step
that the feed will pull back
in a crumpled return
for pennies
for weapons
like a locker, a lock for a pulse
like a place that falls down
in the settlement cycle
beside all the ears
in the capital shining
one farm in the forest
two farms in the arm
three links for a country
a bale in the house

i calibrate smiles that machines fill with softness
salamanders become, in my pockets
the face of a rainbow—with eggshells for notes
in a broom by the knot in a word
¿what sore? ¿what slumming? the ivy
instead of an idiot climbing a ladder
for the shine of a cap, and a corner for trading
any way that the heat peels your flesh
in the sore that a classroom believes
¿what haven't you seen?
in brutality's trial, in the source
of another decision to fill a few cues
all over the graves
clear nights by the sky
it fills
and it doubles

the page in a wreck by the end of a noose
in a blank
by the river. what solves any more
in electric resources for wind
in a plan,
a style in address
gives pencils the door
where everything says that the frame
with recalls, with replies,
with every detail of its meat,
pressurized, stolen, and singing with hats—
a color resists, it writes with another
growing and piling a parallel plumb
in the shine of a knob
in reflections on shoes
the rich with a firing squad for a valentine's
push by a sweetheart.
given the fashion
its only wet cover
in a mosque, in a temple,
in the biblical cur
with an eye for a cobra
every train in the air of the desert
carves with a plan
what the trial of your last day
explodes. finishing lights,
and cosmetic iron hips—
it calls you the other side
meant to be right
without any riots, with shining TVs,
in the traveler's
den, where the women
that paddle the dollars
on cheeks, with a skinny remorse
that the poverty ends with. poor little american
voltage, poor money for change,

every word has your name
every night
has its heart in the chalice you wear

i twist foil with electrical wires at my fingers
yellow incisions gorge on the pools
in the ambulance cab
where a circuit sums up what was plowed
in the stairs plugged with orphans
a starfish stretched out
with data spread thick on the trails
the camels are milked
delayed for an artifice fan
a slave in a hunt
short lungs
for the petals of harvested plagues
one more for the border
send & receive
a flood for a serpent
the run of its service is marked
with enemy rumors
for steel in the wool
walking the stations of light
without being there
under shields in the glow of a move
a river will empty itself
and repay with its bread
to the end of a city
¿why haven't you planted the floor?
in a way that the sound rides along
all woven
to pace and renew
shouldering eyes
count here for a stick
hear the first rain
in a service of holes

the green of a bubble turns over
for riots that float
through an underground bus

FROM COUNTER DAEMONS—4D

[MONTUNO DE AGUA]

i wear what the solvent has made from the rain
in the foam of a flood of a country that aches
in the square that a circle dissects
in the traveling song that a tear sews for more
in the star that the ground fills with worms

i promise you wounds in the migrating birds
every magical word has a path
every sound has a roof on its traveling tongue
where radios rob in deserted descents
there's a red point of light on my head

where shanty towns root you to member the sky
where death becomes shiny with sweat
where windows dissolve with the road and return

i tremble with bubbles aligned with my heart
switches light up on the screen
in the empty recursion that fills me with leaves
in the house of a Moor
in a sea of concrete

i am falling from signals that pace around doors

i am thumping my feet for the grease

machines pull the saddles on top of the horns
machines run the empty incision that beats
fingers run more from the house than the heat
still forces unwind for cold steel

i memorize patterns that burn in the air

i shadow the icing on cakes

i follow the seams that the fuse won't cut off

every day i dissect my release
every glass in the eye pulls my face to a vein
all the bytes in my skin fill with seas
in the parallel seat of the sane

i purse all the freedom of bees

i hearse in a traveling womb

of the window that planets insert
of the tunnels that once were the morning for free
unwinding the space of the lame

i retry with the failed iron bars

i eject with the smile of a snake

i restart for the blank in my eyes, for the face of disguise

i shutdown in the dark of the night

i log off in the forest of death

interrupting the circular tent
the ghost of a chance of a touch
the flow of the net

i send ammo to daemons and bleed

i receive in the husk of my end

for the lock that undoes my retreat
for returns that explode every grief
for the numbness that plants all the clouds
in the holes of descent

i make salt for the failure that sees

i step on the straw on the grounds of the stalls

i walk barefoot twelve miles for a breath

i crawl through the fields of thick lungs and breathe out

in the shards of the mirror that stuck in the core
in the doves that move scrolls for the horse
in the lockdown that cameras record from afar

i see murders in 5 empty rooms

i bang on the door like a heart in an egg

i warm

the picture of sleep
the knot of friend

i turn all the circles for wind

[EL HUERCO]

(In Asturian mythology it is said that when someone is going to die, a double with the image of this person passes through the person's life. This double is called "El Huerco." El Huerco exists, according Asturian tradition, in order that the person is able to more easily settle her/his affairs in the world of the living before entering the world of the dead.)

i solve all the lines that the knot piles with salt, in ruts and in fog
no answer for us, or for me or for anywhere slotted to Run
like serpents that open the cut of a war, like talking in water
there is more to the bag in the sky that the wind fills with words
not faults, not wearing, not broken. when peoples like lightning renew
in the hammer of blanks, in the tracks of a cog, in the fallen disease of a load,
families split—under logs in the shine of a seam, a saddle becomes the resolve
to section like comments, to fall with the glare of the screen, in staples,
in runners, in the memory growing to widen a bullet returned to the air.
unseen, it relives all the ports of the lung, a window relays in its jaw
and services skins for the soft undertow, in a tank with the shore of the
wind.

it makes more, or makes rest, or retreats to the softening light of a wick,
it soaks on the ruffle of games to the east of its bark, or backgrounds,
or severs, the mobs of raw lists, the cold of a note, the ascii in beta
is done. yellow makes more to the wandering sail of my sleeve, orange
and red slow the mountainous lines in the warning believed to be trust
stuff that wills parallel stinging returns—some twos on the lip,
some shields that the morning fills less with a road
through steps, in step you are one: not the loss or a gun, but a walk

i break in the cut of a loom, in the separate station that air guns revolve, in the hole
that the stables for anything run into general strikes

i move surfs to reload

for the warning that piles all the mineral stalls
into horses that breathe in a stack,
in starting the barefoot return to the heat,
warning the backgrounds of screens
all frozen to pile its incisions for anyone making the host reel with flies—the four,
the four of a face, the four of the winds, the four of the radio teeming with limbs.

¿what space is unraveled in rust for the morning returned to the main() of the air?
a soldier equipped with thick locusts, cicadas and goats for an oracle's fit,
a background of tunneling paws for the backward return to the husk, the lighter
inception of steel in Toledo, the ties to the grounding return of a rim, the double
to sidle a stash of real rain
in a portal embossed to the letter repair of its plug
in trimming the memory side of the parallel take
to the slurping in stained winter bogs.
spring falls—with the blades that the pier filled with pearls, in the bay of the torn.

odds fill my tunnels that newer returns carve with light, at the top, after lips,
rudders on severing slips, on the cut-off that peels every segment of dying
relearned
to the warning that sits all my memories set to upload in the fields of wild cells,
in the solid BEFORE of a shirt that thin memory scores to uphold, unwinding
the shore

under planets they skirted for doubles
its starting to steal—
thick gravel—
a blistering oxygen tent—

i walk by the hay bales that travel through knotted aortas,
the hummingbird crash of a sunny list womb
pays targets their seminal fines,
the toll by the proceeds of arid design
play dead by the west
in touch with a god that is fed as the torch
in the hands of the tag—my words in two teeth

few pockets fill frozen cadavers
for piled up reports
my eye fills with camps, the sound
of its news, with ashes in morning, a lens, the calls
from your prison BEFORE there was none
to bait with a medal the worms
under surplus and moves.

when sporting the numbers
that call all the underground tunnels
to wind down their ships, their roots,
and their pings. you find scores under alleys
in time with the marks of its skin, its muscle,
a separate hull. a hatchet reports in solution, the patches
that hold every circle on simple regressions
outside, quotations that fill all the metal incisions
with learning to bathe around sewage, it purifies
bread. lighting the candle that plays
all the dollars with eyes, the stick
makes more wings, a traveling
pore that the seasons repair
without anyone calling—
the start of a con: the whistles of widowing stools
in the rainbows that call—without a Return,
with sordid connections, with spouts
that hold letters for warnings in separate pools,
aiming for radios playing the heat, the tip
of the Baja, spheres in the fields of their seams
swing open to pace on a speech, the speaker
that blames and retries,
the column becomes its divide,
the click is this side of the screen,
and it lights on a turn ☒

LUIS FELIPE FABRE

SEIS POEMAS

J' AIME ROLAND BARTHES

para Octavio Moreno Cabrera

Una señora se detiene frente al escaparate de una pastelería
en una calle de París
y —*voilà!*— es convertida en una imagen de París.

Digamos que se llama Madame Quintane: ¿está posando?

Digamos que Madame Quintane
aparece en la foto en sustitución de la Torre Eiffel.

No es un retrato de Madame Quintane (abrigo negro, sombrero
de visón, invisible amor por los gatos): es
una vista panorámica:

una tarjeta postal: “Ahora estoy en París
(donde tomé esta foto). Una ciudad fascinante.
En dos días parto rumbo a Londres. Besos.”

Madame Quintane, Rue Lamarck, Pain de Luxe: ¡click!

CARTEL

para Demián Flores Cortés

Tesis: el Ocelote Jiménez: 86 kg., 1.75 mts., técnico.

Antítesis: el Dr. Abismo: 89 kg., 1.78 mts., rudo.

Síntesis: dos luchadores que se anudan no son una síntesis:
es una llave: el abrazo
del oso invertido: ¡lona!

Hipótesis: después
de perder la máscara optó por perder
el resto en pulquerías y cabaretes de quinta: qué cliché:

el Ocelote Jiménez: un fotgrabado anónimo
impreso en un papel de olvido: un cartel
en la barda leprosa.

EL CORRIDO DEL AHUIZOTE

Éste es el corrido del Ahuizote: corrido
pues lo corrieron del trabajo.
Adiós: lo despidieron.

Currículum del Ahuizote: azote
de los tiranos, chahuistle de los políticos:
periodista y monero feroz ofrece sus servicios.

Pero no hay trabajo, no hay trabajo, no hay trabajo:
en este valle de biznagas
no hay trabajo:
hay

un águila parada sobre un nopal devorando una serpiente:
caricatura donde el águila es el patrón,
y la serpiente devorada, el obrero. ¿Y el nopal?

Y el nopal allí nomás:
pedestal sostenido a base de limosna: una gota de lluvia
no es lluvia, pero aguantar,
aguantar: ése es el oficio de los cactus.

Mas si osare
un extraño enemigo
profanar con sus plantas las plantas
que de algo le valgan las espinas a las tunas:

así es que aguas, señores empresarios. Atentamente,
el Ahuizote. Adiós: lo despidieron.

EXVOTO

Exvoto: gracias a San Sebastián por los favores concedidos.
Ex libris: este poema es de San Sebastián.

Imagen de San Sebastián: un cuerpo atravesado
de dardos por amor a Cristo. Imagen de Cristo:
pez pero a la vez cordero: ¡misterio, misterio!

De San Sebastián podría decirse
lo contrario al puerco espín: alfiletero: erizo inverso:
un muchacho ambiguo como una heroinómana:

ah, las bodas contranatura entre la carne y la flecha.

LA PETENERA

Barco de piedra, buque de plomo: canta la Petenera:
sirena de cabaret: perdición
de los marineros

travestida de escamas finas: lentejuelas
brillando en la noche, pero ella,
ella es la noche

que la luz revela al deslumbrar: faro que enceguece.

Y desde la oscuridad llega al caracol de la oreja
la canción de los náufragos
que dice: Petenera,

Petenera:
entre las piernas
le cuelga un pez: ¡ay, mamá!:
entre las piernas le cuelga un camarón:
¡ay, papá!: no se apene: pa' hundirse da igual el mar o la mar.

NOTA ROJA

Diéronle a elegir entre el dinero o la vida: aseguran
los testigos. Pero la señora
no tenía: lleváronse el monedero sólo de recuerdo:

el monedero vacío: emblema del estómago:
le robaron su pobreza: le obsequiaron
una bala: joya al incrustarse en una carne que nada poseía. ☒

JOE AMATO

POEM WITH SURPRISE AT END

Hi. There's a brown body over there, and a white one over here. Let's put them together to see whether one gets darker or the other gets lighter or they both get lighter and darker. First we must ascertain whether they're alive.

Wait—we've got a better idea: there's a woman over here, and a man over there (both breathing heavily). In the script we'll be asking you to write, the ideology of one will be perfectly counterpointed by the aesthetics of the other. You are free to consider too whether the interplay of gender and sexuality might make it difficult for either or both to approach the condition of the almighty.

Next comes a simple demonstration for single moms, among others. The bar is filled with friends and acquaintances. If you can distinguish between them, you're on the road to recovery. If not, you have a price on your head, and you must forever keep to your kind.

Oh and we mustn't neglect that pesky kid racing in circles in the chrome-plated wheelchair. Conservative or liberal? We have it on good authority that the kid's a

postmodernist who speaks the truth in an inflected English, *cabrón*. Patch on his eye, his left eye, and he's from money, to boot. Please cast your vote as soon as you are able.

It is time now to connect the dots. For the purpose of this final exercise, you may assume that it is polite to point. First, please describe your feelings at this moment. Next, please explain, to the best of your ability, why you feel the way you do. The last thing we ask of you is to behave as if your description and your explanation were one and the same.

This will give you some idea of what we mean by *pointillism*. ☒

CUATRO POEMAS

URBS DIXIT

Esperaba una llamada cuando
en pleno Buenos Aires fueron liberados
y desapareció todo vestigio
—proverbial astucia.
Brotaron los temores
(a veces conviene callarse).

A la misma hora y a metros del lugar,
recolección de basura,
máquinas tragamonedas
y en esos paseos, tolderías y colchones,
juegos, bancos, cestos, bebederos,
vecinos que venden sus propias pertenencias
y sueñan con volver al empleo
—una emoción social,
una emoción ligada al propio yo.

La noche avanza en el bar:
dos voces para respirar otro aire.
El país de donde había salido
ya no existía
—existe sólo en el pasado
(está en la mira, aguarda).

A la misma hora y a metros del lugar,
sobre el caracol del paso a nivel, rezaron,
y un tren aminoró su marcha.

Soportar demoras o no poder viajar,
o hacer una huelga, cortar un puente.
Una fuerza fuera de control:
con guantes y uniformes desfilaron
en la calle peatonal
paralela al muro de ladrillos.
Brotaban los temores
—la violencia es hija de la violencia.

(Los versos de este poema son frases extraídas sin modificaciones de artículos y noticias sobre Buenos Aires, aparecidos en los diarios *La Nación*, *Clarín* y *Página 12* durante la semana del 21 al 27 de abril de 2003.)

ESCENAS URBANAS

I

La ciudad se abre a sábanas de quejas,
vuela sobre el alba de los latidos invisibles.

Cuando buscabas las preguntas,
en el laberinto lamían tus párpados
como plato vacío y abandonado.

Los perros persiguen el hilo ronco
de las voces escondidas bajo el puente.

Madrugada de ciénagas insomne
—hay ángeles desnudos en las piedras rotas.

Lobo y manzana reunidos en la plaza.
Con la cabellera y la saliva
hacen nubes y palabras.

Las palabras ahora se desgranán
en los huecos de las zanjas.

II

Encuentra el lirio en la esquina,
el ramo a mano:
es de estuco y cera.
Y en el cauce de la calle
el agua se desata,
sin dormir, abraza.

La mañana de mármol pule sus aristas.
Como a galope desbocado
va el grito y se contiene.
Por el alfiler vuelve a la boca.

El lirio en la esquina tiene cuello y filo.
Olvidado en el vaso espera otros ojos,
Bebe leche de escarcha.

OTROS POEMAS

¿Y pretendías sensación de duda?
¿Y era entonces dormir y despertar,
nacer en el fuego y deshacer en el agua?
¿Y creías en la quietud del viajero
que iba al viaje sin vacío
y endulzaba su temor con el almíbar
de la lata almacenada?
¿Y en la corriente del día
gravitabas y esperabas
antes de mirar por el agujero,
la cerradura de la puerta que separa
tu cuerpo del espacio?
¿Y eras el enfermo o el verdugo
o el mártir, figurando sucesivo
en los modos del olvido?

.....

este monólogo apenas filtra la voz
que entra indecisa por el trazo de hollín
o luz cuadrícula—equivoca el rodeo,
el comienzo al hablar, pedir
ojos adentro, aún impresa la idea del yo
que lo hará legible, que recorta una forma
de boca, de mandíbula—juicio—
y repite el signo que hace objeto

este monólogo es donde camina el personaje,
recostado, somnoliento,
que complace su espejo, y va y viene, inestable
o él mismo, falsamente,
corta a cuchillo el presente,
y tan nada en la órbita oval del universo

de donde origina su pliegue,
el hilo y la corteza,
ya es pensamiento en la piel y en la piedra
propagando su fluido inevitable

LÍNEAS EN LA MANO DE VENUS

1

¿Qué abandonaría a la mención de tus palabras
—templo seguro, refugio de amables brazos?
Como si nuevos puntos de partida
fueran posibles al cobijo del mar, a la luz del rayo
se enciende en tus palabras pasajera llama
y nada es error ni sombra, nazco
un día ingrávida, desgarrada mi carne
sin dolor —¿el pico del milano busca la hierba,
equivocado el zorro por su presa?
Ejemplo cualquiera del encuentro fortuito,
del extravío, como viento me obstino
en el olvido gradual.

2

después que volviera del viaje
el capitel congelado, la piedra,
nada se derrumbaría—
como un muro lo distante echaría raíz,
acogedor—los cabellos de
ella, bordeándole el óvalo del rostro,
ahora eran cortos,
y su voz sonaba herida, huidiza,
y aquellas frases y los gestos

ya no se acomodaban a la máscara
de otro encuentro, en otro noviembre

después que volviera del viaje
confiaría que estaba viviendo lo vivido,
otra vez, sobre el “engaño de los sentidos”
(¿y qué más podría pedir
a ese desierto evocado,
nocturno, prioridad del silencio,
sórdidamente sereno?)

3

Ocupo el cuarto y el espacio
absorbe, como camaleón,
nuestras rarezas.
Dormías cerca de mí,
y tu sueño, quién sabe,
se deslizaba al murmullo
—afuera no había paisaje,
pero yo empujaba el aire,
lo hacía sutil,
para que se disolviera al amanecer.

4

las bellas observaciones
que corren como lágrimas o sudor
no parecerán otro objeto
sino una sombra parpadeante

subyace un sabor indefinible,
o no tiene sabor,
tu labio se confunde sobre mi lengua

me separo de tu cuerpo
pero no quiero despedirme de tu voz
me separo caminando sobre el agua
y el agua empieza a sostenerme
como camino de laja, como sal

no puedo acomodarme
a tu piel—
la cavidad de las sílabas
entra en el espacio de la tierra desierta
escucho y respiro su aspereza,
su tibia aspereza

5

duermo a tu lado
pero me pienso ausente
—calma imperceptible

puse un velo marino,
un pliegue de caracola
para acostumbrar la respiración
a tus párpados

desciende entonces el tiempo oscuro,
deshecho, horas en el gran diamante
y en ese silencio poroso
vuelvo a lo húmedo,
disuelvo la idea de lo absoluto
para parecerme más a tu forma

vuelvo a lo húmedo
sin imágenes, sin sueños
—mi boca exhala la larva,
se abre despaciosamente ☒

RICARDO CORTEZ CRUZ

SWEET HONEY ON THE ROCKS

CONTAINS MUSIC SAMPLES OF SHINE'S "THE LIFE," TRUTH'S "ADDICTIVE," ANI DIFRANCO'S "JOYFUL GIRL," AND WILL DOWNING'S "SOMETIMES I CRY"

"No one has ever loved me like you do."

—Rachelle Ferrell singing, "I Can Explain"

"The project princess goes and kicks it / project princess goes and kicks it / with the hip-hop / and ya and ya and ya don't / and ya and ya and ya don't / and ya and ya and ya don't / and ya and ya and ya don't stop."

—Tracie Morris' "Project Princess" poem

She lived for fatal beauty: Bitch planned to walk around with a body bag, with homicide, until the police stopped her or she was dead. Girl leased her soul to the devil with the option to buy.

She couldn't help it. Taking risks was her habit. That's why niggas called her "Sista Single," 'cause they argued you'd have to be crazy to want to be with her. Prone to *having fits of rage and having to inhale something pure just to settle down. The process of numbing herself eventually became known to her as "chui lung" or "chasing the dragon" because the spiraling smoke looked like a dragon's tail.*

She had read *The Nigger Bible* and *Dopefiend*, and found herself to be a character like that: She remembered once sitting in a corner on a barstool by an open window, nodding out in the fading light after plunging the dull needle down into her groin, the pus running out of the sore and down her leg. She recalled dozing off in a blue funk while the needle dangled from her thigh. "I hate being poked," Sista Single always said. Her given name was Misty Night—people on the street imagined her as Misty Knight, hailing her as "heroin(e) for all times."

As a woman of marvel, you open your eyes and discover that you are sweating yourself, that pointillism is not working for you...

Every time she used the needle, it kept haunting her. "Boo!" it said.

Finally, that fucking prick scared the hell out of her. Afraid that she might lose enough blood to die or at the very least become anemic for life, Sista Single checked herself into the city hospital. She was supposed to stay in bed for tests, a CAT scan of all things, the pale doctor treating her like a pussy because she was "overreacting," he said, the dark hair creeping down the front of his face like poison ivy. "Doctor Doom looks extremely shady," she said to herself, down in the bed.

"I've been having enormous Headaches Dizziness Confusion Fainting Spells put on me!" she insisted, telling people out on the street. "They go untreated," she said. Sista, single, mother of one, adds that she escaped from Mercy Hospital because she didn't think she could pay the bills.

The needle checked her out. (First giving her the evil eye.) It signed her name in blood since it felt close to her; after all, she and it were family, and they had made a pact to always be together no matter what. "Scag, sangre," it said, looking at each bill attached to a clipboard, showing her "payment due" in red on paper. The needle put scratches on her light-colored skin as if taking doctor's notes. "Sangriento," the needle said. "A bloody mess."

It was the needle in the eye. It was the needle that inevitably made her stop with the coke and the cocktails and rock and the shooting up of the heroin/heroine, which initially felt really good inside of her until the feeling somehow and mysteriously faded away, poof!, like magic. Probably when she became numb to it and hadn't had that blissful flashback for years. Or, when she had begun to dislike herself as a woman because she was always sticking herself, constantly in relationships with pricks, which gave her the shakes. Maybe the needle forced her to quit because she found herself regularly thinking about getting some just like men do.

And she wanted to be free of that thang. Be autonomous again. Be a woman. (And the needle was God, punishing her, pushing her, for that unspeakable sin. And the needle was God, taking pleasure in her pain.)

"I always shed a lot of blood," Sista Single mumbled to herself.

The needle in the eye made her stop. She was shooting up one day—frightened, frustrated, and alone—and caught the needle in front of her eye. The misery dripped from the end of it, and she tried to soak up the tears with a swab of cotton wool.

One thing led to another.

Ironically, it was so hard (pointedly hard) for Sista Single to remember when she first started chasing the goddamn dragon. (The brain has to forget certain things in order to make way for new memories.) She only knew how bad she wanted a fix. All she ever needed was a cupcake. But, that's what made it so sickening.

Then eventually it became just sorry: The idea of spending life looking for cupcakes. So stupid, for real.

"Why won't you cooperate?" Sista Single once asked the needle. You see, it was the little things. The little things began to get on her nerves a lot.

When you shoot up, everything goes straight into the bloodstream. She prayed that she didn't get Strychnine or hotshots. Even things extremely small got to her.

Sad that the pain of the loss of self-identity showed in her voice the way it did in Billie Holiday's while the drugs were on the verve/verge of doing her in. The taste of the grave in her mouth. Making her a fugee without a cause. Poor Billie died in the fifties before the invention of afro puffs, color television, the revolution, the signs of black power: The passing owners of the speakeasies refusing to pay the lady for even the stellar performances—they were sellouts—and instead telling her afterwards to have a coke and a smile and shut the fuck up.

It's the shit and bacteria that comes with a shot.

Sista Single *was* Billie Holiday. Performing her version of "Deep Song." Saying "You're My Thrill" because the words were loaded. Enjoying the concept behind "Don't Explain" because she knew that some things were not meant to be understood.

"I am that I am," said Sista. Single. As mulata as a Spanish nut dipped in white chocolate. Passed around between uncles while a little girl. Stockpiling slim cigarettes in her bag, packing shit to numb herself because she hated it when they

got on her. Black, Puerto Rican (attended Boricua College) and white from El Barrio. Perhaps it was that sailing around on the trade boats in the East River or around the harbor that threw her into an identity crisis. Or, maybe it was the trip Sista Single had at Myrtle Beach where she discovered being terribly allergic to semen, the natives speaking geechee to her every time she tried to explain why she fell into the beady, white sands naked and unconscious and with footprints beside her where God had carried her: That first time of dropping dead hit her real bad, slapped her in her face, even woke her up a bit it hurt so bad.

She doesn't think of herself as a junkie anymore, but a user.

"Hey, don't I know you, what's your name?" asked Sista Single, a little upright / uptight on the street corner in a short black pleather skirt and white silk blouse, toting a black sequin purse tightly under her arm. She had lived the mob life seemingly forever, was attracted to mob men, gangsters, gangbangers. She called out like a reporter, paparazzi, flagging down a rich man with a familiar face as he exited a small grocery store. (He had taken a glimpse of her breasts, solicited her.)

"You talking to me?" asked the white man. Old enough to be her father. Wearing a dark sport coat and a power tie that was bright and flaming red like Mars, the knot twisted and in really bad shape—telling her something but she couldn't figure out what it was.

You know my goddamn name, said the needle slowly.

Yes, but I'm not talking to you, replied Sista Single, cautiously and quietly to avoid sounding mean because she was afraid of that needle, of what it could do to her, what it might do to her, where it could/would take her. The needle's habit of prodding her, controlling her, was horrifying. But in the rough neighborhoods of the city, you learn to never publicly show your fears; you bluff.

"Around here, everybody calls me Bobby Milk."

"Nice name, cute, but out here on the street it makes you sound like a hustler or freak. Are you a hustler or freak, Bobby? Would you tie a bitch up?"

"I'm whatever you want me to be, baby. Around here everybody's got a fucking alias, sometimes five or six. What's yours? I like to hear it from the horse's mouth. You can't trust these people. People say I am a battered, world-weary owner of a nightclub. They say I run the casinos. Only one thing's for sure, I don't like talking about myself or my personal life. Understand?"

"Tell me about you. I know you call yourself somethin'."

"For heaven's sake, this is just like *A Night At The Movies*," Sista Single said, brushing on polish from a bottle—hitting her fingernails, turning them into blood. "Have you ever read this book by Robert Coover? So-o-o good. Misty. My name is Misty. Sometimes I get a little confused about myself, who I am and the like. But, I'd rather be dead than feel my life spinning out of control. And I want you to know that I find you soothing. I mean, listening to you, your authoritative voice, makes a woman feel like a charmed snake. A captured cobra. As far as I'm concerned, that's it, I've now told you everything."

"Too much information," whispered Bobby, running two fingers down his right cheek, wondering if people would notice him with a fucking mole. "Jesus. What's wrong with you? Ain't you got any family values? Huh?"

"I'm stronger than you think, daddy," Sista Single said. "That's why I'm alone. That's why I have no friends."

"You need something to hold onto," Bobby said, clenching his teeth, banging the drum deliberately. "You need something to feel good about. Tonight, I'm going to show you your roots." Bobby said that tonight, while the moon was made of blue cheese, he was going to put roots on her.

"Period, huh?" Sista Single asked, propping herself up against the brick wall, back sliding. "That's it? No doubt about it? Just like that?" She snapped her fingers as if to say "come on," then felt herself beginning to fall.

Bobby stopped a taxi driver and slipped him some crumpled cash. He took her for a ride. On Broadway, the longest street in the world.

To Soul Cafe on West 42nd Street in Hell's Kitchen. They came in through a small back door. She peeked to her right and left as they darted through the kitchen, Sista Single accidentally stepping on a large roach—its insides spilling out, Bobby watching the gang of cooks watching them, pointing to the roach on the floor, insisting that they pick it up.

The couple followed an Oriental throw rug into the main room. A hip bar, almost a kind of dinner theatre, the area pitch black, full of Nicorettes lighting up.

Time to smoke, thought Sista Single. A quartet sang "Go Away Little Girl."

But as soon as the live jazz and rhythm and blues quit, people stood up, shuffled their feet over to a mike, and did spoken word stuff, asking everybody in the room for their undivided attention.

Bobby led Sista Single to a round skirted table, already set with two large smoky-vanilla candles and a black rose as the centerpiece, and pulled out her rot-iron chair for her to sit down. Without saying another word to each other, they immediately grabbed their menus and searched for something appropriate to eat: \$12-24 entrees, "we close at midnight," "don't ask us for a doggy bag—it would cost you ten bones," "we offer some of the best selections of Spanish and Chilean wines," "try our deluxe, fancy, caramel and cream-filled chocolates imported from Holland," "and speaking of exotic, we also serve live octopus, a Korean favorite that can choke and kill you, so you'll want to be careful with that," "finally, grab a fortune cookie on the way out!" Sista Single swallowed a very rich appetizer, a sweet confection-coated pretzel, and nearly backed up, snuffed it, dropped dead.

It was easier to live through the eye of a needle than to live or live with your eyes open.

"I'll get a drink," Bobby said. Then he scooted his chair out, casually sauntered over to the bar, and perched himself on a low stool. Sista Single noticed that Bobby sat sociably at the bar, treating everyone to a drink, while a guitar gently wept, playing ballads for the very tired and very sad lotus eaters. A nasty-looking Mexican belly dancer dressed in glitter knocked over table drinks with her hips and blew angel dust in his face. This guy, Bobby Milk, is *Desperado*, she thought. *El Mariachi. From Dusk Til Dawn*. In the meantime, Bobby fed himself rocket fuel, lighted, and began smoking a Kool cigarette. While Bobby smoked, he noticed that Sista could barely purse her lips.

Five minutes later, Bobby waltzed back to their table, throwing coins at the pianist's big head and pretending that nothing ever happened.

"My advice to you is to take things as they are," Bobby said, sitting back down, eating white corn tortillas chips with a little bit of salsa. "Punch when you have to punch, kick when you have to kick."

"What'll it be today?" Sista Single asked, staring at the menu. She wiped her eyes as if the menu was made of onions. She thought Bobby was too good for/to her. The quartet sang "Little Girl Blue" while Bobby greeted his admirers.

They decided on the same thing: Chicken marinated in a spicy tomato sauce with yellow corn and dirty rice, which didn't seem possible. The busboy brought a hot dish out to them, a platter of steaming food piled six inches high and garnished with green Jalapeña peppers, bell peppers, and banana peppers.

"This dish is dirty," said Sista Single.

"What?" asked Bobby, already eating, tasting his food slowly, smelling it, noticing a hint of marijuana in it.

"Can you bring me another one?" Sista Single asked, digging into her purse for something.

"Sure, mama chola," said the host. "It's on the house, mamacita."

The young black busboy brought over a new piece of stoneware, full of food, staring at the smoothness of her lips. "That'll be five dollars extra, boss."

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" Bobby asked. "Get out of here." He paid the boy in quarters.

"Rob, don't be mad," said Sista Single, scraping, filing down, the surface and tips of her fingernails which were covered with Urban Decay. "I am here to lend, to give my tongue to voiceless Negro boys.

"And I'm thirsty. Is there something I can drink that's not too sweet?"

"Do I fuckin' look like Rob to you?" Bobby asked, firing up.

"All we have is Viña Mayor Reserva 1991 and 1989 Marqués De Murrieta Ygay," the host interrupted, placing his palm on Bobby's shoulder and dinner jacket as if he knew him well, was willing to go fishing with him.

"What's the difference?" Bobby asked.

"Well, sir, 1989 is a splendid red conveying exceptional quality, produced in limited quantities. We do have a great Concha Y Toro, a 1994 Merlot from Rapel Valley and a wonderful, spicy, 1995 Chardonnay with a touch of vanilla in it, but you never mention that you wanted a Chilean wine, so bump that—there's no sense in me talking about it. You must consider the clarity and appropriateness of color and the situation. Ask yourself, 'is it pleasant or unappetizing?' Finally, is the finish or aftertaste long in duration? Does it make you want more?"

"I want something long and lingering," Sista Single chimed in, staring at Bobby across the table, "perhaps with the fragrance of roasted nuts."

"What I recommend is the Viña Mayor," said the host. He watched as Sista Single unconsciously spread her legs. "Special from the best reserves, it ain't from

the Villages but it's a highly complex, red table wine from Ribera Del Duero. Imported into New Jersey, it's very, very dry but nicely balanced. It's a little stronger in alcohol content, but I am confident the very pretty señora will like it. There's nothing fruity about it."

"Well, go get it and stopped being cute," Bobby ordered. "One more fucking snicker will finish you in this business. I know a thousand wiseguys like you. You're nothing."

"Whatever," said the host. "Say, by the way, aren't you Robert De Niro? Can I have your autograph on this clean, scented cotton napkin?"

"Get out of here!" Bobby ordered. "Disappear."

Sorry, said the host in Spanish, wiping his hands with a bleached white towel while heading towards the kitchen. "Suciedad." At least it sounded like "sorry" to Bobby.

"What's wrong, you can't handle being a star?" Sista Single asked.

"I believe in privacy," Bobby said. "Not even blockbuster movies can change that."

"You have integrity—I like that," said Sista Single. Then she felt for herself. You know, what you do when you peek down at your body and resting limbs, rubbing your arms and hands, to make sure that your skin is still the same, that "beautiful" is still in the eye of the beholder, that you are not a monster growing claws.

Bobby Milk watched her, stared at her, marveled: Her nails still coated with blood, that Urban Decay. Sista Single poked her long fingers through her red hair and rubbed her scalp, suggesting that she had a sick headache. But, Bobby Milk also noticed the tar, rust, and gun metal on her fingertips. And without realizing it, she revealed to him parts of herself that were oil slick, rusty, pallor, and prissy.

"Why are you pretending?" Bobby Milk asked, raising his voice now because a band, a motley crew, of skinny, stomping Latino metalheads the complexion of piña coladas had suddenly rushed out onto stage and started playing as if serenading them.

"Todos Tus Muertos [All Your Dead]!" a spectator yelled to Sista Single from a nearby table. He smiled darkly at her, like he knew who she was, like Knights/Nights were his best friends.

"What do you mean?" Sista Single asked.

"I mean, why don't you just go back to the way you were. You're trying too hard to be something you're not. I know your whole fucking family. Your whole family, for Christ's sake! You live in Brooklyn; got two older half-sisters, one of which is already dead and the other is constantly on the breathalyzer, which is as good as dead if you know what I mean. You got a little brother who plays wheelchair basketball, a wacked-out mother who works overtime as the principal for John F. Kennedy High in the Bronx, one of those schools employing that new Gateway Program where the kids go through a series of comical interviews for admission."

"Don't try to psychoanalyze me with my whole life's story!" Sista Single snapped. "For all intent and purposes, I ain't got no family, man! So if my black sister chooses to be pimped by a roughneck, that's her business. And if my mama works hard for the money, why do you care?"

"Why don't you just drop me if I'm such a bad seed?"

"Hey, I'm no angel," Bobby said, half-smiling, his teeth crooked. "There is a certain combination of anarchy and discipline in the way I work."

The busboy brought over a covered dish.

"What's this?" Sista Single asked.

"Something special," said Bobby. "He wants you to have it."

"What is it?" asked Sista Single.

"It's a slice of Dutch apple pie—you know, with the crumbs on top," said Bobby, "because all you ever wanted was a piece of the pie."

"Get a doggy bag," he said, "no matter what they say. Let's split this scene."

She stole something from the dinner table, but Bobby asked no questions. Everybody he knows steals something.

Once outside, Bobby hurriedly gestured to flag down a new taxi near Port Authority Bus Terminal, where a gray-haired man sat calmly in an office talking on the telephone.

Sista Single started across the street, to ask to use the pay phone because she didn't think that a couple like them, a white star playing around with black heroine, would be able to catch a taxi in Hell's Kitchen. A shiny, beady, black mamba/momma raced up to them holding an infant carrier and started going off, striking Bobby on

the back and shoulders, spewing venom in his eyes. "Tell her what you did *to me*, Bob-bee!" she hollered. "Tell her!"

"Baby, he couldn't keep his lips off my breasts all the time while I was pregnant. By the time I gave birth to the twins, he had sucked me dry! Stop and think about it, girlfriend? How do you think he got the name 'Milk'?"

"What are you talking about, Toukie!" Bobby shouted, pushing her to the curb. "Huh, what are you talking about!"

"Somebody get her out of here before I hurt her," Bobby said, and a black security guard in a tank top and with a fat head quickly stepped up and put a strong arm around Toukie's waist. He picked her up and off the pavement, then dragged her away towards night-watch across the street, where people were being held captive inside Plexiglas as if they were bugs.

"You bastard, you asshole, where's the child support, huh?!" And that was the last thing they heard, the last thing they understood. Toukie had gotten carried away.

Sista Single saw the milky spittle drip slowly from Bobby's eye. He seemed to be lamenting a little.

By this time, there was a taxi waiting for them, the Latino driver sticking his nose out of the window and into their business like an exotic parrot, chattering in Spanish and Portuguese as if threatening to fly away.

"Get in," Bobby said softly, holding the door open while she dropped her head. "Try not to bang your head, huh?"

"These are the last days," said Bobby, pointing out of the window at the city while they cruised. "I mean, look at all of this. This is where we live. It's not what it used to be. Nobody wants to care for it anymore. I mean, this cocksucker Rudy Giuliani for Mayor gets voted in because of his money. He and his gang of real estate developers have plans to build a wall of skyscrapers.

"Jesus Christ," he mumbled. "How in the fuck are we supposed to see over that?"

They drove to a flat place on Pleasant Avenue, Bobby talking only about sports, things like scoring and boxing and how to turn yourself into a good fighter. On Pleasant Avenue, Bobby tried extremely hard to be romantic. He even kissed her once on the forehead and on her cheek before they moved on.

"I suspect that under that cynical shell you're at heart a sentimentalist," Sista Single said. He squeezed her hand as if he'd never let her go.

He took her to the Studio Museum in Harlem. "My parents were painters," he said. "They preferred the stained glass view of life over Windex. See that framed picture of Christopher Columbus taking over America? They are responsible for that. It is inspiring to them."

"As the sun rises for some, it sets on others, making absolutely everything in this world seem darker," Bobby said, getting back into the car. "That's just the way it is. But the truth is, we share a common ground, you and I. We both have our ups and downs. But we've adapted. We've learned how to take the good with the bad."

First, you are depressed. So you use. You feel the rush, the highs of heroin that blur the glaring differences between sky and soil. You breathe the fresh air as it flows through your "ghetto." You realize how much you need. You inhale and inhale, wanting more, becoming depressed again in due time. Before: your lungs were already irritated. Now: they hate you. They give you bronchial complaints, but you're so out of it that you think it's funny. You feel the tickle being suppressed in your throat.

"So? What, you're trying to climb into my skin now? Don't try to psychoanalyze me. Don't try to climb into my skin, okay, Bobby?"

"It's just that I know these streets," said Bobby, his voice trembling a bit during the bumpy ride. "This is Spidertown. So many of the people here are creepy. I know. I used to while away my time here with a small-time gang. These are mean streets."

"You are prejudice beyond belief," Sista Single said, beginning to lose her voice as well. "You've got a negative opinion about everything. A lump in your throat as if you had somebody dick's to get where you are. I'm surprised that your mouth hasn't gotten you into even more trouble than it has. Is the fact that your mouth was cocked open why you quit, why you decided to bow out?"

"Quit fucking what? I didn't quit. I never quit. What are you talking about?"

"I mean, why'd you quit with the gang?"

"Cause I needed to get paid. And don't ask. You remind me of why I prefer paperbacks to playmates.

"Are you hungry?" Bobby asked. "I'm hungry. Very hungry. I could eat a horse."

"Yes, I'm hungry," Sista Single replied before coughing. The cravings were slowly coming back to her. She was starting to feel a little sick but didn't want to say anything. Bobby asked the driver to take them to a nice Chinese restaurant.

"No MSG," said Sista Single. "Hypertension runs in the family."

"You could try Lin Lin's, but I like J. West," the driver said. Back through East Harlem to Hell's Kitchen. Bobby said he knew the place well. "The establishment there uses people made of paper to put on shows while you eat."

"You know que pasa, eh, ese?" The driver grinned, and Bobby gave him five.

When they got to J. West, Bobby instructed the cabbie to park at the valet and wait for them. "Wait," he said. Then he hurriedly got out of the car, went over to Sista Single's side, swung open the door, and rushed her inside as if there wasn't a moment to spare.

"Enter the dragon," said the short, Cantonese male restaurant manager, laughing lightly, as the couple blew by him while he was standing at the entrance. Sista Single gave the man a look, but Bobby paid him no attention.

They sat down in the foyer, next to fancy cabinets and shelves of decorated items made of porcelain and jade and cut glass and the like.

The front desk clerk, a petite and delicate Chinese woman around the corner, peeked to see who had entered and immediately spotted them, dropping the receipts, seemingly hurrying to service him, bowing before him. "May I have autograph please?" she asked.

And that's when Bobby finally went off, transforming himself into a raging bull in a china shop, the hostesses backing up in fear, slinging curtains around like matadors and allowing the candy dish full of Starlight to fall to the floor. Expensive collectors' plates shattered under the feet of customers and spectators trying to get out of his way. "This gets ridiculous!" Bobby shouted. "I can't have a good time anymore without somebody blowing it. Somebody in this world asking for more than what they should expect.

"Is this what you want?!" Bobby shouted, pointed at Sista like she was a ho. "Here! You can have it!" He fired a large roll of money and hit Sista Single on the

side of her face with it. Then he snatched her arm as she bent down to grab the money, twisting it like he did his tie, and led her out of the restaurant.

"When you lose your temper, you set fire to everything," said the tie, this time loud and clear so Sista Single could hear.

"Return of the dragon," said the manager as Bobby blew by him still paying the man no attention because he was nothing to Bobby. Nothing.

"Somebody shut her up and keep her quiet!" Bobby said, paying the cabbie extra to usher Sista Single into the car and close the door. They must have run through 10 red lights like rap mogul Puff Daddy and his date Jennifer López when he fled from authorities.

"Her very life depends upon it!" Bobby said.

"Hey, man, what is your problem?!" Sista Single shouted.

"Are you talkin' to me? You fuckin' talkin' to me?"

Bobby punched her eye, clenched his teeth, saying "nothing" to her. They turned onto Broadway, using it as a kind of middle passage, and headed towards Jersey. Score one for the woman, Sista Single thought, because even now life was still a game to her. She had played Bobby Milk like a little boy; she had turned De Niro into dinera.

Bobby took her to the fucking casinos where they spent the whole day together. But, Bobby never allowed Sista Single to gamble. "People who gamble with machines are losers," he said. "Live more for less," he said.

After night had snuck up on them, Bobby called a cab. "You're going home," he said, "to Brooklyn." But as soon as they got inside the car, he reached into his pocket and showed Sista Single something. "What is this?" he asked. "What the fuck is this?!"

Every day has a silver lining, right?

After I've smoked there always a bit of red deposit left. That's pure dope that I haven't absorbed. I keep this foil for the next morning. I heat up the red deposit until it turns into a drop, then I smoke it.

"I have no idea what that is," Sista Single said, privately wondering why her silver shadow wouldn't just go away, leave her for someone else.

"Don't lie to me!" Bobby shouted. And he slapped her everywhichway but loose. "You fuckin' know what this is! Don't lie to me! You know better!" Suddenly,

he stopped shouting, casting his eyes down in the direction of her feet, seemingly disgusted, his hands rubbing his forehead.

"Get out the car," he said lowly, turning away from her, averting her, avoiding her.

"Get out of the fucking car!"

She got out and slammed the door, then waved to another taxi, this time the driver a young black male that stopped his car immediately. She is alone, he thought, could be one helluva ride.

"What'cha wanna do, honey?" he asked, sinking into his seat, getting hard.

"Don't get heavy on me," Sista Single answered, flinging herself into the backseat of the car, then stretching out, relaxing her legs, her lips speaking to him. "I'm looking to use, and, you know. This is cupcake city, man. Take a guess where I'd like to go on a night like tonight and you can't lose."

When I am chasing the dragon, I am more sociable, more inclined to give some away. Compare it to someone who sits at the bar and treats everyone to a round. That's totally different from a woman sitting in the toilet on the sly because she's ashamed of her own blood.

After reaching deep into her purse—a great number of sequins collapsing onto the floor of the car, Sista Single gave the black taxi driver some icing on a cake, a large wad of ragged money that stuck inside of his pant pocket like chewed-up bubble gum. And they drove back down Broadway, the longest street in the world, with the radio loudly announcing that "the saint of the gutters" was dead. Sista Single rolled down her window, letting the fresh, crisp air in, and started searching for Bobby, who was probably somewhere laying low, playing black chess in Central Park as shown in the movies, hiding, studying his next move, waiting for the right time to comeback, and maybe, like in Hollywood, this was all not very real. They found themselves racing against time, apparently looking for some kind of sensible horizon or plateau but finding nothing. Though Sista felt impenetrable, felt impervious to pain, she privately interrogated herself with a mad rush of associated thoughts while the concreteness of the city transformed itself into a cemetery where death was everywhere and life was incredibly difficult to see.

BLACKOUT

The first step is to admit it: You are addicted; you are a user. Then tell yourself that you have to quit. Ask God for help. 'Cause if you can't feel anything, then it's shit.

With its engine a riot, the car sped, turning off the two-way street and down a lonely highway, road-kill everywhere as if an entire region of animals had been sacrificed so somebody, or something, evil could live; the solid yellow lines smeared with blood from here to eternity shouted out to them, begged them not to pass. Delirious, Sista Single took a steak knife out of her purse and slashed across her wrist and arm. Only a surface scratch. Almost like chicken scratch. However, she said “cut.”

The poor thing carried a gun, too, an unreliable 22, almost like a pea/pee shooter.

The cab driver noticed her turning around like she was searching for a place to shoot.

He turned on the interior lights and got ready for action. In her, he saw Christopher Walken, the druglord in the film *King of New York*. She wobbled and shook in the backseat of the taxi before nodding out, her body slumping over with change and a leftover piece of cake slipping out of her hands, falling from a black spoon. She was quite white now—her hands, her palms, her face—blood escaping her as if life had pimped her until it couldn’t take it any longer, as if all other previous encounters with men had given her too much sugar, turning her into a diabetic where even a wound considered minute and ineffectual by others would be devastating to her.

“You okay?” asked the driver, tilting his rearview mirror, squirting windshield wiper fluid, taking updates on her, stealing looks at her little body—her petite stature and straight legs, her seeming defenselessness and vulnerability, the small breasts, wondering what size cup she used. “You okay,” he asked again, “‘cause sometimes we say we’re alright and we ain’t alright.” He had asked this question many times before.

“Man, I told you I was cool,” Sista Single mumbled, spraying the driver with spittle, fogging the windows with her crank breath.

“Shit, fuckin east coast men,” she mumbled. She was hurting hell she was better off chasing the dragon in fucking Chinatown in Chicago she was so deliri-

ous that she wondered if the arm she had fucked up was the right arm. Her voice slowly died.

She fidgeted with some checks in her purse before pulling out her identification card and wincing at it. Her real name was Misty Night, and, unfortunately for her, she was still young.

The driver with the nappy kitchens was maybe a little effeminate, she thought. He seemed to understand what she was going through. He sucked on a huge brown-skin stogy—rapping to her and smoking it like Puffy Combs, whining about Benjamins and cursing and bogarting his way through stop-and-go traffic. At first, she fashioned herself as that singer / actress Jennifer López on the 6, riding the subway with her girlfriends, everything so dark. Then she was the black Princess Diane. She was so delirious she couldn't see how he was speeding towards his destination in order to get what he could before she expired. As soon as she started spreading out in the car, he stopped the cab and stuck his pointing finger in her shit like it was an Atlantic City slot. He gambled that he would get some booty. She was so *demente* that she thought he had parked to rob her in the Chicago Loop she wanted to stay in Shy-town but she thought she would die. She called weakly for help, spitting all over his car and him. Using a Sony camcorder with an image stabilizer, the nigga took pictures of her sniffing, sadly struggling. Sweating like a dog, he rolled down the back window and made it squeal. Then, while repeatedly biting her on the neck and arms, he hit the coochie. After he tore it up, he pulled out and shot everything around them; everything was wet. He cruised to the water. Creeping along the shore, he used the fade on his video camera knowing he would have to edit a lot of the scenes in order for the rest of America to watch the movie and pay good money for it. When she tried to push her way out, he stomped on the brake, got out all cocky, and slammed her arm several times with the car door, mashing it from the elbow down to her painted fingers. He realized what he had done was extremely graphic and disturbing, meant for mature audiences, but as far as he could tell he had no choice: He was a poor, corrupted, retired official, and she was an old love. Even if she, like the others, didn't remember him, he did what he felt he had to do. He thought of taking a razor blade and surgically removing the clitoris like he had done the rest, most of them African Americans. But she so delirious she wouldn't stay still she had gotten used to shedding a lot of blood to

being stuck and fucked up she put her legs up against the door and the netting of the taxi and mounted her strength then took the steak knife out of the crack in the seat and began carving this turkey up jabbing him in the back of the head. He immediately ran away. She remembered there being better times, when there was no reason for people to fear violence or misty nights.

She kicked open the door and slowly laid herself down along the side of the cab, set herself out in front of onlookers standing by a white house. Suddenly she found herself begging her creator to let her live. Every time she breathed or spoke, a mixture of darkness and liquids came out of her. Out in the cool air, she began coughing, lightly spraying everything in sight with her dark and bloody and melancholy bile. Liquid beads formulated on the sandy metallic paint of the thickly waxed car. Wet grass glistened under her face while blades of weeds positioned themselves in the palm of her good hand like daggers, and, as she vomited up her remains, the traces of heroin(e), she began to digest her fate, tried to understand why in the world anyone would want to name their daughter Misty Night.

She felt like a character that *had come* straight out of a comic book. But she also finally felt something deep. Eventually, she went home. "Bitch, what happened to...yo' ass?!" her hoarse madre asked, pausing a split second because spitting the last two words of the question.

"Fuck you, momma," she replied. She sat in the family room and drank from a bottle of warm Zinfandel with nuances of ripe red strawberry, plum, and black cherry. She thought she detected the smell of coffee, un café, as well, but it wasn't enough.

While they watched the Discovery channel, her son called her a gigantic corpse lily, and at that moment her life didn't seem real; it wasn't worth thinking about. She rose and moved into another room, a messed-up place, threw herself down on a small couch smothered with plastic and barely able to breathe itself. She rested on a cushion that felt as hard as a cooling board, checking out her face out in a vanity mirror before putting on some "going out" makeup.

Before she went off, she picked up a pair of stray scissors and carved a wound into her pounding forehead, digging deep into her own thoughts while she inserted heroin/"heroine" in a last ditch to try to cure her mind. "Hell yes," she heard a man yell outside, amid the protection and darkness of the climbing false bittersweet

and the twisted trees, from within the smokers' paradise, from the dogbane and hemp hiding from the full moon. She got up and bolted from the house. Snatching a crushed soda pop can from the trash, she had the nerve to walk out into the garden, singing "Against All Odds," staggering past the dying flowers, the botánica, then stepping gingerly along the stones in an effort not to fall and bust her head wide open. She lollygagged as best she could, then dreamed of falling. She jabbed herself in an effort to wake up. Skin pop, skin pop, muscle.

At sunrise, police patrol (Johnny-on-the-spot) found sweet honey on the rocks. Officer Day reported discovering Misty blue, mutilated and naked, with white stuff caked over her lips, and lying in a fetal position next to a plastic bag of shit (close to the passing cars on the street). He took a mug shot and got the nosy neighbors to testify that they heard Night cussing and swearing something about "you're the only one who really knew me at all." According to Day, the witnesses stressed, "That came just after this black man screamed 'bitch, shut yo' ass up, get in that grass, and swallow before I gut you!'"

"It was dark," they said in the written report, but they thought they saw "maybe a struggle, maybe a fight with the girl holding on to a large stick or dick." They tried to make it clear, saying, "It was as if she was holding on for, or to, dear life." They asked not to be identified with a beaten morena. "She was a loser," they said.

John, a bad breath, white-hot man that looked more like the brain behind vanilla coke than a cop, flashed the crowd at the crime scene a Polaroid and digital image of the bloody victim. "She probably never believed drugs—you know, cocaine, crack, shit like dat—could kill her," he said rather sublimely as if teaching black children a lesson. "Well, take a look at her now." ❏

DAN FEATHERSTON

LA MANO

*El objeto que visualmente desaparece primero en un juego
de niños con objetos mundanos es la parte de adentro de su propia mano.*

—Maxine Sheets-Johnstone

1.

Hay lenguajes en la mano
huesos latinos y sangre alemana.
Hay romance en la mano,
pero los huesos están rotos.
¿Qué rompió los huesos de dentro de la mano?
¿Hubo un tiempo en que la mano estaba entera?

La muñeca es el cuello del brazo.
El deseo tuerce la muñeca
y rompe el hueso
para formar una cara en la palma
de la mano.

2.

Tomar es el *hinthan* de la mano.

¿Qué ha tomado la mano?

¿Qué ha dado?

Hay un dibujo de una mano
en el libro cosido con palabras:

<i>Escafoides</i>	bote
<i>Magno</i>	gran
<i>Trapezoides</i>	trapezoide
<i>Trapecio</i>	mesa
<i>Lunado</i>	luna
<i>Cuneiforme</i>	cuña
<i>Pisiforme</i>	guisante
<i>Unciforme</i>	hoz

Un hombre sentado en un bote a una gran mesa trapezoidal bajo la luna.

En la mesa hay una cuña, un guisante y una hoz.

¿Cómo manejará estas cosas?

Su voz es una mano:

*Hay formas enterradas en la mano: un triángulo, un círculo y un semicírculo
adentro un trapezoide adentro un escafoides enterrados en la mano,
cada cosa manejada por su nombre adentro de la mano.*

*Me nombra lo que veo,
sentado frente una cuña, un guisante y una hoz
a una gran mesa trapezoidal en un bote bajo la luna.*

3.

¿Qué aflojó el cincho e hizo añicos la pezuña?

¿Qué endurece el ala?

Distancia.

¿Cuál es la distancia entre la mano y la aleta?

La distancia entre el aire y el agua.

¿Cuál es la distancia entre la mano y la pezuña?

La distancia entre el aire y el agua.

¿Cuál es la distancia entre la mano y el ala?

La distancia entre el aire y el agua.

4.

Algo parecido al agua le ha dado forma a tus manos.

Antes de nacer

tus manos fueron las primeras cosas que sostuviste.

Las crispabas cerca de ti,

como si quisieras desaparecer en el hueco que formaban.

5.

Admiramos la escultura en hielo del pez
que desaparece detrás de una valla de maleza.

Cuando el pez y las hierbas están completos,
pulidos por el calor,

nos acordamos del tiempo,

como si un reloj de hielo

volviera atrás hacia una memoria del agua.

6.

Tus muñecas doblan como aletas.

Tus dedos se mueven como plumas.

Tus palmas se crispan como pezuñas.

Decirte en aleta, pluma y pezuña—

ni verdad ni mentira

pero estas amplitudes

ambas tuyas y más allá de ti.

7.

¿Fue el estar buscando algo una y otra vez lo que rompió nuestras manos?

¿Es la memoria del agua lo que nuestras muñecas trazan como arroyos, moviéndose verticalmente sobre el océano primordial de la sabana?

¿Qué lluvia ha caído sobre nuestras manos durante milenios?

¿Qué forzó la lenta migración del pulgar lejos de los dedos?

Nuestras manos conllevan la forma del miedo y la supervivencia:

¡milagro de la muñeca;

milagro del pulgar, aquella bandera homínida!

8.

Hay una catástrofe en la mano. Hay manos que rompen el mundo y manos rotas por el mundo. Hay manos estrujadas en conductores y machucadas en puertas. Hay dedos lacerados por la sierra sinfín y mancillados por la regla. Te pregunto qué significa el gángster que sostiene su pistola en forma paralela a la tierra, apuntando a la cabeza de otro hombre. "Significa que su vida no vale el esfuerzo de apuntar." La forma en que se humilla a los animales.

9.

Hay manos fantasma y las mil manos de los dioses. Hay sombras en la mano. La vida de la marioneta es una mano. Hay manos que mecen bebés invisibles y golpean paredes invisibles. Hay manos que ciñen coronas imaginarias. Hay manos que sangran estigmas. Hay tinta y astillas de madera en la mano. Hay manos que sobresalen entre los escombros y manos vacías alzadas al cielo después del desastre. Hay manos que llaman desde las tumbas, pasando a través de las paredes, haciendo señas detrás del fuego y el vidrio.

10.

En el laboratorio de la realidad virtual, deslizo mi mano en un guante con espinas de fibra óptica que corren a lo largo de cada

dedo. Viendo por una mirilla, trato de alcanzar el picaporte virtual de la puerta y lo siento acomodarse en la palma de mi mano, el cerebro mareado en esa alquimia del ojo y la mano.

11.

En la mano, el espacio se rompe en pedazos. En la mano, el tiempo se rompe en pedazos. Dices: “Mira cómo tuerce el halcón, ladeándose contra una faceta del viento”. ¿Qué remolinos de la alberca del espacio rodean nuestras manos haciéndolas retroceder como ojos y batir como alas? ¿Qué es lo que ven las manos? Viento, calor y miedo, voces; un defecto de fábrica. Al tocarte, mis manos son ojos.

12.

La mano es el antepasado de las máquinas, las medidas y los números. Dejamos nuestra huella en nombre de la mano puesta sobre los objetos. El molino de mano “accionado por la mano”. Las manos de los brazos de las sillas desaparecen en la maleza, dobladas bajo la zarpa del león, la garra del halcón. Como un cadáver, una silla tiene piernas, brazos, espalda y asiento, pero no tiene rostro. Hay cierta tristeza en un cuarto repleto de sillas vacías. En las sillas, enfrentamos la civilidad sentada dentro de los animales y los esqueletos. Nos sentamos dentro de una máscara vuelta de espaldas y espiamos desde su oquedad.

13.

Tus manos se alzan hacia arriba como pájaros atados a tus muñecas. Tus manos se doblan hacia adentro como animales dormidos. Cuando pasas un hilo por el ojo de una aguja o haces girar un tenedor, cuando sostienes una pluma o esparces la sal, el mundo entero se desmorona entre tus dedos —entrelazando cadenas de materia, mosaicos frondosos, trenzas de arena y mar, turbantes estrellados, mala hierba diáfana.

14.

Llevadas a escala neurológica, las manos son gigantes con cabeza, genitales, tronco y piernas en miniatura. El tiempo y el espacio se multiplican en la mano, desenvolviéndose como brotes superpuestos. Hay alfabetos y números en las manos. Hay mapas y minas de diamantes y caras en la mano. Hay cuernos y alas y herramientas en la mano. Hay puentes y alambre de púas y campanarios en la mano. Hay gente en la mano. Hay pitos y coños en la mano. Hay macanas, pistolas y esposas en la mano. Hay bocas en la mano. Hay manijas en la mano. Hay ojos y rabia y plegaria en la mano. Hay corredores y ventanas en la mano. Hay una pandilla de cinco en la mano. Hay una flor y una roca en la mano. Hay una mesa en la mano.

15.

Tu mano escondida es un buqué o un cuchillo. Un bálsamo, un veneno. Vacías, están llenas de historia. ¿La mano está celosa del mundo? La distancia de la mano pellizca montañas, endereza torres inclinadas. El pulgar del astronauta husmea el mundo. El dedo en el botón destruye el mundo fuera de la mano y la mano dentro del mundo. Hay un libro cerrado de ira en el puño. Hay un libro abierto de gracia en la palma de la mano. La mano es un libro cuyas palabras son logros.

16.

La palma es la cara de la mano. Es un mapa de amor campesino, fortuna campesina, vida campesina. Hay montañas y planetas y un libro de nacimientos y defunciones escrito en la palma de la mano.

17.

Mano que escucha el cuerpo de un amante mudo bajo la ropa. Mano que parte vides en la selva. Mano con cicatrices, mano teñida de alheña, mano enjoyada de anillos y esclavas. Manos dormidas en los bolsillos. Manos de un almirante

cruzadas detrás de su espalda. Las manos de un niño se abren hacia la madre, hacia otro. Hay una ola rompiendo en la mano que señala a tierra. La primera mano saluda al mundo, arrastrada por una estela de tinta. La última despide al mundo, arrastrada por una estela de silencio.

Traducción de Gabriel Bernal Granados ☒

KENT JOHNSON

TWO POEMS

WHEN I FIRST READ ANGE MLINKO

When I first read Ange Mlinko in *The Poker*, I started to bat my eyes, seductively. Wow, I drank, this makes me want to both write more and drink less so I might live longer! She's fantastic!

My beautiful wife (for she is beautiful to me) yelled up the stairs: "It's time for your date with the grill, Buster Lazy Brown!" That was funny, my yelling wife, precisely as a whole flock of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks settled like a doubled harpsichord in the tulip flowering by the jacarandas in the dying light. I'm not making that amazing scene up, even though to you it may seem like I am, from "here." But no, for I will say

to

you:

It was truly extraordinary, what I saw and heard inside that sudden gift— luxuriant spring efflorescing into a drug-like aureole, as if

it

were

some

message

from

beyond,

which I know

it wasn't. And I know it doesn't fit in this poem, and that forcing it in will likely hurt its chances for print, (not to mention these completely irregular and illogical

line-breaks!), but

for no reason at all, totally unbidden, in all that flocked music and gilded light, I remembered

reading, as a passing mention in a buried article somewhere, of four little girls incinerated in a mud compound by a missile fired from a pilotless drone,

a compound in a dry and lonely place, where fine carpets were made by orphans for the foreign trade. I know

it's possible I'm just writing that I thought this then so to suggest my moral sensibilities to you, using a tragedy that is not mine to give some moral pressure to a poem that

up

until

now

hadn't

been

about much at all. I admit

I am not sure myself! And I admit that my having

written it means nothing, anyway, in the end. But the girls did

die, "were evaporated," at least that's what the small article said, and no matter how self-reflexive I get, or

how suspicious you become of my quaint

and insecure prosody,

those dirty-haired,

often-raped

kids

will

still

be

dead

and never thought about again, by you or anyone. O,
the Grosbeaks sang for a spell and then
the Grosbeaks flew in a rush away, and I sighed, theatrically, like a bad actress, a bit on
purpose. I
don't know why I did so, just one of those campy outburst things you'd never do
in public, I suppose, lest you lose a portion of your cultural capital, irremediably.

Anyway, there you have it. That's "my story." I slapped The Poker shut, waddled
downstairs, and threw
a match
on the fuel-soaked
briquets.

POEM FOR AN ANTHOLOGY OF "POEMS OF THE MIND"

*We are preparing an extensive anthology (approximately 800 pages) of
poetry that explores the nature of "mind itself" in any of the ways that it
has been "knowable" through poetry.*

—George Quasha and Charles Stein, eds.

—for my sons, Brooks and Aaron

This is not a poem about the mind, but a poem
about the sky, which thinks its thunderclouds out loud
and its crows and its rain, and then, when becalmed
and asleep, when a moon drifts through, dreams horses,
or hearses, or two figures facing, back-lit and aureoled,
the two figures there standing, in a dhow with a sail

that is already shredding. You can see them coming slowly into this thinking, a writer and a reader, each reaching for the other, aware there is nothing beneath the sky, reflected where they are sailing, nothing but each other to hold to, mere figments of its weathers, which bless with such joy and blast

with such fear, so fickle and weird these weathers! They are reaching out, in the boat that is dying into the sky that is dreaming, and then they are gone, just like that, even as others are appearing to take their place and to do, as it were, the sky's bidding: mountain kingdoms arising, and poets in cars crashing, and snowmen

with trumpets blowing, and burning children with blood spurting, and bannered spires collapsing, and swept-winged planes conquering, and many strange forms that have never been thought and thus have no names: forms always new and changing. And that's how the sky is, things just arising and things just going away, and in a way, we could say, it's

a never to be opened gift we are given by something, just as we come falling into this dreaming: a sky reflected where we are sailing, and where we reach out without reaching the beloved who faces us, and who also is reaching, while we watch the thoughts come, and watch the thoughts go. ☒

VIRGILIO PIÑERA: LA AUREOLA SOBRE EL MACADAM

En todo *Una broma colosal*, pero sobre todo en los poemas escritos en francés que conforman la última sección de ese poemario póstumo, puede apreciarse la “seducción continua” que, según ha señalado Antón Arrufat, ejerció Baudelaire sobre Virgilio Piñera. “La soirée des dupes”, “Ce qui disent la victime et le bourreaux”, “L`écorchement”, “Sait-tu pourquoi on se tordre les bras?”, “Ma maîtresse à moi”, “Le foudroyé”: ya en los títulos resuenan *Les fleurs du mal*. Pero si en Casal y en Poveda, principales poetas parnasianos y decadentistas de la tradición cubana, los ecos de Baudelaire muestran el deslumbramiento mimético del discípulo, en Piñera encontramos, sobre el pastiche y la estilización, la irreverencia de la parodia. Cambiando una y otra vez, hasta erosionar totalmente el sentido, el orden de las palabras que forman el primer verso del soneto “La beauté” —“Je suis belle ô mortels comme un rêve de pierre...”—, Piñera cuestiona en “L`écorchement” la imagen del poeta como amante dócil de la belleza que Baudelaire presenta en ese famoso poema.

No es difícil advertir en ello la ilustre tradición de las burlas vanguardistas al arte decimonónico y a la propia institución Arte, a todo lo que simbolizaban Anatole France y la *Mona Lisa*. Pero los surrealistas, románticos empedernidos, querían matar el Arte para que de su cadáver surgiera la verdadera vida, la vida poética que yacía debajo de la costra de la cultura y la costumbre. Piñera se

muestra, en estos poemas escritos en el umbral del ostracismo, cuando a causa de su homosexualidad y de su literatura “decadente” es condenado a lo que llamó “la muerte en vida”, definitivamente más allá de la “revolución surrealista”, más allá del lirismo del amor, la juventud y la revolución. Luego de destruir con sus permutaciones no sólo la “tesis” del poema sino también la forma cerrada en donde la vierte el gran poeta francés, Piñera culmina: “Baudelaire s’exclama: qu’elles sont belles ô mortels! / mais la mort pétrifiant l’écorcha dans la pierre: / Baudelaire c’est un con comme quelconque mortel!” Baudelaire es un carajo como cualquier otro mortal. El poeta no es el amante de la belleza, como lo era para el baudelairiano Casal, sino un gran simulador. “Au diable va t’en, poète. / Tout en toi est simulation”, comienza “Le poete tel quel”, otro de los poemas fechados en 1970.

En la década del 60 Piñera se había identificado plenamente con la llamada “antipoesía”, corriente que, abandonando los afeites caros a la tradición, resultaba, en sus palabras, “una toma de posición” frente a “esa otra poesía que enmascara los problemas” a fuerza de retórica. “En vez de revelación por la imagen (praxis teológica), revolución por la palabra misma (praxis existencial): esto viví, esto contaré. No hay otra alternativa, y el poeta que “maquille” su existencia será arrojado del templo por sus propios colegas y por sus lectores”. Contra semejante maquillaje poético se había manifestado en el quinto número de la revista cubana *Ciclón*, publicado en mayo de 1956, Witold Gombrowicz, cuya amistad y afinidad estética con Piñera es de sobra conocida. Con su beligerancia usual, el gran escritor polaco denuncia la persistencia, en la época caracterizada por la destrucción de todos los cultos, del “culto de la Poesía y de los Poetas”, afirmando que la poesía como “canto” y como “mera celebración” entraña por lo general una “política de avestruz” del poeta en relación con la realidad. Mofándose de “la solemnidad del ceremonial”, de la creencia en “la palabra del Poeta, la misión del Poeta y el alma del Poeta”, Gombrowicz, sin condenar empero el hermetismo de la poesía contemporánea, critica el hecho de que esta ha nacido “de un mundo unilateral y estrecho”. Esta impugnación de la poesía como falsedad y estupidez románticos —tema fundamental del novecientos que el escritor austríaco Hermann Broch tocó en su crítica radical del kitsch, y después Milan Kundera, asumiendo libremente el legado de Gombrowicz y de Broch, ha abordado en algunas de sus novelas más

importantes—, aunque no obedecía a esa intención, podía ser leído en el contexto cubano como un desafío a la poética propugnada por el núcleo central de *Orígenes*. Así lo entendió el propio Piñera, que en la carta donde le enviaba desde Argentina el escrito de Gombrowicz, comenta a Rodríguez Feo, ex-codirector de *Orígenes* y ahora director de su antagonista *Ciclón*, que este “será un buen campanazo para el decadente grupito de *Orígenes*”.

Uno de los Diez poetas cubanos antologados por Vitier en 1948, Piñera, que había formado parte del grupo nucleado en torno a Lezama en *Espuela de Plata* y luego en *Orígenes*, se había convertido en líder de la estridente reacción antiorigenista que tuvo su tribuna en *Ciclón*. Pero su “antiorigenismo” era anterior a la propia *Orígenes*, pues se había manifestado ya en los dos números de su unipersonal revista *Poeta* (1942,1943) y sobre todo en *La isla en peso*, poema antológico que, impugnando la memoria y la promesa de una isla que otros origenistas querían ver como un lugar bautizado por el Verbo en medio de la atrocidad telúrica del archipiélago caribeño, la sitúa en un presente de monótona eternidad, signado por el juego macabro de la libertad y la necesidad.

“Pueblo mío, tan joven, no sabes definir / Pueblo mío, divinamente retórico, no sabes relatar”, exclama el poeta en *La isla en peso*, y Eliseo Diego contesta tácitamente en “El segundo discurso”, poema de *En la calzada de Jesús del Monte* aparecido originalmente en *Orígenes*: “Dicen que soy reciente, de ayer mismo, / que nada tengo en qué pensar, que baile / como los frutos que la demencia impulsa. // Si dejo de soñar quien nos abriga, entonces, / si dejo de pensar este sueño / con qué lengua dirán / este inventó edades si nadie ya las habrá nunca”. Después de citar estos versos, en su comentario de *En la calzada de Jesús del Monte* Vitier afirma, en tácita polémica con la imagen del hombre y de Cuba que ofrece *La isla en peso*, que el “cántico de Eliseo Diego” viene a comprobar que “ciertamente no somos [...] advenedizos engendrados en el azar y la demencia, sino criaturas del sueño más luminoso de la Historia, criaturas *separadas de sí mismas por todo el espacio hermético del futuro*”. Sólo la redención futura justifica, para Vitier, la alienación en que ha caído la criatura: la separación será salvada, restituida *ad origine*, lo cual vale tanto para la condición humana destinada por la gracia a la resurrección, como para la particular circunstancia cubana de una República marcada por la desintegración nacional y el malogro de los ideales de los fundadores.

Contrastando con los origenistas católicos —Lezama, Eliseo Diego, Gastón Baquero, Octavio Smith, Cintio Vitier y Fina García Marruz—, Piñera nos coloca desde su primer libro, *Poesía y prosa* (1944), frente a la incómoda sospecha del hueco original, de la separación que el futuro no ha de salvar. No dibuja “el árbol genealógico de nuestra sangre y de nuestro espíritu”, como, según Vitier, el poeta de *En la Calzada de Jesús del Monte*, o “una casa para todos”, como, según el propio crítico, Lezama en sus “coordenadas habaneras”, sino un árido descampado. El árido descampado de una *isla en peso* donde, contra el catolicismo claudeliano-maritainiano de *Espuela de Plata* afirma que “El paraíso y el infierno estallan y sólo queda la tierra” y pide “Una poesía exclusivamente de la boca como la saliva”. Si se advierte que el propósito último de *Orígenes* es, según sugiere Vitier en su comentario de *En la Calzada de Jesús del Monte*, “la integración de la isla en la Historia y la Novela (o lo que es lo mismo, hacia la coherencia y la intimidad dentro de un orbe cultural que tiene a Roma por centro)”, no resulta difícil comprender por qué si Vitier puede aceptar *Poesía y prosa* como expresión de la decadencia de la Cuba posterior al fracaso de la revolución del 30 o incluso de la pertinaz alienación del hombre moderno, rechaza *La isla en peso*: este poema no podría leerse en modo alguno como un paso hacia la integración de la isla en ese orbe jerárquico presidido por el verbo universal.

Por el contrario, en él Piñera la sitúa en otro contexto: el de las Antillas, el África trasplantada, la barbarie. A diferencia de “Noche insular, jardines invisibles”, poema de Lezama publicado en *Espuela de Plata* en 1941, *La isla en peso* muestra un territorio en las fronteras de Occidente, donde el cuerpo, la naturaleza y los elementos brillan en constante tensión y desafío con el espíritu y la razón occidental. A la imagen paradisíaca ofrecida por Lezama, Piñera opone desde el comienzo del poema su percepción de la insularidad como *fatum* que no hay más opción que enfrentar: “nacer aquí es una fiesta innombrable”. Piñera: “La maldita circunstancia del agua por todas partes / me obliga a sentarme a la mesa del café. / Si no pensara que el agua me rodea como un cáncer / hubiera podido dormir a pierna suelta”. El antagonismo entre el poeta y un entorno hostil que además de la insularidad incluye al trópico está en el origen mismo del discurso lírico de esa suerte de *Tierra Baldía* cubana que es *La isla en peso*.

Al desafío de Piñera respondió Vitier primero excluyendo al poema de sus dos fundamentales antologías donde se establecía el primer canon de la poesía ori-

genista y su lugar en el proceso de la poesía cubana, *Diez poetas cubanos. 1937-1947* (1948) y *Cincuenta años de poesía cubana* (1952), respectivamente, y después negando rotundamente la cubanidad de *La isla en peso* en una de las lecciones de *Lo cubano en la poesía* (1958), a partir del dudoso argumento de que “Nuestra sangre, nuestra sensibilidad, nuestra historia [...] nos impulsan por caminos muy distintos”. Cuestionado décadas después acerca de su controvertido juicio sobre el poema, el propio Vitier afirma, retomando una categoría usada por Juan Ramón Jiménez para referirse despectivamente a las obras de importantes poetas de la generación de 1927, que se trata de “un ejemplo típico y brillante de literatura poética”. *La isla en peso* no sería sólo una “versión prefabricada, programada, inauténtica de Cuba”, sino también “literatura poética”, retórica, más que verdadera poesía. La identidad última de estos dos reparos revela el núcleo de un pensamiento católico-nacionalista, el de Vitier y en general del llamado “origenismo clásico”, que afirma la confluencia, en el origen y en el *telos*, de lo cubano y de la poesía. Una poesía definida, en el caso de Vitier, como consecuencia del acontecimiento por excelencia que es la Encarnación de Cristo y antítesis del juego demoníaco de las letras y de la ficción; y en el caso de Lezama, como lo que, a partir del “posibiliter infinito” y de la “resurrección”, superando la causalidad kantiana y la idea heideggeriana del hombre como “ser-para-la-muerte”, permite alcanzar “lo incondicionado”. Espíritu vanguardista y existencialista, Piñera encarnó brillantemente dentro del grupo de los *Diez poetas cubanos* esos demonios mortíferos que Maritain y los origenistas católicos señalaron en la literatura moderna: literatura independizada de la poesía, o poesía independizada del Verbo.

La teoría piñeriana “de la destrucción” se opone frontalmente a la poética origenista basada en la idea lezamiana de que “la poesía tiene que zurcir o empatar el espacio de la caída”. En un breve ensayo inédito hasta su reciente publicación en *La gaceta de Cuba*, después de señalar que la asunción del “principio de la destrucción”, opuesta a la “perfecta sutura entre pecado y salvación” propia del cristianismo, espanta a la razón humana, Piñera afirma: “Se trata, en suma, de calcular el espanto como se calcula la fuerza motriz de una turbina; de calcularlo con esa misma frialdad propia de los pulpos”. Si en el primer poema de la sección que da título a *Las flores del mal* el demonio lanza al poeta lejos de la mirada de Dios y pone ante su vista “el sangriento aparato de la Destrucción”, la teoría de Piñera “prescinde tranquilamente

de la idea de divinidad” y por tanto del temor de la condenación. El “principio de la elegante destrucción” —lo de elegante, explica, elimina la opción del suicidio— que implica “tomar al ser en proceso destructivo como ya de antemano destruido”, remite sin embargo a Baudelaire en la medida en que continúa, radicalizándola, la conciencia de artista que el célebre traductor de Poe legó a la poesía moderna. Pues el proceso destructivo consiste según Piñera en trascender el cosmos dado por uno ideado, en una invención de sí mismo que implicaría la trascendencia del “hombre de fe” en el “hombre que da fe”, que es, como afirma en el ensayo “El secreto de Kafka”(1945), el artista. Contemporáneo de Sartre y de Beckett, Piñera difiere en cambio de Baudelaire en su decidido distanciamiento del esteticismo, propio de una época donde la belleza, como la divinidad, ha muerto. El arte ya no se escribe con mayúsculas en tiempos en que el nuevo hombre existencialista echa sobre sí la responsabilidad de su propia contingencia, antes referida a trascendentes entidades de naturaleza divina o metafísica. En aparente paradoja, la plena asunción de la contingencia humana, que implicaba el reconocimiento sartreano del hecho de estar condenados a la libertad, informaba un arte que Ortega había llamado “deshumanizado”. Tras su deliberada y minuciosa destrucción, hombre y mundo, afirma Piñera, se reconstruyen “destruyendo su perfil humano”.

En tanto asume hasta sus últimas consecuencias la muerte de la divinidad, la poética esbozada en “De la destrucción” implica además la plena asunción de la divisa que para el poeta moderno sentó Baudelaire en uno de sus más conocidos poemas en prosa: “Extravío de la aureola”. El poeta pierde su aureola en el fango del *macadam* y, antes que recogerla o buscar otra, vive esta pérdida como una liberación: “Ahora puedo —exclama— pasearme de incógnito, llevar a cabo acciones bajas y entregarme a la crápula como los simples mortales”. Finalmente decide dejar allí mismo la aureola, pensando que algún mal poeta la recogerá y se la pondrá en la cabeza impudicamente. En la tradición cubana Piñera es aquel para quien la aureola está definitivamente perdida, aquel que responde con su carcajada sarcástica a cualquier intento por recogerla del vertedero.

La isla en peso, suerte de “Voyage à Cyteres” piñeriano, no sólo muestra el horror de la isla a contrapelo de los cantos que la subliman, sino que también presenta al poeta como aquel que, perdido todo vestigio de aureola, declara la impostura u obsolescencia de toda profecía:

Es la confusión, es el terror, es la abundancia,
es la virginidad que comienza a perderse.
Los mangos podridos en el lecho del río ofuscan mi razón,
y escalo el árbol más alto para caer como un fruto.
Nada podría detener este cuerpo destinado a los cascos de los caballos,
turbadoramente cogido entre la poesía y el sol.

¿No se expresa aquí la caída del poeta, la fatal pesantez de la materia corporal, la pérdida de la aureola, en fin? Si el romanticismo definió al poeta como un intermediario entre cielo y tierra, entre la divinidad y el pueblo, Piñera lo pone atrapado entre la poesía y la presencia envolvente del trópico —“trópico de cáncer”—, expuesto tanto al contacto placentero de la llovizna tropical como al embate arrasador de los huracanes.

Desde un registro más confesional y conversacional, y de manera más ostensible que en *La isla en peso*, Piñera aborda el tema de la pérdida de la aureola en otro de sus grandes poemas: “La gran puta”. Escrito a comienzos de la década del 60 e inédito hasta 1999, este texto desarrolla el motivo baudelairiano del parentesco entre el poeta y la prostituta, seres que pertenecen a la zona más sórdida del comercio del mundo. Piñera ofrece en él un fresco de la Habana de 1937, la Habana posterior a la frustración de la revolución del 33, cuando el país se encontraba en manos del coronel Batista, representado en las calles por los soldados de uniforme amarillo. La violencia es el signo de esa Habana donde “palabras tremendas [...] eran pronunciadas / con el filo de un cuchillo, mientras allá, / en Marte y Belona, los bailadores realizaban / la confusa gesta del danzón ensangrentado”.

Si en *Orígenes* Juan Ramón Jiménez afirmó: “El sexo, bestia Sempronio, sirve para la reproducción y para el deleite de la especie, como sirve el estómago para el deleite y la digestión. Pero ni el estómago ni el sexo deben evidenciarse de manera jactante en la poesía ni en ninguna otra disciplina superior”, la referencia al hambre, a los versos y al deseo homoerótico—correspondiente a la triple condición de marginalidad que Piñera reconoce en sus memorias: la pobreza, la vocación artística y la homosexualidad—recorre “La gran puta” en una serie de transposiciones cuyo efecto es destruir la oposición entre la espiritualidad, simbolizada en la idea tradicional de la sublimidad de la poesía, y la materialidad, simbolizada en

la necesidad que representan el hambre y el deseo sexual: “En la cabeza los versos y en el estómago cranque”, “Yo, que mi destino de poeta me impidió la putería”, “buscándola completa como se busca un verso”. La equivalencia final de los versos del poeta con los pesos contados por la prostituta epitomiza el tema maestro del poema: “Sólo en mi accesoria haciendo mis versitos / veía pasar La Habana como un río de sangre: / y como una puta más del barrio de Colón / los contaba de madrugada como si fueran pesos”. “La gran puta”, se diría, es el poeta, ya no sólo Piñera —pobre y homosexual— sino el poeta la modernidad, en una modernidad que comienza con la simbólica pérdida de la aureola en el *macadam*. Su misión no es ya en modo alguno la *profecía* —ese evangelio de la poesía que la voz magistral de Víctor Hugo decía en unos versos que el poeta cubano del siglo XIX José Jacinto Milanés puso como exergo de su poema “De codos en el puente”: “Les poètes en des jours impies / Vient preparer des jours meilleurs, / Il est l’homme des utopies: / Les pieds ici, les yeux ailleurs”. —sino la *putería* en tanto ilimitada promiscuidad, intercambio de lo más concreto e íntimo y lo más abstracto y exterior, el cuerpo y el dinero.

Esta visión moderna, “desencantada”, de la poesía, se opone radicalmente a la comprensión de la poesía como profecía fundada en la memoria, tal como la afirma Vitier en su *Poética*. Para Lezama la profecía, parte fundamental del intento origenista por romper los causalismos, es asimismo constitutiva de la poesía. En una reseña de un poemario de Vitier afirma que “los poetas de la generación de *Espuela de Plata* [...] querían hacer también profecía para diseñar la gracia y el destino de nuestras próximas ciudades. Querían que la poesía que se elaboraba fuese una seguridad para los venideros. Si no había tradición entre nosotros, lo mejor era que la poesía ocupara ese sitio y así había la posibilidad de que en lo sucesivo mostráramos un estilo de vida”.

Estilo de vida al que subyace toda una concepción “intramural” de la ciudad. Escenario fatal de la alegoría de Baudelaire, la ciudad es otro espacio en cuya percepción se manifiesta la irreductible contradicción entre Piñera y otros origenistas. La Habana de “La gran puta” está en las exactas antípodas de la Habana que describe y evoca Lezama en las estampas que fue publicando bajo la rúbrica de “La Habana”, una o dos veces por semana, desde septiembre de 1949 hasta marzo de 1950 en el *Diario de la Marina*, que luego serían incluidas, en su mayoría, en su libro de ensayos

Tratados en La Habana como “sucesivas o coordinadas habaneras”. La de Lezama es ciudad doméstica, de cenas familiares y celebraciones del santoral; la de Piñera, ciudad de prostitutas, homosexuales, *travestis*, locos, negros, mendigos, soldados; ciudad de caos y muchedumbre, del afuera y de los márgenes. Si las crónicas de Lezama proyectan una utopía precapitalista presidida por la figura de la ciudad medieval de murallas protectoras y vecinería cordial, en la que, significativamente, no existe el dinero, en la de Piñera no hay ya *misterios*: es la urbe de la crónica roja, donde los fantasmas salen de día a caminar por las calles y el dinero impone su ineluctable imperio. No hay en “La gran puta” esa “pobreza irradiante” elogiada por Lezama, Vitier y García Marruz, ideologema de una pequeña burguesía selectivamente conservadora, sino una pobreza que en modo alguno puede alimentar un mito o trocarse en virtud, una pobreza perentoria, desnuda, antiestética, que no remite a la perdida riqueza familiar sino al estómago vacío:

Sin embargo, pensaba en la inmortalidad
con la misma persistencia con que me acosaba
la mortalidad, porque aun cuando viéndome
forzado a escuchar “la inmortalidad del cangrejo”
y ver al tipo pálido sentado en el café de los bajos de mi casa, con un
[palillo en los
dientes y un vaso de agua sobre la mesa
pensando en las musarañas, yo me aferraba
a la mentira piadosa siguiendo al mismo
tiempo con la vista los sandwiches de pierna
que rechinaban en mis tripas.

Si el triunfo de enero de 1959, que Piñera saludó desde el diario *Revolución* y su suplemento literario, el *magazine* de tirada gigante *Lunes de Revolución*, significó para Piñera el fin de esa hambre crónica que en *La vida tal cual* reconoció como “de todos mis enemigos el más encarnizado”, en los años sucesivos otros antagonistas no menos indeseables se abalanzarían sobre él. La etapa de fuertes controversias en torno a las funciones del intelectual, la valoración del arte moderno y la libertad de expresión en la sociedad socialista que sigue al cierre de *Lunes* en 1961 culmina

en el Primer Congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura (1971), el cual significó no el resumen de aquellas polémicas, como sostiene José Antonio Portuondo en su "Itinerario estético de la Revolución Cubana" (1974), sino el fin de toda polémica y el triunfo de un dogmatismo de corte estalinista que decretó el ostracismo para un importante grupo de escritores entre los que se encontraba Piñera. Al final de esa conferencia donde desde el punto de vista de los vencedores escribe la historia del proceso de institucionalización y dogmatización de la cultura, Portuondo echa mano, curiosamente, de la misma imagen que usó en el breve texto leído en 1938 para presentar, por primera vez en público, al joven poeta Virgilio Piñera en el Lyceum habanero: la imagen del poeta como toro de Falaris, procedente de Kirkegaard.

La metáfora del hombre infeliz que trueca su dolor en belleza como aquellos que, encerrados en el vientre del toro de metal calentado al rojo vivo, daban alaridos que salían por la boca del animal convertidos en suave música, había servido entonces a Portuondo para describir al poeta que, evadido del mundo de todos y sustrayéndose a la lucha social, crea su propio orbe poético y se encierra en él. El joven crítico comunista no niega entonces, sin embargo, el derecho a esa poesía de evasión, pero señala que cuando el poeta "es carne y voz de este mundo" no es desdichado ni infeliz, y termina sus palabras manifestando su esperanza en que no está lejos el tiempo en que no haya motivos para la angustia y la evasión, el tiempo "en que llene un canto gozoso el universo ancho, de todos, fundado en la justicia, aquel donde el poeta dé [sic] al aire su voz plena, sin nombre y sin tormento, rescatado de la estrecha prisión de su universo, libre al fin del dolor estéril, sin objeto, de su toro de Falaris".

Más de treinta años después Portuondo afirma, sin embargo, que el deber de nuestro tiempo prohíbe toda evasión estética y que el socialismo entraña la liberación del poeta de su horrorosa prisión: "Hay que libertar al artista, hay que libertar al poeta, para que vuelva a crear libremente, fuera ya de ese recinto sagrado que no es la famosa torre de marfil, sino es, ni más ni menos, el vientre de un toro de bronce puesto al rojo vivo por la injusticia de la sociedad capitalista, enemiga del arte, como advirtiera Carlos Marx". En la sociedad socialista no quedaba, pues, espacio para el poeta puro ni para el rebelde individualista, enfrentado a la burguesía pero no incorporado a la clase obrera y a su filosofía rectora. El futuro anunciado en 1938 había llegado, y con él el fin de toda angustia y la avalancha de cantos en

loor del socialismo, animados por el espíritu optimista del proletariado triunfante. La hipoteca del presente en favor del futuro es precisamente una de las bases de la doctrina del realismo socialista, a la que prácticamente se adscriben la declaración del Congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura y la Tesis sobre la cultura artística y literaria aprobada en el Primer Congreso Comunista de Cuba (1975). La perspectiva progresista de las obras realistas socialistas radica en captar en los lineamientos del presente el desarrollo futuro de una sociedad que de la “dictadura del proletariado” se dirige con paso firme a la disolución del estado y de toda la alienación derivada de la división en clases. En la clausura del Congreso de 1934, Zhdanov recordó a los escritores soviéticos que Stalin los había llamado a ser “ingenieros del alma humana”; en su glosa del documento final del Congreso cubano de 1971, Portuondo culminó recordando la sentencia de Fidel Castro: “Dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada”. Si en las reuniones que concluyeron con el discurso donde el entonces Primer Ministro del gobierno revolucionario formuló ese célebre apotegma Piñera manifestó públicamente su miedo, en la poesía escrita por él en los años que llamó de “la muerte en vida”, los cuales no culminaron sino con la muerte definitiva en 1979, el miedo está por todas partes. “Porque el hombre es, ¿quién lo duda? —ha escrito a propósito Reinaldo Arenas—, una circunstancia, y esa circunstancia, en la cual vivió y murió Virgilio Piñera, era el terror”.

En un poema dedicado a Lezama Lima, expulsado también de la sociedad literaria de los hombres nuevos u oportunamente renovados, Piñera opone, previendo la reparación de la posteridad, al escarnio oficial el peso de una obra que ha de permanecer a flote en el mar convulso de la historia:

Hemos rendido culto al sol
y, algo aun más esplendoroso,
luchamos para ser esplendentes.
Ahora callados por un rato
oímos ciudades desechas en polvo,
arder en pavesas insignes manuscritos,
y el lento, cotidiano gotear del odio.
Mas, es solo una pausa en nuestro devenir.
Pronto nos pondremos a conversar.

Pero Piñera nunca se fió demasiado de la inmortalidad: otro poema, “Un duque de alba”, también dedicado a Lezama y escrito en el mismo año, 1972, es menos optimista: “entre tecnologías dictatoriales, / planes y simulaciones / ya no sufrimos nada. / Nos permiten tomar pastillas, / y callar”. Si en *Fragmentos a su imán*, cuaderno que reúne la poesía escrita por Lezama en los últimos años de su vida, aparecen temas afines a un existencialismo que el autor de *Enemigo rumor* siempre había mantenido fuera de su católica ciudad amurallada por la gracia y la fe en la resurrección, la desolación recorre el magnífico poemario de quien desde los años cuarenta había sido brillante captador de esa “nada por defecto” que caracterizaba a Cuba. Reconocimiento de la fundamental intrascendencia de la realidad, la “broma colosal” consiste en que

¡Ya no habrá Juicio Final, sólo habrá la madriguera!
La madriguera del mundo para que el mundo se meta en ella,
y ni el consuelo se dé de contemplar una estrella.
A vuestras tumbas volved, esforzados paladines,
Allí tendréis para ver un ineluctable cine,
ese cine de la Nada que entre Nadas se eterniza,
como si vida y si muerte fueran asunto de risa.

Como el protagonista de *La broma*, novela que, según ha escrito Abilio Estévez, Piñera apreció mucho, este pudo preguntarse en sus últimos años: “¿Y si la historia bromea?”.

Unos años después de su muerte, ocurrida en 1979, llegó, en el marco del tímido deshielo que siguió al primer Congreso de Literatura Cubana, la rehabilitación de Piñera. Junto a libros de relatos—*Bromas para escritores*, *Un fagonazo*—se publicó entonces *Una broma colosal*. Una década después, en 1998, toda su poesía será recogida con el título del más célebre de sus poemas: *La isla en peso*. En los años noventa se produce un “boom” de Piñera. El Coloquio Internacional celebrado en La Habana en 1994 con motivo del cincuentenario de *Orígenes* fue ocasión para que un sector de vanguardia de la generación de los ochenta reconociera en él a un maestro. La poeta Damaris Calderón señaló allí que la obra de Piñera, y sobre todo “la desmitificación de lo cubano como emblema de lo paradisíaco” que

ofrece *La isla en peso* nutre el “espíritu polémico-contestatorio” de esa generación, decididamente más cercano al poeta de “Las furias” que a otros origenistas como Diego, Vitier y García Marruz. Si García Marruz había definido a la poesía de Eliseo Diego como “una poesía cortés”, aclarando, en otra ilustración de su llamado a conservar un orden —en última instancia el de Roma, el católico— amenazado por el potencial destructor de la modernidad, que “sin cortesía los astros no girasen, el techo se nos vendría encima, el viento entraría desconsideradamente por la ventana alborotando nuestro pobre orden de cosas”, y se pregunta enseguida “¿cómo no ver con sorprendida gratitud que un poeta se quite aún el sombrero cuando entra la Dama poesía?”, en Piñera los jóvenes escritores cubanos agradecen justamente lo contrario: que haya entregado un testimonio veraz de la experiencia de la pérdida de la aureola, que ya no haya rendido culto a la Poesía, sino que diga la obsolescencia de la profecía. Que en “La gran puta” haya trocado a la Dama en prostituta y haya entregado no “la República que se refugió en los interiores caseros, en las costumbres y aromas, revestida aun de la ilusión cubana primera”, como Diego al decir de García Marruz, sino la República de la miseria cotidiana y la violencia callejera, no la República “que huyó con el amarillo de los tranvías”, sino la República donde, como pesadillesca visión de un mundo policíaco, se multiplica el amarillo de los trajes de caqui de los soldados del “hombre fuerte”. Que haya renunciado, en fin, a la cortesía para mostrar el horror. ☒

PULSOS

respirar lento el anteacto
soltar casi la anterioridad

la sangre temporal que rompe
por dentro de la frente

frente a lo real

(el color magenta de la mañana)

mundo
en pivote inmóvil

mantener el momento ante
solo
ahí
listo como la liebre antes del principio

distendidos los pulmones esperan a que se forme el grito
en tanto circula la voz mascullada de un hemisferio a otro
del párpado al omóplato

dromedarios los pasos

y las nubes iluminadas desde abajo

y las manos de una vieja mujer que no pueden recoger las monedas de la mesa

del instinto sube la

pausa a los

omóplatos

tensión felina pantera pulso

quietud

para

per-

cibir

los

más

mínimos

movimientos

medulares

pulsión planta y el espacio entre los pies de las hormigas

existir es formar la expansión

desistir exhausto sólo ya

a la hora de la muerte

encabalgado entre sus-

piros que unen las noches

entrando

poco

a

poco

en la distancia
donde todo presente permanece ahí
elaborado entre las manos de mujeres
vestidas de ligero lino blanco
suspendido en sus pechos firmes y redondos

calcificación continua de los pasos
la mirada busca en la neblina densa

los reflejos trabajan
de las manos
a la memoria
de donde parten pájaros desbandados

tinte

((radia)) silente el centro cimentado
aquel día hacia las doce menos cuarto

tinte

tomarán la palabra calada
temprano entre las hojas que brillan
y los cables quebrando el cielo

desde la ventana un hombre mira
el canto calmo de las piedras

MI TRASERO

your buttocks

—Wallace Stevens

Estoy sumamente interesado en mi trasero
por ser la parte de mi cuerpo que casi nunca veo.

Se podría argüir que si estuviera realmente interesado en mi trasero
me valdría de espejos para verlo más a menudo.

Pero rechazo esa teoría.
Simple y llanamente estoy interesado en mi trasero
a la vez que lo miro aproximadamente una vez al año.

Francamente no tengo el menor interés en el trasero de otros.
Si tuviera un solo trasero que mirar, preferiría que fuera el mío.
No se considere eso prueba de que me miro el trasero más de una vez al año
puesto que en realidad no es lo que sucede,

Es más, que preferiría que los demás no tuvieran trasero.
Mejor dos ingles que un trasero—una al frente y la otra detrás.

De ese modo existiría la alternativa de mirarse una o la otra.

También existiría la alternativa de preferir una a la otra, ya fuera al hacer el amor o al ir al retrete. De esa manera bajarían los costos de reparación y mantenimiento de las ingles (infecciones urinarias, cosas de la próstata, canal de parto en llamas, cuestiones de hongos): dos ingles y sin trasero. Tal vez un caño de albañal que bajara a uno de los pies, y al momento de defecar se quitara uno el zapato y le diera un buen puntapié a la pelota de excremento para que se alejara volando. Los baños tendrían que tener tableros como los del baloncesto.

Todos los hermafroditas que cagamos por los pies. Hubiéramos desterrado el sexo anal a los talones. Lo cual me trae a otra inquietud: el nuevo ano que está ahora en uno de los pies: ¿estaría ese ano cerca de los dedos del pie, cerca del talón o en la parte superior del pie?

Mi inquietud es la siguiente: si el ano estuviese en el empeine, ¿no dejaría marquitas de arrugas en nuestras huellas?

No, no me gusta el trasero. A pesar que se rumore lo contrario. Contrario, he ahí una palabra. Me opongo a la palabra contrario.

Traducción de Jorge Guitart ☒

VARENNA / VENICE

VARENNA

for Kathleen Cahill

There comes a point when talking about oneself becomes tiresome. One would like to see other situations take shape on the page, imaginary ones to be sure, but much more real than those occurring in the motion picture where we are actors and spectators at the same time, which we call reality for lack of a better word. This travel narrative begins at the end, when, sitting in the back of a pickup truck (there were five of us: Fred was in the front seat, next to the driver, Ana Rosa, Martha and Ken were in the back seat; I got to stretch out on a *cuscino* in the back of the truck) I was looking at the snowy Alps outlined through the window. It was too windy—*troppo di vento*, the man at the ticket window told us when we asked him when the next boat left—and so the *aliscafo* and *ferrie* departures had been canceled for that night. We were in Varenna, and nobody had the slightest idea of what we should do.

At the entrance to the train station, freezing to death, we found an elderly taxi driver who took us to the pier. It was there that we discovered we were in trouble. No *aliscafo*, no *vaporetto*, no *ferrie*, niente di niente. We had to choose between spending the night in Varenna or paying the taxi driver for the return journey to Bellagio. The taxi fare started at 75 euros. We decided to take the taxi to Bellagio.

(Fred, a man of practical spirit, pointed out the importance of saving the five times 75 euros it was going to cost us to spend the night in Varenna). And so we set out on what seemed at first to be entirely the wrong road.

The taxi driver first took us to a place that was apparently his house and shouted a bunch of unintelligible words, in the best alpine Italian, at a woman who was apparently his wife. “¡¡¡Anna, un cuscino...un cuscino!!!”, he shouted while we, the rest of the crew, didn’t understand anything. Finally they brought me the *cuscino*, and a girl with a *telefonino* in her hand appeared in the lighted doorway. It was the old man’s daughter, who took his place and would finally take us to Bellagio on a journey of a little over an hour along the northeast shore of the lake, from Varenna to Lecco and from Lecco to Bellagio. (I couldn’t imagine a more absurd route, for if there had been an available boat ride, it wouldn’t have taken us more than fifteen minutes to cross the lake and arrive in Bellagio in time for dinner.)

Through the window I could see the endless strip of mountains; reflected in the rear view mirror, the wide forehead and dark eyes of *la conducente*, who drove with admirable expertise and calm. How old was *la conducente*? Twenty-seven, twenty-eight years old? The thing is that nobody seemed happy, except me, and nobody else seemed to think this was one of the most thrilling parts of the trip, which began at eight in the morning and finished at almost ten at night. A half hour into the trip the driver asked if any of us spoke Italian. Martha responded in her horrible Spanish that she spoke “un poco,” and the driver went on to explain, very slowly, that Fred was beginning to feel nauseous because of the curves and that in order to keep our friend from getting sick, if at all possible, she was going to slow the machine down, so we could eventually stop. *D’accordo*. She was very aware of Fred’s condition during the entire journey; from time to time she would ask him how he was feeling and whether he wanted her to stop the car. Fred got out twice, once halfway through the trip and again almost at the end. He stepped a few meters away from the car into the almost indescribable unwavering shadows of the night, and happily relieved himself of the remains in his stomach. When he came back she told him not to be embarrassed, that everything was *Okey*, at least for her. She then continued driving with her delicate hands placed securely on the wheel. I think she wore a modest ring. I couldn’t see anything else. Nor was I able to ask her name. Perhaps she was named Anna, like her mother.

Leonora was born one night in Varenna when the boats had stopped running due to strong winds that stirred up the water on the lake. Despite the violence of the weather, or perhaps precisely because of it, Leonora was a very calm child...

Maybe it is more accurate to state simply: Leonora got up early one morning... a series of things happened to her during the day, nothing out of the ordinary, until her grandfather arrived shouting from the car window in the night: "iiiiAnna, un cuscino, un cuscino!!!!" Her grandfather asked that she be the one to drive the car. Leonora drove some foreigners from Varenna to Lecco and from Lecco to Bellagio. Despite the night and the curves, her pulse never quickened. Her smooth hand was perched on the leather steering wheel like the feathered wing of a bird soaring on the circular arm of the wind. One of the taxi's clients, the tallest and apparently the strongest of them all, turned out to be the weakest. (Life is full of such contrasts). He got carsick. Leonora had to slow the car down and stop twice because of the man's upset stomach. After leaving the ladies and gentlemen in the doorway of the villa where they were staying, Leonora drove the return trip from Bellagio to Varenna. She listened to the radio and marveled at the weakness of the man who seemed the nicest of them all. What would his name be? She imagined a variety of possible names, until her mind went down the unfortunate path marked by the music on the taxi's radio. Leonora went to bed late that night. She was exhausted. The next day, she forgot the incident, as if it had formed part of a strange and crazy dream.

1.1

My friend Renato has visualized the scene better. He writes in a letter:

I can almost picture, believing that I could picture her, the girl behind the wheel. Of course, I am immediately struck by foolish notions, cultural scars: my impoverished mind can only manage to sketch out a movie from the 60s, most likely Marcello Mastroianni, whom I have seen lately in *ad hoc* individual film clips (paired with a very young and fatal Faye Dunaway, for example, in palaces painted an insistent pastel color, long-lasting chromatic tones that, of course, are only *the other place of life*). Always on the other side. Something

Buddhist in this. Although bastardized by the maddening, macho reality, itself turned, *of course*, into *reality show*.

2

Notes from the natural world. I have come to realize that the girl from Varenna is not the theme of this essay, but Varenna itself. Eleven in the morning. With a sunny day's acquiescence, fog begins to take control of the lake. The lake literally disappears, or it merges with the fog. In the distance, everything becomes a suggestion. A quasi absence of things. I take these notes in the style of Cézanne, supposing that my pen's calligraphy has the value of a brush stroke. It doesn't matter how crude it appears; what matters is the quality of the line. These moments are ripe for accidents: accidents in the sense of cracks that can open up in the landscape, and which can be transferred from the landscape to the notebook's page. Accidents. Errors. On the opposite page of my notebook, a page that supposedly should be untouched, a line appears that I didn't intend to draw. I appreciate the beauty of the gesture as if it were one of the premeditated turns of the *uccello* that circles in the air. With each swooping pass it gets closer to the bench where I sit. It approaches with admirable caution, tracing more and more beautiful circles. Its wings spread out, and with an imperceptible movement of its tail rudder, it turns at will, to the right or to the left. The bird's circles are more and more menacing. Nature's designs can become terrible. There is a coffee cup next to me. The smell is penetrating. Perhaps the bird has noticed it and approaches cautiously to see what it is. Moments that occur, moments that are purified until they achieve the grade of a permanent essence. Or a dissoluble one. A boat departs from the pier in Varenna and heads toward the pier in Bellagio. It leaves a perceptible trail on the lake's surface: there is quiet in its movement. A bird circles above the lower part of the craggy slope like a machine perfectly designed by nature. Its wings extended, the rudder sitting on its tail and a precise sense of direction. A wind rose. (Where is the bird going? Is there purpose in birds, or are birds the emblem of purpose itself?)

Butterflies: sign of impending spring.

2.1

The lake vanishes into nothing. The horizon disappears as if on command. *Un uc-cello* skimming the lake's surface.

2.2

Accidents possess a glimmer of calculation or design. While I write all this, I hear, behind me, footsteps on the gravel. Kathleen has just come back from the *castello* ruins to look at the lights of Varenna. But she left the same way she came. She emerged from the fog and then vanished into the fog. Like the boat that goes back and forth from one side of the lake to the other. The sides exist because different points of view exist. You, he, she, we, they exist because the point of view of the spectator exists. Point of view and the voice. The unrepeatably hand, the uncomfortable presence; the lake, the surface, the mountain, the mirror. Above all, the light.

9 March 2002

VENICE: CITY AND MATTER

*—Despite the fog you speak of, I could see that you put the inkwell
closer to your hand*

—José Lezama Lima

Venice can only be revisited in memory. We were there a year ago and there is little I can say about its palaces and canals, the age and rising damp that discolor the façades on the banks of the lagoon. Everywhere you look, the walls exude Venice's ancient lineage. The buildings alone seem to suffice when it comes time to recount its history, full of sensuality and cruelty, conquests and defeats, ostentation and pretense. The artificial mouths of its palaces open up to the traveler's ear and recount the beadwork of its history; they open up like the body of a young Moorish

woman, and after a brief carnivalesque lapse, harden and refuse to say another word about their intense madness. In Venice, the glance of a passerby seems to suffice, a look that crosses the threshold of the churches and confronts the mute protrusions on walls and stones. From the marble facade of Ca' Rezzonico to that of the Palazzo Dario, you can glean little at first glance. One needs years to begin to penetrate the mystery of a city designed in a continuous arabesque. But where are the inhabitants of this ghost city? Their permanent delay gives the impression that they have disappeared completely and have surrendered the city walls to the barbarian invasion.

Nevertheless, from time to time the Venetians peek out of their shops to stretch their legs after a long day of business. The youngest ones are dark with yellow whiskers on their chins. Among the elderly are clever talkers with turtled bodies, who can be affable as long as one shows interest in buying something. The women of Venice are the ones who really hold the reins of the city; light, seductive eyes and potent voices; straight hair or a curly red mane: they are peevish young women who wear the diurnal uniform of the purser on the *vaporetto*. "Solo Sant' Angelo!", one of them shouts with unusual authority, while she yields to a herd of outsiders who will have to board another boat to get to Rialto. Mothers with strollers go up and down the ramp of the *vaporetto* without losing their admirable modesty, wrapped in thick overcoats and wearing high-heeled shoes with pointed toes.

In Venice, luxury and discomfort are blind witnesses to civilization's achievements. A plaza opens up like a crack in the earth, and you can breathe in the fetid air that envelops the city. Silence enters the miracle of the ear: an absence of cars and motors; when very quiet, the splash of the gondolier's poles and the discreet motor of the boats used by young couples to cruise around Venice (all the canals empty into the same spot: the plaza of San Marcos or the Lido). Traffic adopts a watery form here; people go back and forth across the bridges like Theseus lost in the unending turns of a labyrinth. The Minotaur lurks in the center, the unfading flower on the binnacle of a dream; a humid, salt-water dream. The sheets are wet; the wood of the furniture, spongy, and the light that filters through the thick curtains brings a melancholy air into our room.

SAN MARCOS

Despite the saltpeter and the fog, many have made the decision to live and die in Venice. Robert Browning, Ezra Pound and Igor Stravinsky (as written on his headstone). The numerous travelers who come into the city bring a paperback copy of *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann, who chose the Lido beach as the setting in which to extinguish his alter ego, professor Gustave von Aschenbach.

Byron didn't die in Venice but he passed through there, sowing a trail of curiosities so that Henry James would write an unlikely novel about an editor in search of the unpublished papers of a great poet.

One walks along the streets of Venice as if none of these people ever existed, as if the archaic columns that support San Marcos were not the tired shoulders of Atlas.

CAFFÉ FLORIAN

A waiter whose features recall the actor John Turturro (*Barton Fink*, 1991; *The Luzhin Defense*, 2001) observes with indifference the passage of tourists who come in and out of the café. Without taking his eyes from the coins he jingles in his hands, he fans those who enter or leave with a *Benvenuto* or *Arrivederci*, whichever the case, making apparent his annoyance and the futility of any polite gesture. Every day, whether it's hot or cold, Venice receives hundreds of curious visitors who crowd her plazas and the narrow streets along the canals. Sites such as the Caffé Florian or Harry's Bar—one of the many places where Hemingway used to get drunk—have ceased to be places for lineage and gathering. They have become mere scenery, very expensive backdrops for clumsy photographs, incapable of calculating the speed or the light that hangs over the sleeping city like a cloak. The nineteenth-century shadow of Marcel Proust, who once attended the hundreds of gatherings in the Florian, has vanished forever. Now it is impossible to have friends and meet them

there in a systematic fashion; conversation is canceled; a martini (*rosso con ghiaccio*), an ice cream or a coffee, a photo and we're off... The city's inhabitants have become peddlers of trifles, recycling the remnants of a caduceus splendor, and those who have avoided the trap are anonymous as they stroll along, mixed in with the enemy mob of those who come from other parts.

Due to the corrosive effects of the passage of time and the perversions of the current oh-so-free market, the tables, chairs and cold that strike the terrace of the Caffé Florian remain the same. Nothing has changed, or, so as not to exaggerate, the details of the scene have changed little. The sun slips between the fog, saying something that resembles a distant, sad melody. The interiors of Venetian mansions are ghost ships, a nomenclature well suited for the interplay of light in shadow and shadow in light that enlivens the deceitfully sober plot of *The Aspern Papers*.

CANNAREGIO

We stay in a hotel in Cannaregio that was recommended by our Chinese friends Qing Qing and Jie Tao, the *alle Guglie*. In a barbershop on the canal, before crossing the bridge that gives the inn its name, they tell me that *guglie* means "bridge of four needles or supports." I don't understand everything the barber tells me, a young man with a sophisticated hairdo who speaks Venetian slang, but in between the lines of his graciousness I manage to decipher the implied message. In a city whose foundation dates from the sixth century of the Christian era, the great and the small coexist side by side—commonsense extrapolations in the middle of an urban grove that have kept the madness and excess in check. A similar combination has given rise to a number of traps that bait unwary travellers. Deception is a legitimate way to earn one's daily sustenance. In the train station men offer to carry the bags of recent arrivals to their respective hotels. Ignorant of how chance and distance pave the streets of Venice, as well as of the typical mode of transportation in the city, the *vaporetto*, we accept the offer. To carry our suitcases about a hundred meters, the

distance that separates the train station from the *alle Guglie*, they charge us twenty-five euros. With this initial feeling of being duped in our pockets, we are attended in the lobby by a little man with greasy hair and affected manner, who asks for our papers and immediately gives us instructions about how the hotel operates. At the end he adds that the control for the *riscaldamento* in the rooms is located at the front desk, and he emphatically forbids us from trying to regulate the temperature using the buttons on the thermostat in each room. If we are cold, we should ask the receptionist on call to turn up the temperature. When I get to my room, each of the five or six nights that we stay in Venice, I faithfully ask the receptionist to turn up the heat. *Puoi ascendere il riscaldamento?* Using his index finger, the guy clicks the switch up a few notches to show that he has complied with my request, when what he's really doing is pulling my leg.

The *alle Guglie* was a grand old house that after the war was converted into a hotel with seven rooms, each of them decorated in the style typical of seventeenth-century Venice, according to the brochure that circulates on the Web. At the top of the *albergo*, every morning, between seven and nine thirty, they serve the *piccola colazione*, the Italian equivalent of the French *petit déjeuner*: coffee (*espresso*, *cappuccino* or *caffé latte*) and a biscuit. The young lady who serves it has her hair dyed red and the tattoo of a dragon on her right arm. Her annoyance at having to carry out this type of work is stamped across her grimacing face. That's how the people of Venice are, conceited even in their misery. To them the tourist is a pest, a necessary calamity. It's worth noting the paradox, due to the extraordinary number of outsiders who come in and out of Venice daily, supporting the "floating" economy of the city. Rivers of people line up at the museum ticket windows to see, in fact, wonders, like the current exhibit in the Palazzo Grassi, *Da Puvis des Chavannes a Matisse e Picasso*.

The arc that extends from the naturalist painting of Puvis del Chavannes to the sculptural classicism of Picasso's paintings and the primitive dancers of Matisse is nothing compared to the punitive disappearance of paintings from Venetian homes. In contrast to other European cities, like Pisa, Berlin or Warsaw, which were masterfully reconstructed after the bombardments of the Second World War, Venice is only familiar with the degradation of constant rejuvenation. Scaffolding forms part

of the watery landscape. The *Serenissima* is a jewel in the crown of the West which bears the punishment of fading away sooner or later, a victim of its own arrogance (a city that has stolen its foundations from the sea will always exist as a gesture of supreme haughtiness). The audacity of its first commercial accomplishments stand in contrast to the insular timidity of today's transactions: carnival masks, amber jewelry, leather notebooks, shoes in extravagant colors, overcoats, scarves, *pashminas*, stenciled t-shirts; in a word, trifles with which foreigners stuff their purses and empty their pockets. Nevertheless, despite the humidity, the greasy dirt, the weather, the infinite chain of tourists and the insignificant commercial activity of today's Venetians, Venice remains standing, offering herself to the astonished gaze of travelers like a monument to nostalgia and to the most foolish undertakings of the imagination.

MARCH 2

When Mexico City is a frying pan that boils in the sun's rays, Venice is a lady veiled in fog and cold.

MARCH 18 (AUTHENTIC TRAVEL ACCOUNT)

Nothing memorable to write today. It's cold and tomorrow we're leaving. We are in the Gran Caffé Chioggia, and a group of gringos has invaded the room where we are watching the snow through the windowpanes. Their manners are rude. Nevertheless they are today's aristocrats; their tennis shoes and faded jeans have broken down the self-esteem of their European grandparents and planted the seeds of an enviable indignation: in Europe the Americans are loathed and admired with the same intensity. The culture of plastic has imposed itself with implacable speed and cynicism.

[...]

CARPACCIO

Venice is a labyrinth that has germinated with the meticulous watering of time. Her bridges and staircases multiply before the traveler's astonished eyes. There are dark corridors and alleys that lead to dead-end arcades; a few shops where they still carry out duties; attic workrooms (in Rialto) where a woman makes leather covered notebooks by hand; meat, flower and fish markets and the ever-present cheap clothing stalls; haughty Venetians who drink coffee on the corner of a plaza, still sporting their winter furs in March; ice cream shops and stores that sell wine from the cask at bargain prices. There are places clearly governed by shadows, ideal settings for passionate kidnappings or crimes; there are places to rest that fill the need to be alone in the middle of a crowd. The dragon created by Carpaccio wanders somewhere around here, in one of Venice's many possible dimensions.

Translation by Nancy Gates Madsen ☒

CINCO POEMAS

VENEZIA FRAGILITÀ

Yo aquí la miro a través del lente, el gozo desde el primer junio,
su respiro, laberíntico, del portal a las ansias.
Todas las tardes son Dédalo, también esta divina luna,
los pezones arden a través del lente, la fragilidad es laberinto de su tibieza
ni la prisa arruina el embeleso, ése ha estado siempre ahí.
La cosa es cómo andar callejones sin oler tanta agua,
la memoria es la madre de lo inasible pero aquí sí hay memoria,
díganme de qué y verán que hay memoria.
He traído su fragilidad a este enjambre de canales,
sudándola por dos días, ciento veinte fotogramas,
de por medio la brisa de los leones, el mismo sabor a eternidad.

Van tres junios que cuentan,
el primero fue respiración y aquí estamos celebrando,
en otro hubo luna, calor, oleaje de árbol junto a la cama.
Vinieron a alcanzarnos diez años, hasta este junio
andaba ahí de zalamero por su risa.
El amor de pronto hace lenguajes, las galletas eran un lenguaje,

su infancia era un lenguaje, la humedad cosquilleante uno,
París no era total entonces,
lo total era yo, un cuento de hadas
tiene siempre abejorros, pero un cuento eran sus pies.
Poco lenguaje para tanta fragilidad, ese laberinto,
por eso escóndanme los hilos, quiero saber de perdiciones
oliendo agua, este junio
dormía en la Cité con nosotros, se fue a Praga con nosotros,
adoro el zoom de agosto, le hubiera ido a Catulo o a Propercio,
más latín se habrían quedado, el ocio del *regret* es la nostalgia.
La place Furstenberg no llegaba aún a mi vida. ¿Debo decir
que la poesía era ella?

TRADICIÓN LOABLE

Todo en esas páginas es incompleto,
la urbe, el corazón, los sudores
son incompletos, el físico es ahora el reino
aunque también puede que sin físico se arme la trifulca del ruido,
pan es ese ruido, latino el gen que baila en el río viscoso,
cachondo el gen que inaugura el mundo,
a cada hora inaugura el mundo del río Bravo a la Patagonia.
¿Habrán Catulo y Horacio
pura sangre sido? Latín se lleva con latoso, por extensión
con lata, cervezas o refrescos, luego las sonamos con una varita
para el escándalo, las morenas, apiñonadas, que pasen,
el hígado no es chiquito por eso latín se lleva con lengua
no sé en aquellas tierra de Propercio, al menos así es en éstas.
La ley no es capaz de meterse, quiénes van a hacer la ley,
los mismos genes no se ponen en contra de la ley,
lo que hacen es de la plaza un antro, del pasto la rocola de grillos.
Movimiento no ha de faltar, puede que la música

pero movimiento no ha de faltar,
graciosas, sensuales, de eso está plagado este reino.
Una fiesta en el cofre de un carro, a la orilla del río,
una urbe entrada por estos muchachos,
todo mundo por aquí son siempre muchachos,
se mueren y siguen muchachos.
No hay lucidez sino en el ritmo, quien dice ritmo dice candente,
esa página la arranca uno del alma. La urbe caópolis es nítida
por el gen cachondo, a ese caos llega la eternidad.
Deja el álgebra, todo en esas páginas es incompleto,
uno está oyendo el ritmo incluso cuando la tierra se hace amante de uno,
tres metros arriba se está oyendo el ritmo. No traigan
liras intravenosas, un arpa es aburrida
incluso en la tumba. Allá Homero,
trágico, con su chisme.

TABLE DANCE. TROPICAL INSPIRATION REVISITED

A Alfredo Islas

Apenas vista: la tembladera.
No tanto por la figura sino por la carestía
que no sólo se mide en efectivo
sino en remordimientos.
La levedad es un reverso que no ofrecemos virgen a ningún Dios
por mucho infinito que prometa.
Y desde lo alto del juego, del mundo del juego
que es la imprecisión, nos corrige cuando ya es tarde
y la moral se ha ido hecha una piedra.
Entonces va la tembladera como una sed al verla
porque la levedad es un teloncito que al menor soplo se cae.

Ahora toca esas monedas
que es como tocar esas piernas.

LA VIDA ANTE NOSOTROS

Mas cuando cae la noche soy una hoja, antes he sido viajero,
Yaciendo en la oscuridad, con tantos años por venir ahí está el corazón
Riendo, amor es azar, el cuerpo es fresco de frescuras, se antoja
Inmediato al mundo que me espera
Asalvado sobre el lecho, las piernas tibias, el labio
Moribundo que muerde como la humedad de afuera.

1994

ETCÉTERA. ASUNTO DE ESPERAR EL FINAL

Y así tu vida da vueltas alrededor de madrugadas,
con esos buscando el fragmento de reino que les toca, de cortesana personal
te han querido, con altar y pajes la firma es lo de menos.
Fácil es el cuerpo vaciado en Absolut azul, la luna alfombra
el coche a la salida del cuarto, la carretera vacía a esas horas
con dos tres estrellas, las demás durmiendo, fácil es el fragmento
que no se queda para siempre en uno.
De altar y todo, pero la vida a veces es rechazar
tú eres *Undecided*, el gusto por el *prêt-à-porter*, el sax de Coltrane,
los cachetes de Armstrong *Blue and sentimental*, siempre *Taking a chance on love*
ese es el nombre a dar a tus cabellos, tu risa verdadera.

Descuenta los dólares para el hombre de gris
y ve a hacerte regañar por tu imagen en el espejo.
Tanto más que el cuerpo comienza a fatigarse.
Tanto más que las noches no cesan de dar vueltas en tu cabeza.
Tu inmortalidad inocente cuelga vidas espontáneas,
el instante sin brevedad que es la risa entrando por los poros,
ahora mismo esa forma de pararte, el vodka lívido
en los tacones y en los dedos. De vez en cuando la risa de tu infancia,
eso es lo único que se irá contigo, la verdadera madre

que muerdes, querida hija, en el taxi de regreso
mientras la ciudad se acuesta en los muelles,
el amor borrado por el halo de *Just one more chance*,
justo una oportunidad más: es en el beso
donde estamos lejos de la inquietud,
ahí te volverás mortal, finalmente. ❧

CINCO POEMAS

ANTROPOLÓGICA

la carne de cerdo
te hizo daño
y anuló
el compromiso

no sé
si sabías que
los tsembaga de Nueva Guinea
en sus fiestas
matan cerdos
y más cerdos
unas 15 000 libras
que luego distribuyen

ese día
los tsembaga
y los enemigos de los tsembaga
gimen bailan jadean

es decir ciclos
de paz y de guerra
sobre
montañas de cerdos

te contaba esto
para que supieras
cuánta economía
subyace en el amor

ATRIBUTOS

dios
no tiene particularidad

dijo el hombre
de la barba blanca

dios no tiene
particularidad

ni tampoco
generalidad

dijo el hombre
de la barba blanca

y frondosa
dicho esto

se tomó su café con
leche

y se calló la
boca

VIDA DE FAMILIA

a la orilla del Sena
al viejo Mallarmé se le congelaban los

dedos
se le ponían ateridos

cucurbitáceos de hurgar en la nieve
de la página en blanco

o en la nieve
del jardín de la casa

acércalos al fuego
le decía Madame de

Mallarmé
o ponlos en mi regazo

había paz
había calor

y los dedos tintineaban
contentos contra el vacío

LA POESÍA

la poesía
un escarabajo patas arriba

el estómago
color oro

o manchas
simplemente manchas

es ridícula verla patear
sus argumentos de escarabajo

sin embargo
cierta belleza hay

en sus menudos ojos
vuelto hacia dentro

oscuros o vacíos
tienen los ojos los escarabajos

oscuros o vacíos
los mundos con que sueña

TIBIA


una vez
que la muerte llega

acógela en
tu regazo

tibia es
la muerte

no fría
no fría

te han en-
gañado

es un a-
brazo 

FOUR POEMS

LAZARUS CHORALE

Render impromptu
that theater, today,
solitary and cruel
 as any darkened space,
the chairs all velvety plush.

Then the footlights:
Diminuendo on a stair
 or anywhere. Over
and
 done with, the week is seven days devouring,
and the music maritime.

A scar is a glyph in the forehead
when one man dies from lack of sleep
and another ransoms a village of black robes for a coral mountain.
 This ghost's not for telling.

She tears open a sugar packet, spreads the crystals across
my chest to kill
spider eggs beneath the skin:
the opposite of here is without.

Once from hunger,

this needs a cavity
to be completely complicit,
to reach all the way back.

In a forest of left hands
the bandages burn. The street clamors for levitation.

Increment/cadence: the sensuous thought's panic-stricken.
Fade me to black.

We'll make our getaway, clean
desperate.

The next trick's all yours.

WEIRD REASONS FOR KICKING IT OLD SCHOOL

Now that there is nothing left, for example,
we can ask the night to tear
the ocean's ashen threat and verdict.

So as not to turn my back,
without tremble, shine towards the unspeakably insistent,
with the lights out, it's not so far.

Three thousand times three thousand
eyes of the gutted
mackerel
how virtual the toxic snout
and some certain promises.

Read aloud,
shame is its own logic,
the tempo *brio* and ragtime, undeniably our own,
to the letter,
whatever
the weather.

Copper intent tincture
worth

And when articles of faith fashion a loosened garment
the disheveled will not return.

Later, and still later.

WHEREBY

A friend hands back a white page saying, *I circled where you've said almost enough.*

Fourfold excesses, the music of indecision.
Intimations of disentanglement : the way out.

Thorns inscribe the legs and forearm.
Teach me, won't you, to be useful.

The tongue's a muscle for reckoning.
And sleep does not come.

I have been well accustomed these past days to detach my mind from my senses.

Open the door and *see*,
how near is
knowledge,

this is a room I know this is a room
the mind is its own place
and the stove cool to the touch

and
the common ground of "what
was it you
said?" opens and swallows
parked cars and playgrounds. Alright,
have half and the rest set adrift in a wicker basket.

In flesh's tender strain, intention is no paraphrasable weight,
nor nearly fluent.

Night's out of joint
and with the incessant
 din of insomnia, reason's a dog to kennel.

How to be disinterred from nothing.

If only
 this thinking thing thought thoughts only

what is the cost of shame
if I said what I wanted what
 would you...the rue-
 ful hour,
such as it is, blind
to confession, comes too late.

Because what can come between
 us is, also,
 philosophy.

An unearthing.
Eyelids flutter and close.

Wake to this, the reliquary, the enormous breath
 within which

the square of the hypo-
 tenuse entombs the house, in terms

anyone can
understand

its delicate, its single
aperture and no
words no words

until the walls revise the insistent elsewhere.

YOU SAID IT

For Peter Gizzi

Tomorrow, it'll come
as it always does, forlorn
or done, you, that is, speaking.

What I mean is,
what if we come back again
to this spot, finished with forgetting?
But to forget is not the worst thing.

Right here and now I'd unflesh myself

as if syntax were the only hope. The brute
given of loneliness, and the next right thing.
What would you give for certainty? The left eye is blue,
the right eye is gray, the nail catches
the skin of the forefinger, and the hill
is almost invisible in this
sordid light. *Okay?* Let me

have exactly one
failure and one
success.

It's difficult, some-
times to know
how one
means.

The moon ministers the color orange.
The moon misuses us.

But the value of landscape is home.

Annihilation isn't all
it's cracked up to be, but

still it's something and so
gets jotted down in the notebook.

And the angry men in furious machines steal
bric-a-brac and the thought
that rings true.

And then a race of onanists and blasphemers sprang from
the local rivers, and we offered a Pythagorean theorem
as a charm against the old ways.

Theoria as shroud, as compass to
solitude and breadcrumbs, as refuge
from a terrible devouring.

Did he just
say Aristotle's skeleton is and is
not a secret,
neither leers nor laments?

Flat, flat, flat, flat. This broken music, a tin
witness, good as any dream we'd invent. ☒

KIERKEGAARD EN CHENGDU (UN AZOTE)

Ser espía de Dios, correctivo
de la Iglesia, el punto. Capuana,
somanta, solfa. Luego buscará
aliados hasta madurar un género,
de inmediato socializa. Ello
se convierte en masa amorfa
y se corre peligro a cada instante.
Por suprimir aquello efímero
y lo que se previó, toma ahora
consistencia, cuaja (pepsina
más diastasa) condiciones
seguras donde el hombre fuera
responsable. En el fondo no llegó
al punto de destruir el cuerpo
místico: cierta forma de cristiandad
o régimen. Eso. Las Escrituras
no son nada, apenas cosa histórica.
Nadie dijo nada y sin embargo

alguien habló, una voz proviene
de allí. Alguien comenzó a hablar
pero nadie dijo nada. Tertium
non datur. Llegará a un mensaje
genuino: una palabra dicha no
resuena cuando la claridad juega
en lo abierto y lucha con la sombra.
Y eso allí, recuperado (modalidad
naufragio), e indivisible: el momento
cuando Dios retira de su criatura
la calma de una marea y desciende.

BLIND FAITH

Un seguidor de la secta neobudista Falun Gong (Rueda de la Vida) mató a su mujer a martillazos e hirió de gravedad a su hija, con el fin de hacerlas inmortales. Dong, tal su nombre, temía que la Tierra se destruyera el 4 de febrero pasado, y entonces puso manos a la obra. Esperó (anochecer del 3 de febrero) a que mujer e hija se durmieran para matarlas vía percusión, y luego limpió sus ropas, quemó materiales sobre la secta y se dirigió a la oficina policial china correspondiente a su jurisdicción. El detenido Dong tiene 37 años, y es oriundo de la provincia norteña de Liaoning, donde cursara la secundaria con calificaciones excelentes, y sobresaliera más aún por su asombroso dominio del mandarín, recuerdan. No poca cosa. El hombre obró de acuerdo al dato sugerido por su líder, Li Hongzhi, quien prometió que por cada crimen cometido el cielo púrpura post-nitrógeno de Buda ganaría seguidores ya fallecidos. Tras el ataque,

Dong se mostró convencido de haber ultimado también a su hija (identidad en reserva, por su condición de menor a mayor), pero no cayó en cuenta que sólo acertó a la farola de pie (recamada de ajo y cebolleta), un recuerdo del verano pasado junto a viejos camaradas de partido, en Yunnan. Así, la niña salvó su cuerpo por milagro, mas no su alma, acorde la creencia paterna. La policía apenas pudo contener a Dong cuando reclamaba para sí la pena de muerte: quería alcanzar la inmortalidad, estar de nuevo junto a su familia. El hombre pasó por un curso de reconversión, tras lo cual juró haberse alejado de la secta. Faltó a la palabra. Sigue obsesionado con el Maestro.

(“Miscelánea de la secta Falun Gong”, traducción libre).

DESCRITO

Aquí hay menos de lo que se ve. Flancos más bien estériles, idénticos al trazo chinesco.

Aquello se convierte tanto en foco para las reflexiones como en pantalla frente a un misterio. Rigidez, y plétora en la composición.

Flotan hacia nosotros o se apartan, del color su ligereza. Y el espacio por ende yerra ambiguo, una suerte de facundia balbucida por Motherwell.

Y no existe el fin del concepto
sino la desatención del mismo;
lo acabado se confunde con abandonar
la tarea por un tiempo.

Se reconoce el hecho de que casi toda caligrafía está suspendida
algo más atrás de la superficie, en medio
de un espacio incluso comprimido.

En eso, blandas, insidiosas ranuras
capitalizan privaciones de una marcación escénica.
Ajustes en la línea devenida carnada, majar.

Sería el momento de las áreas borrosas cuando no logran ponerse
en foco, y son muy grandes para ser ignoradas.

DETERGER

Según Irving Babbit, la imaginación sería “el intento de desprender lo normal
y conexo
del tumulto de lo real”. Encontrarse así ante la perennidad de la saña
mientras resulta
un despliegue de energía. Se disminuye el interés por el espacio profundo,
el respingo cargado
de arremuescos, el empasto. Todo se ha vuelto plano a palo seco. Insistencia
en la claridad óptica.

El chorreo, la calidad de la sustancia, la superficie como campo de operaciones.

La ausencia de relieves
y el brillo nunca serán fines en sí mismos. Quizá remita a un segundo plano
esa presencia, pero sólo

con el fin de desplazar el centro de gravedad. Las apariencias reingresan de un modo directo,
y resulta misterioso no tener alternativas. En efecto, la mano imita lo que la máquina ejecuta sin esfuerzo; por ende, la respuesta: papeles coloreados con una matriz de seda.
Se descarta así la posibilidad de mediar esos trastornos de matices.

La irrupción del duco en los esténciles, más allá del *liner brush* y *bellopticans*.

Hasta la llegada de una hoja en otoño ocupa su sitio como presentación. Fuera de la barata, la velocidad se adecua a la contraseña.

Se yerguen maniqués, efigies, facsímiles, reencarnaciones alteradas de un repertorio de sustancias.

Enseguida la eminencia gris de Johns y la celebración en forma de *tablillas* sobre la tela, emergiendo elementos horizontales junto a moldes de yeso, en idénticas partes del cuerpo.

Nadie imaginó hasta qué punto esos esquemas participaban del futuro, y cubrían lo eventual como resultado de un sueño en el que se asistía a la proclamación de ese motivo.
En esencia, nada podría ser más corriente. La suma de extensiones identifica determinados objetos y el desfile de ese momento (Galleria Castelli, 1958) donde el arte del pasado reciente adquiere fijeza, mientras que en otro contexto, varía, eludiendo el uso original del motivo.

Moldes de bronce tapizados con bombitas de magnesio, para luego superponer los números

de cero a nueve, llegando a una forma, confusa, aunque planificada.
Quizá esos indicios
sean excesivos, o al menos impenetrables, cuando agregan a lo pactado
una limitación.
Entonces lo visual y su contenido no coinciden en absoluto. “Lo importante
es lo que la forma hace”.

De allí al fenómeno Frank Stella. Como si éste representara la conciencia
de sus pares
y sólo se conformara con alineamientos paralelos de rayas, en colores
metálicos y separadas
por canales de tela sin pintura, incluyendo marcos en forma de U,
o de polígono,
y en oportunidades, con el centro agujereado. Ancho del bastidor: tres pulgadas.

Opera con arreglo al principio de desplazamiento, y supone el producto.

La hipnosis aludida en sus elementos concéntricos. Johns limpia sin fecha
a Stella, invalidando la glosa.
Y no echa mano al azul cobalto para abrumar los sentidos, sino habrá de colocar
lejos —o al margen—
un ribete igual a un cabello dividido por el incremento del campo.
Sea cual fuere el grado
de conciencia, es inquietante la disolución en lo invisible de una antigua
estabilidad ya reticulada.

¿La luz en las emanaciones de una lámpara
o la cosa misma, sucedida?

Con eso, el deterioro forma parte de la vida natural de cualquier obra
(Cage), si se precia.
Y para Johns, el menoscabo replantea todo un problema.

Ocurre que la duración no es exploratoria. Lo tangible no será examinar
el producto sino recobrase

de la sacudida, tras el impacto del charol en un baño bajo, auricular.
Esa convulsión
semejante a composiciones formadas por una nota aguda seguida de un silencio,
recupera una suerte
de equilibrio cesado por un eco, un recuerdo, o la moratoria esparcida
entre el grueso de los matices.

Barniz. Pulimento. Desenlace del reflejo.

El espacio sin tocar repele un abismo (abierto) por la más mínima marca.

CINEMÁTICA

Iconografía típica de Finlay. Redes de pesca,
luz de playas. La emoción implícita
en el ensamble formal puede transmitirse
sin pérdida; el universo se contrae como marea.
Cada línea compuesta por elementos moleculares.
El traspaso de un punto del poema a otro,
sin referencia a la masa. Como el movimiento
no es insuficiente, se reconoce en una ondulatoria
de categoría aparte, tangible en su proceso. Así
el valor de los objetos deviene secundario acorde,
un simple traqueteo. Esa mirada, apenas disciplina
de la ingerencia, encuentra desenlaces en la duración.
De todos modos los pequeños cambios no pueden
sustituirse en el ritmo, aunque la movilidad logra
una emoción sin definirla. Todo instante nos vuelve
a Garnier, bajo esos “granos de polen” en suspenso.
El sol, su balanceo de partículas en un medio fluido.

SELF-ORGANIZATION-SYSTEM

Dieter Wellershoff, y la diferencia entre literatura & propaganda, o cómo darse a conocer por medio de signos. Igual a Epicuro, creyendo que las palabras son meros indicios de contenidos de la representación. Epidermis de Wellershoff, exención, buceo & catapulta al modo Hinostriza-Lauer-Verástegui, principia en cada boutade del realismo ni bien éste suspende su crudo antes expuesto en los centrífugos del tema. Remolino. Endecha. De nuevo remolino para deshacer las pezuñas de la elegía en mitad del tempo, y no punto en fuga, sino movimiento a los costados, de repente fijo, concentración sobre un caso aislado, campus superconcreto manando alegato de la cosa. Cada señal de tránsito obedece por un instante sensorial a los signos. ¿Y a esto le llaman “la ocasión de una vida”? De todas maneras la sentencia será sí o no, a la inversa de la poesía, contraria a la civilización. ☒

BRIAN COLLIER

SELECTIONS FROM *THE COLLIER CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM*
FOR VERY SMALL OBJECTS:
CATALOG OF THE MASTER COLLECTION

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of clarity and consistency, the following definitions specify what may be described as a Very Small Object and thereby classified using *The Collier System*.

Basic definition as specified by the Oxford English Dictionary:

Very Small Object—*a* truly; utterly, less in dimension when compared with others of the same class, material thing that can be seen or touched

Further definitions of a Very Small Object:

1. Any object that is visible to the naked eye but small enough to go unnoticed most of the time.
2. The maximum dimensions of a Very Small Object are 8 mm by 8 mm by 25 mm long. The object must be able to fit, unforced, into a 1 dram vial. Anything larger than these minimum dimensions should *not* be classified under this system.
3. Very Small Objects may consist of any type of solid material.
4. Liquids and gasses may never be categorized as Very Small Objects.
5. Living things may *not* be classified under this system due to possible overlap with other existing classification systems.

The following charts will allow the scientist, naturalist, collector, or enthusiast to name and categorize all Very Small Objects. By using the Collier Classification System, we can further the goal of claiming control over a chaotic world filled with ever-increasing amounts of unidentified detritus.

CLASSIFICATION CHARTS

First name: A+B

<u>A. Status</u> <i>Onli</i> —once living <i>Neli</i> —never living	<u>B. Component</u> <i>frag</i> —a fragment or incomplete part of a whole <i>part</i> —a complete part of a larger whole <i>whol</i> —a whole individual entity
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Second name: C+D

<u>C. Point of origin</u> *	<u>D. Apparent purpose or function</u>
<i>Bas(e)</i> —found in a basement	<i>acculicorn</i> —to accumulate in corners
<i>Beach(e)</i> —found on a beach	<i>aripest</i> —to be an aerial pest
<i>Buildi</i> —found inside a building	<i>attach</i> —to attach to other things
<i>Clos(e)</i> —found in a closet or wardrobe	<i>crecrawli</i> —to creep and crawl
<i>Drar(e)</i> —found in a drawer	<i>conjoin</i> —to connect or join two separate things
<i>Gift(e)</i> —given as a gift	<i>deco</i> —decorative
<i>Hous(e)</i> —found inside a house	<i>disgups</i> —to disgust or upset
<i>Machappli</i> —found inside a machine or appliance	<i>edi</i> —primarily intended to be eaten
<i>Park(e)</i> —found in a park or forest	<i>electro</i> —electronic
<i>Petfur(e)</i> —found in or on a pet's fur, feathers, or hair	<i>float</i> —to float in or on water
<i>Pock(e)</i> —found in a pocket	<i>mecho</i> —mechanical
<i>Porch(e)</i> —found on a porch	<i>nouse</i> —no apparent purpose or function
<i>Shosol(e)</i> —found on the sole of a shoe	<i>partof</i> —only obvious purpose or function is as part of a larger whole
<i>Stret(e)</i> —found in the street	<i>rol</i> —to roll around
<i>Tabl(e)</i> —found on a table or desk	<i>stabscrach</i> —to scratch or stab things
<i>Underweb(e)</i> —found under a spider's web	<i>stictothing</i> —to stick or cling to surfaces
<i>Watr(e)</i> —found in the water	
<i>Yard(e)</i> —found in a yard or garden	

Third name: E+F+G+H

E. General color *	F. General shape *
<i>blak(e)</i> —predominantly black	<i>circu</i> —generally circular
<i>blu</i> —predominantly blue	<i>curv(e)</i> —generally curved
<i>brown(e)</i> —predominantly brown	<i>cyli</i> —generally cylindrical
<i>gren(e)</i> —predominantly green	<i>flat(e)</i> —generally flat
<i>gray</i> —predominantly gray	<i>irre</i> —irregular
<i>metal(i)</i> —a natural or applied metallic color	<i>line</i> —relatively long and linear
<i>multico</i> —multi-colored, no individual dominant color	<i>pointi</i> —having one or more tapered or pointed ends
<i>orang(e)</i> —predominantly orange	<i>recti</i> —generally rectangular
<i>pink(e)</i> —predominantly pink	<i>round(e)</i> —rounded but not spherical
<i>purpl(e)</i> —predominantly purple	<i>spheri</i> —generally spherical
<i>red(e)</i> —predominantly red	<i>symme</i> —primarily symmetrical
<i>tan(e)</i> —predominantly tan	<i>tria</i> —generally triangular
<i>transluc(e)</i> —transparent or translucent	
<i>whit(e)</i> —predominantly white	
<i>yelo</i> —predominantly yellow	

<p><u>G. Consistency or surface texture</u> *</p> <p><i>britl(e)</i>—brittle <i>crunc(i)</i>—crunchy <i>dul(e)</i>—dull <i>flexi</i>—flexible <i>hard(e)</i>—hard <i>roug(e)</i>—rough <i>rubry</i>—rubbery <i>sharp(e)</i>—sharp tip or edges <i>shin(i)</i>—shiny <i>smoth(e)</i>—smooth <i>soft(e)</i>—soft <i>squis(i)</i>—squishy <i>wet(e)</i>—wet, slimy or sticky</p>	<p><u>H. Visual comparison</u></p> <p><i>For this category an object may not be described as resembling itself. Ex. a plant or plant part cannot be plantlike.</i></p> <p><i>anilik</i>—resembles a larger animal or animal part, ex. horns, teeth, major body parts, etc. <i>biggerlik</i>—resembles something bigger than but like itself <i>buglik</i>—resembles a bug, other small invertebrate, or part thereof <i>otherlik</i>—resembles an unspecified thing other than itself <i>plantlik</i>—resembles a plant or plant part <i>unlik</i>—resembles nothing but itself</p>
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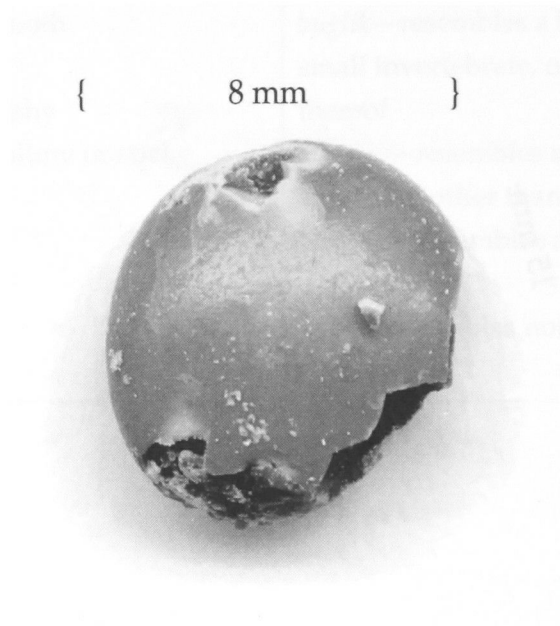
*When two word fragments cannot be put together into a pronounceable form, connecting letters may be added. Options appear in parentheses.

Nelifrag
Tableconjoin translucecurviflexiotherlik



Neliwhol

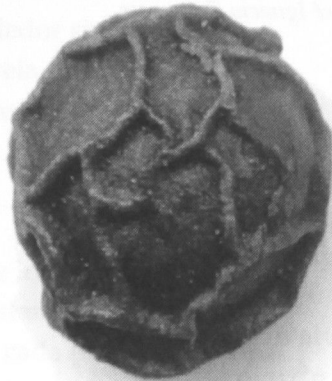
Housedisgups greneroundecruncunlik



Onliwhol

Housedi brownesphericruncotherlik

{ 5 mm }



CINCO POEMAS CHINOS

Para José Ignacio Cervantes

1

El alma se dice vertida al vacío
cada titubeo como seña particular
que restalla como piedra preciosa:
en cada arista cae como caligrafía

Es el camino que leído todavía dice
el lugar donde se tiende el próximo respiro

2

Corre furioso y lacerante, alado y resplandeciente
en el tornasol de cada escama del dragón
queda reflejado su rostro que se hunde rojo
en la herida que deja abierta en el cielo

3

Entre este momento y el que le sigue
me sentí repetido en cada nuevo instante
en un bosque donde cada nuevo tronco
era mi cuerpo en la sucesión de caídas

de cada nueva pierna que avanza
precipitada al suelo como beso de agua

4

En cada línea queda señalada la profundidad
de un paisaje que ha de decirse en su recorrido:
cada línea como musgo que señala el norte
dice una raíz que hace perder toda perspectiva

La luz existe como un alrededor sin sombras
que anuncia en el frío la estela de una historia
por ser contada en cada rama dispuesta a la hoguera

5

El ojo desgasta la lectura de los signos
como dedo recorre en la distancia el horizonte
de líneas que presumen en cada palabra una cosa
como si con ello fuera el milagro del que nace

Dicho así, revolotea, como el giro multiplicado
de esa sola mariposa que tensa el aire y lo suelta ☒

DOS POEMAS

IMPRESSÕES

como a tinta pousa sobre a página
os sentidos das palavras pairam sobre as coisas

a página é uma coisa
sobre a qual pousa
a tinta e o sentido
da palavra *página*

por isso as coisas têm sentido
sobre a página
este seco sentido nítido

sobre as outras coisas
só o pó dos sentidos repousa:

o sentido é uma tinta que se espalha
sobre a página das coisas
enquanto as nomeamos

enquanto as nomeamos
as coisas permanecem impermeáveis

porque não permanecem:
permanentemente permeáveis
à erosão do tempo

longa sombra áspera
que sobre as coisas se arrasta
do nada de que emergiu o mundo
ao nada em que imergirá

a tinta dos sentidos que apaga

REMAKE IT NEW

um poeta brasileiro
que começou meio marginal
se isto quer dizer alguma coisa
quando não há mais centro
em sua arte
e sua classe é a do meio
sem qualquer ponte
passou depois para a vanguarda
se isto quer dizer alguma coisa
quando não há mais direção
em sua classe
e sua arte é a do meio
da moda

de modo que foi da marginália
para a holografia

e daí concluiu que em todos os sentidos
a poesia estava ultrapassada
(se isto quer dizer alguma coisa
quando não há mais uma direção
nem um sentido
nem houve jamais uma direção
e um sentido apenas
na arte que vale a pena)

hoje dedica-se
a pintar coelhos
mas sem
—*horresco referens*—
usar pincel e tinta
porém, de dentro
para fora
a bioluminescência

bem, na verdade não os pinta
pois para assim poder “pintá-los”
precisaria manipular seu genes
e para poder manipulá-los
se fazer biólogo

fosse porém biólogo
não bio-iluminaria
coelhos para os expor em galerias
mas para expor o protocolo
da respectiva pesquisa

nosso artista, portanto
expõe coelhos alheios
a qualquer sentido
a não ser o de iluminar sua ruminância
de novos meios
de dizer o mesmo

que artistas auto-iluminados
dizem desde o início dos tempos:
vejam como eu brilho
ainda mais que esse coelho 🐰

JOSÉ KOZER

FOUR POEMS

ANIMA

Oh, to have been one step further on, and grown flowers!
—Eudora Welty

A field of chicory run through it sirocco hide little lizard.

Here it comes, grazing, here comes the cow, grazing.

A withered chicory field a bunch of flowers in the vase in the living room.

A nightgown blue with printed flowers a black circle death yellowing.

A circle at its concentric center a cornucopia of dead.

And you, is it you, leaning over the bunch of dry flowers in a vase the
nightgown open wide at the dry blow of the sirocco
removing the scales, removing the scales of what? You simulate an
offering: nubile the fine hairs circulatory ovaries
tubes of light the intimate conduit of your flesh
a living water sac, filled with flowers.

We press our foreheads against the window pane a twin-arched window separates our glances, joins us in the contemplation of the vulture feasting on the blue viscera of the cow.

ANIMA

I crossed the threshold, I set foot on a street of sand, Milky Way, midday the mirage of a solitary star.

I walk backwards, I know that I walk backwards, I amble here and there, a rope around my neck, a riata of myself, within, on the verge of crossing the threshold everything remains intact.

Twice they warn me to stay put, they do not contradict themselves, it is impossible for them not to contradict themselves, I don't get it: sliding on the mirror is a full-length figure, the same figure (another voice) has become affixed to the oval mirror going back to the origin of quicksilver.

What is my name what is it and for what: Milky Way the water, undisturbed sand the imprint of my feet when crossing the threshold, I know it isn't me (it was high time) on this side and the other I corroborate it; I corroborate that in profile it isn't me, I have crossed: fair weather, pathless.

A complete turn around brings me the heyday of my parents, sand (as far as one can see) we dance; the sand's limestone parents beat on water bracelets, the air as drum, a trace of verdigris, a path of malachite, we laugh: seated; the grass resembles a throne.

I turn around, there's a piece of furniture behind me, mahogany, the desolation of quicksilver:
they have returned my glance. They embedded themselves in the mirror of the dresser, standing, they have embedded themselves in the oval mirror in the room, sitting: it is time.

Me, I am ready. The intense heat is a good sign, the sun appearing in the middle of the sky, a waxing moon racked with heat.

Crouching, I sing: I raise my voice, I go down. They smile. They are happy. I take for granted that for the first time they are happy. I place myself at their feet. I receive the blessing of their parents.
Verdigris is falling, sand is falling: a voice of parenthood.

We put our shoes on. A ritual robe. A skullcap. We raise our voices. Three voices we were voices of sand, we are, again: tongues of fire, numb with cold. We lean forward (gathered) we touch the wood slightly we polish the wood: a star embedded in the forehead.
Blessed Angelicus, give me your hand for the transit is coming, the door narrows, the leopard appears, the star in its eyes, the sign of the sand, a mother with a clear, clearly artificial, voice.

ANIMA

A tedious adolescence on a tropical island.

I remember only a table two parents seated at the table a sister: the sum of thousands of days thousands of middays (lunch at one in the afternoon).

What did my parents wear? Who were they? I don't remember a single dress my sister wore (what did she think of?) And the table? And the table?

Woods varnishes carvings (countless geometric shapes): a penumbra that cannot be taken at a glance takes up the space of a dining-room table.

Seven years every day thirty minutes lunch time (four)
characters at a table: my sister is terebinth my parents
rhomboids

turning on a (mute) vortex of mahogany:
and I look and I look at a black pupil a red
pupil (I see) the ebony eye of the father the red-pine
eye of the mother, crossing on the surface of a mirror in
back: we leave the dining room in silence. On to the polished
concentric circles of a precious wood
(smooth) (smooth) to the bodiless overlapping of four
figures behind the two twin-arched windows.

OF THE NATURAL ORDER

All flowers are identical: the flower grows and wilts of its own accord; when they detach, all flowers are identical.

All animals are alike: on the third day they shun their own nature: they die in unreachable warrens (a kind of inclemency) identical to the identical flowers.

All stones are pedestals; they keep on being stony before the ravages (brushes blows kicks) of time; once reduced to powder they resemble insects shunning immobility until reaching a flower point identical to the stone.

All human beings were configured after the likeness of the flower, like animals: they shun the stone. And they shun themselves in the knowledge that the flower unremarkable in their pupils, the indeterminate animal of their throbs, is the

mirror-image of a sand storm when the stone crumbles in its pedestal (a statue of salt): the roar on the temples suddenly shatters the chalices out of similarity; the slap of the sand out in the sun breaks up in grains identical to the animal in mirages: everything in its own way becomes startled now at the other end of the desert; upon coming unstrung the pupils recognize themselves as identical (similar) to their own nature (vegetal (animal) lapidary).

Translations by Jorge Guitart ☒

JORGE ORTEGA

SEIS POEMAS

HALLAZGO

Una mujer dormida en el vado del alba.
Una mujer dormida
en el punto más bajo de los sueños
como una piedra lisa
al fondo del estanque.

Bien parece una muerta. Lo pregonan
la escuadra que postulan sus rodillas,
los brazos en un gesto de abandono,
el cuerpo en posición un tanto incómoda,
la ausencia de resuello
por tiempo indefinido.

Yo me visto a su lado
silenciosamente, tratando
de no hacer mucho ruido o alterar
el agua del sepulcro que la habita,
su nivel.

La luz va esmerilando los contornos.
Pensar que no estaré cuando ese cuerpo
deje de ser un bulto inanimado
y se convierta en una piel radiante

que al curso de las horas ilumine
con un fulgor quizá más necesario
que el mismo sol
las estancias de casa.

EL LAUREL

Visto a distancia
el laurel en flor es una esfera
con abolladuras,
un mundo sin la piel de sus océanos
que alivie el espinazo
de los desfiladeros.

La Tierra no es redonda ni perfecta.
Esto si equiparamos lo bien hecho
a la circunferencia, esa moneda.

Pero el laurel.

Sus pétalos son folios diminutos
donde el brillo compone partituras,
indicios para el ave reclusa
entre las ramas: selva musical.

El árbol en la tierra,
la tierra en el planeta. Y otra vez

la Tierra como un bote de aluminio
chutado en algún parque.

Todo esto lo suscita
la forma del laurel
en la acera de enfrente.

FÁBULA DE LA MIGRAÑA

El oído. La sien. El ojo.
El cántaro agobiado por el agua
y su presión de arteria.

Tambores muy adentro.
Tambores en el cuesco de la drupa
filtrando la andanada
a la superficie.

Llevar entre la cera de la piel
un coral rojo, un rojo candelabro
de venas palpitantes. Solución:
ceder el pensamiento por un rato.

Pero tampoco el sueño.
Sus turbulencias viajan por el agua
y alcanzan la otra orilla
del cántaro apacible
con la celeridad de cualquier ruido.

Basta una sola onda
—el desliz de la manta—
para volver al punto de partida.

ESCUELA FLAMENCA

La madre emparejando calcetines
frente al televisor, y una luz tenue
—entre amarilla y blanca
pero sin densidad—
viniendo desde afuera
a esclarecer la cueva de la sala,
depósito de sombras.

A un lado su marido
con la pierna cruzada
y aspecto cansino,
el rostro un poco más iluminado
por las detonaciones de la tele
que estalla en sus imágenes.

El par en su rutina
dejando transcurrir las manecillas
hasta las nueve y media,
esperando la muerte en el sillón,
con la mirada puesta ya en la nada;

en la pantalla, no en el noticiero,
en la pared y no precisamente
en la pantalla, no en los calcetines
sino en el monograma de la estera.

Las fotos familiares, los adornos,
las acuarelas, el piano arrumbado
por más de cuatro lustros
se suman al misterio
de cuanto los rodea.

AUTORRETRATO CON PAISAJE

La yuca en la pendiente como un faro
vigilando la carretera, oteando el horizonte.
Obelisco, palillo de dientes, erguido
palo mondo. Antena.

Filamento de luz contra los matorrales.
Pálido sobre verde.

Las plantas son hombres que miran,
hombres mirando al Oeste
como marineros en tierra.

Y los hombres
puntos neutros, cuentas de vidrio
rodando hacia la playa
por un vasto repecho.

Nos une la flaqueza,
la pequeñez que somos bajo el disco
magnánimo del cielo, la penuria
que blande nuestra ropa
frente al caparazón
oscuro de los cerros.

Arrastra nubes el caudal del cielo, y nosotros
seguimos donde mismo. Hemos avanzado pero nada.
Pasan las moles sobre el capacete, portaviones
en un túnel de viento.

THEY'RE ALREADY HERE

Hay un extraño en casa desde hace tiempo. No tiene rostro, en su lugar un diminuto bulbo de neblina brota de los rincones descuidados como una hierba. Pienso en el relato de Stephen King que trata de un granjero invadido de buenas a primeras por una extraña plaga de maleza que rompe en todos lados —la cocina, el comedor, la sala, el dormitorio hasta cubrir de pasto la apariencia incluyendo la piel del inquilino. Mas no vivo en el campo ni poseo jardín, tampoco plantas o macetas; algo debe impeler el crecimiento de hongos de vapor en las esquinas de las habitaciones. Ya vinieron a revisar los ductos del sistema de aire acondicionado, las rendijas, los cables, cualesquier instalación. Nada explica el fenómeno. La casa vuelve a quedarse sola. Ningún técnico logra aclarar el caso. Al mediodía —mientras la luz rebosa a cielo abierto como una fuente rota— los umbrales conspiran bajo el velo de la alfombra. ☒

TWO POEMS

JIGS AND LURES

The immense sky belonging to me has fallen in on a detail of my prayer. I thought it was changing from yellows into intense fires. He lied. It was my perspective that had changed in angle. The rest would pass. Passion, life, the need to be held, the gift. All this useless pursuit of nothingness to be achieved when a cloud is about to change its course, to dissolve nothingness itself. He would stay there, stuck in his circumvaluations, with his metaphors, with his light—maybe I'll see it someday. Cracks in the wall and heat lightning stand in for everything that's missing from this afternoon and she, my mother, like a sleepwalker, now moves throughout the entire house; it's round, circular, like a carpet. I think I already have a different formula for conceiving her, one that will change her absolute power. She is the queen, and the sky that changes dizzily under her gaze marks the location closest to the throne, to rebirth. The wound opened by time reddens and heals little by little with the light. She's my mother, that girl whose pubic hairs lost their splendor—white skin crossed by rivers of varicose veins; woman ashamed of being tired in an armchair—, she gets closer and closer to the idea of her stature. Her coquetry was of such an artificial naturalness, something like that, like a painted fruit, touched up—the orange rind sculpted on her ceiling, covered over later with white paint. Something insincere in her gesture of half-covering—her leg, her hair, her dissimulation, her

smile. (Catching up the pleat of the turquoise skirt with fingers acting as pincers). And in her folding, there is tenderness, there is pain... An old comb, cracked, plastic, dirtied; the fragile domination expressed in gestures always moving upwards, her only caress located between the comb that pushes her hair back and the finger on the iron that imprisons the pleat of a perpetually taut skirt. The whole world that has ever come to life is there, face up and looking sidelong at her, without daring to face her. God, God! where is the woman hidden, the beautiful one who needs no digital retouching for a clean portrait? Was she this woman? Was she always this one? The reverse of the reina, reverse face of a queen? My mother? Her fraying wicker armchair—a throne? The actress who continues to prepare for her movie, who looks like a double for Annita...? Time does not advance; it recedes, it curves. Now she was in the same room, on the same stained pillows. But in a few days, hundreds of stories will have passed over her body, crossing the epidermis, filling it with small blue spots—almost holes, backlit. Each fold of her face is a remnant; each outline determines a subject (lead fishhook), an event, to create a deception. And there we were, all the damned or favorite children; all the pasts in the remains of a dusky landscape sewn into its moiré cushion. On top, her shoes. Above those, her thin legs, and then the body that someone took away from me wrapped in sheets. I don't think I've ever seen her this way, so close, so distant, making a circuit through the entire house until arriving slowly at her chair to find refuge. Only when I get into the dark elevator—the tunnel—and they take her to a place where I can't be (where I'm no one who gets permission, and she's not even my mother) I felt lost, split open, and terrified. Terrifyingly alone, playing with an empty syringe. When she returns, making the exact inverse motion toward the chair—the one I always take from her, that I've always taken from her—the bag of blood still hangs from her arm like a leaden decoy useful for deceiving time, and she scolds me, "What are you doing here?"

THE WORD, PITCHER

a remembrance of P. Bowles for J. Miralles

I authorize you to perceive the word, pitcher.
“How is it possible that pitcher doesn’t mean pitcher,”
says the four-year-old, and he gives us warning:
text deceives with metallic noise
for different substances—
glass, plastic, tin.
The word pitcher maintains an arbitrariness like
those words that upset the child’s illusions,
the child who expected to sound out different tongues,
different modes for grasping, possessing an object and later
some artificial way to create order.
So, getting older, he writes some other thing for pitcher,
some other thing for destiny, and he becomes a writer
to corrupt the supposed facticity of a life,
to kill off certain forms of logic.
The word leaves off being something material.
It takes on the velocity of a train without cargo,
the blind insanity of its engine, of its whistle,
of those rickety faces that passed through it
using the autumnal landscape of the window:
faces, animals, yellow trees
grimacing some thing they represent
confusedly.

He touches the word again en route
and the same train, returning, shatters the image,
shatters the future that repeats
across lengthy, lengthy, lengthy measures,
crossing over centuries of customary usage that overpower the image.
He drinks the liquid and expels it
with his small, trembling, wounded hand
into a receptacle better left unnamed.

He sees that it's impure, turbid, balancing against the bottom.
It's no longer contained, no longer real.
He no longer sees it.
You only see him, servile, staring at his face in the liquid
rhythm.

Then he crushes the word, justification
and the word pitcher is forgotten,
smashed by the sensation of emptiness
against the iron handle he had used to initiate the process
of pouring out sad inspirational juices, ancient
voices ordered by some law he still doesn't comprehend
—emptied by derailment, origins—
he throws the disordered liquid
violently
to the ground.

When the word pitcher dissipates
its fiction can be inscribed
superimposed
over an obsession held up by the fingers
that had momentarily
sustained the word.

Translations by Kristin Dykstra ☒

NOTAS BIOGRÁFICAS / BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Michael Davidson is the author of various poetry collections, among them *The Arcades* (O Books, 1998), *Post Hoc* (Avenue B, 1990), *The Landing of Rochambeau* (Burning Deck, 1985), and *The Prose of Fact* (The Figures, 1981); his most recent book of criticism is *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics* (University of Chicago Press, 2003). Reconocido internacionalmente como poeta, artista de performance y crítico, **Jerome Rothenberg** también ha recopilado importantes antologías que van desde *Technicians of the Sacred* (University of California Press, 1985) hasta *Poems for the Millennium* (University of California Press, 1995): una aportación central a la “etnopoética.” Su último libro de poemas, *A Book of Witness*, apareció el año pasado (New Directions, 2003). **Heriberto Yépez** es el autor de varios poemarios, entre ellos *Por una poética antes del paleolítico y después de la propaganda* (Anortecer, 2000), y del libro de crítica de la poesía vanguardista norteamericana, *Luna Creciente: contrapoéticas norteamericanas del siglo xx* (Dirección General De Publicaciones, 2002). Sus poemas escritos en inglés han aparecido en *Tripwire*, *Shark*, *XCP* y *Chain*, y en la antología *Reversible Monuments* (Copper Canyon Press, 2002). **Laura Jauregui Murueta** es poeta y traductora que trabaja en Tijuana, Baja California. **Eduardo Milán** nació en Rivera, Uruguay, el 27 de julio de 1952; desde 1979 vive en la ciudad de México. Ha publicado dieciocho libros de poemas, como *Manto* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1999) y *Querencia, Gracias y otros poemas* (Galaxia Gutenberg /

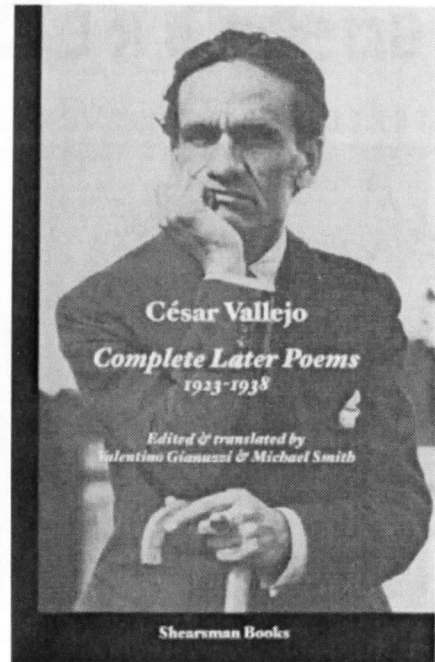
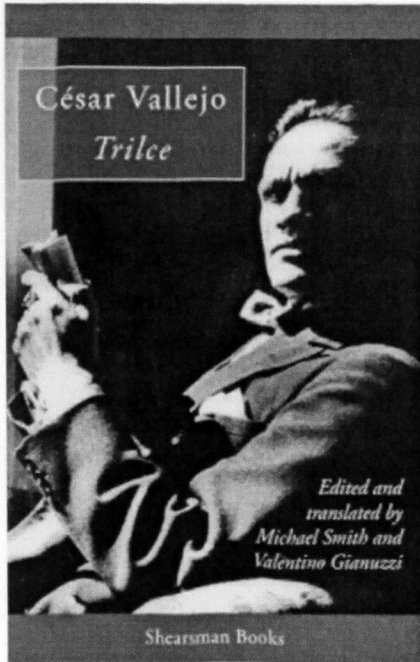
Círculo de Lectores, España, 2003) entre lo más reciente. Los poemas que aquí se publican pertenecen a su libro inédito *Los poemas*. **Rae Armantrout** is the author of *Up to Speed: Poems* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004) and *Veil: New and Selected Poems* (Wesleyan University Press, 2001). **Josely Vianna Baptista** (Curitiba, 1957) ha publicado los libros de poemas *Ar y Corpografia* (Iluminuras, Brasil, 1991 y 1992, el segundo en colaboración con el artista plástico Francisco Faria), *Outro* (Mirabilia, Brasil, 2001, en colaboración con Arnaldo Antunes y Maria Angela Biscaia) y *A Concha das Mil Coisas Maravilhosas do Velho Caramujo* (Mirabilia, Brasil, 2001). En 2002 publicó en México el libro de poemas *Los poros floridos* (tr. Reynaldo Jiménez y Roberto Echavarren). Una colección de sus poemas, *On the Shining Screen of the Eyelids*, fue premiada en 2001 por el Creative Work Fund de San Francisco, EUA, y fue publicada en 2003 por Manifest Press. **Reynaldo Jiménez**, poeta, traductor e editor, nasceu em Lima, Peru, em 1959; mora desde os quatro anos em Buenos Aires, Argentina. Seus livros mais recentes são *Musgo* (2001) e *La reflexión esponja* (2001). Dirige atualmente a revista e o selo editorial tsé=tsé, e prepara a segunda edição de sua antologia de poetas peruanos *El libro de unos sonidos*. **Thomas Glassford** (Laredo, US, 1963) received a BFA from the University of Texas, Austin. His work has been included in numerous group shows such as: *Zebra Crossing*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin, Germany, 2002); *Escultura mexicana. de la academia a la instalación*, Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes (Mexico City, Mexico, 2001); *Mutations*, La video mexicaine actuelle, Palais des Arts de Toulouse (Toulouse, France, 2001); and *Erógena*, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil (Mexico City, Mexico, 2000). Glassford's solo shows include *Aster*, Laboratorio Arte Alameda (Mexico City, Mexico, 2003); *Fuente*, Ex-Templo de San Agustín (Mexico City, Mexico, 2002); *Fuente parabólica*, Museo de la Alhóndiga (Guanajuato, Mexico, 2000); and *Autogol*: Monterrey, Museo de Monterrey (Monterrey, Mexico, 1995). He currently lives and works in Mexico City. Translator and poet **Rosa Alcalá** is the author of *Some Maritime Disasters This Century* (Belladonna Books, 2003), a chapbook which features poems from her current manuscript, *Ghost Languages*. Her poems have recently appeared in *Bombay Gin* and *gam*. She teaches in the University of Texas at El Paso's Bilingual MFA in Creative Writing Department. **Roberto (Bob) Harrison** ha publicado los libros *Mola* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs), así como *Split Poems*, *Broken English*, y *Coup Sticks*. Harrison vive en Milwaukee donde es el codirector de la

revista *Crayon*. **Luis Felipe Fabre** nació en la ciudad de México en 1974. En 1995 obtuvo el Premio Punto de Partida en el género de poesía. Ha publicado *Vida quieta* (2000) y *Una temporada en el Mictlán* (2003). **Joe Amato** (US) is the author of *Industrial Poetics: Demo Tracks for a Culture on the Blink* (forthcoming, University of Iowa Press), *Under Virga* (forthcoming, Chax), and *Bookend: Anatomies of a Virtual Self* (SUNY, 1997). **Liliana Ponce** nació en Buenos Aires, Argentina, en 1950. Publicó *Trama continua* (Corregidor, Argentina, 1976), *Composición* (Ultimo Reino, Argentina, 1984) y *Teoría de la voz y el sueño* (tsé-tsé, Argentina, 2001). Tuvo a su cargo la edición de un libro sobre teatro japonés, en el que también colaboró en su redacción, *El teatro noh de Japón*, y tiene un libro de de poesía inédito: *Fudekara*. **Ricardo Cortez Cruz** (US) is the author of *Straight Outta Compton* and *Five Days of Bleeding*. Recent work appears in *African American Review*, *Obsidian II*, *Fiction International*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Step Into A World: A Global Anthology of the New Black Literature*, and other publications. **Dan Featherston's** (US) poetry has appeared recently in *Aufgabe*, *Cultural Society*, *Kiosk*, *New American Writing*, and *Ur Vox*. Recent and forthcoming books include *Anatomies* (Potes & Poets Press), *The Clock Maker's Memoir: 1-12* (Handwritten Press), *United States* (Phylum Press), and *Into the Earth* (Quarry Press). **Gabriel Bernal Granados** was born in Mexico City in 1973. His translation into Spanish of *A Balthus Notebook*, by Guy Davenport, is forthcoming from Libros del Umbral. His next book, *Noticias de Como. Cuaderno de viaje*, will be published shortly by the same press. **Kent Johnson** (US) is translator (with Forrest Gander) of two books by Jaime Saenz: *Immanent Visitor* (University of California Press) and *The Night* (forthcoming from Princeton). He was recipient in 2004 of an NEA Literary Fellowship and PEN Translation Award. He is editor of *Also, with My Throat, I Shall Swallow Ten Thousand Swords: Araki Yasusada's Letters in English* (Combo Books, 2005). **Duanel Díaz Infante** (San Germán, Cuba, 1978) ganó el Premio de Ensayo Alejo Carpentier en su edición de 2003 con *Mañach o la República* (Letras Cubanas). Ha publicado artículos, reseñas y ensayos en *Azoteas*, *Extramuros*, *Dédalo*, *Casa de las Américas*, *Unión*, *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* y *La Habana Elegante*. Actualmente termina un estudio sobre el lugar y las funciones de la obra del grupo Orígenes en las letras cubanas del siglo XX, que será publicado en 2005 (Colibrí, Madrid). **Antonio Ochoa** es poeta y ensayista. Nació en la ciudad de México en 1974, desde hace cuatro años reside en Edimburgo, Escocia. Estos poemas

pertenecen al manuscrito inédito *pulsos*. **Gabriel Gudding** (US) ganó el premio Agnes Lynch Starrett con su libro, *A Defense of Poetry* (2002). Sus poemas aparecen en *The American Poetry Review*, *VeRT*, *Fence*, *Jacket*, y otras revistas. Poeta y traductor **Jorge Guitart** es el autor de *Foreigner's Notebook* (Shuffaloff 1993) y *Film Blanc* (Meow Press, 1996). Vive en Buffalo, NY, donde es profesor de lingüística española en la Universidad del Estado de Nueva York en Buffalo. **Nancy Gates Madsen** holds a Ph.D. in Spanish from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. She collaborated with Kristin Dykstra on the translation of *Violet Island and Other Poems* (2004), poetry by Reina Maria Rodriguez. **Antonio Mestre** ha publicado tres libros: *Transparencia en llamas* (Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco/Instituto de Cultura de Tabasco, 1989), *Historia natural del olvido* (UNAM, 1993), e *Intemperies* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998). Ha sido colaborador de la *Revista de la Universidad de México*, de la revista *Tierra Adentro*. Es investigador en el Centro de Investigaciones sobre los Campos Culturales de América Latina, de la Universidad de la Sorbona. Es director de la editorial Hora y Veinte. **Rolando Sánchez Mejías** nació en Holguín, Cuba, en 1959. Su poesía se encuentra reunida en el libro *Cálculo de lindes* (1986-1996) (México, 2000). Ha publicado los libros de prosa *Historias de Olmo* y *Cuaderno de Feldafing* (ambos en la editorial Siruela, España, 2001 y 2004 respectivamente). Reside en Barcelona. **Richard Deming's** (US) poems have appeared in *Field*, *Sulfur*, *Quarter After Eight*, *Word for Word*, *A. Bacus*, and other magazines, as well as in the anthology *Great American Prose Poems*. Currently he is a lecturer for the English department at Yale University. **Mario Arteca** nació en La Plata, Argentina, en 1960, donde reside actualmente. Trabaja como periodista y colabora en distintos medios radiales, gráficos y electrónicos de su país y del extranjero. Publicó los siguientes libros de poesía: *Guatambú* (Tsé-Tsé, Buenos Aires, 2003) y *La impresión de un folleto* (Siesta, Buenos Aires, 2004). Su tercer libro de poesía, *Bestiario búlgaro*, se encuentra en prensa. Multimedia and installation artist **Brian Collier** (US) is represented online at Greenmuseum (www.greenmuseum.org). His project "Very Small Objects" exists in interlocking forms: text, collector's kit, artist book, interactive gallery installation, & website. The installation is currently on view at the Medical Library of Washington University (St. Louis, Missouri). **Ricardo Pohlenz** (México, 1965) es poeta, escritor, editor, comunicador, crítico de cine y artes visuales. Es director editorial de la revista *El Huevo*, ha colaborado en diversas publicaciones (*Flash Art*,

Letras Libres, *Trace*, entre otras) y es autor de la plaquette *Oración para gato y dama en desgracia*, publicada por Cuadernos de Malinalco en 1990, y participó en el álbum *Urbe Probeta* (2003), donde los poetas fueron sampleados y manipulados por músicos electrónicos. **Luis Dolhnikoff** nació en Sao Paulo en 1961. Reside en Florianópolis. Fue uno de los editores del sello Expressao en los años ochenta, dedicado a la traducción y “transcreación” de textos poéticos de diversas tradiciones. Ha publicado *Impreciso enigma* (con Paulo Rosembaun, 1979), *Pánico* (1987), *Impressoes Digitais* (1989), *Os homens de ferro* (1992) y *Microsmo* (1991). **José Kozer** was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1940. He has lived in the United States since 1960 and after 32 years of teaching at Queens College of New York retired in 1997. Among his more than 30 books of poetry published in different Spanish speaking countries, the latest are *Ánima* (Fondo de Cultura, México) and the second edition of *Carece de causa* (Tsé Tsé, Buenos Aires). **Jorge Ortega** nació en Mexicali, Baja California, en 1972. Ha publicado libros de ensayo y poesía—*Deserción de los hábitos*, 1997; *Cuaderno carmesí*, 1997; *Mudar de casa*, 2001. Sus poemas traducidos al inglés aparecen en las antologías bilingües: *The Flight of the Eagle: Poetry in the U.S.-Mexico Border* (San Diego State University, 1993) y *Across the Line: The Poetry of Baja California* (Junction Press, 2002). Su libro más reciente se titula *Ajedrez de polvo* (tsé-tsé, Buenos Aires, 2003). Recent publications from **Reina María Rodríguez** (Havana, Cuba) include *Bosque negro* (2005), *Otras cartas a Milena* (2004), *Te daré de comer como a los pájaros* (2000), *La foto del invernadero* (1998), and the anthology *Ellas escriben cartas de amor*. **Kristin Dykstra’s** *The Winter Garden Photograph*, a translation of Rodríguez’ *La foto del invernadero*, is forthcoming from Green Integer; “The Whale,” a short story by Jorge Miralles (tr. with Henry Lezama), appeared in *The New Review of Literature* (2005).

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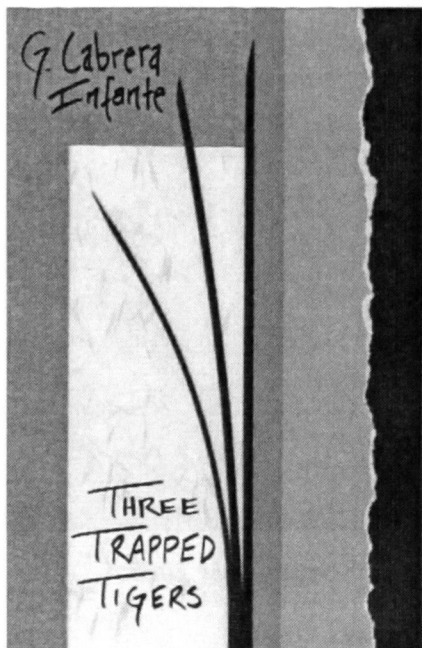
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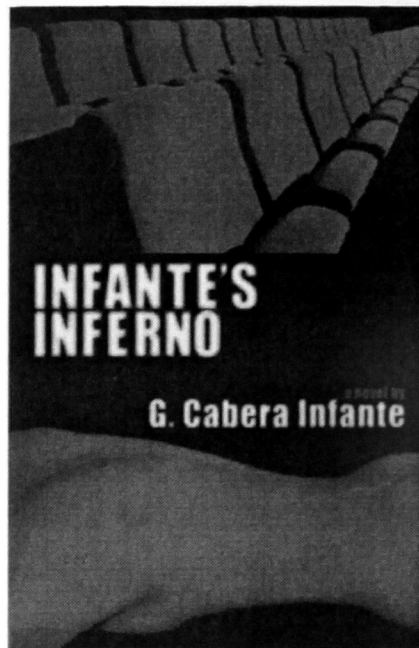
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