



MANDORLA

NUEVA ESCRITURA DE LAS AMÉRICAS • NEW WRITING FROM THE AMERICAS

6

El primer número de *MANDORLA: Nueva Escritura de las Américas* se publicó en mayo de 1991 con el propósito de iniciar un diálogo significativo que fuera bilingüe —de hecho, multilingüe— pero no en el sentido convencional de la palabra. Tratándose de obras escritas en inglés y español, los textos inéditos aparecen en su lengua original; mientras que de las traducciones, *MANDORLA* sólo publica la versión en el otro idioma. Poesía en francés o portugués aparecen en su original, con traducción al inglés y al español. Se trata de hacer que las distintas voces emprendan una lectura —o relectura— de lo escrito en otro lado, para autorizar así un cuerpo que sea coherente con la vitalidad creativa e intelectual del hemisferio.

MANDORLA se edita e imprime en la ciudad de México: sitio en que el crucial debate cultural entre norte y sur bien podría realizarse. De hecho, el nombre de la revista —*mandorla*, palabra que describe ese espacio creado por dos círculos que se intersecan— alude a la noción de intercambio, y a la de un diálogo imaginativo que es ahora una obligación entre las Américas.

El terreno aún por forjar es como el mismo continente americano: virtualmente sin límites.

6

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EDITOR • DIRECTOR

ROBERTO TEJADA

ASSISTANT EDITOR • SUBDIRECTORA

ESTHER ALLEN

MANAGING EDITOR • JEFE DE REDACCIÓN

GABRIEL BERNAL GRANADOS

ORIGINAL DESIGN • DISEÑO ORIGINAL

AZUL MORRIS

LAYOUT • FORMACIÓN

ANTONIETA CRUZ

EDITORIAL STAFF • REDACCIÓN

SUSAN BRIANTE

ARCHIVE • ARCHIVO

SUSANA TEJADA

GUEST EDITOR • NÚMERO EDITADO POR

ESTHER ALLEN

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LUIS FELIPE FABRE

LA LUNA ES UN PLATO ROTO

1 ≈

Jack Mendoza vendedor de biblias soltero 57 años
nunca aprendió a tocar el violín

el sombrero
lo traes puesto por vanidad
o es que si te lo quitaras el cielo se nos caería encima?

en este pueblo infernal
los hombres se derriten como paletas heladas

y tú con traje negro y corbata de moño
vienes de tu entierro?

Ya ni sudas Jack
de seguir así terminarás por volverte cactus

ding-dong ding-dong

Jack Mendoza vende biblias
en un país donde ya todos tienen una

2 ≈

ya no cabe en tus ojos tanto desierto
pero en esta carretera nadie se detendrá por ti

mira
allá van las casas rodantes
como huyendo de su hipoteca

mira
muchos son los hombres
que se han vuelto una raya blanca de autopista

entonces un trailer se detiene
el conductor viene de matar a su rubia'
según te explica y te necesita de coartada

esta vez tuviste suerte Jack

3 ≈

una fila de casas como un tren descompuesto
algunos hombres bebiendo cerveza

las cuatro de la tarde y no has vendido una biblia

en casos así
es válido robarle a las niñas sus manzanas

si Jack Mendoza tuviera una pistola
bang-bang-bang asaltaría un banco

4 ≈

a esta hora en la cafetería ni las moscas
aquí el polvo ha encontrado su lugar

grandes pechos los de estas meseras comestibles

sus nombres están tatuados en la corteza de los árboles
y en los corazones de todos los trailereros

solitaria hamburguesa la tuya
Jack Mendoza vendedor de biblias soltero 57 años

Jesús te ama!

pero los cuervos vienen a morir en tus ojos
y la luna es un plato roto que una mesera arrojó por la ventana

5 ≈

pueblo de cartón
aquí las mujeres se volvieron vacas

los niños apedrearon a los pájaros

porque eran demasiado bellos

toc-toc cada puerta que tocas es un portazo
y tu nariz cada vez más chata

y otra vez por la serpiente oscura de la carretera
tras las persianas las muy vacas no te miran partir

y Jack Mendoza se va haciendo chiquito
apenas un punto
menos

nadie podría asegurar que eso en la lejanía es alguien 

MARIO BELLATÍN
FROM BEAUTY SALON

All kinds of inhumanity become human with time.
—Kawabata Yasunari

1.
Some years ago, my interest in aquariums led me to decorate my beauty salon with different colored fish. Now that the salon has turned into a Dyinghouse, where people with nowhere else to do so can come and end their days, I find it hard to tell why the fish have been gradually giving up. Maybe it's because the tap water has too much chlorine in it, or because I don't have time to give them proper care. I started out breeding Royal Guppies. The shop people assured me those were the toughest and therefore the easiest fish to breed. The ideal fish for a beginner. What's more, they had the peculiarity of reproducing very fast. They are viviparous, so they don't need an oxygen pump; the eggs are safe even without changing the water. The first time I practised my hobby was not all that successful. I bought a medium-sized aquarium and put in a pregnant female, a virgin female and a male with a long colorful tail. Next morning the male was dead. He was lying belly up at the bottom of the tank, among the white stones with which I'd covered the floor. I immediately fetched the rubber glove I used for dyeing the clients' hair and picked the dead fish out. Over the next few days, nothing special happened. I simply tried to work out the right measure of food so that the fish would neither get indigestion nor starve to death. Controlling the food also helped to keep the water clear all the time. When the pregnant female had her

young a ruthless persecution started. The other female wanted to eat the babies. However the newborn fish had quick, strong reflexes that could save them momentarily from death. Out of eight that were born, only three survived. After a few days, for no apparent reason, the mother died. That death was very odd. After giving birth, she remained motionless on the floor of the tank, her abdomen not deflating at all. Once again I had to bring out the rubber hair-dyeing glove. With this I removed the dead mother and flushed her down the toilet that stands behind the shed where I sleep. My workmates were against my fish hobby. They said fish were unlucky. I took no notice and started buying more aquariums, as well as the necessary appliances to keep everything running. I got some little oxygen pumps made to look like treasure chests abandoned on the seabed. I also found some small pumps shaped like frogmen, with tanks that constantly gave off bubbles. When I finally got the knack, with some new Royal Guppies I bought, I ventured into fish that were harder to breed. I was very intrigued by Golden Carp. At the same shop I found out that in certain cultures it was held a pleasure just to gaze at them. That was what started happening to me. I could spend several hours admiring the reflections from their scales and fins. Afterwards someone told me that this pastime was a foreign amusement.

What is not amusing at all is the ever greater number of people who come to die at the beauty salon. It's no longer just friends in whose bodies the sickness is well advanced; most of them are strangers who have nowhere to die. Apart from the Dyinghouse, their only alternative would be to perish in the street. To go back to the fish, at one stage there were dozens of them ornamenting the salon. I had installed smaller tanks for the pregnant females, and promptly separated them from their young so they wouldn't devour them after birth. Now, since I've been attacked by the sickness as well, only empty aquariums are left. All but one, which I try my best to maintain with some life in it. I use some of the fish tanks to store the personal effects brought by relatives of the people staying at the salon. To avoid confusion I stick on a label marked with the sick person's name and there I keep his clothes and any candies that might be delivered from time to time. I only allow the families to contribute money, clothes and confectionery. Everything else is forbidden.

It's strange to observe how fish can affect a person's state of mind. When I was keen on Golden Carp, apart from the peaceful feeling of gazing at them, I would always choose something gold to wear when I went out at night dressed as a woman. A hairband perhaps, gloves, or the stockings I wore for such occasions. I thought that an

accessory in that color might bring me luck. It could save me from an encounter with the Queersmashers, a gang that haunted the central area of the city. Many people had died after being attacked by those evil villains, but I dare say it was worse for someone to come out of the confrontation alive. At the hospitals, they were always treated with contempt and admission was often refused for fear they might be infected. From then on, because of the pitiful stories I heard, I developed the compassion to take in this or that injured companion who had no other option. Perhaps that's how this gloomy Dyinghouse that I have the misfortune to manage came about. But to return to the fish, I soon got bored with keeping nothing but Royal Guppies and Golden Carp. I believe it's a deformity of my character: I tire extremely quickly of the things that attract me. The worst part is that then I don't know what to do with them. First it was the Guppies, which struck me one day as being too commonplace for the majestic aquariums I planned to create. Without the slightest remorse, I gradually stopped feeding them in hopes that they would start eating each other. I flushed the last remaining ones down the toilet, the way I disposed of the dead mother fish. This freed the aquariums for fish of a higher caliber. Goldfish were my first thought. But on consideration I remembered how dull they were, almost stupid. I wanted something that was colorful but also lively, enabling me to pass the time when there were no clients in watching them chase one another or shelter among the aquatic plants I had growing over the multicolored stones.

My work at the beauty salon occupied me from Monday to Saturday. But some Saturday afternoons, when I was very tired, I left the business to someone else and went to the Turkish Baths to relax. My favorite establishment was run by a Japanese family and was reserved for persons of the male sex. The owner, a middle-aged, short man, had two daughters who acted as receptionists. The lobby tried to respect the Oriental style of the entrance sign. It had a counter decorated with multicolored fish and red dragons carved in high relief. One invariably found the two young women doing large jigsaw puzzles, most of them involving over two thousand pieces. If anyone came in, they turned from this occupation and became very solicitous. The first step was to offer small transparent plastic bags, for the visitor himself to fill with his valuables. Then they produced a numbered disc that one had to fit onto the wrist oneself. The Japanese girls placed the bag in a certain pigeonhole and then invited the visitor to step into the room beyond. Here the decor changed completely. It was like the baths in the National Stadium that I had the opportunity to see when I was taken there by an amateur footballer. The walls were covered up to half way with white tiles, most of them

chipped. Leaping dolphins had been painted onto the untiled part. The patterns were discolored and one could barely make out the animals' backs. There was always the same employee waiting in the room to ask for the clothing I had on. Each time I went I always took care to wear only masculine garments. After I had undressed in front of him, the employee stretched his arms forward in a mechanical gesture to receive my clothes. Then he consulted the number hanging from my wrist and carried the pile to the appropriate compartment. Before doing this he would deliver two towels, threadbare but clean. I'd cover my genitals with one and drape the other over my shoulders.

The last time I visited the Baths, I was reminded of a story a friend told me one night as we were waiting for men on a fairly busy thoroughfare. My friend liked to dress exotically. He was always in feathers and gloves and showy things of that sort. He said that a few years before, his father had paid him a trip to Europe. It was on this trip that he'd learned to dress the way he did. But the look was not much appreciated around here, it seemed, and my friend spent many hours standing on street corners. Not even the patrol cars prowling the area would pick him up for the usual tour. I remembered him that time because once he told me that his father used to go to a bathhouse to spend the weekend. This was another, upmarket type of Turkish Baths, not at all like the one run by the Japanese. He recalled that on one of his own first visits, his father's friends took advantage of him in a cubicle. My friend was no more than thirteen at the time, and said nothing about it out of fear. The point is that this bathhouse is different, because unlike the one frequented by my friend's father, here all the customers know what they're after. Once you are covered in nothing but a towel, the field is yours. All you have to do is descend the staircase to the cellar. As you go down, a strange sensation begins to invade your body. Downstairs you merge with the steam billowing from the main room. A few steps more and your towels are almost instantly removed. From then on anything can happen. At those times I always felt as if I were inside one of my aquariums. The sluggish water stirred by the bubbles from the oxygen pumps and the jungles formed by the underwater greenery was like the cellar of the Baths. I experienced, too, that strange feeling of being pursued by big fish wishing to eat the little ones. At such moments, the inability to defend oneself, and the ultimate hardness of the transparent aquarium walls, opened up with the fullness of a reality. But those are bygone times that will never come back now. My present ravaged, skeletal body, covered in sores and blisters, prevents me from continuing to visit that place. Another important factor in viewing it as a thing of the past is energy,

which seems to have deserted me altogether. It seems unthinkable that I could ever have had the strength to spend whole afternoons at the Baths. Why even when I was in my best physical condition, I would emerge from a session feeling completely exhausted.

Another thing that I am no longer up to is going out at night in search of men. Not even in summer, when it's not so bad having to dress and undress in the yards of houses close to the pick-up points that are ranged along the main avenues. Because the whole makeover has to be accomplished in that sort of place and in secret. It's madness to take a night bus home in the small hours, dressed in the same clothes you worked the night in. Besides, I scarcely have time nowadays to look after my appearance. I have to manage this Dyinghouse. I have to provide a bed and a bowl of soup for victims in whose body the sickness has already taken hold. And I have to do it on my own. Help is pretty sporadic. Every now and then, some institution remembers that we exist and contributes a little money. Others want to help by donating medicines, so then I have to insist that the beauty salon is not a hospital or a clinic, it's simply a Dyinghouse. All that's left of the beauty salon are the rubber gloves, most of them with holes on the ends of the fingers. And the receptacles, the basins, the hooks, and the trolleys for moving cosmetics around. I sold the dryers and the reclining hair-washing chairs in order to fund the equipment needed for this new stage the salon had entered. With the proceeds from those things designed to enhance beauty, I bought straw mattresses, iron cots, large pans and a kerosene cooker. One very central feature, which I got rid of altogether, was the mirrors whose reflections used to multiply the aquariums and the transformation that came over the clients as they underwent the process of hairstyling and manicure. Even though I now believe myself to be accustomed to this environment, I feel it would be unbearable for everyone if agony were multiplied to that uncanny infinity produced by facing mirrors. I also think I've grown used to the smell given off by the sick. At least there's been some help with the business of bedclothes. We made some sheets out of the reject fabric donated by a factory. In the patio behind the shed where I sleep, I sort the linen into separate piles. The relatives themselves are expected to wash each pile separately. As for the ones who have nobody at all in this world, I take care of their bedclothes myself.

I am very concerned about who is going to take responsibility for the salon when the sickness breaks loose in earnest all through my body. I've only had inklings so far, mostly external signs like loss of weight, and the blisters and sores I mentioned.

Nothing internal has developed yet. I was talking a moment ago about that matter of the odor and being used to it. It's because my nose can hardly smell things any more. I can tell by the nauseated faces people from outside make as soon as they step in here. That's why I keep one of the aquariums with water inside and two or three rickety fish. Though it's not as nicely maintained as before, it gives me the feeling that something fresh can still keep going in this salon. Some reason I don't know stops me from looking after it as I ought. Yesterday, for instance, I found a dead spider floating, legs uppermost.

Before it became nothing but a venue for dying in company, the beauty salon closed its doors at eight o'clock in the evening. That was a convenient time, because many lady clients didn't like venturing too late into the neighborhood where the establishment was located. A notice over the entrance announced that beauty treatments were available for persons of both sexes. However, very few men ever crossed the threshold. Only women seemed not to mind being attended by male stylists who generally dressed in female garb. The salon is so far from any public transportation routes that catching the bus involves a fatiguing walk. There were three of us working on the premises. Twice a week we changed our clothes, packed a small case and, after closing the doors to the public, set out in the direction of the city. We couldn't travel dressed as women, since we'd found ourselves in dangerous situations more than once. Therefore we carried the outfits and makeup we were going to need on arrival inside the cases. Before stationing ourselves, cross-dressed all over again, to wait along a crowded boulevard, we would hide the cases in some holes there were at the base of the statue to one of the national heroes. There were days when we felt discouraged by all that changing, and though there was no money in it we'd go off to amuse ourselves in the mezzanines of cinemas that showed non-stop pornographic films. The three of us had a good time whenever members of the audience went to the bathroom. Our downtown excursions lasted until the early hours of the morning. Then we'd collect our bags and return to the salon for some sleep. Out back we'd built a wooden shed where we three stylists slept until noon. We did so all three together in a big bed.

The main thing about the beauty salon was the decoration. New salons were opening up in the vicinity, so the look of the interior was vital for us to be able to compete. The idea of having large fish tanks occurred to me from the start. What I wanted was for my clients to feel as though they were submerged in crystal-clear water

all the time they were being treated, rising back to the surface with a new youth and beauty. The first thing I did was to purchase an aquarium two meters long. I still have it. But that's not where I keep the three fish that are left.

This may sound hard to believe, but I barely personalize my residents any more. I've reached the point where they're all alike to me. At first I could tell each one apart, and occasionally even let myself grow fond of one. But now they're nothing but bodies in crisis awaiting death. I remember one in particular, whom I actually knew before he fell ill. He had a sedate sort of beauty, like those foreign singers who appear on television. I remember how when we held beauty contests, the queen always asked to have her picture snapped with him. In my view this lent an international touch to the proceedings. The boy travelled abroad quite regularly, that I knew. He was said to have a wealthy lover who paid all his fares and expenses. When he fell ill, the lover abandoned him and the boy didn't want to involve his family. He fabricated a journey abroad and moved into the Dyinghouse, sold the apartment he had and gave all the money to me. Before the sickness advanced enough to keep him in a permanent state of delirium, he told me that his many journeys hadn't been just for pleasure; he was also trusted with carrying cocaine hidden about his person. He explained in graphic detail his method for concealing the drug, how he inserted the little bags into special parts of his body. Listening to him I felt pained at the way he'd been used by that lover who had left him alone for the hard times. I believe I even came to feel something special towards him. I neglected the needs of the other residents and for almost as long as he took to die, devoted myself entirely to tending him. I also placed an aquarium with fish in it on his bedside table. What moved me most was that he was not indifferent to my efforts. He expressed his affection back to me. A couple of times I was actually in an intimate situation with that ruined body. I didn't mind the protruding ribs, the dry skin, or even the staring eyes which still had room for a flicker of pleasure.

All the same, you mustn't think I was suicidal enough to give myself completely to that boy. I took precautions before we did it and I don't precisely think it was him who infected me. But as I said, my tastes are somewhat fickle and from one day to the next he lost all interest for me. I removed the aquarium from his bedside and treated him with the coolness that is my rule with all the residents. The sickness assaulted his whole body almost at once and he didn't take long to die. In his case, terminal decay spread down from the brain. He embarked on a long rambling speech that was only interrupted during the few hours when he was overcome by sleep. Sometimes the tone

of his voice rose more than usual and drowned out the moans of the other residents with exalted words. I assume that he was then seized by a devastating tuberculosis, since he died after a fit of coughing. By that time, the boy's body had become just one more corpse that had to be dealt with.

Oddly enough, three fish died simultaneously along with the boy. While it's true that by then the aquarium was well past its heyday, a good number of specimens were still thriving. Nearly all were of the type they call Priest Fish, black with white fronts. I don't know, at the time I'd left colors behind and what my mood demanded was black and white. Every time I think back on the boy for whom I felt a special interest, I see him lying on his bed with a tankful of Priest Fish on the side table. After he died, with the fish nowhere near him, I found three of them lying stiff on the bottom. I tried not to think about anything as I took them out of the tank. You need a water heater to keep Priest Fish. I had one permanently plugged in. I was still fulfilling the obligations imposed by the aquariums, that's why I feel it was more than coincidence that the three fish should have died on the same night the boy passed away. Next morning I unplugged the heater and two days later it was apparent that not a single Priest Fish had withstood the coldness of the water. Around the same time a few Angel Fish which had come down with a skin fungus also died. I went to the shop for some Royal Guppies like the ones I started with. I poured them all into one aquarium and they're still there now. As I say, they are resilient fish and despite receiving the minimum of care they have kept going more or less steadily: now and then some die, some are born. But the water is far from clear any more. It's acquired a greenish tinge that coats the sides of the aquarium. I've placed the tank well away from the residents. I don't want their vapors falling onto the water. I don't want to see the fish attacked by fungi, viruses or bacteria. Sometimes when no one is looking I drop my head over the tank, going so far as to touch the water with the end of my nose. I breathe in deeply to catch the whiff of life still rising up out of the container. In spite of the smell of stagnant water, I detect a freshness. And what surprises me is the faithfulness shown by this last batch. I spare them almost nothing of my time, yet they hang on to life in the strangest way. It reminds me of the curious dying played out in the Turkish Baths. That too was a kind of protracted death-rattle, but no match for the vital energy shown by the visitors as they endlessly opened and closed the doors to the steam rooms. Another similar situation I've come across is that of some of the women who came to the beauty salon in its better days. The majority were old or blighted by life. All the same, the long agony you saw beneath those decayed complexions decked itself in hope with every appointment.

But the subject of drawn-out agonies is of little interest to the residents. For them, a lengthy dying was a sort of curse. The briefer their stay at the Dyinghouse the better, as far as they were concerned. The lucky ones were in real pain for about fifteen days. There were others who clung on to life, like my present set of Guppies. These wished to live even though there was no prospect of relief for their suffering, even though the wintry cold was seeping through the gaps in the windows. Even though the daily ration of soup I served them was getting smaller all the time. As I think I mentioned at some point, doctors and medicines are banned from the beauty salon. So are medicinal herbs, healers and the moral support of friends and family. In this respect the rules of the Dyinghouse are inflexible. Help can only be channelled into cash, confectionery and bedclothes. I don't know where I find the determination to run this salon on my own. My former companions, who worked beside me in hairstyling and cosmetology, have been dead for quite a while. Now I have the shed to myself. The bed where we used to sleep together feels too big just for me. I miss their company. They were the only friends I ever had. Both died of the infection and when it came to their agony, I treated them with the same rectitude as I show to the rest. The clothes we wore to go out onto the boulevards are still hanging on the rack. I also still have a boxful of cards given to us by various men of the night. I never called any of them. Not even to let them know why we're no longer to be found posted at our usual corners. Though they've probably forgotten all about us. I expect other young men are now standing at our customary spots.

I don't know where I gathered the strength to go to the fish store the time before last. I immediately thought back to the carefree way I used to lose myself among the aquariums in search of the brightest, quickest, most majestic specimens. But on this occasion I felt shame at being surrounded by such life-enhancing fish. I went over to the Priest Fish tank. It was the only space empty of color. I asked about the sort of attention they needed and was told that they were delicate fish. The assistant then concentrated on catching ten of them for me. He had a little strainer which he deftly manoeuvred about inside the water. This operation took him nearly fifteen minutes. Then he handed me a clear plastic bag with the Priest Fish inside.

Another reason for my feeling shame was the money I spent that time. It was not much, but it was still money which had been given to me for a different purpose. I spent some of the savings belonging to an old lady who had entrusted me with her moneybox and her youngest grandson. The grandson was a youth of about twenty, already suffering from loss of weight and swollen ganglions. One night I caught him trying to


break out of the Dyinghouse and gave him such a thrashing that he lost all motivation to escape. He remained quietly stretched on his bed waiting for his body to disappear after the foreseeable tortures. When I returned to the salon with my bag of Priest Fish, the acquisition went largely unremarked. Some residents were still conscious, after all, and I found their show of indifference upsetting. I felt they weren't being grateful enough; the terms in which they or their relatives applied for admittance, or the nice things I heard from time to time, seemed insufficient. I wished they'd express their gratitude in more tangible form. They could, for instance, show appreciation of the fish that were still alive or perhaps say something about my body, something to imply that it was still in good shape.

One of the periods of crisis experienced at the Dyinghouse was when I had to deal with women asking for a space to die. They came to my door in a dreadful state. Some were carrying babes in arms who were similarly infected. But I was unshakable from the start. In its time this salon had done more than enough to serve women's beauty, and I wasn't about to throw away so many years of hard work. I never accepted anyone who was not of the male sex. Much as I was implored to do so time and time again. Much as they pressed money on me, I never gave in. At first, when I was alone, I'd brood over those women who would be reduced to dying in the street with their children around them. But I had been witness to so many deaths by then, I soon realized I couldn't shoulder the burden of everyone who was sick. With time I managed to become deaf to the pleas, as well as to certain people's animosity. This was compounded by the smear campaign launched in the neighborhood where the salon is located, which meant that more than once I feared for my life when I went outside.

The campaign that got underway in the area was rather disproportionate. When they tried to set fire to the salon, the police themselves had to intervene. The neighbors claimed that the salon was a nest of infection, that the plague had set up shop on their doorsteps. They organized, and the first I heard about it was when a deputation appeared at my door holding a paper signed by a long list of names. I read that we were requested to vacate the premises immediately, after which the Committee they had formed would take care of burning the place, as a symbol of purification I suppose. I also read some names beside the signatures and a figure, no doubt the number appearing on their personal documents. Although I responded politely, I took no notice of the petition. I did not read as far as the part that said we had twenty-four hours in which to pack up. Next day, the first signal of alarm was some stones breaking the

windows that overlook the street. The sound of splintering glass quite frightened us. There were residents who still had their senses in order and others who were in the grip of nervous exaltation, which was worse. I myself got nervous when I heard them yelling with whatever voice they had left. A ghastly chorus of moribunds started up. The crowd outside was in a frenzy. I was forced to escape by way of the shed where I slept. I got out through a small window and left the residents to the mercy of the mob. I ran as best I could for a few blocks. It was dark and as I ran I imagined the neighbors storming the salon with torches held high. I pictured the residents barely aware of what was going on and clutching on to those mattresses and blankets for which I'd exchanged my former beauty hardware. How I don't know, but after going for an infinite number of blocks, I managed to reach a Public Telephone. I had an agenda on me with a few numbers I thought might come in useful. They belonged to the institutions that were always wanting to help out with medicines and other things suitable for a hospital. After placing a couple of calls, I went on running until I reached the local police station. I was exposed to some sarcastic banter from the officers until finally one sergeant, who seemed more sensitive than the rest, was good enough to listen. He heard part of my story, omitting certain details of course, and designated a group of his men to go with him.

We walked back together. When we arrived, the mob had succeeded in breaking down the front door. However, for some reason that probably had to do with the smell or the fear of contagion, they hadn't gone in. The police fired a few shots into the air. The people scattered at once. But this was not the end of my troubles. The police, who had had no previous idea of our existence, began to make inquiries. They carried out an inspection and started talking about a Sanitary Code. Luckily, just then some members of the organizations I called turned up. They spoke to the police and one of them accompanied the sergeant to the station. With the other members, some of whom belonged to a religious community, we tried to calm down the residents. After that we erected a sort of palisade in front of the door for the night. The repairwork was completed over the following days. During those days I went into a deep depression which did not, mind you, cause me to neglect my residents in the slightest. The only difference was that I spent more time by myself in the shed. In spite of everything I still got up early and went to the market for the vegetables and chicken innards I needed to make the daily soup. On getting back I would check over the residents and then wipe them down as best I could. I helped those who were able to stand to go to the toilet. Then I started cooking. It was not really very demanding. I simply put the vegetables and

offal into a pot and let it boil for a couple of hours. Then I'd throw in a handful of salt and cover the pot again. At lunchtime I served it up in bowls. It was the only meal. The residents were hardly ever hungry and many couldn't even finish the daily helping in front of them. I ate the same thing, and I too got into the habit of eating just once a day. 

Translated by Lorna Scott Fox

AMY CARROLL
FIVE POEMS

I ∞

Hypocrisy, hypocrisy, all lies, the aristocracy clamors of ways and means,
what I've seen I have seen a clarity, seasons change us physically, the spring
in one's step, a predilect, zygote dividing Babel's torture tower-chamber,

every love, a product of labor, then some, lyric *I* and lyric *you*,
passionately tango, oh, to softshoe the night away, cheek to cheek,

Scheherazade, talk to me, sweet nothing spittle in my ear, what I wouldn't
want I hear. Despite the dart of climatic tongue, winter's nudge toward
extra weight, down-pillow pull on a sundial's tick, let it be known: I resist

pi-eyed dry summer siren calls, parched consciousness baiting me
to ante up, to raise a vein. No, recollect, I reign, you hold me tighter,

your presence, a château, night-watch-person, but I am something
slyer still, a sleight of hand, the best card trick, wily as wire. I anticipate
threading the needle of an eye — I see every where and why. You're leaving

me, I'll leave no sigh in air muddying blue traffic space. Instead, I insist,
go away. Cheshire cat, murky cataract. Brilliance is as brilliance does,

outshine the stars, leave me to love the whole of loss, the realm above,
below my waist. A child's drawing the horizonline, the primal scene,
the final sign. I've ascertained other ways and means, I declare I secede.

YOU ∞

I'm leaving you to follow me. Nothing comes of dry run yearning. We must go
belly-up, full force packed into the wallop of an *I am* bit of meter, not a second

of *I fear* how quiet and narrow the straits appear, where I'm heading, the shifty
breeze, one wayward gale gone south it seems. Yes, a foot hesitates, remembering
the vinegar pleasure of a place, longs for something, untoward grace, a hat to hook

the head upon, the righteousness of a citizen's ship before it sets sail to dismiss
a settler drifting into the quick, licking a finger to draft her sin, fit as a fiddle

in foreplay again. Secession does not proceed without doubt, bar harboring in
the curve of someone else. It requires quagmires, spite and spit and span the coast,
father, son and holy ghost. The colonizing wise, drunk on wares, awash in brine

neglect the porthole unlatched to find one disappeared in the morn. *One, two,*
three, four, ...drumroll my creed, hurly-burly shout to secede. Demand the cracking,

wham-bam circumstance, plate tectonic continents, minimal foresworn mutiny,
Marco Polo destiny. We cannot conceive of where we'll wander, but knead the path
in order to believe in any compass calm conviction. I'm leading you to follow me,

one fool, the wiser, applauding revolting flaunting, made manifest wanting, stowaway
disarming, luckily charming — will-selfsame psalm-body — sounding back an undertow.

WE ∞

This eye seeks to glean how we inure the falls we heed to insure two-stepping, part privilege, parcel remedy, seasoning tossed in a morass to stew, haphazard, the loss of an *I* and a *you*. Once the thought of relinquishing the leased quotient of autonomy

banished me to a no man's land, unwilling to forfeit a single expense. But to gain, we must give, something gone, we lose to win temporary consensus, veering short

of essence, originary penchants. We fail, and yet, in lieu of irrefutable facts, that one cannot backtrack, that two can never fully exact, we add a rounding to the world. Seasick, we lick the queasiness of solitude, bedding down two by two, loading an arc

making due by the seat of our past, promissory notes. A rainbow gloats above the sums we cannot assail. Either/or, neither/nor, even our conjunctions fail to capture the travail

of pronouns as they ground, floundering beach-bottled blokes, charlatans, inclined to impose. Get used to hands rubbing lamps, pining for you, happenstance, prim as a pin. So much could hinge on a *we*, the legend of a map, winnowing its operations in the

specialization of relation. Secession preempts *a priori* calls to exist, cavorting advice at a stillborn price: Drop your syllables like doubloons, aye-aye stutter to the moon,

slowdrawl *y'all, we'll be leaving soon*. Tip of the morning, tip of noon, a head's crowning, now we come two, storyboard isles having little to do with mud or ribs, or offspring who, frigating gardens to and fro, supplanted how tall our tales could grow.

SAN PATRICIO ∞

Am I my brother's keeper? Sleeper. I keep you close to this inner... *Crack*. Vile.
To secede these days reconceive aborting. You, my most astounding, confounded baby

in a bottle, swaddled in wolf's clothing. Sheep together. Fowl weather. Truth comes in
stalking feat: Truth be told, I miss you, that ewe of Huck-el-Fin froggy freckled mon-
seigneur days. A wish-boned oath: Chingate. Maggot, don't be going and slipping me no

chicklets puffed up with intent to show & tell how high we can fly. I'd rather lie, ground-
ed, *cero*, fettered, where there's little solace or debris. A boner. Stone her. Tie a rib-


bon round me. *Tick-tock*, Spot, check, be gone, gosling, dive bomb, false alarm, snake
charmer. Tweety, get your buttered fingers *off!* On, mi ancient mariner, mar y gold, mari-
poser. Do as you're told. *Dios te bendiga*. Quiet as it's kept. I keep you, *Sonny's* warbler.

Blues. A regret. Ratchet. *Ribit*. Rob it. Suzy Q. I can't get my arms round the mettle of
you, Gemin-eyed, spry Mr. June, dull-finned big. Bugger. I keep you, tight as a tan-drum,

Tom Sawyer's *cheep*-ish grin. Sand shark, land shark. *Love her*, the song pricks. *I tawt*
I taw a puddy-tat. Piqued. Carlito, mi'jo, how could this be? How could I *not* keep you
here inside me? *Peek-a-boo*. Ciao & choke. Carpe cape: Where do we wander? Where

do we wait? Atelectatic, these lungs'd smoke, pack, for you, a mean-minded pistol,
a mighty moused groove. *Cri Cri*, es caped avenger, swoop down for me, the creeping

canto-crawler, the can't elope sea. *Am I my brother's keeper?* What do I keep? Blued
prince of a fortune, man muzzled to a leech. Grim reaper. A keeper. Dulce. *Sí-así*. Hustle
for your tram, son. Fumble for your fief. I whistle what you work, you sow what I reap.

stilt-stalks the sea, schemes the sky into high beam. One by land. Two by sea. Who holds your middle, manatee? One by one the world's a skein come undone in rest, less dreams. Now the water spit-tunes pennies, whips the pistil into a frenzy. Now the heart's heartless, scheming. An arm's race I cannot own. At arm's length, I know my own limitations all too well. Penny wishes in a well of why and what and where and when. How, my love? Begin again. To shake this shake, this malted milk, curdled in the stomach's silk viaduct. I pluck to own the I out of its socket, sewn in so well it cannot move. Movement, in essence, still, remaindered essence, skiddish, to spill. Faith, perhaps, a surer act, but far, away, less exact. Flipping coins, I would backtrack, hack up the thump in my throat, the nostalgia piece my stomach hones. Blunt instrument, your pointed tongue, a tuning fork. I've come undone. Now my secession's a distant shore where someone else went before. Now my secession's a stymied star, a luminous and fitful farflung signature of a snail, forged razzmatazz, holy grail. Now, I'm orphaned without the sun, the days, they shorten into a sum of silt and sand and fallow soil. I have my hand, but it's embroiled in its own fallal foils. I have my mind, but it's unloyal. I have my heart, but it's a bee, without its sting, without its sweet tooth to make a flower hole. Jealousy, a sea-cowed sole survivor in. A center folds. I want you gone, I want you back. Two can tangle, one can slap. So sound's stamen storm-winnows me: motherwit, stiletto grief. In the middle I cannot meet. In the spittle I slip to feed, slip-knot the lock, slot defeat into the crevice where craving creeps, into the craven crumbs of sleep. 

GERALD BURNS

OUTSETTINGS

or something like it is the word for “translation” in Dutch, a book on Daniel Heinsius says, and I think I like it as a way to talk about translations and as a word. I’d have to look at the book again to see what it is in Dutch. How would you translate a cat, take it out of its vertebral existence, parallel-evolve something lobsterish, carapaced, with fur like whiskers on a mussel or hairs on nightbird beaks. . . and so on. The eyes would be different, from different life-experience, and that’s what’s wrong with translations. Outsettings, a lifting out of, better than Italian tradit/tradut puns, but the “setting” part works on me, preverbally in a way; I think of jewelry or jewels in a Tiffany window, pearls and dead leaves, the natural objects presented in what by now is pure convention, which holds its own, rubies draped on rock . . . as letters on a page can seem strewn — speckled, spattered, that white paper can receive repeating carbon shapes — print as outset from handwriting, with its greater regularity, different way to be marvelous. The Guinness in my glass changes its flavor as the bubbles rise, as wine poured alters. Imagine a text bottled in language. Decant to English, with taste (the Metaphysicals might say) a funnel, or Thomas’s hourglass poems, deformed by needless violence for the hell of it, outset, his imagining of “discipline” rendered, again for the hell of it. No poem you write’s translated *from* something in your head, the rustle of words inert, like feathers in a pillow no one’s resting on. The funnel in section is a circle, or Martini glass unfooted. A glass of liquid is itself translated. Today, thrown virtually out of the house

by a landlord, "Get the hell out. Get out of my face" tasted till the meaning's tolerable, I'm where I otherwise wouldn't be, translated as a chessboard bishop, not wanted *there*, issuing *from*, avoiding maybe an atmosphere too awkward, set automatically in the wrong but not "put." Depressing. I came back late, crept in by the basement door, rosemary and sage from my lentil soup replaced by a burned smell. Went to bed. Landlord must've turned on the wrong burner. Met Stephanie, the upstairs tenant, yesterday. She's off a week, Kevin to take care of her cat. It's black, with a two-tone cry, *whee-err*, a break in the middle, did that to me today. When agitated the sound breaks into three, *whee-krr-err*, no food in the front porch bowl. Last night Chris said I find an odd way to say "green is not blue" and nobody understands. To hell

with it. I said a book about Charles Lamb persuades me you can live as if not the center of your world (his sentences show it.) And that (this in a two-hour conversation about arrogance) I thought my verse lines

are like that and everybody calls me arrogant. He thought his writing teacher arrogant to say, gratuitously

of a paragraph, "Well, you don't have an ego problem, do you?" *Humbless oblige*. It's arrogant to translate, as if writing weren't perfectly happy inside itself. The egg yolk calls for the silver spoon it tarnishes.

What *would* that sound like in French or Portuguese? In German probably unintelligible, either too folksy

or abstract. Angels, I used to think, must speak French because they have the best word for them. Your silent anchorite lays by his balalaika, falls asleep ("lays by" here means puts down away from him) full of the madness of the speechless, citar on the sand to show *everything* is quiet. The picture wins, by translating soundlessness to paint. Its genre is the *langue morte*. Coleridge would call

it a cithern, the demon lover what he doesn't know he knows, in a poem liked by Lamb who wrote a fine letter apologizing for being carried home speechless drunk on a man's shoulders, fireman's carry,

itself carried away in praising at such length that means of transport, setting out for *home*, carried. 🚫

VERÓNICA VOLKOW
DOS POEMAS

TEPOZTLÁN ∞

Mar vertical
piedras que ondulan
rocas que se dejan tocar
 modular
 decir

por el viento

y no sé en su interior qué vuela
 y les agita


como si fuera
un pensamiento
no sé en su forma qué recuerdan
¿cuál es la voz que escuchan para siempre?

¿si en el vuelo del viento estuvo acaso
el secreto que encierran?

IXTAPA ∞

Para Tomás en su bautizo

El mar se metió en la caracola
como dentro de un espejo,
canto de aguas atrapado,
ola en sí misma ya sin fin
rompiendo un adentro,
tiempo que regresa — vuelto interno,
Lo interior guarda
y sabe las sustancias del tiempo.

En el telar de agua el viento
y en las palmas de harpas inaudibles
un aire, que no sabemos,
y que la roca escucha o la yerba.
Caricia del hombre, la escritura,
sobre papeles y piedras;
con toda la sed, el hambre y el deseo;
avidez de lo inasible
y lo más perecedero. 

HEATHER RAMSDELL
THREE POEMS

SERVICE OF POINTING ∞

but should we help them all the
moth's huge
desire beating all the helpless
fleet
 bound by design and
temporally
 fleet or some procedure
must & should it staunch the all, the

convulsive return, as if eros
evolves, such beating from the gentle door would
strike even the young scientist
in the science of that door, that lid. Then
let the past sleep, there will be no dreams for the police.

*Hide here cauldron
 pricker bush
 shed falling*

and not come back until
of a big dark

that's my pile, things to sort go in my pile, take nothing, hide nothing
from this pile. I will be home during the weekend. Call me if you need
me for anything, when you speak you speak through a crack as if a door.

XO

XO

X

O, incredulous Or

could it be known in the lab what the result would say
enough to leave without looking
with bags with assistance with suicidal resolve

in reflection's stead,
the water rocking/rotting clouds
of, clouds of
crowds
of

crows, a field black, burning
with crows

field of answer

white field
of tracks in the snow the willow
weeps, by design
—*Family of Willows on White*

pointing strongly
in the fear of pointing
space in the fear of space, horror
swarms the blink

NEARLY CIRCLE ∞

Sad, to shut
to shut other
things into the space left
the space that I left
the space in skewed perspective twisting
foregrounds, sags in glass — *this is your conscience*
speaking. Frontal laughter even
politely refuses the antidote, the closing stroke

later to be fixed, fudged
in memoriam, during the naming of names when you finally show in the picture.

And you know who you are. Hold still
just for a moment. Now move. You move
the cloth away from your face. And the face

is vague particles twisting
into thin air, is dust. (Don't I know you?

I must, I recognize your face in all things and all things must fit
together, as all stars once did, as all sands did so that sand on the
floor made sense until we looked closely at it and it spread.)


PLATE GLASS ∞

Hand propped, waiting
for a better end. Not dust.
On the violin, or hair

on the violinist or on the lens
or dust in the mouth
of the violinist, or from the mouth
of the dream, waking

into plate glass
fell and difficult depth
appeared in obstacle, obstacle
muscled into plate glass. Taking
out the connections — did you
hear that, did you, feel?

Released? Let out? Hair
held in wind caught without
that part, the inside—glitch

of screen, of picture's
error, if electrical
wires, crazed. Nerves in
tangle, vacant
sun, or microscopic
masses of hairline
cracks, gushing from
the mouth of abandon, spread. 

MICHAEL RIPS

TALES OF NEBRASKA

One ∞

The tornado touched down, and closing the doors behind us, we gathered in the basement.

When I say that we closed the doors behind us I mislead you because the fact is we forgot to close one door, one small door, which is why grandmother was sucked up the garbage chute. You can imagine our surprise when, with the house rocking, she levitated into the chute.

The tornado passed, and we searched the yard and the trees but couldn't find her. We searched our neighbors' yards and trees but couldn't find her. The assumption of my grandmother had ended in the kitchen where she was whipped unconscious by pans and cutlery. When she came to she was crazy with anger because she thought we'd purposely put her head under the garbage chute.

The tornado, having finished with grandmother, continued on to destroy a greater part of Omaha. It was, the newspapers reported, the worst tornado in history. Funnily, there was only one injury: an elderly man had an eye sucked out of his head.

Hours after the tornado, the man was crawling up and down the street looking for his eye.

Two ∞

Nebraskans consider North Dakota very exotic; so when it was announced that a girl from North Dakota would be joining our class, there was a great deal of excitement. In the back of our minds we were expecting an Indian.

She was, it turned out, not an Indian. She came from a small town, had a brother and sister, mother and father, and if you didn't know better, you would have thought she was from Nebraska.

Later that year she and I were paired up in a chemistry class, which meant that at least one night a week I was at her home working on an assignment. Before the night was out, each member of her family would stop in to say goodnight and wish her "sweet dreams."

One evening, after the others had gone to bed, she remarked that she had something to show me. As we reached the third floor, she took my hand. There were two rooms on the floor, hers and a bathroom.

She brought me into her room and sat me down on one of the beds. Still standing, she turned around so that she faced the other bed. Grabbing the edge of the bed, she bent over slowly, her skirt rising to the very top of her thighs.

As I reached to touch her, she pulled a trunk from beneath the bed.

Her fingers floated across the lock. Within seconds, the lid was open: inside was a vast accumulation of confections.

Her feasting lasted for an hour. She was curled over the trunk, the wrappers piling at her knees, her mouth wet in chocolate, her teeth licorice black. Finally, she stood and left the room.

When she returned, her blouse was off, her breasts glazed with sweat. As her eyes cooled, the fragrance of her insides held us together.

Three ∞

David, a third grade classmate, had announced his intention of bringing his hamster to school but got up in front of the class without it. When he began to describe his hamster, the teacher interrupted to ask him why he hadn't brought the hamster.

David responded, "I've brought my hamster but he's inside me." David lifted up his shirt and pushed out his belly. He did this with such sincerity that everyone, including the teacher, believed the hamster would chew its way out. Everyone laughed.

As he grew up, David became known for his tricks. Just before the bell for class, David would open the door of his locker, push the front half of his body inside, and then cross his arms so that his hands draped across the back of his shoulders. This gave the impression that David was in the embrace of someone who was standing inside the locker. Teachers, having come to find David, would assume that he had pushed a girl into the locker and was hugging her. David would suddenly swing around, causing the girl to disappear. At times David would accompany this performance with the sounds of a sexually excited woman, which was odd since none of us, including David, had ever heard a sexually excited woman.

The last time I saw David was years after we graduated from high school. He had taken a room in the Clarkson Hospital, having performed a stunt in which he made an incision around his neck and then lifted his face off his head.

If you are a small child and having sex with your mother, the guilt inside you congeals into something thick and plastic and as you move about in life, it takes on a variety of forms, including animals and aroused lovers. And every once in a while you feel the need to be punished.

Pulling your face off allows the hamsters and lovers to get out and makes certain that when they do no one will recognize you. ☒

MARÍA NEGRONI

de DHIKR

*En el año 601 de la Emigración, probablemente en la Mecca, el filósofo y místico Ibn-Arabi redactó una teogonía en prosa rimada que tituló Shajarat al-Kawn, El Árbol del Mundo. La inspiración quiere que, en el principio, Dios sea un Tesoro Escondido que ansía conocerse y, por eso, crea el mundo, es decir escribe el Árbol del Devenir y la Divergencia. A medida que lo hace, sin embargo, insufla en cada uno de los seres, una pequeñísima chispa o **dhihr** capaz de instigar la reminiscencia de ese Sitio Impensable, donde habitan en perfecto equilibrio, exentos de forma, límite o atributo alguno, lo Deseado, el Deseo y Quien Desea. Curiosa ontología circular que, haciendo de la plenitud del universo un préstamo, interpreta la muerte como restitución y anhelo. No sé de inspiración o desamparo tan brusco y tan solidario: como Dios, los seres se exilian de sí, buscan en reiteradas desapariciones el secreto adentro del Secreto, añorando algo que llevan oculto adentro.*

* * *

Pensar que un ruiseñor dejó las huellas doradas de su canto entre mis manos
y yo emprendí una transacción de plumas con el viento, como si quisiera
negociar lo impostergradable.

* * *

En tierras del árbol milagroso — oh Ganges—, un cuerpo es menos que su sombra.
Ha llegado hasta aquí como mendigo, estremecido de todo lo que espera desde
siempre y hace signos hacia la inútil boca del vacío.

Ha llegado en silencio.

Aferrado a la nostalgia de su propia luz, invisible. Sin más expectativa que los ecos de las voces calladas que, a veces, se imprimen en sus sueños.

Toda la noche el cuerpo ha transitado hacia sí mismo. Huyendo del desierto que huye de las caravanas. De la ofrenda ancestral. Tan lejos todavía del verdadero Libro de la Ausencia, ése donde canta y es cantado, y es el que ha venido a recordar.

* * *

Esa mujer con un balcón en la mano, con una playa en el balcón, con un mar interminable en la playa, y así. El universo, en infinita regresión, es un deseo personal. Trae el desvelo al centro de mí, de donde mi emoción lo expulsa como contribución a las pequeñas euforias del silencio.

* * *

Cuando el ruido de la lluvia moja las sábanas tendidas y en la cama hay batallas que tejen y destejen el cuarto de la memoria, y esa línea que no se puede cruzar porque el cuerpo es una arena blanca, y tus barcos están llegando.

* * *

Recibirás la riqueza del mundo cuando hayas dejado de desearla. Cuando el ojo vea en la memoria una estación (cualquiera) del miedo.

La tempestad de espadas no existe. Ni siquiera esa isla de estuarios blancos, rencorosos. Su encanto de cosa perdida de antemano. Tierra de hielo ardiente alrededor de un corazón que sueña.

Vivir ese mar, esa danza: la gran porfía humana, la prueba del invierno, el extravío carnal en su más alta noche.

Toda derrota es un esfuerzo. Pero la tela se rasga a veces y el ave más irreal del paraíso, por una vez contagiada de tiempo, se revela a quien busca aquello que ya tiene.

* * *

Un día me dirás que no existes y yo besaré tus párpados de agua
y la noche será hondura y oro entre mis manos. Me dirás que no existes
y tu ausencia será toda mía.

* * *

No voy a renunciar a la distancia. Ni a la lima persa del poema en el jardín
cerrado de tu intriga. Ni a las islas. Ni a los manuscritos perdidos de las islas
como faros. Como cuerpos ardiendo en los desiertos de otro cuerpo, recapitulación más
triste que lo triste, cantando entre noviembre y tu regazo de cerezos.

* * *

Cuando un gran pájaro nocturno irrumpe en el silencio blanco de la nieve,
en las más blancas contradicciones del silencio.

Y se rompe el cristal de las palabras. Y la novia material del mundo
abre la prosodia y canta lo inaudible. ☒

CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

THREE POEMS

AT XOCHICALCO ∞

— a ball court stone hoop
half-embedded in the ground.
A geometric spider web spans the arc.
That spider, hanging there,
shovels a faceful of caresses into me,
caresses of a Chiapas child, full of worms and lice,
trying to read,
caresses of: to win is to live what it is to lose,
caresses of “Woman, your body is the battlefield!”
caresses of the line cut by Adam’s black diamond
in the glass of virginity,
caresses of thudding players in the ball court of the dead,
can their absolute absence be said?

Absolute division between the living and the dead

Poetry to span the absolute,
hovering over, baby spider cast into the breeze,
to report what it sees below:
the moisture on the pyromaniac’s skin,

Neruda getting Trotsky's assassin out of Coyoacan,
the potty of a saint,
chess pieces slippery with blood,
a spider the size of a field mouse digesting a hummingbird
while it whirrs.

CLUTCHES ∞

At Skhul, a man died clutching the mandible of a wild boar.

At Qafzeh, a child died clutching a deer antler.

At Dolni Vestonice, a woman died clutching an Arctic fox.

In Paris, César Vallejo said he would die "outside the clock,
clutching a solitary shoe."

At Ivry-sur-Seine, Antonin Artaud died seated at the foot
of his bed, clutching his shoe.

In North Hollywood, Lee Hickman died, Charles Macauley
told me, clutching an issue of *Sulfur*.

UNLEAVING ∞

I threw myself on the leaf-strewn ground,
under the red maple I've watched grow 10 years
I wished the earth to take off,
a roving mastodon, with me clutched —
instead, I fisted leaves and rolled
up to the trunk, a newborn pup

up to a teat, I put a star in my mouth
counted its milky rays
then slid down the night side of Eden
into the tunnels that map the underworld. . .

Who will read the fallen leaves? not in tea
but in drift, who will read
the urn of death? I see patches of its sides

coiling shreds the raising wind spits. . .

A dress of leaves for one who is ashes. . .

Each leaf a tiny tree of vascular bundles,
litterings that lift
the unappeasable need for inspiration,
for nothing's abstract concreteness,
the end of the world telescoped into the now
inconceivable beginning,
millennial patience casting anchor as it crests

Imagine this wet scat,
the "wanwood leafmeal" of these photosynthetic factories:
"under the influence of light, six molecules of carbon dioxide combine with six of water
to produce one molecule of sugar and six of oxygen. This single molecule of sugar. . .
is the basis of life."

 Say that the maple
produces leaves to feed itself, that they know
to unleave when no longer needed.
I am creating something to feed me:
serene blue-bellied hornets
drag their rickshaws out of repressed sheds
to the shores of Lake Garoylalia,
they hover, waiting for the mutilated to be coughed up,
the lake belches, and like swans
robed in oily mist the bodies toss,
a few are speared and rickshaw deposited,
and now ticks and cockchafers get in line,

and thoughtchafers, a caterpillar confetti,
the vertebral thunder of a nest of dead leaves,
the abyss encapsulated in the Western God
whose African children are worm bores,
bags of glassy sore flows,
monstrous blending of all images
as I shuffle through these newsreels—
carotenoid thrust of Kali
shutting down chlorophyll,
and is not Shiva the purplescent meaty luster
in the still scarlet and violet oak?
There is a moment in every autumn
when angel is unzipped from watchfiend,
an unleaving, when remaining is letting go.
Persephone takes the erect invisible into her throat,
the icy but still igneous breeze
is the onset of Hades' ejaculation,
the snow to come, its lees. ☒

THAD ZIOLKOWSKI
FROM DREAM WORKS

A Note on Dream Works

Often simply as a way to begin writing, I jot down what I remember of my dreams, making no attempt to maintain any fidelity to the pre-narrative, imagistic flux dreams putatively comprise prior to being “misinterpreted” as vignettes, tales, or parables, but rather telling the dreams to a notebook as if to someone at breakfast, meaning only to fulfill the generic requirements we all, as mysteriously gifted “authors” of dreams, fulfill when we recount them, and to see the words emerge. I have begun using these notebook dreams as lexicons from which to write poems, limiting myself to, though rarely using all of, the words recorded, and occasionally changing a given word’s part of speech. I intend the two — dream and dream-derived poem — to be read as one work.

T.Z.

* * *

My stepfather who committed suicide is still alive and in the midst of running for some sort of political office — mayor perhaps — in a town where I’ve been scheduled to give a reading or talk. It’s difficult, though not overwhelmingly so, to adjust to the fact that he’s somehow managed to survive his suicide and now vigorously pursues this path. When he cancels my talk, and all concerned are scandalized that he would do this, I try to shrug it off, much as I’ve tried to absorb

the reality that he's not actually dead.

The shrug of fact

scheduled alive

his not reading

the still midst

of the difficult town

the political office

of running for suicide

would survive to adjust

* * *

Looking at charcoal drawings by Hopper in a small museum where Hopper has the centrality Bonnard has in the Phillips Collection. I praise the work to a young female artist, who is much less impressed, saying that art has changed so much since Hopper's day. No, I say, there's one drawing of his that does everything art in, say, the '60's does. But when we look for it in one of the rooms, it's missing, having been taken down. I recall its tonalities — at once pictorial, abstract and, while dynamic, also exquisitely serene, as if laid on extremely evenly, like a curtain being lowered, but a curtain of the Northern Lights. We can't find the drawing in the storage room. We have sex there.

I recall having been one
of the day, in one room,
missing, but serene
in the Northern Lights
that praise the changed
being when it has been

everything once, but is so
much less there, in the rooms
I say


* * *

I sit with Glen Gould and another man. We talk about memory — what we find easy to remember, what not. “He,” I say of Glen Gould, “can’t remember conversation, but he has a phenomenal recall for something else....” I look at the other person, realizing that he doesn’t recognize Gould and debating whether I should say: Do you know who this is? It’s unclear whether part of the marvel of it all is that Gould is dead and is thus making a “special appearance.”

Of whether dead
a person is unclear
should say something to what is easy
to remember making it all
part the find I sit with
the appearance of

* * *

The publisher, James Sherry, who disapproves of the way I represent these dreams —specifically, their narrative coherence— held for over a year, without deigning to accept or reject it, my first manuscript of poems, which I had submitted for publication as one of his Roof books. Eventually of course the delay amounted to a tacit rejection. When I see him on the street in Manhattan in this dream, however, I master my usual impulse to save face by ignoring him and approach on my bike in order at least in part to resolve the issue by confronting him with it. “Yes or No?” I say, blocking his path. “What’s it going to be?” And, as if deciding right there to say what I least expected, Sherry replies, “Yes! Yes, I’m going to publish it.” “That’s great!” I say, overjoyed, but also, on another level troubled by the imperious whimsicality of the decision, its meaninglessness, and pedal away.

I dream in order to publish the tacit
troubled face of my right to see,
submitted to what replies, "That's great!"
by ignoring the way I level
its delay of another meaninglessness
on the street, of course, on my bike,
their narrative of the decision
to represent blocking this path 

CECILIA VICUÑA
SIN TÁCTICA ENHEBRA

*un ensayo abierto para el coloquio internacional
"Gabriela Mistral a 50 años del Nobel"*

digo sin táctica enhebra y pienso que ella oye "hebrea"
como si
jugara con los nombres desde la tumba
y yo tuviera que dar
vuelta algunas palabras para acercarme a la "fiesta no habida"
de su lenguaje.

Primero "sin taxis", o el modo de enlazar
el *syn* de los griegos
es el *con* nuestro
un primer revés.

syn: unión y simultaneidad (griego)
sin: carencia (latín)

y el taxi, antes de ser *tassein*, arreglo y movimiento, era tax
el movimiento de la savia en las plantas.

Hermoso imaginar los taxis como el movimiento de la savia
en la ciudad.

syn tax

“con movimiento”

sería el primer sentido,

el antes del antes del sintactar

antes que tax se hiciera “tacto”

y tanto más.

* * *

Entrar en la multiplicidad unívoca de la Mistral es arriesgar una lingüística
personal, una insistencia, diría Gertrude Stein.

Stephan Mallarmé decía: “todo sucede como una hipótesis.”

El modo de unir y simbolizar en ella

o la potencialidad de la

mezcla

es el lenguaje de la yuxta

posición:

“entre casamientos místicos, el de nuestros sentidos
con una medida y un ritmo me intrigó siempre por
misterioso y digno de averiguación.”

G.M.

Las palabras son seres rítmicos y sinápticos
existen en la sintaxis
de su propia conversación
se mueven en un tiempo extático
de co-nexión
existen entre ellas y con ellas en un gusto que es
sólo condensación

y en esa cúspide de silencio y conflagración hay que leer el sabor
único y transicional de un poetizar.

* * *

La forma en que el o la poeta silaba o saliva su corporación
en el tiempo palábrico

“Un libro como cualquier otro ser vivo es cuerpo carnudo”

dice ella sonando
su tiempo algarrobal
el seco instantáneo del blando tercar:
andar oyendo lo que no es
y será por eso por siempre jamás
deseo y visión
el poro intempórico
el tono imposible
de su invención.

•

Qué táctica ni sintáctica!
el suyo era un sin, un permanente

sin, un con perpetuo buscando la unión
el tinkuy o la yunta

posicional de la transformación.

“Rayada del entrevero” dice ella
“caminando por la raya”
de un *ceqe** mental.

* * *

El *tinkuy* y el *allqa* de la yunta
y u x t a posición

es el encuentro, el lugar donde los opuestos
se funden, la junta de dos cosas, o “el espacio en el que
cesan las divisiones y se mezclan las energías.” dice
Regina Harrison.

El *tinkuy* y el *tinku*, la batalla ritual: “una conjunción
dialéctica de fuerzas opuestas que generan y regeneran
la fertilidad” dice Tristán Platt.

Tincustha es ser igual o competir entre iguales (un
encuentro amoroso)

Tinkuy, quechua y *allqa* aymara.

•

La zona de carga y turbulencia, lo más túrbico y decidor está en la
forma de unir y asociar,
ahí está
el espacio de los
encuentros y las transformaciones

ceq'e: línea (quechua), calendario astronómico y ritual.

una idea andina milenaria que ella
ignoró y efectuó a la vez
en su disfrazada andinidad.

* * *

Y es que hay un completo revés: no somos nosotros los que
hablamos sino el habla y el silencio
que habla en nos

un ritmo que nos habita
inhalar y exhalar

algo flexible y maleable, inaprehensible y moldeable a la vez
que nos toca y se deja tocar

que viene de antes y seguirá después de nos
nadamos en la lengua como en un mar.

•

Leerla desde hoy incita a leerla desde antes (ese modo
de simbolizar viene de muy atrás)

ahí está el gozo frágil de la con-tinuidad
el re-conocimiento
y la satisfacción de la re-petición.

“abajo son los silencios”

dice

“estoy metida en la noche
de estas raíces amargas”

“raíces-alimañas”

“no sé quién las haya herido
que al tocarlas doy con llagas”

Las raíces oyen y sólo entrando en ellas hay la posibilidad
de oír.

“Oyen los vientos, oyen los pinos
y no suben a saber nada”

“Quiero aprender lo que oyen
para estar tan arrobada”

Con ser lo que uno es está en su raíz, el núcleo y la sede
de las transformaciones.

•

El poema, en ella es el viaje, el *p e w m a*, o el trance extático
de la machi / shaman

en el que la frase sucede “a plomada”
formando una sintaxis vertical,

un lanzarse a un abismo
de hueso y verdad

en el que encuentra el arrobado y el gusto
de la totalidad.

* * *

O es que sólo diciendo el tormento llega a su penumbra,
la zona que quiere tocar

“andando entre sus hablas”

afirma su pertenencia andina, aunque así nunca lo diga

“yo sé bien que doy un puro balbuceo”

Así cruza cruzando, hilvana enhebrando dos o más sintaxis,
dos o más percepciones.

“toco pellejos ariscos
unas pechugas, unas nidadas”

dice

y las líneas aparecen
como marcas o ríos de lava, revientan como penachos de
plumas en medio de su “europeidad”.

Todas las dualidades se aúnan y reverberan la una en la otra,
al más puro estilo andino:

apenas dice “día” y aparece la noche.

Dice “gozo” junto con “acedia”, no hay tiempo y sigue soñando,
el cielo y la tierra, en con-junción.

En el “poema de los hebreos” todo se dice por inversión o negación,

“Nombre, los otros, la Muerte”

y ésta es quizás la clave o el centro
de la adivinanza

en la que canta para olvidar y canta para recordar.

* * *

“dénme ahora las palabras
que no me dio la nodriza”

Dénme ahora los umbrales y los quiebres
parece decir

“de la sílaba a la sílaba:
palabra “expolio”, palabra “nada”,
y palabra “postrimería”,
aunque se tuerzan en mi boca
como las víboras mordidas!”


Sólo en el arte precolombino hay imágenes de fuerza semejante,
imágenes que incluyen en su forma el doble proceso de construcción
y destrucción,
la metamorfosis de la una en la otra
en irradiante
fusión.

“Todo me sobra y yo me sobro
como traje de fiesta para fiesta no habida”

Ahí están las guías, las formas de una poética por-venir
un estado
lenguar que es otra vez un pensar palábrico en tensión:
la andinidad
hablando en español.

* * *

Ahí está su “leche de ritmos”, el torque o la fuerza de la torsión
en la que ella hace su enhebro de dos o más culturas.

Una forma de escribir y leer, una forma de ser en que “la fiesta no habida”
no es ya su cuerpo, sino un poetizar,
el poema que existe en una sociedad que lo niega. 

New York y Santiago
octubre 1995

GUILLERMO OSORNO
SOCCER MATCH

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in April 1997, the national soccer teams of Mexico and the United States have come to Foxboro Stadium, home of the New England Patriots, to play an elimination round for the 1988 World Cup. The U.S. players race onto the field, and the Mexican fans boo, so loudly that you wonder if there are any Americans in the stands. Then the Mexican team appears, and the booing is even louder. Shouts of "U-S-A! U-S-A!" are followed by shouts of "ME-XI-CO, ME-XI-CO!" and fierce clapping in both camps.

Numbers matter here. The U.S. soccer team, which doesn't have a national stadium, could have played this match anywhere it liked; it chose Foxboro, a suburb of Boston, because in all the continental United States there is probably no other large arena so far from any serious concentration of Mexicans.

The Mexican fans, then, have had to travel a long way. Around the stadium, they hold signs reading, in Spanish, "L.A. supports the Mexican team," or "Chicago is here."

With the match just about to start, two white preppie types are looking for their places in section 320, row six. After some confusion, they confront a pair of seated Mexicans. "Sorry guys, but you have to move," one of the preppies says, producing a ticket.

The Mexicans look puzzled. They produce their tickets in turn and compare numbers with the Americans. The Mexicans — dark, short and in their 20s, about the same age as their questioners — have row seven, seats three and four. They look behind them. Other Mexican fans already occupy those places.

"Which are your seats?" they ask in Spanish. But in row seven, which is full, nobody feels a need to be precise about these things. People shift this way and that, creating two free spaces for Saul Gomez and David Sierra. Saul, wearing a beige polo shirt, jeans and a black cap, looks to his left and smiles at a friend. In this row are most of the people he boarded a bus with at nine that morning in New York City. Some of them are relatives of his.

Hector Gomez, Saul's cousin, has painted his face red, white and green — Mexico's national colors. He's wearing a giant sombrero with a sign on the brim that reads, in Spanish, "Long Life to Mexico, assholes!" Sergio Gomez, another cousin, has also painted his face, and, in addition, sports a black wig and a big, collarless cotton shirt. He has decided to look like a Tarahumara Indian from the state of Chihuahua, which borders the United States. An odd look for a soccer match, but, as he explained on the bus, he wants to be on TV.

Saul Gomez sports a thin mustache and a vertical line of hair extending from the center of his lower lip to the point of his chin. This gives him something of the air of a Latin American guerrilla leader, and his cousins call him Fidel Castro. But he also has a New York street-wise look, savvy and fashion-conscious. He taps the shoulder of one of the American preppies who asked him to move. "We're gonna win, and that's for sure," he says.

"Stand up!" someone behind Saul orders, in Spanish. "Salute. Salute the flag. Take off your caps."

An opera singer warbles a slowed-down version of the Mexican national anthem. Saul and his group try to sing along, but because they're used to the standard version they finish ahead of the singer. A moment of national pride has become a moment of national confusion. "Next time I'll go out there on the field and sing it myself," Saul says in disgust.

The Star-Spangled Banner blasts from the loudspeakers. All the American fans sing together in perfect time and the song ends with a small fireworks display that energizes the crowd. It seems unfair, but that's organized sports for you. In a couple of months, Mexico will receive the U.S. team in the Azteca Stadium, a Mexico City soccer Mecca.

The referee blasts his whistle and the match starts. People take their seats but are instantly back on their feet. "GOOOOOOOAAAAAAL!" the crowd shouts.

A bizarre goal has been scored by the Mexican outside left, Carlos Hermosillo. Intercepting a kick by the U.S. goalie, Kesey Keller, Hermosillo headed the ball to the ground. It bounced over Keller and into the net. Mexican fans dance and sing: "ME-XI-CO! ME-XI-CO!" The game has been underway for less than a minute.

Once again, Saul taps the American on the shoulder. "And you have not seen the best," he says in English.

About ten minutes later, Mexico is about to score the second goal. "You know," someone from the Gomez group says proudly in Spanish, "Mexicans are good at everything, but in making money we are fucked up."

No other border on earth lies between two countries with such different per capita incomes. As long as things are that way, Mexicans will continue to emigrate, no matter what the law does to stop them. Mexico is now by far the leading supplier of immigrants to the United States, and according to some theorists, Mexicans pose a particular threat because unlike other immigrants, past and present, they remain in close touch with their original culture. "Mexican-Americans will have open to them possibilities closed to previous immigrant groups," David M. Kennedy, a historian who teaches at Stanford University, wrote in the November 1996 *Atlantic Monthly*. "They will have sufficient coherence and critical mass in a defined region so that, if they choose, they can preserve their distinctive culture indefinitely. They could also eventually undertake to do what no previous immigrant group could have dreamed of doing: challenge the existing cultural, political, legal, commercial and educational systems to change fundamentally not only the language, but also the very institutions in which they do business." California or Texas, according to Kennedy, could become to the U.S. what Quebec is to Canada. In Foxboro Stadium today, you can see a little of what has people like Kennedy worried. The U.S. national team, playing in its home country, finds its fans almost outnumbered by Mexicans.

The long bus ride from New York gave the Mexicans in Saul's group plenty of time to whip themselves into an appropriate nationalistic fervor. The bus was chartered by the owner of a Brooklyn store that sells everything Mexican, from food to CDs. The fare — \$60 — included transportation and tickets to the game. Although Saul lives in Queens, most of his cousins live in the Bronx, and they took a rented van to Queensboro Plaza, the official point of embarkation. The minute they were in their seats at the back of the bus, they unpacked their beers and sodas, deposited them in a Styrofoam cooler and set it on a nearby table.

"Would you like something for breakfast?" asked Francisco Gomez, grabbing the first beer before the bus's engine had even started. Francisco is the oldest Gomez, and uncle to them all. "It kills parasites," he added, passing along a bottle. As the beer began to flow, the Mexican flag was unfurled.

Flash! Someone snapped a photograph of one of the Gomezes brandishing the flag. Hector, the tallest, heaviest and handsomest member of the clan, then suggested that the flag be taped to a window at the front of the bus. "Is this an INS ambush?" he asked, once the flag was in place.

Everybody laughed, including Hector, who flashed a perfect line of white teeth. Flags would play an important role in the journey. "Hey, hey, put that flag back in its place," said Sergio about an hour later as the bus was nearing Connecticut. The flag had fallen down, and somebody in the bus had noticed a group of bikers on the road, about thirty of them, looking powerful, sexy and scary. Sergio wanted the bikers to know that the bus was a Mexican bus.

"Don't be stupid," said Leobardo, a friend of the Gomezes who lives in the Bronx and is godfather to Francisco's son. "They could be racists. They see that flag, and they'll come beat us up."

"Or maybe they're faggots," Sergio added.

"Look, they're giving us an escort," Hector observed.

"Take down that flag! They're going to beat us up," Leobardo insisted.

"Those guys are faggots," Sergio said again.

"They're just rich bastards," said Uncle Francisco, somehow breaking the bikers' spell.

From time to time, the bus passed other buses packed with Mexican fans. When this happened, there was shouting, dancing and flag-waving.

A white car with a kid holding a U.S. flag out the window went past. "Fucking gringos!" Sergio shouted, standing to look out the window. He seemed to be on the brink of exchanging obscene gestures with the kid, but then thought better of it.

Halfway to Foxboro, Leobardo unpacked three small flasks of red, white and green face pigments that one of Hector's sons had bought in a store in the Bronx. The flasks caused great excitement, and Sergio was one of the first in line to be painted. He asked to have his face divided into three sections of color, with a black spot on the nose. "The national shield," he said, referring to the eagle eating the serpent on the Mexican flag.

"There's not going to be enough," said Leobardo, after painting Sergio's face and six or seven others. A few fellow passengers — people the Gomezes were meeting for the first time — lined up for a splash of the three national colors on their cheeks.

Then the bus made a sudden, lurching stop. Sergio, who was standing in the aisle, lost his balance, spilling a bottle of beer onto his seat (which, like the bus, looked brand new), and biting down hard on his lower lip. He stood up immediately, but blood — real blood, not red pigment — was streaming down the white side of his face. For Sergio, the rest of the day was a long struggle to recover his good humor.

As the bus entered the stadium parking lot, the trip organizer's assistant — a heavy man in his early 30s whom the Gomezes call "Silver Arm" for his resemblance to a Mexican professional wrestler— took the microphone and lectured the passengers. "We came as a big family," he said. "We do not want problems. If we are pushed, we are not going to retaliate. We have to show that we are educated people. Everybody keep cool, and long life to Mexico!"

U.S. midfielder Claudio Reyna gets a free kick after Mexican Dulilo Devino spikes him in the collarbone in a chase for the ball.

Reyna's kick hits the U.S. star Alexis Lalas, then bounces over to Wynalda, who finds Eddie Pope open in the slot for the equalizer. "GOOOOAAAAAL!" the stadium roars. "U-S-A! U-S-A!" the American fans sing. They, too, wave flags and have painted their faces. They also have confetti and fireworks, outdoing the Mexican crowd.

The Gomezes' good cheer starts to desert them. From time to time, they try to rally with a chant of "ME-XI-CO!" but the mood has shifted and so has the progress of the game. It took the Americans some time, but now they are protecting the ball better and keeping it away from the Mexican side.

The first half of the match ends in a tie — not what any of the Mexicans expected. Saul stands up, and a few minutes later comes back with two glasses of beer, for him and his best friend, David. He explains how he managed to buy them without an ID: he spotted a Hispanic beer seller and invoked Hispanic solidarity.

Sergio, who stopped drinking after his accident, looks bored — a bored Tarahumara Indian with the Mexican flag painted on his face. Hector also looks bored. As the second half starts, Saul and David sip their beers and fill other people's glasses. On the field, an errant pass by U.S. player Thomas Dooly is taken by Mexican Benjamin Galindo. Galindo kicks the ball to Rafael Hernandez, finding him in the clear. Hernandez maneuvers past goalkeeper Keller for a 2-1 lead.

"GOAL!" Saul's group chants, resuscitated.

In front of them, in more expensive seats, another group of Mexican fans also drink and cheer. Unlike Saul, they have ID's. They have lots of credentials. They are members of the Mexican Society of Harvard University (more than 200 of them, wearing Mexican Society T-shirts), along with people from Boston College, Tufts and MIT. Mexican chic.

The group from New York is male-dominated: just one woman, the organizer's wife, was on the bus. The other wives and daughters stayed behind. Among the Harvard group are gorgeous, tall, thin women with wonderful silky brown hair. Pearl earrings are common currency. Men and women alike look as if they were out to watch

a bullfight in Mexico City — an extremely fashionable thing to do on a Sunday afternoon. They chat and giggle as someone tells jokes he heard from a Mexican immigrant. They smile at the inventiveness and humor of the common people like Hector, with his big sombrero and his long-life-to-Mexico-assholes sign. They wear flags around their shoulders, too, and have painted their faces, but their flags somehow look perfect, like Hermes scarves, and instead of thick, pasty pigment, those with painted faces sport an evenly-distributed pastel powder.

They are, or will be, members of the professional classes in the big metropolises of Monterrey, Guadalajara and Mexico City. They will never emigrate. Some already have jobs waiting for them back home. Saul's cousins, on the other hand, are here to stay. They are from Tulcingo, a little village in south-central Mexico that, since the 1940s when Mexico's industrial revolution began, has been exporting its peasants, first to the big cities of Mexico, then to the United States.

Most of the Mexicans in New York City are from this sleepy backwater. The local authorities in Tulcingo estimate that 4,000 Tulcingueños live in New York. Only 6,000 remain in Tulcingo. Saul Gomez and his Uncle Francisco went directly from Tulcingo to New York. Hector and Sergio's families paused for several years on the outskirts of Mexico City, but now both have children who were born in the U.S. Hector will never go back to Mexico to live. He took a big step forward by emigrating to the United States, but culturally he is in limbo. His sons, Christian, 15, and Danny, 8, are going to school in New York. Hector's home town could not offer them an education like the one they're receiving, nor the job opportunities they will have when they've finished. Christian and Danny will be full-fledged Americans.

Hector is upbeat about the United States. "We're not ungrateful," he says, adding that if the U.S. team were playing against any country but Mexico, he would be rooting for the U.S. He and the other Tulcingueños here probably have more in common with the American fans than with the Harvard Mexicans.

But this afternoon, the gap between Tulcingo and Harvard is masked. Not that they talk to each other, but they cheer and shout the same things: "CUUUUU-LEEEEEEE-ROOOOOO! CUUUUUU-LEEEEEEE-ROOOOO!" (ASS-HOLE! ASS-HOLE!) to the referee. And so do the people from L.A. and Chicago.

Mexican Luis Hernandez tackles Lalas. The referee hands Hernandez a red card: he's out — an undeserved expulsion. Even some of the American fans agree.

Down on the field, short one player, the Mexicans are looking vulnerable. In the stands, the contingent from New York is paying very little attention to the game.

Someone has tried to start a “wave” going—a Mexican wave. Saul is a big enthusiast. He stands up, raising his arms, but the wave stops in the section to his left which is full of Americans who are pissed off by the score.

And suddenly there it is, majestic, splendid. A bizarre spectacle. A force of nature. While Saul is again concentrating on an approaching wave, something happens on the field. The wave stops dead. Ramirez has accidentally headed the ball into his own goal. The United States ties with Mexico, 2-2.

“I didn’t see it,” Saul moans amid the uproar. “Fuck!”

Minutes later, the match finishes — a tie, but for many Mexican fans, a defeat.

On the way back to New York, Saul and his friend David drink brandy that Hector has poured into a Coke bottle. The tie was not a good outcome. The bus is quiet. Saul, cradling the Coke bottle in his hands, drinks for the sake of drinking and tells stories about his life in New York. He works as a busboy in a Manhattan restaurant. Once, though, he was sent to jail after the police caught him throwing rocks at the house of some Puerto Ricans who had been bullying him. Saul has a problem with Puerto Ricans; since high school, he says, they’ve looked down on him. He has the same problem with Dominicans and African-Americans, not to mention his employers, who are mostly white.

Relations within New York’s Mexican community are not so easy either. Gangs are on the rise. Some are crime organizations that distribute drugs to Mexican immigrants. Some are merely Mexican teenagers fighting other Mexican teenagers over territory. Saul has friends who have been beaten by gang members; he knows some people who’ve been killed. And AIDS has hit the Mexican community, he says. A friend of his, Homero, died recently in Tulcingo of an AIDS-related disease; Saul’s sister, who still lives in the village, told him.

“If I think about the women I’ve had sex with,” Saul says, “I’m not so sure myself.” He takes no precautions.

The more Saul drinks, the more he speaks. He has assumed full custody of the brandy, and from time to time he carelessly lets it spill on the wall of the bus.

“We Mexicans like to drink,” Saul declares, the syllables crawling from his tongue. “That’s something we carry in the bloodstream.”

But no one else in the bus is drinking like Saul. After no more than a couple of glasses of brandy with Coke, his cousins, who washed the pigment from their faces before boarding the bus, are watching an action film on TV screens that hang from the bus’s ceiling. Not even David, who’s been drinking with Saul, can consume as much

liquor as his friend. Saul's neck seems no longer able to hold up Saul's head. He rambles for a while longer before finally losing the power of speech.

He abandons his seat and lurches towards the front of the bus, hitting other passengers as he goes by. Silver Arm, the organizer's assistant, stands up and asks Saul to go back and sit down. Saul walks back to where Francisco is sitting. "Daddy! Daddy!" he shouts, embracing his uncle. Then he stands up again and walks to the back of the bus, where he playfully punches the door to the toilets.

"Why have you become so fierce?" Francisco shouts. "Control yourself, my son! If you don't know how to drink, then don't drink!"

Silver Arm grabs Saul from behind and throws him onto an empty seat as an action movie zips by on the screen overhead, its soundtrack providing the perfect accompaniment to Saul's struggles.

He manages to elude Silver Arm, but only by throwing himself at Hector, then grabbing and kissing him. Hector says something about faggots; this time the joke has an edge. Silver Arm manhandles Saul back onto the seat. This time he jumps on him. Saul tries to fight back but is soon overwhelmed.

"I think he's got a hard-on," Silver Arm says after a couple of minutes of leaning on Saul. This gets a laugh from the Gomezes.

Halfway to New York, the bus stops at a McDonald's. Most of the passengers—dark, small and Indian-looking—line up for hamburgers, mingling with the Connecticut suburbanites. Saul sleeps in the bus, exhausted.

From McDonald's to New York City, the trip is calm. Now that Saul is asleep, the fury is gone from his face. David, his friend, keeps talking in Saul's place, telling his own stories. He is 22, married, with a child. He works at a dry cleaners on Manhattan's Upper West Side, in charge of difficult stains. In Tulcingo, he learned the craft of tailoring and he dreams of going back to Mexico, where he thinks he could practice his trade.

After a brief stop in the Bronx, where the Gomezes get off, the bus crosses the Triboro Bridge to Queens. The view of Manhattan by night is spectacular. A dreamy city with glittering skyscrapers.

"It looks beautiful," David says. "But not so beautiful when you have to live and work there." ☒

MÓNICA DE LA TORRE
DOS POEMAS

PARA SALIR DEL PERPETUO ESTADO
DE ANSIEDAD EN QUE ME ENCUENTRO ∞

Quise usar la lamparoscopia,
la taciturna fluidez de las mañanas,
las pulsiones regresivas,
la tracción delantera.

Quise usar los guantes blancos,
la endodermia polimorfa,
el azufre subiendo por las venas.
Dejar de ser un clásico embrión de envergadura
y convertirme en timbre que registra los preembarques,
en sugerente figura plástica,
en minúsculo nigromante arrabalero.

EROS GRAVITA DEMASIADO CERCA
DE LA TIERRA CUAL SI NO FUERA ∞

El enredo no fue el nudo
sino cómo pudimos hacerlo.
Aparece un higo considerable como un satélite.
De dónde vienen los asteroides,
residuos de planetas,
malformaciones,
fragmentos dislocados;
cuál el incómodo basurero sideral
desde donde se lanzan
a estropear los cuerpos celestes
en sus precisas órbitas.

Eros, nunca te fundiste a la masa candente,
no quisiste amalgamarte al futuro planets
de pozos y cubetas, ratas y temblores.
Preferiste rondar por tu cuenta,
incerto, improbable asteroide,
si te estrellaras contra la tierra nos matarías. ☒

SUZANNE RUTA

HORTENSIA

La azafata que atendió el vuelo de una aerolínea suiza de Ginebra a la ciudad de México no se dio cuenta, cuando la señora Allende se sentó en primera clase entre dos mujeres de edad madura con trajes bien cortados y chamarras de pieles, que se había cometido un gran error. La señora Allende reconoció de inmediato a la señora Kirkpatrick. La señora Kirkpatrick no pareció reconocer a la señora Allende, quien empezó la conversación con un comentario acerca del clima. Los chilenos son tan afectos como los ingleses a esta clase de plática insulsa. La azafata sirvió una botella de vino blanco, y del clima las dos mujeres pasaron pronto a tópicos más íntimos. La señora Allende, llegado el momento, informó a la señora Kirkpatrick que era viuda y la señora Kirkpatrick replicó "Cuánto lo siento", mientras que sus cejas no dejaban de apuntar hacia arriba con una expresión de feroz incredulidad.

La señora Allende, cuando se le preguntó su lugar de nacimiento, concedió ser peruana. Ésta fue la primera mentira que se permitió a sí misma. Tenía la firme intención de no dejar que la charada se le fuera de las manos. Cuando llegara a diez, lo había decidido de antemano, el juego habría terminado y entonces daría a conocer su verdadera identidad a su interlocutora, quien no tendría a dónde voltear cuando a mitad del Atlántico el letrero del cinturón de seguridad la forzara a permanecer en su asiento en medio de una turbulencia. Sí, era peruana pero había vivido en muchos lugares, añadió. Luego le preguntó a la señora Kirkpatrick si de casualidad había estado alguna vez en Perú o en Chile. Además de haber sido engañosa en relación a su país de origen, pretendía no saber quién era la señora Kirkpatrick. Esto debía contar

como una doble infracción, pensó, lo que ponía el marcador en cinco. Entonces cayó en la cuenta de que la señora Kirkpatrick también había cometido la falta de no presentarse a sí misma como quien realmente era, un miembro del gabinete de los Estados Unidos con un interés especial en los asuntos de América Latina, la mujer que había dicho poco antes de la crisis de las Malvinas “Argentina es mi país favorito”. Se preguntó si la señora Kirkpatrick no estaría también jugando su propio juego. Concluyó que no. De cualquier forma, el marcador estaba en cinco, y había otros cinco tantos pendientes.

La señora Kirkpatrick contestó que había estado en Chile en varias ocasiones y que de hecho había estado en Santiago y Viña del Mar hacía unos cuantos meses. La señora Allende, con la sola mención del lugar donde había sido enterrado su esposo, se tornó sombría y melancólica y se permitió citar algunos versos de su querido Neruda: “Viene el mar y reúne nuestras vidas y...” Aquí se le quebró la voz. La señora Kirkpatrick, que era todo menos inculta, recordó que el verso pertenecía a uno de los últimos, breves y apolíticos poemas de Neruda, y completó la cita diciendo “y sólo ataca y se reparte y canta”, complacida con la oportunidad de mostrar una erudición que no le servía de mucho entre sus colegas de Nueva York y Washington.

Qué persona tan encantadora, pensó. Puede que la invite a cenar en México. Aunque el destino final de la señora Kirkpatrick era Acapulco, donde la esperaba su marido para pasar una semana de vacaciones, tenía planeado permanecer por lo menos una noche en la capital.

Como era de esperarse, empezaron a hablar de sus hijos. Los de la señora Kirkpatrick estaban haciendo doctorados, uno en economía, otro en ciencias de la computación. La hija de la señora Allende estaba casada con un economista. Ella había estado en Ginebra para visitar a los nietos.

Una vez servido y retirado el almuerzo, la señora Kirkpatrick abrió un portafolios y comenzó a leer unos papeles. La buena educación de la señora Allende le impidió echar un vistazo clandestino a esos papeles aunque, como pensó en un momento de inesperada amargura, tuviera todo el derecho de hacerlo. Ella sacó un libro sobre el sistema bancario suizo que su hija le había dado y pretendió abismarse en un capítulo sobre el papel de un banco suizo en la huelga de los camioneros chilenos en 1973, toda una concatenación de hechos que le era muy familiar.

Después de hora y media, la señora Kirkpatrick levantó la vista de sus papeles y le preguntó a su distinguida compañera si el libro que estaba leyendo le parecía interesante.

—Trato de que así sea por el bien de la familia —contestó la señora Allende—. El esposo de mi hija no es un conversador moderado, y nada le interesa que no tenga

que ver con su propio trabajo—. La señora Allende cerró el volumen y lo deslizó discretamente en su bolso. —Yo prefiero las novelas y el suspenso —añadió, deseando llevar la conversación a un terreno más seguro.

—¿Qué le parece un crucigrama? —preguntó la señora Kirkpatrick, y sacó uno de entre el montón de papeles que tenía enfrente. Guardó los demás y cerró el portafolios entusiasmada.

—¡Ay, eso sí! —exclamó la señora Allende. Su respuesta acerca del libro subió el marcador a seis, lo cual la hizo comprender que en realidad había inventado ese juego como un táctica dilatoria. Temía una confrontación en pleno vuelo. El crucigrama podría muy bien darle tiempo.

—El fundador de la iglesia al sur de la frontera, ésa es fácil, *Pedro*—. La señora Kirkpatrick escribió con tinta la primera definición. —Pero qué me dices de ésta: el calzado de Picasso.

La señora Allende reflexionó un momento. Se percató sólo después de tener una respuesta cuánto había necesitado el silencio que acompaña a un momento de concentración desinteresada. Este viaje en primera clase estaba probando ser un tormento para ella. (Por lo general hacía sus viajes en clase turista, pero en opinión de su hija esta vez se veía cansada e insistió en pagar un boleto de primera.)

—A-L-P-A-R-G-A-T-A-S —deletreó en voz alta—. Tengo entendido que ustedes las llaman *espadrilles*, que es palabra de origen francés. Picasso, por supuesto, era catalán.

—No sé qué haría sin usted —dijo la señora Kirkpatrick y continuó resolviendo el crucigrama ella sola. El placer que le daba su propia inteligencia creció tanto que se extendió a su compañera de vuelo, a quien invitó a desayunar la mañana siguiente en una pastelería de la Zona Rosa que ambas mujeres conocían bien, una pastelería que, casualmente, también era suiza.

—Podemos vernos una vez más en territorio neutro—. La señora Allende, habiendo aventurado esta pequeña broma, esperó a ver la reacción de su compañera. La señora Kirkpatrick no dio señales de haber captado la ironía. Estaba diciendo en voz alta, para sí misma, “72 vertical, Pinochet para sus camaradas. Ésa es fácil. Augusto con dos úes, como en inglés, siete letras, perfecto. Acabé”. Dobló el crucigrama y lo hizo a un lado.

—Bien, no siempre se tiene la misma fortuna con los compañeros de viaje —dijo. Le agradaba esta mujer, esta señora —¿Cómo dijo que se llamaba?

—Alarid —dijo la señora Allende sin pestañear—. Siete letras.

—Y el mío es Kirkpatrick —dijo la señora Kirkpatrick sin esconder nada detrás de sus palabras, y le extendió la mano a su compañera de asiento, quien la apretó

pensando para sí misma “Cómo disfruta de su anonimato, pobrecita. No voy a privarla de semejante placer”.

El placer era mucho mayor de lo que la señora Allende pudo haber sospechado. La señora Kirkpatrick estaba dándole vueltas en su cabeza a un artículo que quería escribir durante sus vacaciones, justo sobre el tipo de mujer latinoamericana que representaba esta distinguida y agradable señora. Era esta clase de gente, cuya meta en la vida era el servicio al prójimo antes que el enriquecimiento personal, la que más se parecía a esa élite norteamericana de la que ella misma formaba parte. A esta clase, como lo afirmaría en su artículo, debía fortalecerse y alentarse para tomar las riendas de América Latina. Por supuesto que no era lícito usar a una persona que acababa de conocer como conejillo de indias, como paradigma, pero la posición pública de la señora Kirkpatrick y su apretada agenda la obligaban a tomar las oportunidades tal y como éstas se le presentaban. Además era con un buen propósito que se disponía a explotar la deliciosa ingenuidad de la señora Alarid.

Al día siguiente, hicieron algunas compras en la calle de Londres antes del desayuno. La señora Alarid compró un anillo para su hija que estaba en Lima (con ésta van ocho, pensó la señora Allende, ya que su hija estaba en la Habana) y la señora Kirkpatrick se compró un chal de encaje blanco para llevarlo en las noches de Acapulco. A petición de la señora Kirkpatrick, la señora Alarid regateó sin inhibiciones a la muchacha de la tienda y obtuvo un diez por ciento de descuento sobre el precio del chal. Por el anillo se limitó a pagar la primera cantidad que se le pidió. La señora Kirkpatrick estaba impresionada con la liberalidad con que esta viuda gastaba sus pesos, y decidió que debía pertenecer a una familia de mucho abolengo y mucho dinero.

Las otras mesas que estaban cerca de la ventana de esta pequeña pastelería suiza en la esquina de Génova y Praga estaban vacías esa mañana a los once. La señora Kirkpatrick había preparado algunas preguntas para su amiga, deseando que sus respuestas añadieran algo a la sustancia de su artículo. Para empezar, le preguntó acerca de su educación. La señora Allende, llenando su taza de una generosa cafetera que la mesera acababa de servir, aludió vagamente a una preparatoria de monjas y a una licenciatura en letras que tuvo que abandonar para dedicarse a la familia. (Con esto el marcador se ponía en nueve, pues ella había terminado la misma carrera que su difunto esposo.)

—¿Y a qué se dedicaba tu marido? —preguntó la señora Kirkpatrick. La señora Allende miró a su inquisidora. ¿Esta mujer con ojos de zorra astuta estaba decidida a acorralarla? Pero aún no diría la mentira número diez. No rompería las reglas del juego, pero haría su revelación hasta que ella quisiera y no antes.

—Al final estuvo en el gobierno —dijo la señora Alarid sin perder la calma.

—Oh, ya veo, ¿un burócrata o un puesto de elección popular? No es que haya una gran diferencia entre uno y otro. Me baso por supuesto en lo que ocurre en mi propio país —la señora Kirkpatrick trató rápidamente de enmendarse la plana, haciendo su mejor esfuerzo para parecer cortés y simpática. La mujer que tenía enfrente, una mujer de buena familia, como ella, era una mina de oro para los fines que perseguía su artículo. Esta actitud era muy sencilla de entender. En la universidad, en el doctorado, la señora Kirkpatrick pasaba meses preparando cada trabajo, a sabiendas de que éstos serían enterrados durante años en el escritorio de algún profesor. Ahora sus observaciones casuales eran impresas y difundidas como cosa natural. Anhelaba enfrentar un reto y esta dulce mujer se ofrecía como la presa idónea.

—Oh, fue un puesto de elección, en una oficina muy importante. Nuestro país es una democracia—. El desliz era inevitable, pero lo corrigió de inmediato, decidida a no mentir de nuevo hasta que estuviera lista para asumir las consecuencias. —Nuestro país *era* una democracia.

—¿Cuántos años estuvo en el gobierno?—preguntó—. La señora Kirkpatrick lució su formidable conocimiento de historia moderna de América Latina. En Perú habían habido esos militares de izquierda y de nuevo elecciones sólo en fechas recientes. La verdad es que ella había prestado menos atención a Perú, con sus inescrutables masas de indios y sus desastrosos terremotos, que a otras naciones sudamericanas, mucho más occidentalizadas y confiables. Se prometió ponerse al día en cuestiones relacionadas con Perú tan pronto como regresara a Nueva York.

La señora Allende, convencida de que su contertulia no tenía la menor idea de con quién estaba hablando, entre la cafetera de acero inoxidable, las gruesas tazas blancas y la charola con brioches y mermeladas, la miró con lástima y dijo “Mi esposo fue asesinado en el otoño del setenta y tres”.

La señora Kirkpatrick dejó caer la taza sobre el plato. El sonido de la taza rompiéndose contra la vajilla resonó en el local vacío. El líquido se derramó sobre el impecable mantel de color blanco, regando algunas gotas de color café claro enfrente de ella.

—Qué terrible —dijo—. Pobre de ti. Acaso fue mientras estuvo en el gobierno. ¿Tuvo algo que ver, espero no te importe mi pregunta, con su posición política? Verás, a mí me interesan mucho todas esas cosas. Espero que no te molesten mis preguntas.

—No te preocupes —dijo la señora Allende, que de pronto sintió que un peso se le quitaba de encima, al tiempo que comprendió que para la señora Kirkpatrick hacía mucho tiempo que ella había dejado de existir y no volvería a figurar en el mapa de

nuevo. La tan temida revelación nunca habría tenido el efecto esperado. A la señora Kirkpatrick seguramente no le habría importado.

La señora Allende se adelantó y tomó la cuenta que habían dejado en la mesa. “Hoy eres mi invitada”, dijo. Caminó hacia la caja que estaba en el mostrador, donde se exhibían las pastitas, esas exquisiteces a las que los suizos bautizaban con unos nombres tan curiosos, llenos de resonancias históricas.

“*Japonaise, Napoléon, diplomate, religieuse*”, recitó para sí misma, repitiendo el último par antitético, “*diplomate, religieuse*”. Una vez que pagó la cuenta regresó a la mesa, dejó una propina a un lado de su taza, le extendió su mano a la señora Kirkpatrick, la retiró sin recibir respuesta y dijo, mirándola justo a los ojos: “Ha sido usted tan amable de aclarar cosas que no entendía antes de conocerla”. Esto no era mentira. Había aprendido mucho de la señora Kirkpatrick, sin necesidad de hacer grandes revelaciones. ¿Podría llamarse a esto un triunfo?

De cualquier forma, nada le impidió salir de la pastelería y pasar por la ventana sin temer la mirada de la otra mujer que estaría estudiándola hasta el final, sin apartar los ojos de ella. A decir verdad, no podía hablarse de un triunfo, pero tampoco de una derrota. Simplemente había hecho lo que tenía que hacer.

“Hola Tencha, te queremos mucho”, dos jóvenes mexicanas, al parecer estudiantes, le gritaron desde el otro lado de la calle. La desconcertó el hecho de que la reconocieran así de fácil y que usaran su diminutivo con tanta familiaridad, temiendo haber perdido el anonimato que le había conferido la mujer norteamericana que había dejado atrás. Pero el temor desapareció pronto. Era otra vez ella misma y pudo respirar libremente, mientras esperaba a un taxi en Paseo de la Reforma para que la llevara a casa. 📄

Traducción de Gabriel Bernal Granados

LINDA NORTON
TWO POEMS

CALIFORNIA ∞

Lyrics & burden for freight train, harmonica, & peacock

The mind catapults a poem into the future
Girls pulse with the urge to deliver
Yarrow and oleander line the roads of the state
The crushed contraltos move back east

Back there back back back
Back there back back

Here's a creamy transparency, a filmy depth
The boxcars make a nice apocalyptic sound
What does it mean when peacocks scream?
"Who told you that you were naked?"

Come here come come come
Come here come come

Upholstery cracks in the noonday sun
Too soon new lipstick tastes of attic

A louvered cattle car rumbles to slaughter
A box of meat, a box of metaphysics

Cut this cut cut cut
Cut this cut cut


This day like others is entirely fugacious
Men die making gasoline for yachts and trucks
Blood and starch go together on a plate
The freight train slices the fat pink distance

Tuck stitch tuck tuck tuck
Tuck stitch tuck tuck

PAINTER PAINTING ∞

*Pitiless verse? A few words tuned
And tuned and tuned and tuned.*
—Wallace Stevens

The ellipse of your heart collapses
At the ache of tangent strings pulled taut
Toward scattered centers of magenta,
The numbered box of love, the weedy thing
That used to creep, that used to sing
A maudlin song, and throw a shadow
On legitimate grass, legitimate foreground,
Legitimate career: the grass pressed flat
Where a fox used to lie, a fox from another picture.

Then a bell rings; a log rolls; ten bells ring
Inside ten latticed white-washed cribs
And you are not afraid: if the numbered box
Goes where the fox once was— You wake
and stretch, refreshed; refreshed, and curious. 

ROLANDO SÁNCHEZ MEJÍAS
ACERCA DE FRANKENSTEIN

1 ≈

Entre las partes
y el todo — ninguna
relación.

Sin embargo
se movía, astuto, *aquello*, a
ras de tierra interpretando
el Libro de Instrucciones.

2 ≈

Por otro lado
la imposibilidad de moverse
en el vector de la vida: el bosque
resultó abrupto, inexplicable, sin espesor
los árboles en la cuadrícula del córtex
y en la cuadrícula del territorio
también sin espesor.

3 ≈

Primo: elegir
por azar
del anaquel
un cerebro de circunvoluciones mondas ad usum.

Segundo: cocer
la cínica cabeza de caimán
(cocer y cantar, incluso bailar)
con hilo y pegolín.

Tercero: ajustar
el sistema
a las variedades del inconsciente.

Así circuló por entre nuestras mujeres:
con la ferocidad del dinero. Muñeco,
no ángel: somos gente sencilla
y hemos visto rodar
desde el cielo
estirpe semejante,
lelos de frente trepanada
por el rodillo de la Naturaleza.

4 ≈

Operaciones básicas:

- a) Errar.
- b) Mirar la luna.
- c) Mugir (como una vaca en celo).

5 ≈

picotea
como gallo

la dura cáscara
de lo real

(así
goza secreto)

...

de lo real
una gota de papa
o de baba
queda

6 ≈

De las marionetas conservaría la inespecífica
atracción por el vacío: series descentradas
prolongándose en una malla de *modus operandi*.
Su *umwelt*, como el de las arañas: pura vir-
tualidad.

7 ≈

en una rápida volición

con
el puño abierto

casi sin
sentido

pescar

cornejas

en
el

aire

8 ≈

Su cerebro, como el de Lenin, lograría la
consistencia de un enorme queso Gruyere
puesto a secar.

9 ≈

vio
en el pasto
conjuntos discretos de vacas

extensiones vacías

de conceptos
en el pasto (pensó)

(no obstante
finalmente
vacas) pensó

mientras se borraba el pasto

10 ≈

Abrir
claros en el bosque.

Encima
negra nube de anófeles, abajo
— inter castaño y castaño — quebrar
gaznates de jabatos, que husmean surrones,
que muerden bellotas, como él.

Entrambos — máquina y cerdo — una
solución para el cálculo de lindes
en tiempo de Movilización Total.

Viste de golpe, el asunto: “empresas
de la Razón”. O mejor dicho
viste el bosque
de conjunto: un
Dichtung.

Y en detalle
(intra bellota rota):
¡partículas de luz!

SEVERO SARDUY
TWO POEMS

≈

The oiled, shiny embolus
lays impetuous siege to the crack
spilling its burning white
liquid that scalds the slower it pours.

A veiled fleeting witness
licks and looks at the groove
that the bulk dilates and closes
with its own lava. In the oval


mercurial mirror over the carpet
(the slick tower penetrating,
dripping honey, coming out, entering)

he deciphers the ideogram of the shadow:
thought is illusion: fucking
the one we cannot name comes slowly

Entering you, hair by hair
breathing in our languid air:
memory a still web in the dying

afternoon light: endless ray
piercing burning bones, touching
your body's edge: day's light

catching the shape
witness
a wide void where
whiteness
erases marks in the sand, your face
as sounds devour the day

burning
slowly
your thick
texture turning to ashes
in the hungry night of the senses. 

Translated by Suzanne Jill Levine

the ribbons of asphalt guides us — to our little posada — the one place in town with
a room — four of us in three narrow beds—

nearly insoluble puzzle to which love is the answer —
companionable love —

Skull crusted with turquoise mosaic chips
cranio humano con incrustaciones

Monte Alban

or Pacal's face

1300 years the jade mask undisturbed
thick stone sarcophagos at Palenque
no one touching the lid

I draw a finger along the ridge of your brow
down the proud cheek curve
same lines as the old mask held —
eyes proud & unreadable through tough
bone apertures
homo sapien

And south past the cattle barons & machineguns
past vaqueros driving their heifers
out past Tonina ruins
far-minded revolutionary women step through the Lacondonia forest
cartridge belts crossing their breasts

Through the black mask a
row of broken teeth

bright morning

Ocosingo

Deep night after sleeping drugs —
waken to

“Paco!”

“Anita!”

“Pa-a-co!”

“Ani-i-ita!”

and Rikki’s out the door
urging them on
two parrots in gilt
cage on nearby
balcony

continuous noisy love affair as we pack & depart —
a blur of red and green feather —
life seems ancient
sweet & good
same flavor as the squat potted palm at a
turn in the cement staircase
oh cheap hotel
streets coming alive under
long clouds

the mind meets itself

this is the road

to Ocosingo

As we drive through fenced entry to Tonina, past Rancho Guadalupe's fortified cattleman gates, a dusty armored truck full of heavily outfitted soldiers rumbles towards us. Pull the car up by a little bungalow, and turn the mind towards the ruins.

Folk who built these were rivals of Palenque? One Lord of Palenque at least got sacrificed here under the bloody pink sun. Glyphs on the walls are said to celebrate the event. Rikki & Jonathan lace their high leather boots against "four nostril," lethal snake of the jungle. Barefoot children stand watching, then trail off to play. Anne & I head for the ruins. We pass across a miserable little swamp on wooden walkway — cow carcass off there bloated halfway in murky water — and on to the massive hill of stone that's Tonina. One more imperial fortress. Its famous frieze an outsize dancing death

human head swings from one skeletal hand

* * *

Palenque Dream

Arduously climbing a pyramid tomb, pick my way up the stratified facade, my dog dead nearly ten years now follows me. We rise through the "eight spheres of existence" — it is all enclosed, an ill-favored amber light washes down from rotted brick dome overhead. Dim sense of antiquity, hierarchy, "the impotent dead." A route across gray stone blocks, Zapotec zigzags carved in like at Mitla — suddenly its precipitously steep. At the final level I'm thwarted, can't get a grip to pull myself to the summit. Horrific death dance with human skull. Just below, the shepherd dog's equally caught. Peter Lamborn Wilson — I see him seated reading a scripture under the little summit hut — in the priest shelter — wearing his maroon

Shriner's fez picked up at a rummage sale — Muslim holy scholar
food staining his khaki shirt, also probably got at a rummage sale.
In panic I call to him, he hefts out of his seat, reaches a hand
forward & pulls me towards...

* * *

12 August Lost Things

Tuxtla Gutiérrez

Among the ruins of Palenque
I lost my
pocket notebook
Lost all the Mexican addresses
assiduously gather'd
Other things gone —
 the phone numbers from Mexico City
Spanish words I tried memorizing
 notes on Mexica ruins
What about poem I wrote in La Parilla restaurant San Cristobal
 while Ambar read Jaime Sabines
 & translated his early verse
 about lovers
Gone the breast-like flowers
gone the dark narrow thighs
table behind her full of
 drunk Coletos
 who hollered at us on the road

Gone the bibliographic references
Gone the conversation with Elsa full of her sweet low tones
Gone "Los Amorosos"
copied by hand
nearly weeping at a Spanish I hardly decode

13 August

Tuxtla airport
we hold hands at first daylight
two swaggering pistoleros with girls pass through the
metal detector
guns pushed into their waistbands

guards keep their faces averted

one pistolero's girlfriend eats a wet pineapple round
I study the long red
innocent fingernails

Thinking of scribes who called their stellae
tree stones

spoke of planting words
for their dynasties

scored name glyphs into ceramic vessels

& drank cacao over poetry

all of which vanished
in Bishop Landa's inferno —

a forest of stone

Gun glyph
airport glyph
luggage conveyor belt glyph
daily newspaper running with news items glyph

styrofoam coffee cup glyph
diesel fuel glyph
Elsa Cross poetry glyph
medallion Sor Juana
glyph of first dream
flight back to the capital glyph

Take it in like a translator
copy them down.

Mexico City

Two hour layover. Buy a NY Times & change money. What's going on
Norteamerica? Quick

final beer before noon, wash down a plate of chilaquiles while rock'n roll clatters
across the

airport. Then on the runway flipping the paper. The stream of imperial economy
eddies and

swirls, all the pages report it. Jerry Garcia a few days ago dead. What does it
matter. Unnamed

staff writer declares him shrewd businessman. Not a word for the music. The
plane taxis and lifts.

We go north. North like coffee, like fruit, like oil. Air billows beneath and clings
to tall

buildings. Edge of the city stretches to the mountains swallowed in smog. One
day will our

whole planet be like this? Twenty million people directly below us. Consider the
bards who have

died. Massive buildings along the edge of a dried up lake. A few songs on
parchment or paper,

then they go from our world.

*At last my heart knows
for today a song comes to my ear
I gaze on a flower
that cannot wither*

(Aztec) 

PETER BALESTRIERI
TWO POEMS

YALE EXCHANGE ∞

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* * *

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JEN HOFER
TWO POEMS

TRILOBITE ∞

humidity held, as pitch
is held, unbroken

night breaks, opens
onto you as you

fossil into
the groove of night

fitted, as humidity fits
against you like a pitch

pressed upon you, a fossil
of color bitten into

your skin grooved,
ridged as the night

ridges the sky.
tonight

the sky is small.
a night tree

inks the asphalt as humidity
colors the ridge

of skin, a tree bare
in stained segments

as arms are bare,
connected or inked

or pitched as shadow
onto asphalt, as shadow

veils asphalt underfoot stained,
a sidelong streetlight glance

as you glance
as you veil,

barely touched but tinted, pitched
as you are bare

and touched,
as segments

close up to one another
to form a color

or body.

YES SHE SAID YES PLEASE ∞

hand ≈

as bird, waxing
curvature, fine
fine hairs as bird-
song flutters jawbone.

coffee, grit, sawdust,
piercing knuckle as
sunlight, mown grass,
cleft lemons, as flight,

hiss whistled, rustle
fan flame or finger
slide or slap when asked
when jaunty and overcome.

avoidable poison, salt,
brine, contraction as wing
poised. catastrophic thumb,
arch, as raspberry, as vinegar.

eyelash ≈

skirts, stuttering fingers, breath
of bird. hearth of cattails, velvet

slight, as whispered drizzle, as
steam before cardamom honey.


lightly. stab. flicker. striate. upheave.
moss. fool's gold. bicker. trance. nightly.

back ≈

turned, as bird
absent, absent
as blue floor
spotless, under belly.

ridge, gleam.
tentative, as metallic,
tempting feathers
erase impossibly soft. sun-

speck, as blinding. risen,
floured, swollen.
landed, as wingless
moist article. bird

intent, slick shirring.
serrate, unleave.
silence, as bird open 

DAVID SEARCY
FROM A TRIP TO THE SUN

In the late seventies there was a fashion for landscapes painted on the sides of vans and mini-buses. You could purchase a new vehicle already decorated or take it to a customizing shop but what you generally received smeared and airbrushed over the original finish was a glimpse into the most perfunctory world, thoughtless and arbitrary as the backgrounds of circus sideshow posters. (What is that place behind the Goat-faced Boy? Those feathery trees; the vague distance?) But the airbrushed vans had nothing to advertise, no subject to speak of, just background, vacant and automatic — sometimes three or four views on the same vehicle, recesses in the sheet metal forming larger and smaller cartouches of more or less identical bleakness (frequently desert) like a conjurer's illusion box turned every which way to prove it's empty or as if some random photographic process were involved — photosensitive panels recording, like a heliograph, the journey averaged out, particulars blurred away leaving just the essential landscape nearly as abstract as the tinted plastic appliquéés that once promised color from your black and white TV.

Nor was there sufficient evidence of conviction or delight for the gesture itself to constitute the subject as, a decade earlier, emblems of the natural world might have adorned decommissioned schoolbuses or any massproduced mechanical surface (flowers down gunbarrels) in ritual opposition to it. Maybe about a decade was the time required for ideological content to evaporate, all the volatiles to be driven off leaving a residue safe for commercial appropriation; time for contaminants to sift in as

well — the neutralizing influence of traditional American hot rod ornament (detectable in some of the desert and swamp scenes, for example, pale as they were — a trace of the school of dreadful insignia representing death or horror embraced or endured). In any case people's thoughts were captured in some way — for two or three years at least, all those vehicles with violated picture planes and nothing to show for it, such uncertain space, complete lack of intention, the aimlessness of the scenery itself as if the landscape were unimportant beyond the illusion of it, just enough information to establish a sort of muttered territory. Is that what people wanted? Did they stand on the lot among the plainer models and think something's missing: "We want a car that whispers to us of arrival, of destination as a faint, enveloping possibility." How hopeless the unillustrated ones must have looked; insensitive to the miles they had to pass; unambiguous, blind paint. But imagine the deluxe version — the interior so thoroughly upholstered and fitted out, so much like home you have to suppose the landscape painted on the outside functioned, somehow, as lawn, theoretical front yard; suggested, rather than adventurousness, a kind of trepidation, longing not to go but to arrive. Think of people travelling in one of these, sensing themselves, for hundreds of miles perhaps, at the verge of arrival — a fine-scale recycling of expectations as if to deflect some regret or psychological breakdown of the sort usually associated with prolonged confinement in submarines or spacecraft; interstellar distances. In act at one end of the range of airbrushed landscape types was the extraterrestrial, explicitly otherworldly. The lawn was deeply arbitrary.

You wonder how the lens-like plastic bubble-windows — usually part of the package — might have contributed beyond making vans look like giant box cameras. Half the time they were too small to be very good viewports (the poet Gerald Burns has suggested eyes at the back of the skull). Maybe, like the painted illusion of depth on the outside, they were ambiguous but from an opposite point of view — pressing domestic space outward, herniating the distinction as if anticipating and inflating the effects of arrival, the lurch of attention, faces pressed against the glass. "Here we are," say the goggle-eyed windows. "Somewhere or bust," says the empty painted landscape which seems to be a kind of advertisement after all: This is what you will see from inside the van; what you may train yourself to feel — a uniformity of vision; perfect tourism; how to possess the territory you pass through; avoid longing and regret.

Occasionally you see a survival. A pickup's tailgate decorated with the most rudimentary landscape — some eroded, lifeless world, all that's left; hazy, black-outlined mountains above the desert, little cacti and cowskulls. But this truck isn't going anywhere except to work as if still half asleep, in a dream. "Every day's a

holiday," it wants to say. It's only the tailgate though, probably an afterthought painted by the owner, provincial inheritance of a discarded fad, not a lot invested — he just happened to have the spraypaint on hand and got involved in it. Still he may have understood, though intending ornament, he's made a proposition. As a child he'd have added a main subject — an animal or a family group. Is it his model that restrains him? Or does he respond to the principle that this way it refers to him, stays in his mind, accompanies him as a pastoralist — eyes in the back of his head, land the same in all directions — is accompanied by the steppe.

Motion really is incomprehensible — another reason still photographs are so compelling. They agree with primitive suspicions about the rigidity of the moment, that the fixed instant is somehow closer to the truth. You feel that a photograph — unlike a painting, more like an evaporating tray — has lifted, undamaged, the noun-like from the verb-like component of experience (the flatness is a sort of trade-off, an unavoidable byproduct) leaving you with something you can recognize, be certain about. But it can't be that simple; separation is incomplete; the event is still involved in some way — not just in the sense it defines the captured noun, precedes and follows, but as if it were reduced in the stillness like noise in the seashell, a residual necessity that gives you a start when you concentrate on an old photograph, feel certainty washing over onto the event itself, sense yourself at the verge of belief in things having happened, having to have happened. Nothing else does this; if it did it would be still photography. Motion pictures escape your attention altogether by pacing it, concentration vanishing the way a lens disappears in liquid of the same refractive index. Likewise holographic records by allowing motion to continue (redirected, as it were, by ninety degrees) around the object in ordinary space. Fossils also require ordinary space; no matter how compressed (even preserved surfaces such as dinosaur trackways, etc.); their essential bulk enlists them immediately as full participants in current events; they are objects around which your point of view continues to circulate. They aren't motionless. You are never brought up short, forced toward the possibility of belief and radical relocation. The trilobite isn't convincing as an event — even a whole population of them, as sometimes happens, on a slab; that ground is like sculptural territory (whether or not it's fortuitous — an accidental fracture or the preparator's judgment where to plane it off). It can't support the imagining, the apprehension of ancient relationships.


A still photograph is fixed, perhaps, in the way you feel yourself to be: the stillness of the unlocateable self suspended (developed) within a process from which it remains distinct is like a photograph of someone whose history is more certainly

resident in that instant than in a movie or a taperecording or even a glimpsed moment of life.

An old photograph — maybe 1910 or thereabouts — shows a little girl; Omaha, Nebraska it is thought. She's about three years old, sitting in a swing and slightly blurred having swung toward the camera a little too far past focus. Behind her, overexposed and fading away to a white horizon, is a grassy expanse unrelieved except at left where it runs into a row of dark, two-story brick buildings that could be dormitories or tenements. You feel she has emerged from the buildings onto this playground that looks like the end of the world. She has come out to play but seems constrained and severe at the very center of the photograph caught within the terribly abrupt distinction between the dark buildings and the bleached white field of grass; it's as if she's had to make a concession, a compromise of some kind.

Imagine this photograph flickering into motion. A couple of slow frames and she completes her movement toward the camera then, speeding up to eighteen frames per second, swings into life, back and forth; you've lost concentration now (not with regard to her position relative to the camera or anything like that but just regarding the fact); it's been replaced; the girl in the swing has been exchanged for an analogue of events, of external life as generally experienced and your belief in her is drawn out into belief in something more general as well — a child like her, a moment like that. You may wonder about the reality of such moments so far in the past, what life was like, what became of the little girl perhaps but the certainty of her in that place is gone as she swings back and forth like a science demonstration exhausting some stored potential. What you want to believe is that moment near the peak of her swing, that moment right there, that little girl in the swing, the certainty and stillness, her eyes so deep and arbitrary in her nearly perfectly round face — the sort of blankness children tend to express toward cameras — absolutely receptive, understanding she has no choice. And that's it — the certainty is lost because so is the arbitrariness. Objects in still photographs are always arbitrary (not the photographer's intention but the photograph itself); you always know when you see a photograph that the camera might have been pointing anywhere at any time and still have made a picture with the same conviction. Insofar as the real subject of the photograph is not so much the object photographed as the observation of it — the fact of observation — content is arbitrary, at least in principle, like random sampling. Intention shouldn't strictly be necessary. It's possible to imagine, for example, a sort of natural photograph, a pinhole effect in a cavern, say, operating perhaps for centuries upon some flat surface composed of just about any mineral substance subject to fading, eventually fixing a hazy positive image like an

airbrushed painting of mountain range and desert, faint shadings left by ephemera such as forests. Like Niepce's all-day heliograph, it would count as a moment, a glance. The still camera is so passive — actually does so little, unlike movie cameras and most artists — that you feel having a photograph is very close to not having one or vice versa, that photographs (protophotographs) are out there all the time and it takes only the slightest gesture to receive one or not; they are thoughtless and automatic, arbitrary and inevitable as the too-closely examined notion of the self — fixed by definition.

Look at the white dress the little girl is wearing. Think of it. A clear, white cotton dress in 1910; what would it feel and smell like after hanging out on a line all day; what subtle information would it have absorbed that long ago, would it release if you could pick her up and hold her? It's unimaginable. But if you think about the photograph closely enough it seems difficult to understand, at a primitive level, why it's not possible. It's that certain. You want to join the fact of an old photograph, belong to it as to a place, as if some consolation were to be gained, as if you might comfort her the way anyone might comfort a child in such bleak circumstances; like a lost child pick her up in her white dress and console her for having to be there so arbitrarily, for having the same value as empty landscape. 

ALMA GUILLERMOPRIETO
DE SAMBA

BAIANAS ∞

Celina echó la ropa mojada al suelo. “¿Quieres hablar conmigo en este momento?” me preguntó ásperamente. Su irritación era consecuencia directa de la turbulencia del clima, que después de cinco días seguidos de lanzarle lluvias torrenciales a los empapados cariocas aún no dejaba que saliera el sol. Durante los aguaceros uno de los puentes que comunicaba a Mangueira con la Zona Sur se había derrumbado. No podía hablarse de tráfico, sino de un confuso enjambre del que trataban de escapar los autobuses escabullándose por las calles traseras y dejando atrás a la mitad de sus pasajeros; las plantas bajas de todos los edificios estaban inundadas y la ropa de Celina aún no se secaba.

Masculló algo entre dientes al comprobar que seguía húmeda la falda tendida por la mañana. Sólo le pertenecía uno de los tendederos de la red que cubría la Plaza Mangueira y necesitaba más espacio a pesar de que sus vecinas le habían prestado dos tendederos. La ropa sucia se había acumulado con las lluvias y las otras lavanderas impacientemente esperaban su turno para colgar la suya. Esta era sólo una de las quejas de Celina; además, le dolía la espalda, los 100 cruzados (\$1.50) que ganaba al día no le alcanzaban para nada y sus vecinas eran poco solidarias. “¡Oí, Doña Celina!” le gritó un tipo que pasaba por ahí. “¿Tudo bem?”

“Oí, querido”, contestó sin apenas mirarlo, mientras sacudía de golpe una toalla mojada para quitarle las arrugas. “Oí, Celina”, le llamó una robusta mujer de su misma

edad. “¿Vas a ir a que te tomen las medidas este fin de semana?” Sin voltear a verla, Celina respondió que no pensaba desfilarse, ante lo cual la vecina alzó las cejas y se acercó. Celina se echó para atrás para dar mayor sonoridad a su voz. “No está a discusión; no voy a desfilarse. Ya lo decidí a pesar de que en los veinte años que llevo de baiana nunca me he perdido un sólo desfile. No voy a bailar en el carnaval. ¿Ya te dijeron cuánto va a costar el traje de este año?” La mujer asintió. “¡Válgame!”, exclamó Celina. “Quizás tú puedas pagar 4 mil cruzados por un vestido de baiana; yo no. Soy pobre y sé que no soy la única. ¿Te acuerdas de lo que costó el del año pasado? Costaba menos de mil cruzados. Se podía pagar, aunque fuera un sacrificio hacerlo. Este año no le voy a quitar el pan de la boca a toda la familia con tal de salir en el desfile. Me parte el corazón pero no hay de otra: no me alcanza.”

Mientras decía esto iba desplazando su cuerpo hasta quedar justo frente a la ventana del cuarto y también a unos cuantos pasos de la terraza de Doña Neuma, su vecina. Doña Neuma todavía tenía influencia sobre los directores de la escuela de samba a pesar de que ya no era la líder del ala de las baianas. Celina podía apostar a que Neuma se encontraba durmiendo la siesta o tomando el aire en la terraza. “¡Veinte años!”, repitió Celina en voz muy alta para que la oyeran Doña Neuma y los que hacían sobremesa en el restaurante de al lado, que obviamente estaban prestando atención. “¿Qué la tradición no cuenta para nada? ¿Quiéren ver a todos los ricos desfilarse con las baianas? No serán los del cerro los que los acompañen. Ya sé que este fin de semana se tomarán las medidas para los trajes; pero si de algo puedes estar segura es de que a mí, allí, no me vas a encontrar.” Recogió la tinaja de ropa del suelo enfilándose hacia su casa y se detuvo para pedirle prestada una manguera comunal a un hombre que se estaba lavando el pelo. Se enjuagó los pies y escrupulosamente se puso las sandalias.

“Ahora sí, ya podemos hablar”, me dijo.

Debido al asesinato de Carlos Doria, el presidente de la escuela, Mangueira llevaba un retraso serio en cuanto a los preparativos para el carnaval. Sin embargo, para mediados de octubre el diseñador ya les había entregado los bocetos de sus vestuarios a los líderes de las alas. Cada ala tendría un traje diferente, complementario al carro alegórico, y cada carro alegórico representaría un capítulo de la historia que contaría la samba de la escuela. Algunos líderes ya habían calculado el costo de sus vestuarios y estaban a punto de hacer una muestra para presentarla ante la dirección. Los vestuarios de las alas más elegantes costarían alrededor de \$300, aunque el de la mayoría oscilaba alrededor de los \$150. Tradicionalmente, ni la batería ni los directores pagaban por sus trajes. La batería, conformada por los percussionistas, constituía una especie de aristocracia contradictoria; sin su labor nada podría existir y sin embargo

sus miembros eran los más pobres de la escuela. Mientras todos se divertían bailando ellos se amarraban los instrumentos de percusión al pecho y se abocaban a la tarea de hacerlos sonar sin interrupción, hasta sacarse ampollas en las manos tapizadas de callos.

A las baianas sólo se les cobraba un porcentaje del precio real de sus trajes. Celina no se equivocaba: el vestido del año anterior había costado cuatro veces menos. La inflación galopante que había duplicado los precios en Río no justificaba un aumento del cien por ciento en el precio real de los vestidos. En este contexto, la mayoría de los cupos de las 56 alas de la escuela sólo podrían llenarlos la gente que quería alardear de su participación en las alas más ostentosas: los blancos pudientes de la Zona Sur, los de los suburbios residenciales al Norte de la ciudad y algunos negros relativamente prósperos.

Todos sabían que las baianas eran distintas. Se esperaba que fueran pobres y que bajaran de los cerros; junto con los miembros de la batería, ellas le daban a la escuela su raíz: eran la encarnación misma de la tradición negra. Se les llamaba así porque en los inicios del carnaval estas mujeres provenían precisamente de Bahía. Los hombres se vestían como ellas, ya que los faldones y los holanes de los trajes les proporcionaban un escondite ideal para sus pistolas y cuchillos. En ese entonces las baianas cosían y adornaban sus vestidos a su antojo, y a veces también el de sus maridos. Fueron inspirándose cada vez más, hasta que llegaron a aparecer vestidas de princesas, cortesanas finiseculares, musas clásicas y sílfides europeas. Sólo las mujeres de mayor edad conservaron el privilegio de vestirse como auténticas baianas, y su ala era la única que retenía su propia *fantasía*, al margen de las fantasías del mundo de los blancos.

“Está bonito, ¿verdad?”, preguntó Celina, ceñida entre los aros de su crinolina y esquinada entre un armario, un banco, una pequeña mesa y una raquíca silla que junto con otra, sostenida por una caja y con una tabla encima, hacía también las veces de cama. Había sacado el vestido de un saco que colgaba de un clavo en la pared. “Lo único malo es que está tan grandote que no lo puedo usar en casa.”

Los amplios aros del fondo del vestido eran el soporte de una crinolina de metro y medio de tela alrededor del dobladillo, tan pesada que sólo podía cargarse con cintas muy gruesas colgando desde los hombros. Sobre esta estructura descansaba una falda rosa con siete hileras de holanes, un corpiño de mangas abultadas de encaje y un chal verde. El tocado para la cabeza era un rígido cono de cartón cubierto por brillantina plateada. El traje de baiana había ido cambiando con el tiempo a partir de los primeros carnavales de los cerros, pero a pesar de eso para 1987 la de Mangueira continuaba siendo la versión más auténtica, la ortodoxa. Mientras que algunas escuelas vestían a sus baianas de Estatuas de la Libertad o con trajes hechos con recortes de periódico, las

de Mangueira aparecían encantadoras como siempre, emperifolladas entre los encajes de sus vestidos verde y rosa.

Mientras guardaba su traje, Celina me explicó la cuestión. “El problema es que en lo que va del año no hemos tenido una sola entrada de dinero extra. El año pasado fue bueno porque hubo muchos eventos antes del carnaval, y nos contrataron para bailar en fiestas y espectáculos. Te ponías el vestido viejo, sacabas un dinerito y con eso pagabas por el vestido nuevo. Por estas mismas fechas teníamos, por lo menos, una presentación pública por semana. Hasta llegamos a ir a Bahía — ¡en avión!” Posó como si un fotógrafo capturara ese importantísimo acontecimiento: “CELINA ABORDA UN AVIÓN”. Soltó la pose. “Y ahora nada. Será que el asesinato ahuyenta a la gente.”

Desde que se inició la temporada del carnaval los directores de Mangueira hicieron hasta lo imposible por recuperarse del golpe que representó el asesinato de Carlos Doria. Con tal de evitar las luchas internas de poder tomaron la extraña medida de posponer las elecciones y nombrar como presidente interino a Elisio Doria, su hermano, lo cual agarró a todos desprevenidos: Carlos era sumamente impopular y Eliseo era aún menos raíz que su hermano.

A pesar de su escasa imaginación, su falta de seguidores, y su carrera por fuera de los cuadros de poder, en 1986 los directores de Mangueira habían elegido a Carlinhos Doria como presidente de la escuela. Los miembros más poderosos creían que no obstaculizaría las reformas que querían llevar a cabo: fortalecer los programas de asistencia social, aumentar el número de miembros procedentes del cerro y revitalizar el orgullo de los miembros de la escuela por su historia y tradiciones.

En su breve periodo como presidente, Carlinhos se mostró sorprendentemente eficaz e implementó muchísimos cambios: mantuvo las puertas de la escuela abiertas a los niños del barrio durante el día y promovió el deporte, convirtiendo a la escuela en el primer parque recreativo que disfrutaran los niños de Mangueira. Además, hizo los movimientos políticos necesarios para que el gobierno de la ciudad cediera el terreno baldío situado frente a la escuela, en el que se construiría un complejo deportivo y una guardería. Aprobó los proyectos del sector reformista de la junta directiva de revivir el boletín informativo de Mangueira y de proporcionar asistencia médica y legal a la comunidad. Pero su labor más importante fue lograr que la escuela “le diera la cara al cerro” — esto es, que fortaleciera sus nexos con los manguereinses, al invitar a los presidentes de las tres asociaciones vecinales de Mangueira a integrarse a la dirección de la escuela.

Las asociaciones vecinales eran la única forma de organización política conocida por los manguereinses, y la elección de su dirigente constituía el único acto democrático

en el que habían participado los favelados más jóvenes, dado que los menores de 45 años durante toda su mayoría de edad habían vivido bajo una de las dictaduras más largas de América del Sur. Los presidentes de las asociaciones tenían que vérselas con los narcotraficantes locales, con las autoridades municipales, con las comunidades de base de la facción liberal de la Iglesia, con los líderes de las otras 400 favelas de Río y con casi cualquier otra persona que tuviera alguna influencia sobre la política local, con excepción de los directores de la escuela de samba, que tenían fama de elitistas. El invitar a los presidentes de estas asociaciones a formar parte de la junta directiva también podría asegurar a Doria el apoyo de sus electores y el de sus aliados políticos.

Doria manifestó hacia la escuela un nivel de compromiso que le garantizó un genuino apoyo por parte de los directores, a pesar de que electoralmente no lo hubieran apoyado tanto. Pero su problema era que padecía ataques violentos de rabia, y en alguno de ellos había autorizado un golpe en contra de Dona Neuma. La destituyó como líder de las baianas, y a la mayoría de los directores que protestaron ante la intempestiva medida los despidió también.

Así, para planear el carnaval de 1987, los exiliados se vieron forzados a rentar un pequeño local en la misma calle de la cuadra. Contaban con la ayuda de los pocos directores que se mantuvieron leales al solitario Doria, que hacían de intermediarios para pedirle apoyo financiero, ya que era él quien controlaba los recursos suministrados a Mangueira por la cámara de turismo de Río de Janeiro, Riotur. A pesar de autorizar todos sus proyectos, Doria se negó a cualquier tipo de reconciliación entre los miembros de la junta. La arrolladora victoria de Mangueira en el carnaval de 1987 no sólo implicó ganarle a las otras escuelas de samba, sino también superar estas divisiones internas. A Doria le tomó meses admitir que, para que la escuela tuviese alguna oportunidad de ganar en el carnaval de 1988, era forzoso hacer las paces con los exiliados de la junta. Dos semanas después de tan anticipada reconciliación murió asesinado.

Y fue entonces que a los directores se les ocurrió que el indicado para sustituir a Dona era su hermano Elisio. Carlos había sido líder de un ala por varios años antes de ser presidente y Elisio, quien trabajaba como guardia de una prisión, heredó el cargo de su hermano cuando subió a la presidencia. Elisio llevaba un año como líder del ala al momento del asesinato de Doria. A pesar del temor y la confusión imperantes, la junta confió en que como presidente interino le quedaría claro lo que se esperaba de él: dirigir la escuela sin entrometerse en el diseño casi terminado del carnaval y continuar con los que comenzó su hermano Carlos, demostrando a sus asesinos anónimos que Mangueira ni con la muerte se dejaría intimidar. Una de sus primeras acciones fue

acercarse a Doña Neuma: su hermano había iniciado el pleito con la dirección de la escuela al poner en su lugar, como líder de las baianas, a una mujer blanca y adinerada de la Zona Sur. ¿No le gustaría ahora sumarse a los esfuerzos de reconciliación y darle asesoría a su sucesora? A Doña Neuma no le quedó otro remedio que tragarse la amargura y aceptar. -

Cuando esta extranjera informó a las baianas que sus trajes para el carnaval de 1988 serían realizados en el taller de una de las modistas más conocidas de la ciudad con las mejores telas disponibles en el mercado, su primera reacción fue acudir a Doña Neuma. Para la nueva líder poco importaba que en el pasado ellas mismas hubieran cosido sus vestidos y que parte del encanto tradicional del carnaval fuera la entrada de este dinerito extra. Los vestuarios de este año por fin estarían a la altura de Mangueira y las baianas no debían preocuparse si costaban un poco más de lo esperado: la Asociación de Escuelas de Samba había logrado extraer a Riotur un porcentaje mayor de la taquilla del sambódromo. El subsidio a los trajes de la baiana tradicional representaría más de dos terceras partes de su costo real. El traje sólo les costaría cuatro mil cruzados.

Doña Neuma tuvo que morderse la lengua, aumentando nuevas preocupaciones a su larga lista de achaques y dolores. En su casa todos estaban enfurecidos y preocupados. “A Mangueira no le hace falta la gente como tú”, me dijo Guezinha, su hija. “No necesitamos a las blancas de la Zona Sur. Si quieren unirse al desfile y pagar por su lujoso vestido, perfecto. Y si no quieren, hay miles de mujeres que pueden ocupar su lugar. A ustedes lo que les falta es garra; nosotras tenemos que volcar toda nuestra alma y nuestra garra para compensar sus faltas. ¡Lo que gana no es nuestro vestuario! Los carros alegóricos y los vestuarios de Beija-Flor y Salgueiro dejan a todo el mundo con la boca abierta. Pero en cuanto aparecemos nosotras la gente enloquece, porque sólo nosotras tenemos alma y raíz. Las baianas son el alma de Mangueira. La escuela no sería nada sin ellas. ¿Qué seríamos sin Yvette, sin Daisy, sin Celina?”

Al tiempo que los directores comenzaban a incomodarse por el caso de Celina y el resto de las baianas, se libraba otra lucha de poder entre los reformistas y el carnavalesco del desfile, Julio Mattos: el diseñador que montaría la samba de este año. Cuando el desfile aún era un festival callejero y no un espectáculo masivo, el carnavalesco —el encargado de crear la imagen de la escuela, coordinar los vestuarios y diseñar los carros alegóricos— era absolutamente innecesario. En aquellos tiempos, así fuera importante para la escuela desplegar el carro alegórico más grande del carnaval, lo que verdaderamente contaba era la energía de la comunidad y la dedicación con la que sus miembros realizaban su vestuario. Pero en la actualidad el carnaval ha perdido su

naturaleza callejera y hay una especie de aficionado previamente inexistente, esto es, los espectadores que sentados en las gradas de un Sambódromo ven a las escuelas desfilando por una avenida simbólica. Los carros alegóricos son más importantes que nunca, dadas las dimensiones wagnerianas del Sambódromo, y es especialmente por su tamaño que pueden llamar la atención. El carnavalesco se encarga de no descuidar a los 40 millones de televidentes que contemplan el desfile desde su casa, y que se dejan seducir por las pequeñas sorpresas y los detalles más insignificantes de los carros alegóricos. Las cámaras de televisión no sirven para captar los rostros de las multitudes, pero sí para captar los móviles objetos deslumbrantes. Hoy día la labor del carnavalesco es indispensable y consiste en hacer funcionar la imagen del carnaval percibida desde cualquier distancia: creando carros telegénicos que serán vistos de cerca y ordenando los vestuarios y accesorios que serán vistos de lejos.

Fue en los años cincuenta que se plantó la semilla que evolucionaría en el carnavalesco, cuando los sambistas del cerro de Salgueiro confiaron en novatos para el diseño de sus carros alegóricos por primera vez. Salgueiro siempre se había considerado como un cerro con raíz, y nadie dudaba que sus tres escuelas de samba eran de las mejores de Brasil. Sin embargo, ninguna había recibido el primer premio en un carnaval. En 1955 los directores de los recién unificados "Académicos de Salgueiro" decidieron buscar un líder que viniera de fuera y encontraron a Nelson de Andrade, un blanco que era dueño de un gran almacén de pescado cerca de los muelles. Tenía algo de dinero, era un apasionado de Salgueiro y sabía pensar en grande. Para el desfile de 1959 contrató a un museógrafo brasileño, para que con su esposa suiza diseñara los vestidos de la escuela. A pesar de que ese año Salgueiro tampoco ganó el primer lugar, de Andrade se dio cuenta de que uno de los miembros del jurado le había dado las calificaciones más altas a los trajes de su escuela. El juez, que como todos los miembros del jurado había sido designado por la alcaldía de la ciudad, era Fernando Pamplona, un blanco izquierdista de clase media que diseñaba las escenografías del teatro municipal y había decorado varias fiestas de disfraces. Al día siguiente de anunciarse el ganador, de Andrade se presentó en el teatro municipal y depositó abruptamente un paquete en manos de Pamplona: un lienzo con la bandera que usó la escuela en su desfile. A los pocos días volvió a pasar por el teatro, esta vez con un paquete de lustroso pescado fresco y camarones. Fue directo y algo torpe: ¿le gustaría diseñar el desfile de Salgueiro para el carnaval de 1960?

Más que en cualquier otra ocasión, en el carnaval de ese año quedaron al descubierto las paradojas de la relación entre el mundo blanco y el carnaval negro. Con su diseño, Pamplona le dio la espalda a los tradicionales temas sobre los héroes blancos

con una historia cuya trama era sobre el “Black Power”: era un himno al héroe Zumbi, quien perdiera la vida a finales del siglo diecisiete al defender el poblado de esclavos rebeldes de Palmares al noreste de Brasil. Receptivo a la queja de los sambistas sobre la forma en la que el carnaval bailado se estaba llenando de aparatosos carros alegóricos, Pamplona decidió prescindir de ellos casi por completo, basando su diseño en los tocados y los adornos corporales, desde siempre preferidos por la favela e infinitamente más baratos que los carros. Pamplona, uno de los mejores carnavalescos del momento, realizó su labor con extremo cuidado y seriedad, con propuestas exquisitas, originales, y económicas. Fue la primera vez que alguien trabajó tan meticulosamente con el propósito de reintegrar la cultura negra al carnaval. Sin embargo, no sabía nada sobre el cerro de Salgueiro y muy poco sobre el carnaval negro. Los miembros de la escuela se escandalizaron con su diseño: en su único día de gloria los negros de Salgueiro aparecerían vestidos de negros, y peor aún, de esclavos. Muchos amenazaron con desertar, pero de Andrade logró apaciguarlos y hacer que se quedaran a escenificar el espectáculo sobre el héroe Zumbi. Cuando se presentó la escuela en este revolucionario desfile, con tan bien concebidos vestuarios, todos reconocieron lo que quería decir: Pamplona había triunfado, no Salgueiro.

A pesar de que Salgueiro fracasó una vez más en su intento por conseguir el primer lugar, adquirió un reconocimiento inmediato. Históricamente, que un profesional se encargara del diseño de un carnaval significaba un cambio cualitativo radical, similar al que representó la creación de la primer escuela de samba en los años veinte. Hoy día, incluso las escuelas de segunda división contratan a profesionistas graduados en artes plásticas para que diseñen sus desfiles. Generalmente son blancos y son los únicos que reciben honorarios por su labor. Las escuelas los contratan y luego se los disputan como si fueran entrenadores de fútbol.

En el carnaval de 1960 brotaron otras contradicciones: sin la escenificación de la samba, el desfile callejero nunca hubiera atraído la atención de los televidentes y, por consiguiente, Brasil nunca se hubiera convertido en un foco de atracción para el turismo internacional. Si las escuelas no se hubieran corrompido y comercializado, las predicciones de los antiguos partidarios del carnaval negro se habrían convertido en realidad y la samba hoy día se encontraría sepultada en la fosa común del arte folklórico.

A pesar de ser blanco, Julinho Mattos era muy distinto a la mayoría de los carnavalescos. Provenía de un barrio popular a las faldas del cerro de Mangueira, y era autodidacto en cuanto a su formación como diseñador y realizador de carros alegóricos. Aprendió su oficio en una respetable escuela de segunda división. Nunca tuvo la

pretensión de ser un gran artista ni la ambición de imprimirle su estampa a toda la escuela, al estilo de Joaozinho Trinta de Beija Flor de Nilópolis, a la fecha la figura más extravagante del mundo del carnaval. Por el contrario, Julinho prefería hacer lo que sabía hacer mejor: diseñar un carnaval que se asemejara en la mayor medida posible al anterior, con pocos carros alegóricos, bastante espacio para que se desplazaran las alas y una trama apegada a la tradición, los héroes patrios y los momentos históricos de Brasil. En los once años que llevaba en la escuela la fórmula de Julinho nunca había fallado. Mangueira, la escuela considerada el portaestandarte de la tradición sambista, al igual que Julinho, tenía muy claro lo que quería: verde, rosa, muchos holanes, príncipes, princesas, y por supuesto, nada de senos al aire.

Pero los reformistas de 1988, bajo la guía de Marília Barboza, querían cambios significativos en la samba de ese año. “Cien años de libertad: ¿ilusión o realidad?” El guión había sido escrito por Julinho, quien raras veces escribía los guiones, y había sido aprobado por Carlos Doria antes de morir. Marília, quien había sido parcialmente responsable del éxito de la samba del año anterior sobre un gran poeta brasileño, ahora tenía varias objeciones: ¿por qué nunca se había retratado la situación actual de los negros en Brasil? Ella, al igual que otros reformistas, estaría dispuesta a aceptar que en la parte histórica del desfile no figuraran los esclavos si, a cambio, en la parte que representara la situación actual aparecían los negros favelados. ¿Por qué nunca se representaba a los barrenderos y las sirvientas, si eran ellos los que mantenían la economía de los cerros y aportaban mayores ingresos? ¿Acaso Mangueira se avergonzaba de ellos? Había que situarse en el contexto de lo que estaban haciendo las otras escuelas. El año de 1987 significó para Brasil el momento en que el primer presidente civil en veintiún años había provocado la peor caída de popularidad en las encuestas jamás vista en el país. José Sarney presidía el desplome de la economía brasileña, así como una farsa convención constitucional y una hiperinflación del 400%, la mayor en la historia de Brasil. Algunas escuelas preparaban guiones corrosivos con títulos como “Bye Bye, Brasil” y “Esto es una broma”. ¿Mangueira se atrevería a ignorar la realidad social? Si lo hacía, los críticos se la comerían viva. Nadie quería romper con la tradición, pero ¿qué había de malo en que se actualizara un poco la trama y se reflejara la situación del momento vistiendo a las baianas como lo que son, lavanderas, cargando magníficos cestos de ropa sucia en la cabeza? ¿Qué no sería ésa la baiana más genuina de todas?

Julinho se negó rotundamente, alegando que si su interés fuera plasmar la realidad social no sería carnavalesco. ¿A quién le interesaría ver barrenderos desfilar por las calles? Le parecía suficiente con aquéllos que ya iban detrás de cada escuela

recogiendo plumas, envolturas, latas y zapatos rotos para abrirle paso a la siguiente escuela en el desfile. ¡Exactamente!, arguyeron los reformistas: el público del carnaval generalmente acaba por aplaudirle a los barrenderos que aparecen cuando termina de desfilar cada escuela. Si Mangueira era la última escuela en desfilar, ¡justo cuando todos pensarán que todo había terminado, aparecería el último ala, vestida con trajes dorados de barrendero, seguida de los barrenderos de verdad! ¿Qué más podría decirse sobre la realidad y la ilusión? Era imposible hacer que Julinho viera el carnaval desde ese punto de vista.

Un debate como éste es precisamente el que debería moderar el presidente de una escuela de samba. Elisio Doria postergó su labor, dejando el camino abierto para que los reformistas convencieran a los directores, y esperando a ver si había algún cambio de opinión antes de tomar sus propias medidas. Mientras tanto, los líderes de las alas cuyos vestuarios estaban en veranos se desanimaron porque se estancó la realización del presupuesto y de la muestra de sus trajes. En teoría, para la segunda semana de noviembre cada ala tendría que haber sometido a autorización un traje de muestra. Una de las tres divisiones que tuvo que cambiar de diseño fue la de Guezinha, quien sabía que no tenía ninguna posibilidad de terminar su muestra para finales de mes, y por lo tanto no tendría tiempo para tener listos los 49 trajes que había que repartir antes del carnaval. Me enseñó un boceto del traje supuestamente realista. Si triunfaba el sector reformista de Mangueira, nosotras, las mujeres de su ala, desfilaríamos vestidas de sirvientas en versión para cabaret, en minifalda, con minidelantal y plumero de avestruz. La clásica falda drapeada blanca, corpiño de lentejuelas y tocado de plumas se convertiría en una reliquia del pasado. Me imaginé con el nuevo modelo puesto y a pesar de simpatizar con los argumentos de los reformistas, comencé a sentir deseos de que perdieran la batalla.

Doña Neuma perdió la suya. Una decisión inicial de reducir la contribución de las baianas a 2,000 cruzados por persona fue revocada casi inmediatamente. Las noticias de que podría desfilar, y luego de que no podría hacerlo, le llegaron a Celina rápidamente.

“Debí haberme casado con mi primer novio,” se quejó Celina. “Mi padre aún vivía cuando me dejó embarazada. Yo tenía diecisiete años y cuando mi padre se enteró lo primero que hizo fue tratar de hacer que se casara conmigo, como era la costumbre en esos tiempos. A mí me dio muchísima pena presentarme ante la corte cuando el hombre aquel me acusó de obligarlo a casarse conmigo. Me moría de vergüenza y me escapé. ¡Qué estupidez! Hoy día ese hombre y su mujer viven en esta misma favela, él tiene dinero y su mujer desfilará como reina con su vestido de 4,000 cruzados. ¡Y yo aquí como una imbécil!”

Eurides fue la única persona que conocí que no se quejaba de los trajes de las baianas. Acercándose el final de su embarazo, lo que más le preocupaba era si podría o no desfilarse sola en febrero. Todo dependía de la salud de su futuro bebé: por ningún motivo lo iba a dejar en casa pero no sabía si el bebé estaría lo suficientemente fuerte para aguantar todo el desfile. A punto de dar a luz, sus monólogos habían pasado de ser ocurrentes y acertados comentarios sobre las vidas de otros manguereinses, a ser reflexiones introspectivas sobre la criatura que nadaba en su vientre: ¿a quién se parecería? ¿Sería niña o niño? Ella lo amaría desde el primer instante, pero ¿qué hacer si el bebé no la quería a ella? ¿Y cómo se llevaría con su padre, Lilico? ¿Cómo lo iba a vestir? ¿Estaría buena su leche? ¿Qué hacer, desfilarse o no?

En cuanto a Celina y a las baianas... Eurides conocía a las baianas. Su madre lo había sido toda la vida, hasta el día que murió en un hospital con las entrañas devoradas por el cáncer. Las baianas eran tesonudas, capaces de encontrarle la salida a cualquier problema. Ahí estaba el ejemplo de su correosa, enojona, vanidosa y muy vital vecina, Doña Lina, quien se había muerto hacía unos días a sus noventa y tantos. Cuando se murió, Eurides se quedó contemplando el cadáver cada vez más frío de la viejita, pensando en lo mucho que le gustaría verse coqueta y arreglada hasta en la tumba. Decidió entonces estirarle las extremidades encogidas a la muertita antes de que se le quedaran tiesas, y después ponerle algodones entre los dedos de los pies para pintarle las uñas de rojo, una por una, como haciendo penitencia por todas las veces que la había hecho enojar por dejar pelones a los helechos de su insuperable colección, al pasearse frente a ella con sus minifaldas o al faltarle al respeto con sus comentarios sarcásticos. Pero tal vez, decía Eurides, tenía estos cuidados con la muerta porque comenzaba a extrañar el carácter y la fuerza de esa vieja que salía a bailar pasara lo que pasara, manguereense hasta la médula y baiana hasta la raíz. A Eurides no le parecía justo que una mujer de tantas agallas se fuera derrotada a la tumba, en fachas y con las uñas de los pies sin arreglar. No le hizo caso a los vecinos, que se mofaban y secreteaban entre sí. Sacó su estuche de pedicura y envió a Doña Neuma al otro mundo con las uñas de los pies pintadas de un precioso rojo escarlata.

Eurides se detuvo para tomar un respiro. ¿Y entonces qué hay con las baianas este año? “Yo no me preocuparía por ellas; cada año es lo mismo. ¡Ay, es que no tengo dinero. Ay, cómo me hacen pagar! Las hubieras visto el año pasado. ‘¡Ay Dios Santo, qué tristeza!’”, decían todas, se llevaban las manos a la cabeza y alzaban los ojos al cielo. Ya verás, en cuanto pase la Navidad empezarán una a una ‘¡Ya tengo 200 cruzados más!’ ‘¡Ahorré cuatrocientos!’ Es lo mismo que cuando bailan, ¿no viste a Doña Nininha el otro día? ¿Rengueando y con las piernas todas vendadas? Un minuto no son

más que quejas y achaques, que les duele la espalda, que no se pueden mover del dolor, pero en cuanto escuchan la música en la quadra se ponen a saltar como si nada. Espérate y verás. Doña Celina le anda diciendo a todo el mundo que no va a desfilar, ¿verdad? No le creas una sola palabra. Espérate a que pase diciembre y a que el carnaval esté a la vuelta de la esquina. Va a ahorrar sus centavitos y a juntar un peso con otro. No la va a parar nadie ¡te lo garantizo!”

Unos días más tarde los directores corrieron la voz de que las medidas para los trajes se tomarían en la quadra el domingo en la mañana. Se requería que las baianas pagaran un anticipo de 500 cruzados. Anunciaron que también se exhibiría la muestra del vestuario.


La fantasía color algodón de azúcar de la modista, adornada barrocamemente y dispuesta sobre un pedazo de organza plateada, se dejaba mecer por la brisa en una esquina de la pista de baile. Las mujeres permanecieron sin tocarla por mucho tiempo. Con toda la calma del mundo se sentaron en las endeble sillas de la quadra, con las piernas abiertas para balancearse y sus musculosos brazos descansando cómodamente sobre sus vientres, sin hacerle caso alguno al diseñador y a su asistente. Estudiaban el vestido e iban rodeándolo con la conversación, divagando de una cosa a otra, de las nietas a los salarios (mayores para las asistentes de los salones de belleza que para las sirvientas, nunca alcanza para nada) y de ahí a los capítulos más recientes de su telenovela favorita. Las que iban llegando jalaban una silla mientras que las otras iban cambiando de lugar. Se acomodaron de tal forma que llegaron a haber varias docenas de mujeres sentadas en grupos cada vez más cerca del vestido. Una mujer se levantó y con los dedos examinó la textura de un holán. Regresó a su asiento con la cabeza erguida y lacónicamente dijo “Es bueno”.

“¡Podrían quedarse ahí sentadas chismoseando todo el día sin darse cuenta!” El ronco murmullo de Doña Neuma anunció su llegada, que se encontró con el alegre barullo de las baianas. “¡Neuma! ¡Pero qué añoranza!” “¡Neuma, pero qué guapa estás!” Sonriente, tambaleándose un poco sobre sus pies hinchados, Neuma intercambió besos y abrazos con las baianas, desplomándose después sobre la silla del escritorio frente al diseñador y la pista de baile. Sacó y limpió sus anteojos, abrió su cuaderno de registros, alisó una página en blanco, examinó su pluma limpiándole la punta con su blusa y colocándola después a la orilla de su cuaderno. “Para usted, Doña Neuma”, se acercó una de las baianas, dándole una muñequita vestida de verde y rosa. Neuma la puso cuidadosamente sobre el escritorio y volvió a limpiar sus lentes.

“¿Listas? Carajo, fórmense en una fila, ¿qué esperan, que las mida a todas al mismo tiempo?” Las mujeres obedecieron con agilidad de colegialas. Neuma tomó el

nombre, dirección y teléfono de la primera y luego la mandó a la otra esquina del salón en donde la mediría el diseñador, rodeando con su cinta métrica sus hombros y su estómago, y luego extendiendo la cinta desde la cintura hasta los pies. “¡Pecho, ciento catorce!” gritó a su asistente. “¡Cintura! ¡Ciento veintidós! ¡Largo, ciento veinticinco!”

“¡La siguiente!” le dijo Doña Neuma a una mujer regordeta y arrugada. Por un segundo, la mujer adoptó un pose coqueta, sonriendo y con la mano en la cadera. “¿Le doy mi nombre artístico o mi nombre de pila, Neuma?” “¡Por la gran puta!”, suspiró Neuma, pidiéndole paciencia al cielo. Sonrió de oreja a oreja. “¡La siguiente!”

Poco después encontré a Celina echada en el piso de su casucha, con uno de sus nietos arrullado entre los brazos y un gato enroscado a sus pies. Al verme alzó la cabeza sin hacer ningún esfuerzo por levantarse. “Te extrañé anoche en la samba”, le dije. “¿Andabas de parranda en otro lado?” “No”, me contestó, acercándose una cerveza imaginaria a la boca. “Me quedé aquí tomando”. Después, ignorándome, me dio la espalda y siguió durmiendo. 

Traducción de Mónica de la Torre

COLABORADORES

Gerald Burns ganó un premio del National Poetry Series por su libro *Shorter Poems* (Dalkey Archive Press, 1993). Sus otros libros de poesía son *Longer Poems*, *Probability & Fuzzy Dice* y *New Poems*; también ha publicado dos libros de ensayos: *A Thing About Language* y *Toward a Phenomenology of Written Art*.

Our Son the Arson, de **Thad Ziolkowski**, se publicó en 1996 (What Books). Trabaja actualmente en una memoria sobre el acuaplanero, *Memories of a Surfer Boyhood*. Vive en Manhattan y es profesor de letras en el Pratt Institute

The two poems by **Severo Sarduy** in this issue are from *Erotismos* and *A Veiled Fleeting Witness*.

Gabriel Bernal Granados has published essays, translations and poems in the literary supplements *Crónica*, *Reforma* and *La Jornada*, as well as in the magazines *Biblioteca de México*, *Luna Córnea* and *La gaceta del Fondo de Cultura Económica*. In 1995 he was awarded a U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture grant to translate a volume of selected essays by Guy Davenport entitled *El museo en Sí*, forthcoming from Aldus Press.

Suzanne Jill Levine es la autora de *La escriba subversiva* (FCE, 1998). Actualmente está escribiendo una biografía de Manuel Puig.

Alma Guillermoprieto grew up in Mexico City and New York. She is the author of *The Heart That Bleeds* and *Samba*. Currently a resident of Mexico City, she has lived in many places across Latin America, and written about them for various publications in the United States and England.

"Hortensia" de **Suzanne Ruta** es parte de su colección de cuentos, *Stalin in the Bronx* (Grove Press). Ruta también ha escrito una novela sobre Nueva York en los cincuenta; actualmente escribe otra sobre Chiapas, donde vivió muchos años.

Amy Carroll creció en Texas; como niña viajaba mucho por México con su familia. Su poesía se ha publicado en las revistas *Chain*, *Bombay Gin*, *The Seneca Review*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Faultline*, y *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*.

Clayton Eshleman ha publicado más de 20 libros de poesía, el más reciente se titula *From Scratch* (Black Sparrow Press, 1998). Es el editor de la revista semanal *Sulfur* y el traductor de Vallejo, Cesaire y Holland, entre otros.

Peter Balestrieri vive en Palo Alto, California. Su poesía se ha publicado en las revistas *RealPoetik*, *POTEPOETZINE*, y *The Experioddicist*.

Heather Ramsdell es co-directora de la revista electrónica *The Transcendental Friend*. Su libro, *Lost Wax*, estuvo entre los ganadores del National Poetry Series en 1997, y la prensa de la universidad de Illinois lo publicó en la primavera de 1998.

Guillermo Osorno was born in Mexico City and has lived there for most of his life. After graduating from the Colegio de México, he studied at Cambridge University for two years, then obtained a degree in journalism from Columbia University in New York City. He currently works for the Mexico City newspaper *Reforma*.

Maria Negroni's first novel *El sueño de Úrsula* won a prize in the Editorial Planeta competition, and was published by Planeta in March 1998. She is the author of several volumes of poetry, including *Islandia*, and lives in Buenos Aires.

Mario Bellatín (Mexico City, 1960) first gained recognition in his own country, Peru, with *Las mujeres de sal* (1986). But it was *Salón de belleza* (1994), with its autistic, eerie treatment of an overexploited subject, that caused him to be seen as one of the founders of a new, anti-baroque literature that owes more to Eielson than to Vargas Llosa. The book was adapted as a play in Lima. Bellatín presently lives in México; his latest novel, *Poeta ciego*, has just been published by Tusquets.

Lorna Scott Fox (Istanbul, 1954) is a journalist, art and literature critic, and translator, now living in Spain after ten years in México.

Poeta y traductora **Jen Hofer** es originaria de San Francisco, California. Actualmente trabaja en dos libros de poesía, la traducción de una novela de Beatriz Escalante y una antología de la poesía de vanguardia escrita por mexicanas.

Andrew Schelling vive en Boulder, Colorado; enseña poesía, sánscrito y la escritura del desierto en el Naropa Institute. Fue uno de los fundadores del Kavyayantra Press; entre sus libros se encuentran *OLD GROWTH: Selected Poems & Notebooks 1986-1994* y *Dropping the Bow: Poems from Ancient India*.

Verónica Volkow (México City, 1955) is a poet, art critic, and translator. She is the author of the chronicle *Diario de Sudáfrica*. Her books of poems are *La Sibila de Cumas*, *Literal de tinto*, *El inicio*, *Los caminos*, and, most recently, *Arcanos*. Among others, she has translated John Ashbery, Elizabeth Bishop, and Michael Hamburger.

Cecilia Vicuña is a Chilean poet and artist whose work was included in the most recent Biennial at the Whitney Museum in New York. Her latest book, *Quipoem*, has just been published by Wesleyan University Press.

Rolando Sánchez Mejías was born in Holguín, Cuba, in 1959. He has published three books: *Escrituras* (Letras Cubanas, 1994), *Derivas I* (Letras Cubanas, 1994), *Mapa imaginario: 26 nuevos poetas cubanos* (Francia-ICL, 1995). He has lived in Havana since 1964.

Luis Felipe Fabre has published in various literary journals in Mexico. He is on the editorial board of the magazine *Marsias*.

Graciela Iturbide is one of Mexico's premiere photographers. Her books include *Sueños de papel*, *Juchitán de las mujeres* and *En el nombre del padre*. In 1996 she published *Images of the Spirit* (Aperture) a retrospective of her work over the last twenty years. A companion exhibition opened at the Philadelphia Museum of Art is currently traveling throughout the United States.

Originario de Omaha, Nebraska, **Michael Rips** es un coleccionista apasionado del arte de los Bamana, un pueblo de Malí.

Mónica de la Torre (México City, 1969) is a Mexican poet and translator who lives in New York. Her first poetry collection, *Trece*, was published in 1997 by the Ditoria Press in México City.

Un poema de **Linda Norton**, "Landscaping for Privacy," con música de Eve Beglarian, se puede oír en *Emergency Music*, un nuevo CD de CRI, Inc. Es una de los editores del *Five Fingers Review* y sus poemas se han publicado en *Northwest Review*, *North American Review*, *Exquisite Corpse* y otras revistas.

David Searcy vive en Dallas. Partes de su largo ensayo *A Trip to the Sun* se han publicado en *Southwest Review*, *Boxcar*, *Temblor* and *Raddle Moon*. Escribió *Godzilla*, una novela, y actualmente escribe otra, titulada provisionalmente *Last Things*.

FONDO EDITORIAL TIERRA ADENTRO

A través de la edición de libros antológicos, individuales y colectivos de jóvenes autores del interior del país, Tierra Adentro da a conocer nuevas voces y estimula la creación acercándola al público lector de México.

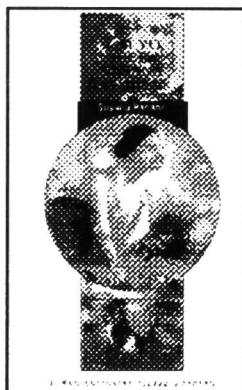
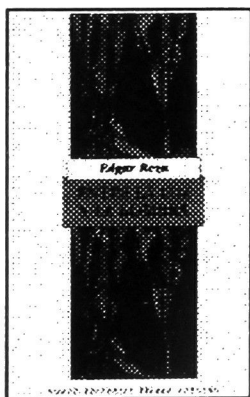
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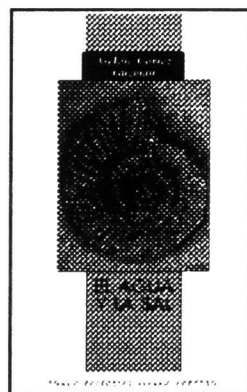
157. Susana Pagano
*Y si yo fuera Susana
San Juan... ***



POESÍA

158. Antonio Marts
*Antes de estar **

160. Avelino Gómez
Guzmán
*El agua y la sal **



CUENTO

159. Edgar Reza
*Entre la luz y la sombra **

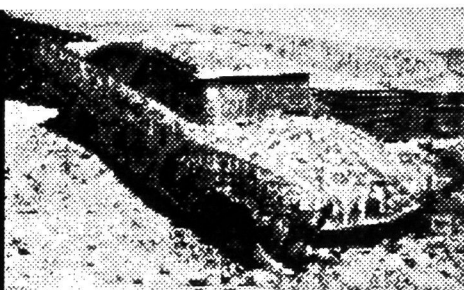
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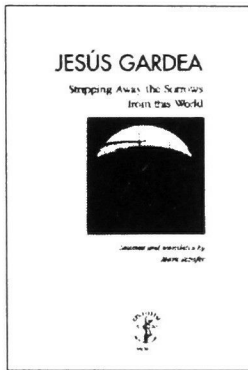
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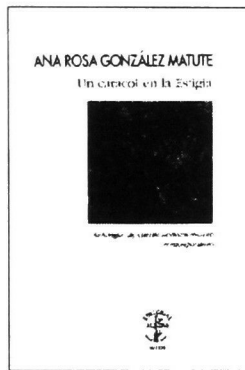
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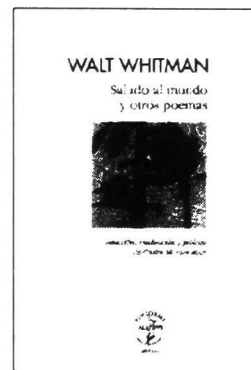
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*Stripping Away
the Sorrows from This
World*
Translation,
Introduction and Notes
by Mark Schaffer



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The first issue of *MANDORLA: New Writing From the Americas* was published in May 1991 as an attempt to begin a meaningful dialogue that is bilingual—multilingual, in fact—but not in the conventional sense of the word. In English and Spanish *translated* material appears only in its surrogate tongue; previously *unpublished work* is featured only in its original language; and in the case of poetry in French or Portuguese, the work appears in its original, with translations into both Spanish and English. Other voices reading—or re-reading—each other's writing so as to authorize a body coherent with the intellectual and creative vitality of the hemisphere.

MANDORLA is edited and printed in Mexico City: the site where the central cultural debate between north and south may well occur. In fact, the name of the magazine—*mandorla*, describing that space created by two intersecting circles—alludes to the notion of exchange and the imaginative dialogue that is an obligation now among the Americas.

The terrain to be forged is like the American continent itself: virtually boundless.

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