

2011

Intersecting Axes of Language and Experience: An Exploration and Translation of the Work of Poet Coral Bracho

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Recommended Citation

Carver, Maeve, "Intersecting Axes of Language and Experience: An Exploration and Translation of the Work of Poet Coral Bracho" (2011). *Senior Projects Spring 2011*. Paper 16.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2011/16

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I. Introducing the Poet

I came to Coral Bracho's work somewhat serendipitously. For several months before beginning this project, I kept a running list of poets in the back of my mind, knowing I would soon be choosing one to translate. As the time to decide drew near, however, I realized that even with this list, I had no criteria by which to choose. I did some research on the Tupamaro group in Uruguay, a guerilla group in the 60's that used creative propaganda (amongst other methods) to cause political upheaval. I was interested in this creative approach to politics and browsed through the poems of Mario Benedetti, one of the founders of this group. There was no spark. I browsed through collections of poems and poets that I brought back from my time abroad in Spain, and still, I felt I could just as easily pick a name from a hat. The search turned into an existential crisis—why translate? Why do I *want* to translate these poets? Finally, out of the blue, a close friend handed me Forrest Gander's translations of Coral Bracho. It was not just her poetry that drew me in, it was the moment of reading it that cemented my decision. Reading her poetry right then held as much meaning as the poetry itself.

Unsurprisingly, as I began to translate Bracho, my relationship with her poetry grew in all directions. Slowly I began to feel a phantom history emerging between her work and me—it felt as though my relationship to these poems had existed all along and that I was only now, at this juncture, discovering it. I hope that by bringing her work back into circulation through this project, somebody else might one day stumble upon it in the Bard library, with a good friend maybe, perhaps right after a great conversation or good

meal, and will have a similar, moving moment. If Bracho has taught me anything, it is to appreciate the significance of every relationship, even the most mundane.

Coral Bracho was born in 1951 in Mexico City. She received a degree in Hispanic literature and studied in both England and France. She has published six collections of poetry: *Peces de piel fugaz* (Fish of Fleeting Skin; 1977), *El ser que va a morir* (The Being that is Going to Die; 1981), *Tierra de entraña ardiente* (Earth of Burning Entrails; 1992), *La voluntad de ámbar* (The Will of Amber; 1998), *Ese espacio, ese jardín* (That Space, That Garden; 2003), and *Cuarto de hotel* (Hotel Room; 2007)¹, and has received several prestigious literary awards. Though she is a contemporary poet, biographical content on her life is scarce and largely unavailable. Her poetry, though highly subjective, even intimate in its sensuality, is not autobiographical. In fact, it often seems to resist this kind of categorization. When the reader is left without a personal history of the poet, language is allowed to speak for itself.

Bracho's poetry is a tactile and organic exploration of relationality—the interaction of the word with its poetic environment (other words, the phrase, the line, the verse) as both sign and signifier. “Relationality” as I employ the term here, refers to the multifaceted identity of the word, allowing understanding to derive from its physical appearance, its sound, its syllables, its position on the page, as well as the images and the sensations it provokes. To understand Bracho's poetry, one must first understand how it grows, that is, the poetic traditions that influenced her and how she transforms that influence into a poetics of her own.

¹ All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

The mapping of Coral Bracho's poetry begins with just that—the act of tracing a system of growth and influence. The beauty of her poetry is that it not only rejects a facile historicity, it also demands a fresh look at the relationship of influence. For this reason, the evolution of the poetic, political and social climate that influenced her is best understood using the philosophical concept or “image of thought” that has also been used to describe a quality in Bracho's poetry itself—the rhizome. In the two-volume work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980) by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, the two contemporary philosophers recontextualize the image of a rhizome, a root system that grows out of itself, sending roots out from nodes rather than the stem of a plant. As roots grow downward from the node into the earth, they simultaneously grow upward, producing new plants at the surface of the soil. This creates a complex system of continual growth that Deleuze and Guatarri use to illustrate a philosophical theory of thought and experience. As opposed to the aborescent model adopted from the image of the binary and dualistic growth of tree roots, there is no beginning or end to the rhizome. Its system of growth reveals the multiplicity of relationships and eliminates any concept of a single origin.

To discuss the environment out of which Bracho's poetry was born, then, requires both a basic understanding of the historical influences of her work and the transfigurations of those influences into a poetics of her own. We can think of Bracho's poetry as a node in a larger rhizomatic web of influence. It must both exert a certain force and influence *and* grow out of one. Although the plurality and relationality of Bracho's poetry resists historicity, I feel a brief chronological description of poetic, political and social movements in Latin America is the easiest way to understand the interplay of the

unique, individual character of Bracho's poetry and its universality. Though this method might not do justice to the plea of the poems themselves, it works to illustrate the individual and collective identities that shaped it.

II. A History of the *vanguardia*

The arts in Latin America often exist in close relationship to the political and social events of the region and the time. Although European and North American poetics have greatly influenced poetry in Latin America, the European system of classification into specific literary and artistic movements has never fully reproduced itself in that region. While European surrealism, for example, is influential in modern Latin American poetry, for the most part it did not exist as a movement of its own. It was instead experienced and then integrated into Latin American—specifically Mexican—literature primarily by one man, Octavio Paz. As is the case with most foreign artistic influences in Latin America, Paz remodeled surrealism to fit the political and social climate of his country and the region in the mid-twentieth century. This integration and folding of outside influence into something inherently “Latin American” was less a premeditated effort to create a unique and independent culture than it was an unavoidable response to the political and social circumstances of the moment. It was through this process of integration that an identity of Latin America, the more personal identity of the individual, and finally the identity of the poem itself began to emerge. The history of Latin American poetry can be seen as a literary mapping of these different struggles to find and understand both a collective and an individual identity. The poetic expression of the early

twentieth century avant-garde is the result of this evolution—it is the expression of a deeply personal relationship to language that is simultaneously, through a very self-reflective meditation on grammar, syntax and the relationality of language, open to the subjectivity of the reader.

According to K. David Jackson, Vanguardism in Latin America develops primarily between 1920 and 1935, right between the First World War (1914-1919) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) (6). The bleak realities of war and human cruelty confronted language with a very physical violence. Poets quickly realized the repercussions of language's inability to physically fight back. Several Latin American writers in Europe returned to Latin America, while others already there began to sympathize with Spain as the country they had previously renounced. Tapscott writes, "The war seemed to demand a realistic, even despairing self-awareness of verbal art in a world in which poetry usually (at least by Anglo-American standards) makes nothing happen ... The results in Vanguardist poems were often currents of cynicism, nihilism, rebellious absurdism" (17).

Renato Poggioli in *The Theory of avant-garde* (1968) further analyzes these currents in vanguard writing. He discusses the European avant-garde using a "system of analogies" structuring the concepts of activism, antagonism and nihilism, agonism and futurism, antitraditionalism and modernism, obscurity and unpopularity, dehumanization and iconoclasm, voluntarism and cerebralism, abstract and pure art (226). Poggioli goes on to say these terms of the avant-garde can be "summed up in the central formula of alienation ... social and economic, cultural and stylistic, historical and ethical" (226). There is (to the Western hemisphere, at least) a universal thread of common experience

that makes it difficult to discuss the avant-garde in Latin America as an isolated rupture from previous poetic structures. The structure as well as some of the content of avant-garde poetry is heavily affected by this political, social and economic alienation. Though the experience is somewhat universal, there are inevitable differences in expression of this common thread for each continent, country, region and individual poet. Jackson elaborates on the specifically Latin American strain of *vanguardismo* [Vanguardism].

The interweaving dynamics of the multifaceted *vanguardista* poetry exist along three axes of opposition. Jackson presents the three main axes and uses them as markers to discuss further tensions within Latin American *vanguardista* poetry. The first axis is the opposition between European and American elements. Jackson says about European influences on Latin American literature: “the models of Europe were ingested, digested, and used as energy source for an ultimately different expression” (6). Latin America’s identity formed as the result of both the rejection of their European colonizers and the reintegration of those foreign influences into their own political and social environment. The struggle to define oneself against a historical narrative of colonization calls us back to the period of Romantic poetry in Latin America, when the region began its struggle for autonomy.

The Wars of Independence in Spanish America (1808-1829) ignited an era of “Romantic self-assertion,” a term used by Stephen Tapscott to describe the Bolivarian stirrings of revolution, autonomy and freedom (5). As Napoleon conquered Spain in 1808, its grip on the American colonies loosened and the political leaders Simón Bolívar of Venezuela and José de San Martín of Argentina began the eventually successful struggle towards colonial liberation. The effect on literature throughout the 19th century

was similarly centered on the empowerment of the self. This fight for independence inspired the Romantic exploration of the history of the physical world around them, creating a uniquely “Latin American” quality in the otherwise European Romantic model of literature. The defining characteristics of this literature—the prominence of the lyrical “I,” the use of the natural world as a reflection of the human condition, sentimentality and the use of the materiality of the world around them—are still present in the works of second- and third- generation *vanguardista* poets like Coral Bracho. The way these characteristics are expressed has, however, changed.

Modernism enacted the first big shift away from the declarative sentimentality of the Romantics. *Modernismo* in Latin America lasted from the early 1880s to the late 1920s, but reached its highest expression with Rubén Darío (1867-1916), a Nicaraguan poet who studied French literature on his travels through Latin America. (In this essay, the Spanish term “modernismo” will be used to emphasize the difference of the Latin American literary movement from the later European and North American Modernist movements.) Using the French model, Darío incorporated the influence of Symbolism and Parnassianism into the Spanish language in order to provide greater flexibility and musicality to the verse form. Furthermore, the *modernista* use of the symbol complicates the function of language within the poem. As Tapscott says, “The question of the status of language as sign or semantic revelation in tension against its function as symbol or as agent of concealment is, of course, at the heart of the *modernistas*’ Symbolist program” (10). *Modernismo* lifted language from its function as placeholder, and revealed the tension between its ability to signify and the nature of *what* it signifies. It evoked the

same emotionality of the Romantic poem but through a linguistic musicality and attention to the symbol as bearer of emotion, rather than through the direct statement of it.

Along this same axis of geographical identity is the tension between continental and national or regional values. With Brach's poetry in mind, we consider an influential example of the foregrounding of regional values in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). The Revolution erupted in response to the conservatism of the dictator Porfirio Díaz. His determination to industrialize and modernize Mexico at the expense of the working and rural peasant classes ignited a rebellion that later turned into what resembled a civil war. The rebellious nature of the Revolution evoked a similar response in the literature of that moment. In the northern part of the continent, the Mexican Revolution marks the end of *modernismo* and the initiation of *vanguardista* movements.

On the other end of the continent, *posmodernismo* (a short-lived and loosely defined reaction to the aestheticising extremes of *modernismo*) enabled female writers in Latin America to enter the stage. When Rubén Darío referred to modernism as a "brotherhood" rather than a movement, he gendered the moment of that poetics and created a largely exclusionary language of which women could not partake (Tapscott 14). The male-dominated culture of Latin America was inevitably present in literature and created boundaries for women writers. While *posmodernismo* gave a larger voice to women writers, it still retained many of those boundaries. Female writers often leaned towards a poetics of the "female experience," writing about female concerns, and specifically, female eroticism. But as Tapscott states, "the designation 'woman poet' came to seem less restrictive and more potentially universal, either because the writer learned to celebrate the experience of Hispanic women or because she gradually

expanded the inclusive implications of the poem and of the act of writing, often shifting toward ‘Vanguardist’ concepts of form” (15). Some of these writers include Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), Uruguayan poets Juana de Ibarbourou (1892-1979) and Sara de Ibañez (1909-1971), and Argentinean poet Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938). The exclusion that these female poets initially identified with is also what they eventually reacted against. The open form that they experimented with is still present in *vanguardia* poetry. These female poets gave voice to future poets like Coral Bracho.

The second axis Jackson offers is the opposition of new and old. The “new” is often associated with modernity, the cosmopolitan and intellectual currents of poetry, while the “old” is associated with “criollo,” “realistic” or “mundane” themes and language (9). Jackson gives another lens through which to see this same polarity—the opposition of rupture and continuity. The *Contemporáneos*, a group formed in Mexico in the 1920s with a literary journal by the same name, embody the cosmopolitan “newness” of the *vanguardia*.

Ironically, given their important position within the Mexican *vanguardia*, the *Contemporáneos*’ main responsibility was to the European intellectual tradition—they often included philosophical concepts in their poetry and had an aversion to social protest poetry. They were conscious of the development of a global economy and viewed it as a positive turn towards cultural universalism. Their aversion to the inclusion of social and political concerns in their writing and the attention to the aesthetics of language instead was in direct contrast to their contemporaries the *Estridentistas*. *Estridentismo* was a multidisciplinary avant-garde movement in Mexico (1921~1927) that concerned itself with action in the present moment. They share some characteristics with Dada, Cubism,

Futurism and Ultraism, and have been referred to as a movement of Mexican socialist Futurism (Tapscott 15). In contrast to the *Contemporáneos*, the *Estridentistas* maintained that change requires the constant aggravation of both language *and* society. Their responsibility remained not only to the exploration and innovation of language, but to political upheaval as well. The tension between these two groups reflects another opposition along Jackson's axis of new and old: aestheticism and social commitment.

The last axis Jackson offers is the opposition between theory and praxis, which he sets up as a space for the various experimental practices of the *vanguardia*. It is along this axis that the innovation of form and structure is revealed in contrast to previous poetics, thereby emphasizing the unique qualities of the *vanguardia*. Here we can begin to cement the complex tensions between the continuing threads of poetic expression dating back to the Romantics and the transfiguration of those threads into a poetics that fits the unique historical and social moment of the *vanguardia*, and eventually leading to the self-reflective and intimate poetry of Coral Bracho.

The *Contemporáneos* marked the beginning of a self-referential acknowledgement of the poetic axis of rupture and continuity. One major contribution they made to the literary culture of Latin America was the establishment of a continuing tradition of literary journals (García 192). Out of this tradition blossomed several currents of *vanguardia* poetry. The next generation of poets in Mexico is in fact centered on the important journal *Taller* (1938-1941). The journal was created and backed by Rafael Solana and after the fourth issue, edited by Octavio Paz. Several of the important writers united by *Taller* include Octavio Paz (1914-1998), Efraín Huerta (1914-1982), Alberto Quintero Alvarez (1914-1944), Neftalí Beltrán (1916-1996) and Rafael Solana (1915-

1992). The aesthetic tenets of these writers are summarized in an essay by Adriana García to be:

(1) poetry preoccupied with language, which meant searching for the word that could not be limited to any method of expression; (2) poetry seen as a vital activity, with love and poetry appearing as the two faces of the same reality, driving the individual both to recover the Edenic self prior to the Fall and to reach the Other side; (3) poetry with the dual task of changing humanity and society and achieving this through the simple act of creation, the poem considered to be by its very nature a revolutionary act—for most of these poets love, poetry, and revolution were synonymous—; and (4) the affinity with the Spanish mystics, the surrealists, D.H. Lawrence, and some German and English romantics, as well as other contemporary poets writing in Spanish whose ideas coincided with theirs. (193)

Like the Contemporáneos, the *Taller* writers were interested in the aesthetics of the poem—the language remained very important. They were also, however, very conscious of the poets role as an agent of change—yet this would not be classified as social protest poetry. The revolutionary drive of the poem comes from the actual process of writing it. As García summarizes above, the poem is by nature revolutionary: all one has to do is create it. The acknowledgement of and active focus on the process of writing is an important characteristic of *vanguardista* poetry, and more specifically, the works of Coral Bracho.

Octavio Paz became the most notable member of the Taller. His contribution to Latin American literature and his country's cultural development is extensive. The

influence of Paz on younger generations of poets, including Bracho's own, is undeniable. The stylistic variations in his poetry are indicative of his own personal ability to recognize and integrate new poetics into his writing—his awareness of the movements of the literary world was keen, and his inclination towards experimentation allowed him to interact with that world in a largely influential way. As mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, Paz is recognized as an important link to the surrealist influence in Latin American literature. As he has expressed, however, surrealism did not shape his writing, but instead coincided with his own beliefs and literary aspirations (García 195). His writing was largely preoccupied with an exploration of language and poetic communication:

Almost 90 percent of his poetic production reflects an obsessive need to recreate the cosmos; to find the Word, the expression that will capture the ever-changing yet permanent face of nature; to understand why the essence of the universe can only be achieved by translating the intangible that lies within the context of opposites: life/death, silence/noise. (García 199)

Paz was not only known for his poetry, however. He is the author of essays, prose pieces, and literary critiques; he participated in literary journals and he occupied different diplomatic positions in government. The successors of *Taller* were unified by the collection of work *La espiga amotinada* (Mexico, 1960) including writers Juan Bañuelos, Jamie Labastida, Jaime Augusto Shelley, Oscar Olivia and Eraclio Zepeda.

Many of these writers are included in the collection *Poesía en movimiento*, a compilation of poetry in Mexico between 1915 and 1966. In the prologue, Paz refers to the younger poets in the collection as “ventanas abiertas,” open windows (3). They are

bridges between the poetic lessons of Paz’s generation and the generation to come. Poets born mid-century are, as Paz contends, at an interesting point in history—they are removed from the wars that marked previous generations and were still very young during the student movement of ’68 in Mexico. This inevitably affected their experience of a history they grew up with and yet never lived. José F. Conde Ortega elaborates “Esto hizo de ellos una generación con otra idea de la historia. La casi certeza de poder ver otro milenio era algo más que una esperanza: la posibilidad de tener el tiempo en las manos” [This created a generation with a different idea of history. The near certainty of being able to see another millennium offered something more than just hope: the possibility to hold time in their hands] (77). This generation was the gateway between a people and a literature marked by war and the hope granted by the future.

III. The Gateway Generation

Coral Bracho and her contemporaries were this gateway. The poet and critic Evodio Escalante categorizes Bracho, David Huerta (1949), Gerardo Deniz (1934), and Alberto Blanco (1951) as the *vanguardia blanca* [white vanguard]. He unifies the *vanguardia blanca* by their introverted and hermetic use of language, emphasizing that this act of withdrawal *is* political. History is understood differently by the new generation, and this new approach to political writing is emblematic of that change. Paz called the younger generation of poets a window to new possibilities, and he was right: “Julia Kristeva se refería, en alguna parte, a tres épocas en la historia: la del símbolo, que imperó en el pasado; la del signo, que domina el presente; y la del significante, que

corresponde al porvenir” [Julia Kristeva refers, somewhere, to three periods in history: that of the symbol, which reigned in the past; that of the sign, which dominates the present; and that of the signifier, which corresponds to the future] (Escalante 41).

Escalante goes on to say that Bracho took the future of the signifier and made it a reality (41). Her poetry steps through the gateway of her generation towards a visceral exploration of language. Language is a system that she expertly maneuvers to expose new paths to meaning. Bracho does not stand in the face of poetic expression or communication—she actively embodies it. Her poetic language is at once sign and signifier.

As previously mentioned, one of Paz’s most admirable qualities was his ability to work with younger generations of poets and to learn from them as they learned from him. It is therefore unsurprising that Paz was able to so elegantly describe a vision that I feel accurately introduces the work of Coral Bracho:

We no longer see the macrocosm and microcosm as the two halves of a sphere, but we conceive the entire universe as a plurality of systems in movement; those systems reflect upon each other and, upon the reflection, they combine in the same manner as the rhymes in a poem. In this way they transform themselves into other systems, each time more transparent and abstract, systems of systems, true geometrical formations of symbols, until, imperceptible to our organs of observation, they end up evaporating—again in the same manner as rhymes that end in silence and of writing that resolves into a void (*Renga* 18)

Paz captures the rhizomatic quality of Bracho's work—the systems upon systems, the geometrical formations, the organic quality of the eventual and inevitable evaporation of such plurality. Her poetic world takes this vision and pulls it back to the earth. The materiality of her poetry is not a link to a transcendental realm of the cosmos or pure communication—it is grounded in earthly experience. Thus the physicality of her poetry is as important as what it conveys.

Bracho breaks the poem down into the smallest entities possible, creating meaning through the sensuality of a world before language. The poem becomes a molecular correspondence of function—meaning comes from the interaction of the word with other words, the phrase, sentence and verse, as if the words were molecules themselves. For Bracho, meaning is not something to be achieved. It is inherent in the action of the poem, existing in a primordial state, metaphorically communicating through touch. Words touch words touch sentences touch paper, and the sight of the word “river” no longer triggers solely an image in the brain, but instead brushes its meaning along fingers, thighs, the tongue. Words for her are not only read, they are chewed between the teeth and swallowed into the stomach, where they continue to swirl. Evodio Escalante says that the poem for Bracho is a “Trizadura de la letra, decantación silábica que se vuelve autónoma, autosuficiente” [A shattering of the letter, a syllabic pouring out that becomes autonomous, self-sufficient] (41). Bracho allows language to speak for itself, giving the word autonomy and enabling language to reconstruct meaning in a realm outside of logos. It is this construction that harnesses the sensuality and intimacy of her work, as opposed to the sentimental declarations of the Romantics or the emotionally laden symbols of the *modernistas*. The poetic voice, though rarely ever made known

through the lyric “I,” is as personal and present. Its presence is, however, expressed through its absence.

IV. Paz’s Symbol, Bracho’s Signifier

A quick comparison of Bracho’s poem “Sedimiento de lluvia tibia y resplandeciente” [Sediment of Warm and Resplendent Rain] with Paz’s “Piedra de sol” [Sun Stone] exemplifies the influence, if not conscious response of Bracho’s work to that of her most important predecessors. A dominant motif of “Piedra de sol” is its tension. In the first stanza alone, one sees tension between the fluidity of the movement of a willow tree and its rigid, crystal body, the rooted and yet dancing limbs of another tree, the watery poplar, and a river that flows circularly, always arriving where it begins:

un sauce de cristal, un chopo de agua,
 un alto surtidor que el viento arquea,
 un árbol bien plantado mas danzante,
 un caminar de río que se curva,
 avanza, retrocede, da un rodeo
 y llega siempre

[a crystal willow, a poplar of water, / a tall fountain the wind arches over, / a tree deep-rooted yet dancing still, / a course of a river that turns, moves on, / doubles back, and comes full circle, / forever arriving]² The interactions of the organic imagery Paz uses, often in tension with one another, accentuate a certain characteristic of time and

² Translations of “Piedra de sol” are by Eliot Weinberger

movement. He ends this long, almost epic poem where he begins, with the same stanza above, indicating circularity to the poem and to time itself. The tensions of the crystal willow and dancing, rooted tree, as well as the last image of the flowing, circular river, symbolize an experience of time that deviates from the conventional linear conception. The tension of the crystal willow dissolves into the ease of the “poplar of water.” This repetitive motion of causality is then the flowing river: it begins where it ends, only to come full circle again, cyclically moving in periods of tension and release. Paz uses the imagery of this poem to symbolize or point to this specific experience of time and history.

Bracho seems to parallel a similar sentiment in her own “Sedimento de lluvia.” The experience of time is, however, active and occurring in the present, unlike Paz’s symbolic indication of it. Bracho does this through her language’s self-referential expression of intimacy. Bracho’s speaker states: “Quiero salir de ti / como nadar al fondo de tus ojos y toparme en la sombra / con tu lento vacío de hierba ardiente, / con tu calma de pájaro extingüible, / débil como la carne” [I want to come out of you / like swimming to the depths of your eyes and in the shadows blindly bumping / into your slow emptiness of burning grass, / into your calm of an extinguishable bird, / weak like flesh.] The softness of her language achieved through the repetition of the final “eh” sound in the words “ardiente,” “extingüible,” and “carne” reflects the intimacy of the content. The repetition of the “o” throughout the phrase draws out this sound as if mournfully wailing. These sounds create emotionality within the poem that mimics the content.

The intimacy and sensuality of the relationship she expresses act as a bridge to those places, both physical and emotional, that otherwise cannot be reached. Rather than

wanting to enter this other body as in a conventional love poem, the poetic voice wants to come out of it--it is not union that the poetic voice seeks. The lyrical speaker already lives inside with a relationship to the body that is so natural that it is comparable to the body's own breath—and yet there is a sense of loss. The poetic voice remains inside the body, bumping into the other's essence, his “hierba ardiente,” unable to leave. It appears that leaving the body is not an act of escape. Leaving the body is an act of recognition of the “hierba ardiente,” which is not only this person's essence, but a sign of his or her mortality. The “calma de tu pájaro extingüible,” the calm of his extinguishable bird, further alludes to this impermanence. Leaving the body means accepting the mortality of this other person, but it seems the only way to leave is to paradoxically penetrate deeper into the eyes, the emptiness of the burning grass, and the calm of the extinguishable bird. The only way out is in—the intimate exploration.

A similar stanza in “Piedra de sol” further exemplifies the different expressions of the two works: “voy por tu cuerpo como por un bosque,/...voy por tus pensamientos afilados/ y a la salida de tu blanca frente/ mi sombra despeñada se destroza,/ recojo mis fragmentos uno a uno/ y prosigo sin cuerpo, busco a tientas/ corredores sin fin de la memoria/ puertas abiertas a un salón vacío” [I travel your body, like a forest, / ... I travel along the edge of your thoughts, / and my shadow falls from your white forehead, / my shadow shatters, and I gather the pieces / and go with no body, groping my way, / the endless corridors of memory, the doors / that open into an empty room] Paz traverses the physical and intangible body, but always externally—he travels the edge of this person's thoughts. He creates a symbolic connection between the image of the natural physical world and the human body, a clear indication of his Romantic influences, to emphasize

the limits of communication. When the poetic voice tries to penetrate the body, its shadow falls from the white forehead and shatters. There is no breaking through the physical barrier. The union Paz's speaker seeks is denied by the fact of his mortality and relationship to the physical world.

The line, "Hablas de corredores, de intentar el regreso, y no encuentras el número del cuarto" [You speak of corridors, of trying to return, and you can't find the room number] that appears later in "Sedimento de lluvia," seems like a direct response to Paz's lines, "corredores sin fin de la memoria/ puertas abiertas a un salón vacío" [the endless corridors of memory, the doors / that open into an empty room]. Both poems grapple with mortality and the physical body, however as shown in these lines, Bracho's physical body is not Paz's physical barrier. The line from "Sedimento de lluvia" seems to reference the empty room Paz's own poetic voice encounters. It is as if Bracho's poetic voice is speaking to its predecessors telling them to stop searching. The search for union and pure, unfettered communication can never cease—Paz's poetic voice will never find the room number. As Bracho shows through her poetry, the physical body is not a blockade between the human and communication—it is inherent in communication. There *is* no communication without it. We can see how her poetic voice does not wish to leave the body because it is already part of it. The essence she describes, the calm of the extinguishable bird, is weak like the body's flesh—the two are one and the same.

As Bracho shows using the last line of the poem, "A veces, el fuego nace de alguna palabra lenta y ensordecida; entonces, cierro los ojos al recuerdo," [Sometimes, the fire is born from some slow and deafened word; then, I close my eyes to memory] the poetic voice closes his or her eyes to the memory, allowing the deafened word of the past

to be heard again. While Paz draws parallels between the past and the present, ending his poem the same way he began it and thereby pointing to the experience of cyclical time, Bracho actively experiences time through the poem. The past becomes present as memory overtakes her. Paz points to the bridge of communication, while Bracho quite possibly crosses it. She takes the rich imagery, musicality, intimacy, and free verse of her predecessors and transfigures it into her own poetics of active experience and process. Her use of language reflects this process, exposing its function as signifier and thereby creating the sensual relationality of the poem.

V. Coral Bracho's Intimate Exploration

Bracho begins the collection *Peces de piel fugaz* [Fish of Fleeting Skin] with what appears to be an uncomfortably long fragment in the poem “De sus ojos ornados de arenas vítreas” [From their Eyes Adorned with Glassy Sand]. I cite here first eleven lines of the poem:

Desde la exhalación de estos peces de mármol,
 desde la suavidad sedosa
 de sus cantos,
 de sus ojos ornados
 de arenas vítreas,
 la quietud de los templos y los jardines

[Out of the exhalation of these marble fish, / out of the silky softness / of their songs / of their ornate eyes / of vitreous sands, / the stillness of temples and gardens]. This use of

extended fragments is common within her work and is often used to defer logical comprehension, enabling the sensuality of the language to emerge. There *is* a possible resolution (line 11), however as previously mentioned, meaning is consistently deferred through the repetitive use of prepositional phrases. In fact, the first word of the poem is “desde” meaning either “from,” “since,” or “out of.” The “desde” can either modify the rest of the line to demarcate a point in time, turning the exhalation of marble fish into an event, or it can be used to describe something coming out of the exhalation. The second line begins the same way. The use of “de” or “of” at the beginning of the third, fourth and fifth lines expands the image of the exhalation and silky softness by creating points of origin. The reader is now working with the exhalation and silky softness of the abstract image of a song and the material image of eyes and sand. What these lines are meant to communicate, however, remains unclear. It is not until the sixth line that the possibility of a resolution to this fragment arises. The line “la quietud de los templos y los jardines” [the stillness of temples and gardens] wants to resolve the fragment; it wants to create the logical connection “B comes from A”—out of the exhalation comes the stillness of temples and gardens. There is no verb, however, and without a verb the stanza remains fragmented.

As the reader drags his or her feet quite possibly begrudgingly onward, he or she will eventually find, after yet another prepositional phrase (marked by parenthesis), a short stanza with not just one, but two verbs. Though it is tempting to allow the fragment of the first verse to resolve in the third—out of the A of B comes C—the terrain of the poem continues the resistance. The parentheses that divide the two stanzas and the indentation of the third do not welcome smooth resolution, even if resolution appears to

exist grammatically. The structure of the poem resists the linear progression of the sentence as much as the repetitive prepositional phrase. The parentheses distract the reader from their goal of comprehension (especially because they shelter yet another prepositional phrase), while the indentation forces the eye to flicker to the side, away from the visual axis of the left margin. The movement away from the margin not only annotates pace in terms of breath, but also sets the literal pace of the eye. The printed words are not where they would be if the poem were following the vertical axis of the margin. The necessary movement of the eye reveals the linearity of the initial, presumed course, and then deviates from it. The structure of the poem therefore parallels the deferral enacted by the prepositional phrase. This heightens the discomfort that the reader feels as he or she hunts for grammatical resolution, or logical comprehension, and draws him or her back to that sixth line,

If the three verses are read as a complete, grammatical sentence, the sixth line “la quietud de los templos y los jardines” [the stillness of temples and gardens] is necessarily anaphoric. The missing link is not a verb, but a preposition. The importance of this lies in the weight of a sentence. A preposition usually indicates the temporal, spatial or logical relationship of its object to the rest of the sentence. When Bracho removes or defers the verb, meaning is no longer dependent on the action because the subject is no longer described or defined by what he or she *does*. Meaning instead surfaces from what prepositions themselves denote: the *relationship* of the object to the rest of the sentence. An example of this is seen in line 17, “Ojos de piedras finas” [Eyes of precious stones] where the prepositional phrase lacks a verb and referent. The word “piedra” or stone modifies the word “ojos,” eyes. Though both eye and stone are material objects, the stone

functions as an abstract qualifier of the eye (think “stony”) rather than as an image of its own. The materiality of the poem often evokes this intermediary quality of her language.

In “De sus ojos ornados de arenas vítreas,” the continuous use of prepositional phrases enables the reader to search for meaning outside of the grammatical construction of a sentence, and in doing so emphasizes not only the relationship of the object to the sentence, but of the words to each other. The “eyes of precious stones” stand alone without a verb or obvious referent. Fragmented, meaning can only emerge if the reader allows the preposition to redistribute the weight of the words it links. In doing so, the parts of language that are generally considered supplementary (such as prepositions of adjectives) acquire a new function—they reveal the relationality of the poem, and the reader is able to feel the phrase, rather than to logically comprehend it.

This once again brings us back to that sixth line. Bracho gives us a choice as readers to complete the sentence, thereby allowing “la quietud de los templos y los jardines” [the stillness of temples and gardens] to be an anaphoric expression. The “silky softness” in line two then modifies the stillness of the temples and gardens, yielding the following reading “Out of the exhalation of these marble fish (1)/ out of the silky softness (2)/ of the stillness of temples and gardens (6)/ they have opened their riverbeds (8)”. Although this is grammatically sound, the reader will find that content holds no more logical meaning than when fragmented. As a whole sentence, the exhalation of the fish seems like it will produce something slightly more material than a memory—and yet, the opening of a riverbed in line 8 is just as intangible. The terrain of the poem, the fragments, the prepositional phrases, and the often ambiguous subject of the phrase, act as invitations to the reader to take the possible anaphora of this line as one of many

different paths to meaning. There is more than one way to read this phrase, and Bracho encourages the reader to find all possibilities.

In following stanzas, Bracho replaces grammatical completion with sensation that she provokes through materiality. This *materiality* of the noun, by which I mean the naming of concrete objects in the poem, gives the reader something to hold onto as he or she continues to feel the ground beneath him or her slipping. The lines “De la espuma que arrojan, del aroma que vierten / (En los atrios: las velas, los amarantos.) / sobre el ara levísima de las siembras” [From the froth they cast, from the aroma they spill forth / (In the atriums: candles, amaranth.) / over the weightless altar of the seedlings] show how a missing verb can be replaced with the materiality of a candle or flower. While the fragment makes it difficult to syntactically understand these lines, there is another type of understanding that seeps through the images put forth.

The use of prepositions puts stress on the spatiality of the images. Though the image of the froth cast by fish and their aromas is hard to grasp, the syntactic accompaniment of the prepositions connotes some type of structure because of their conventional role as markers of space. The reader is aware that the nouns interact with each other and their environment; however, the fragment prevents the reader from logically concluding *how*. The reader is once again floating in space along with the images of the poem, unsure of what the prepositions map out. The interjection of parenthesis after the first line provides a visual haven from this uncomfortably ungrounded fragment. The word “atrium” furthers this sensation of relief by literally creating the image of a small room. Atrium is also a biological term for the cavities of the heart, another small compartment that connotes the pumping of life, movement, and the

comfort of familiarity that, metaphorically, pumps back into the space of the fragment as the line that was interrupted continues. The parenthetical atrium, though an entirely separate image from that of fish, grounds the reader momentarily and fills this borderless, expansive space of the fragment with the sensuality of the warmth of candlelight and the smell and color of amaranth.

The omission of the occasional verb and referent demands a reader who is willing to leave his or her rational understanding of language and its grammatical structures at the door. The constant deferment of any smoothed-out resolution to the fragment strays from a rational understanding that grammar inevitably generates. The reader, however, is left with a residual sense of *something*. What or where that something comes from internally can perhaps never be fully articulated, but the closest one can get is “feeling.” Through this deviation from grammatical structure, Bracho provokes sensation.

Alliteration is another way Bracho achieves her sinuous language. A beautiful example of assonance and consonance appears in “Percepción temporal” [Temporal Perception] in the line, “giran intentan sueltan y salpican huyen la succión liminal” [they spin try to leave and they splash flee the liminal suction keen rhythm return dazzled, panting, reserved]. The example of consonance with a repetition of the “c” in “salpican” and “succión” is separated by the word “huyen” which is chewed on the sides of the tongue. The movement of the tongue during the change from assonance to consonance to the chewing of the “y” gives the line speed and rhythm and energizes the mouth. The first lines of “En verdad te digo que has de resucitar un día de entre los muertos” [Verily, I Say Unto You, You Must Resurrect a Day from the Dead] are “En torno al laberinto un azufroso coro de ventanas,/ bajo la sombra el viento” [Around the labyrinth a sulfurous

chorus of windows, / below the shadow, the wind]. The alliteration of the “o” creates a cave of the mouth, giving these lines an eerie sound that mimics the eeriness of the imagery. This attention to alliteration is yet another indication of Bracho’s dedication to the molecule of language. The syllable is as important as the word itself.

The erudite vocabulary of much of Bracho’s poetry further exemplifies the self-referential quality of her work. The academic and scientific vocabulary that Bracho uses abundantly throughout *Peces* feels as alienating as the syntax. The use of the word “batracio” [batrachian] in place of “rana” [frog] in the poem “Deja que esparzan su humedad de batracios” [*Let them Spread their Batrachian Humidity*] does not limit the readers experience with the poem, however. The meaning of the word “batracio,” a scientific term to characterize an order of tailless amphibians, does not necessarily add to its significance. Just as the elimination of referents and verbs from the sentence encourages the reader to find other paths of understanding, Bracho’s scientific and hermetic vocabulary resists the syllogistic approach to meaning. It is unlikely that readers will be familiar with every word Bracho uses, but her point is not to send them to the dictionary. Instead these words support the molecular approach to language that is so important to Bracho’s work. They further this analogy by triggering thoughts of a scientific, microscopic look into language, subtly acknowledging its existence as a system and tool. Coral Bracho uses this system to refer to itself, and as a result exposes a form of alienation that is not just political, social, and economic, but literary and linguistic. The use of a quintessentially scholarly language to evoke sensation rather than rational meaning is an ironic rejection of the logocentrism of academic discourse.

Coral Bracho is a node in a constantly growing web. Her poetry embodies the rupture and continuity of an evolution of poetics, reflecting on the influences that she has transfigured through her own unique and self-reflective expression. Despite the rare use of the first person, Bracho's presence in her poetry is undeniable. The sensuality of language and the in-the-moment experience of time allow for vulnerability within her poetry that is beautiful both in its humanity and in the erudite way it is expressed.

VI. Translation: A New Ecosystem

Translating Coral Bracho's work has been a wonderful exploration of language, thought, feeling, knowledge and experience. Through this exploration I forged a connection to her poetry that, in some ways, made translating it more difficult. I often felt unjust in my translations, and still wonder if a faithful translation of this kind of poetry is the best route. Then again, throughout this project I have had to ask myself if there is or can ever be a *best* route.

The tension I was accustomed to with translation (my interpretation versus the author's intention) was complicated by the polysemy and contingency of the semantic field in her work. The nuances, syntax, alliteration and rhythm demand as much attention as the meaning itself, and I often felt stuck trying to translate phrases like "Y era como tener los dos un tramo de ese mismo silencio" from "Sedimento de lluvia tibia y resplandeciente." I was pulled between a desire to alleviate the foreignness of the Spanish syntax and the fear of disrupting the process of the poetry. As Friedrich Schliermacher theorizes, bringing the reader to the text or bringing the text to the reader is always an

obstacle in translation (9). Because conjugations in Spanish are tailored to the subject, for example, it is often possible to defer their mention until after the verb. If one were to literally translate the grammatical structure into English it would be awkward or occasionally incomprehensible. An example is seen in the phrase “el lenguaje de sal que despiden al alaba los oleajes” [the language of salt that the waves bid farewell upon daybreak] from the poem “Sedimento de lluvia tibia y resplandeciente” [Sediment of Warm and Resplendent Rain]. As a translator, one has to ask herself how much she wants to retain of the foreignness of the language (thereby also referencing the limits of translation), and how much of the meaning she would like to convey in spite of the structural differences. In Bracho’s poetry, the relationship between content and form is essential to grasping any kind of meaning. Because the position, look, sound and feel of each word are all components of the poems meaning, changing any one of those characteristics sets off a figurative chain reaction, affecting all relationships within the poem. It felt wrong then, to suddenly disrupt this relationship by making a sentence sound more “English,” as if it meant modifying the active history making of the poem. I felt and still feel like a character in *Back to the Future*, overly conscious of the slightest alterations made by my presence.

Bracho’s poetry ignited the fear that I would irrevocably change the future of her poem—not just the English-speaking reader’s relationship to it or its influences on future poetics, but the function of the words themselves. Through translation, the identity of the word is unavoidably changed, and its relationships to other words and phrases are therefore also different. The fact that “río” will never be “river” was made abundantly clear when I tried to recreate the multifaceted relationality of the poem. The feel, look,

length, and sound of the word “río” cannot be replicated through “river,” and so the translation loses something inherent to the structure of the word itself. It is true that its meaning is carried over, that one can communicate the image of a body of water with both words, but this conveyance of meaning is only a fragment of the ability and identity of the word. To understand “río” one must read “río” in its context, to see how its sound interacts with the sound of other words, how its length compares to lengths of other words, how its syllables feed into other syllables. Muriel Rukseyer in an essay titled “The Music of Translation” makes note of this relationship when she says, “But something of the work entire, the word, each word, in itself whatever that is, and with it suggestion, with it silence, with it potential because it is the thing at its potential” (190). The potential of a word is defined by its precise placement and the consequent interactions of that word within that placement. It exists as it does because of where it is, and in this sense is not only a piece of the work entire, but contains that entirety in itself. The responsibility one has to the word can become quite overwhelming, then. I spent a lot of time deliberating which English word would best correspond to the Spanish, but in the end I inevitably had to make concessions. Sometimes this meant choosing a word with a slightly different meaning to retain a specific sound, or losing the alliteration to retain a certain image, or replacing an odd word in Spanish with a more common word in English for either of those two reasons. Even maintaining the speed of a line was often difficult because of the bulkiness of the additional articles in English. I couldn’t do justice to every facet of the Spanish word, but I did my best to respect those relationships when piecing together these translations.

Some specific examples of challenges I faced begin, again, with the word itself. The two words “cauda” and “cerco” that find their way into several of Bracho’s poems are very difficult to translate into English. The definition for cauda in the Real Academia dictionary is “Falda o cola de la capa magna o consistorial.” The word “caudal” in English means “of or like a tail”. The specificity given in Spanish of *cauda* being the tail of the magna layer created the image of the comet tail, which is the translation I used despite its clunky and less academic feel. The word “cerco” has several possible definitions: halo, circular movement, circle and just about any form of fence or enclosure. It was tricky attempting to keep a uniform translation for this word—it was often necessary to adapt the meaning to the context, and occasionally, it was even difficult to do that. I translated the word “cerco” as it appears in the poem “Sedimiento,” for example, as “fence,” whereas in the poem “Deja que esparzan” I translated it as “enclosure.” Bracho often uses the words “cauda” and “cerco” together, making it somewhat more difficult to decipher contextual meaning. I chose to use two different words for “cauda” because of the new context the English created. The word “fence” interacted in an easier way within the context of one poem while “enclosure” did in the context of another. While Bracho’s choice to put these two ambiguous words together more than once would normally persuade me to keep the translations of “cerco” the same, I felt it was more important in these two instances to listen to the demand of the physical environment (meaning the sound and look of surrounding words) of each poem.

Occasionally I came across words that were difficult to translate because of cultural differences. More specifically, the two examples that follow reveal architectural differences. The terms “portal” and “patio hondo” convey common parts of many Latin

American houses that do not translate into North American culture. A “portal” in Latin America is often a tall iron door opening onto an entryway that separates the house from the street. While gateways and fences *are* common in the United States, these words do not carry the same connotation as the tall safeguard of the Spanish “portal.” The term “patio hondo” refers to an outdoor space often towards the back of the house that is still contained by the house. This space often holds a small garden and perhaps table and chairs. The closest translation I could come up with was the North American “courtyard,” which conveys the privacy of the space but not necessarily the image of the Latin American patio. A courtyard could be a large cement enclosure for example, or in my personal experience a small inaccessible outdoor space between tenement buildings in the city. It carries connotations of a small outdoor space, but might not convey the aspect of the quaint and private garden that “patio” brings to mind.

Bracho’s hermetic and erudite vocabulary, as I discussed above, is an important characteristic of her poetry. The biological references are important to maintain because of their function as markers of an intellectual discourse, logos and rational approaches to meaning. There are inevitably times however, when the corresponding English word will be more common than the Spanish word and vice versa. As translator, I had to make choices that respected this balance. My decision to translate “tierra de mar” as “pelagic earth” for example was partially a move to uphold this balance. It was also a way to recreate the image of an earth of sea, as opposed to earth from the sea.

One last tricky and ubiquitous word in the Spanish language is “de.” The preposition, as most, can be translated in several ways. Determining which “de” to use in translating into English was, again, made in respect to the specific context of each “de”.

In phrases like “el perfume de las espigas,” it was a challenge to decide whether to keep the Spanish construction, which is more poetic in English (the perfume of the stamen) or to make it more colloquial (the stamen’s perfume). The phrase “De sus labios de hielo” [From their icy lips] shows the ambiguity of the preposition more clearly. Despite how short and simple this phrase might appear there are actually many ways to translate it. Are the lips icy, or are they literally made of ice? Are they icy lips, ice lips, or lips of ice? Each option means something slightly different. These choices were everywhere throughout the collection, and each one demands special attention.

The ambiguity of the subject was, as mentioned earlier, another problematic aspect of translation. While the deference of the verb or referent in Spanish can be used as a coherent grammatical device to suspend meaning, the English language does not have the same capability. As a result there were times when I was unsure of whether the possessive pronoun “su” for example translated to “your” or “its.” In the poem “Percepción temporal” the pronoun “ella” was introduced for the first time in the collection. Because the word “it” is used less frequently in Spanish than in English and is most often determined by the conjugation of the verb or use of “lo,” I was tempted to translate “ella” as “she” or “her.” The word “ella” *can* however be used as a pronoun referring to an object, not person, making its translation “it,” which in the end felt more in character with the intimacy of Bracho’s work. Allowing “ella” to mean “she” would introduce an ambiguous third person that removes the reader from the intimacy of the interaction with this other character. Bracho generally refers to other characters as “tú” meaning the relationship is direct, present and in that moment. This allows the interaction

to be reflective but still current, as opposed to third-person references, which necessitate distance from the interaction.

My method of translation has been to zoom into the word and then from there to move out to the phrase, the line, and the verse, observing the interactions between each along the way. I tried to retain the grammatical structure of the Spanish when possible, leaving certain trails of translation to linger. I see these marks of translation as my payments of respect to the original poem. As I mentioned earlier, the kind of dissection I enacted on the poem in order to translate it felt violent. I carried with me thoughts of the original “río” and all of its pieces of identity that I was leaving behind. This meditation on the limits of my own translation in turn greatly affected the path I took in translating. Though it felt unjust in some ways to entirely change the ecosystem of the original poem, in the process I realized the translation *is* the creation of a new ecosystem. The life I was terrified of disturbing and essentially killing within the original poem is born from the process of the poem itself—the molecular word interacting with other words produces new meaning through sensation (the sound of word combinations, the appearance of them, the feel and taste). Process, though perhaps not the same one, is reborn through the act of translating. As I have said, I had to dig into the poem, actively choose which words interacted best with others, and really focus on the relationality of the poem as a whole. I suppose this is another reason why one will come across evidence of translation in my work—to really mimic the life or process of the original, the new life (the process of the translation) must be present in the work itself. In order for my translation to be self-referential, it has to recognize itself as translation. I’m not sure if I could say form is an extension of content within the new work if the work did not admit to having a borrowed

form. I suppose that itself is another choice I made along the way—to focus primarily on the form and function of the language. That being said, one of my main concerns for my translations is that they do not capture the sensual essence of the original poetry. If the essence is laden in the form or perhaps the flesh of that form or, more plausibly, the interaction of both, I am left assuming that the essence of the translated poem is then the process of translation itself. I am not sure if this process recreates the sensuality that is so important to Bracho's poetry.

If I were to continue with this project, I think instead of translating another collection, I would go back and translate each poem again from scratch, but starting from the outside in. Instead of focusing on each word and moving out, I would begin with the poem as a whole. I would focus less on accurately representing the Spanish word, and more on recreating the sensuality of the English poem. This might mean integrating more of my own subjective understanding, thereby making it a more creative translation, but I think both methods are equally legitimate.

Peces de piel fugaz\Fish of Fleeting Skin

(1977)

From their Eyes Adorned with Glassy Sand

Out of the exhalation of these marble fish,
out of the silky softness
of their songs
of their ornate eyes
of vitreous sands,
the stillness of temples and gardens

(in their acanthus shadows, in the stones
they touch and soften)

they have opened their riverbeds
they have dredged their channels
beneath the warm leaves of the almond trees.

They speak of the touch
of their glimmers
of the tranquil games that glide along the horizon
to the slow shore of the sunsets.

From their icy lips.

Eyes of precious stone.

De sus ojos ornados de arenas vítreas

Desde la exhalación de estos peces de mármol,
desde la suavidad sedosa
de sus cantos,
de sus ojos ornados
de arenas vítreas,
la quietud de los templos y los jardines

(en sus sombras de acanto, en las piedras
que tocan y reblandecen)

han abierto sus lechos,
han fundado sus cauces
bajo las hojas tibias de los almendros.

Dicen del tacto
de sus destellos,
de los juegos tranquilos que deslizan al borde,
a la orilla lenta de los ocasos.

De sus labios de hielo.

Ojos de piedras finas.

From the froth they cast, from the aroma they spill forth

(In the atriums: candles, amaranth.)

over the weightless altar of the seedlings.

(From the temple:

the perfume of stamens,

fish scales,

deer. They speak of their reflections.)

In the nights,

the fragile marble of their silence,

the prized tattoo, the clean strokes

(they have drowned the light

at the shore; in the sand)

over the terse image

over the motionless offering

of the meadows.

De la espuma que arrojan, del aroma que vierten

(En los atrios: las velas, los amarantos.)

sobre el ara levísima de las siembras.

(Desde el templo:

el perfume de las espigas,

las escamas,

los ciervos. Dicen de sus reflejos.)

En las noches,

el mármol frágil de su silencio,

elpreciado tatuaje, los trazos limpios

(han ahogado la luz

a la orilla; en la arena)

sobre la imagen tersa,

sobre la ofrenda inmóvil

de las praderas.

Sediment of Warm and Resplendent Rain

*Towards the far end of the park
I sat down to remember
and a memory came to me
like a ravenous fever
but one of those calm memories,
without characters;
a memory of the kind not measured
not told
that does not know,
one of those, dark from so much light,
empty from so much weight*

In the fire of time your voice is a pasture that burns.

The days have passed like fish breaching night's surface
as they come to die by morning in the light of the valleys;
they have woven their nets
like long wine-harvests,
like deep and convulsing distances in water.

And your voice, and your eyes,
flare up quickly

Sedimento de lluvia tibia y resplandeciente

*“Me senté a recordar
hacia el final del parque
y me vino el recuerdo
como una fiebre de hambre,
pero un recuerdo de éstos, tranquilos,
sin personajes;
un recuerdo de esos que no se miden,
que no se cuentan
y que no saben,
de éstos, oscuros de tanta luz,
vacíos de ser tan grandes.”*

En el fuego del tiempo su voz es un campo que arde.
Han pasado los días como suben los peces noche arriba,
como vienen a morir de mañana a la luz de los valles;
han tejido sus redes
como largas vendimias,
como hondas y crispadas distancias en el agua.

Y tu voz, y tus ojos,
de pronto se enardecen

as if the fence, the comet's tail were nothing other
than that leaving behind
the truest infinitude
in a habitual way of squinting
or in any other surge of affection;

Because your fire is pelagic earth,
and in your night are thronging
--like a coming and going of the tides--
all of the densities suspended
between a thread of death
and this pen that thins at your silence;
silence of narrow eternity, of defenseless widening.

Because watching you die are not eyes for encompassing you,
and defining your arms from death
is like splitting a lake into two shores:
two magnets that wrench apart to break you.

I want to come out of you
like swimming to the depth of your eyes and in the shadows blindly bumping
into your slow emptiness of burning grass,

como si no fuera otro el cero, la cauda,
que ese dejar atrás
la infinitud más cierta
en una forma habitual de entrecerrar los ojos
o en otra afluencia cualquiera del cariño;

Porque tu fuego es tierra de mar,
y en tu noche se agolpan
—como un ir y venir de las mareas—
todas las densidades suspendidas
entre un hilo de muerte
y esta pluma que se adelgaza a tu silencio;
silencio de eternidad angosta, de ensanchamiento inerme.

Porque verte morir no son los ojos para abarcarte,
y deslindar sus brazos de la muerte
es como desgajar un lago en dos orillas:
dos imanes que tiran para romperte.

Quiero salir de ti
como nadar al fondo de tus ojos y toparme en la sombra
con tu lento vacío de hierba ardiente,

into your calm of an extinguishable bird,
weak like flesh.

Because I don't know what to do with all your gestures,
all these looks of yours in my words,
I write
so that they burn,
so they will excise,
will root out
this doelike anxiety in your eyes,
that aquatic rattle between your lips,
and return you to the lathe of silence
in this deserted afternoon.

*“Beautiful park, beautiful children,
beautiful afternoon, but there's an empty spot on the bench.”*

It was easy to remember you then; your words would flow from a recurring encounter
barely suspended in an echo of willows.

*“It is as if the time that torments you did not flow in parks,
as if both new thoughts and old memories were equally fresh and
clear, serene and hopeful.”*

con tu calma de pájaro extinguido,
débil como la carne.

Porque no sé qué hacer con tanto gesto tuyo,
tanta mirada tuya en mis palabras,
escribo
para que se enardecen,
para que extirpen,
que arranquen
esta ansiedad de ciervos en tus ojos,
ese estertor marino entre tus labios,
y te devuelvan al torno de silencio
de esta tarde desierta.

*“Hermoso parque, hermosos niños,
hermosa tarde, pero en la banca hay un lugar vacío.”*

Era fácil entonces recordarte; tus palabras provenían de un reencuentro apenas
suspendido en un eco de sauces.

*“Es como si en los parques no fluyera el tiempo que tanto te angustia, como si ambos,
nuevos pensamientos y viejos recuerdos, fueran igualmente frescos y claros, serenos y
esperanzados.”*

Your voice was a trail of overflowing ivy, and time, a slow recount of future landscapes, of solitary, illuminated waters.

*“There’s also a narrow river in the background,
but at its shore no willows;
nor rocks for crossing it
nor stones to toss into it.”*

And I would invent your eyes and squint your look the way a children’s song unravels the silence; because there was already silence in that opening of doors, in that scrutinizing of language that parks distend outward; a sound distinct from silence.

(Afterward, when it was finally this surge, this abrupt and prolonged evidence, this living the sea in slight interrupted sips, that sparkling sand of the barely grazed, of the barely dissolved.)

And it was as if both of us held a segment of that same silence, that small gesture of night like a mirror on the back of doors, like a premature falling into the abysmal climax of chords.

Your death startles me in the sea with closed eyes.

Tu voz era un camino de hiedra desbordada, y el tiempo, un pausado recuento de futuros paisajes, de solitarias aguas iluminadas.

*“Hay también un río, angosto, al fondo,
pero a su orilla no hay sauces;
ni piedras para cruzarlo,
ni piedras para arrojarle.”*

Y yo inventaba tus ojos y entreabría tu mirada como un canto de niños desentraña el silencio; porque ya había silencio en ese abrir de puertas, en ese escudriñar el lenguaje que distienden los parques; un sonido distinto de silencio.

(Después, cuando era finalmente este oleaje, esta evidencia abrupta y prolongada, este vivir el mar a leves sorbos interrumpidos, esa arena espumosa de lo apenas tocado, de lo apenas disuelto.)

Y era como tener los dos un tramo de ese mismo silencio, ese gesto pequeño de la noche como un espejo en el dorso de las puertas, como un caer prematuro en el auge abismal de los acordes.

Tu muerte me sorprende en el mar con los ojos cerrados.

And it was like opening a murmur onto that naked shadow of the willows, which awakens in its voice, like dawn to the night, the language of salt that the waves bid farewell upon daybreak. It was both of us waiting in a small room where time is doors and doors mirrors; you speak of some dream the waters spill from, that the tides drag from the beach, they grab you, like one last gesture of intending to swim, of seeking to drag out from the sea, out of the silence, the distended channel that would receive your body. You speak of corridors, of trying to return, and you can't find the room number. I glimpse your voice multiplied by an echo of mirrors. "*Only very close numbers.*" Your hands are the flames of a flickering forest, the way a murmur sustains the warmth of night. The night is a reflection; your image a continual yes, come on, I'll follow you outside. There is a sound of spliced lights.

"*Only very close numbers.*" Because an echo is the light of distance, and the room is a glint of damp earth, of the principle of salt, of light and resplendent sediment, like turning on the faucet, submerging your head, and suddenly, there it is, the ocean is a dark and burning immanence, a deep murmur of lava that erupts from far away, from the depths like a fire that grows from the waters.

Rain is a continual prowling of time;

Your voice, a smooth and blinded path, a turning on the light, a sudden opening of floodgates onto the fire.

"Why then the roots?"

Y era como abrir un murmullo a esa sombra desnuda de los sauces, que despierta en su voz, como una aurora a la noche, el lenguaje de sal que despiden al alaba los oleajes. Era esperar los dos en un cuarto pequeño donde el tiempo so puertas y las puertas espejos; tú hablas de algún sueño que las aguas rebasan, que arrastran las mareas desde la playa, te arrebatan, como un último gesto de intentar a nado, de buscar arrancarle al mar, desde el silencio, el cauce distendido que reciba tu cuerpo. Hablas de corredores, de intentar el regreso, y no encuentras el número del cuarto. Yo vislumbro tu voz multiplicada por un eco de espejos. *“Sólo números muy cercanos.”* Tus manos son las llamas de un bosque que se extingue, como un rumor sostiene el calor de la noche. La noche es un reflejo; tu imagen es un eterno decir que sí, que venga, que te acompañe afuera. Hay un ruido de luces que se empalman.

“Sólo números muy cercanos.” Porque el eco es la luz de la distancia, y el cuarto es un fulgor de tierra humedecida, de principio de sal, de sedimento leve y resplandeciente, como abrir la llave del agua y meter la cabeza y de pronto, ya, el mar es una inminencia oscura y enardecida, un profundo rumor de lava que irrumpe desde muy lejos, desde el fondo, como un incendio que crece desde las aguas.

La lluvia es un continuo rondar del tiempo;

Tu voz, un recorrido suave y enceguecido, un encender la luz, un levantar de golpe las compuertas al fuego.

“¿Por qué entonces las raíces?”

A surreptitious grimace in the mirror.

The room is a refuge of slow rain, of
wide, tenuous spaces,
of weightless and reverberating channels of voice.

A mirror of salt where the waters dug an ebb of quicksilver impulses; where night has
trickled its stream, slowly, like a habitual omen.

On your lips;

*“in eyes, only sand,
smooth sand”*

So that they excise, so that they root out this doelike anxiety.

*“of those children I can’t see,” “how can they be
the eyes of those children I can’t see”*

Outside, the rain rages.

The walls have that virtual margin that distances them or reveals them with a fleeting
outline of hazy grass, with a reflection of the sea.

Your warm, intact space.

Una mueca furtiva en los espejos.

El cuarto es un refugio de lluvia lenta, de

espacios amplios y tenues,

de leves cauces de voz reverberantes.

Un espejo de sal donde las aguas han cavado un reflujo de impulsos azogados; donde la noche ha goteado su influjo, lentamente, como un presagio habitual.

En tus labios;

“en los ojos sólo arena,

arena suave”

Para que extirpen, que arranquen esta ansiedad de ciervos.

“de esos niños que no veo”, “cómo pueden ser

los ojos de esos niños que no veo”

Afuera, la lluvia arrecia.

Las paredes tienen ese margen virtual que las aleja o las muestra con un contorno fugaz

de hierba incierta, con un reflejo de mar.

Tu espacio cálido, intacto.

A veces, el fuego nace de alguna palabra lenta y ensordecida; entonces, cierro los ojos al recuerdo.

Sometimes, the fire is born from some slow and deafened word; then, I close my eyes to memory.

Let them Spread their Batrachian Humidity

One by one, I've been closing the doors;
the windows are woven with ivy,
with fine sand; waters accumulate in the parapets.
House of lilies and hidden concoctions,
of half-hidden courtyards.
Small puddles of light where the geese and Spanish broom
grow and live as one. Willow of cold climates. From here
volcanoes, comet tails,
ramblings. The sand of glimmers, a fragile enclosure;
Flames, a dense smoke.
The light stroke of memories between walls, the incision
of crickets.
Like a dark slice down the middle
Time
suddenly swirls; let
that amphibian presence pass,
that indistinct comet tail
through canals, through estuaries, through waves. Let
it overflow.

In the protected entryways, like the sound of copper,

Deja que esparzan su humedad de batracios

He ido cerrando, una a una, las puertas;
las ventanas están urdidas de hiedra,
de arena fina; en los pretiles se acumulan las aguas.

Casa de liros y brebajes ocultos,
de patios hondos.

Pequeños charcos de luz donde crecen y cohabitan los gansos
y las retamas. Sauce de tierra fría. De aquí
los volcanes, las caudas,
los desvaríos. Frágil cerco la arena de los destellos;
Humo denso las llamas.

Entre paredes el trazo débil de los recuerdos, la incisión
de los grillos.

Como una oscura tajada a mitad

El tiempo,

de pronto, se arremolina; deja pasar

esa presencia anfibia,

esa cauda imprecisa

por los canales, por los esteros, por las orillas. Deja
que se desborde.

En los portales, como ruido de cobre,

like little girls' laughter, colors come alive.

Luminarias on the thresholds.

Starlings fly down to the dust;

the parrots scream and set their rooms and the air on fire;

in their wire cages, in their webbing of perches and branches.

The liquor of summer; the crisp aroma of the heliotrope.

Under the planks, fear and calm.

Let them pass,

let them flood with their faint shadow

cracks, fountains, pyracantha.

let them saturate the warm tiles

with their batrachian anxiety.

Sap of lilies.

Like a dark slice. Afternoons well up out of the steamy air

on the terrace; nights gently rock the flame.

From here, the arches,

carob trees

and delirium.

como risa de niñas, los colores responden.

Las luminarias en los umbrales.

Los tordos bajan al polvo;

los loros gritan y encienden las estancias, el aire;

en sus jaulas de alambre, en sus redes de alcándaras y ramajes.

El licor del estío; el aroma incisivo del heliotropo.

Bajo las tablas, el temor y la calma.

Deja que pasen,

deja que inunden con su sombra imprecisa

los resquicios, las fuentes, los piracantos,

deja que impregnen su ansiedad de batracios

en las baldosas tibias.

Savia de lirios.

Como una oscura tajada. Las tardes brotan de los vapores

en la terraza; las noches mecen la flama.

De aquí, los arcos,

los algarrobos

y los delirios.

Verily I Say Unto You, You Must Resurrect
a Day from the Dead

Around the labyrinth a sulfurous chorus of windows,

below the shadow, the wind;

There, over the hollow stone,

with clasped hands

and eyes

hermetically open inward

like the air

when it feels around

and exhausts itself in dark tentacles the night

advances,

the tower

is the violet color

of sea crystals,

the wind

melds with rock, volcanic opaque inertia

of the walls,

There, over the hollow stone,

with hands clasped

and eyes

hermetically open, the saturated mist

*En verdad te digo que has de resucitar
un día de entre los muertos*

En torno al laberinto un azufroso coro de ventanas,

bajo la sombra el viento;

Ahí, sobre la piedra hueca,

con las manos unidas

y los ojos

herméticamente abiertos hacia adentro

como el aire

cuando palpa

y se agota en oscuros tentáculos la noche

avanza,

la torre

tiene el color violáceo

de cristales marinos,

el viento

se amalgama a la roca, volcánica inercia opaca

de los muros,

Ahí, sobre la piedra hueca,

con las manos unidas

y los ojos

herméticamente abiertos,

unleashes itself –distilled and confused—in the bitter drowsiness of the windows.

It is a thick smell

the density of a sore when it exhales, that has set your face

against the viscous flow of the labyrinth;

There, over the hollow stone,

with clasped hands

and eyes

you seep the gaseous substance of collapse.

—the wind becomes embedded in the rock—

the inflamed night stretches and shakes the tower,

—the cavity that hides your memory—

because you have descended here with a deathly voice,

they have buried you,

blessed be you

they've said, blessed to reach the kingdom of heaven,

excuse me, how far from here?

from here?

they forgot my mirror,

your mirror?

have you forgotten your mirror?

se desata la niebla que se impregna –destilada y confusa- en el agrio sopor de las
ventanas.

Es el olor compacto,
la densidad de llaga cuando exhala, que ha fijado tu rostro
al espeso caudal del laberinto;

Ahí, sobre la piedra hueca,
con las manos unidas
y los ojos
fluyes la gaseosa sustancia del derrumbe.

-el viento se ha encajado a la roca-

la noche inflamada se estira y convulsiona la torre,

-la cavidad que oculta tu memoria-
porque has descendido aquí con voz de muerto,
te han sepultado,
bendito seas

han dicho, bendito para alcanzar el reino de los cielos,

¿perdone, qué tan lejos de aquí?

¿de aquí?

olvidaron mi espejo,

¿su espejo?

¿ha olvidado su espejo?

Naked, over the grey stone,
with anointed hands
and eyes,
you poked and dug,
unearthing gestures and prayers,
until you forced the flesh to its ferment,
Pardon me
In order to approach the flame of the winds that, coiled,
hide themselves
and lurk, awaiting your dust,
—your razable, opaque affinity
with the stones—.

The wind, incisive sequence of the rock,
enters the fog of your body, shoots up
How far?
how far is your mouth disseminated across this cell?
how soon will it materialize?
—they forgot my mirror—
They forgot your face just as you were buried
—they forgot my mirror—
And so you scatter yourself in the creation of the gas that contains you,
that dilutes your image

Desnudo, sobre la piedra gris,
con las manos unidas
y los ojos,
hurgaste,
desentrañando gestos y plegarias,
hasta obligar la carne a su fermento,
Perdone
Para abordar la flama de los vientos que enroscados se ocultan
y te acechan aguardando tu polvo,
-tu arrasable afinidad opaca
con las piedras-.

El viento, incisiva secuencia de la roca,
entra a la niebla de tu cuerpo, brota
¿Qué tan lejos?
¿qué tan lejos se dispersa tu boca en esta celda?
¿qué tan pronto se plasma?
-olvidaron mi espejo-
Olvidaron tu rostro en el momento mismo del entierro
-olvidaron mi espejo-
Y es así que te esparces en la creación del gas que te contenga,
que diluya tu imagen,

that extends it
towards the elusive space of the tower,
now you are growing,
and your expression
is water and rot
your cadence is the ritual,
you have
the hue of earth the ancestral smell
of what boils for a century of what cannot be touched, and it prophesizes itself
in order to be born into the riverbed of silence.

There, over the hollow stone,
with clasped hands
and eyes
hermetically
uncertain, you serve the sentence that dangles
from the rocks:

*And thus the moment will come when flesh masters its changes and makes its voice
explode into the labyrinth.*

Naked,
over the grey stone.

la prolongue
al inasible espacio de la torre,
es ahora que creces
y tu expresión
es agua y podredumbre,
tu cadencia es el rito,
tienes
el color de la tierra el olor ancestral
de lo que hierve por un siglo de lo que no se palpa, y se presagia
para nacer al cauce del silencio.

Ahí, sobre la piedra hueca,
con las manos unidas
y los ojos
herméticamente
incierto, cumples la sentencia que se ahonda
entre las rocas:

*Y es así que llegará el momento en que la carne se adueñe de sus cambios y haga estallar
su voz al laberinto.*

Desnudo,
sobre la piedra gris.

They Touch the Hidden Stained Glass

The crickets (the termites conceal
their scarlet speech) swing the fruits and ferns by their
names. They touch the hidden stained glass
(termites trek across echoes in silence)
through the observant mist,
the obstacle,
of high, still nights .

Tocan los vitrales ocultos

Los grillos (las termitas encubren
su discurso escarlata) cimbran por sus nombres los frutos,
los helechos. Tocan los vitrales ocultos
(las termitas recorren en silencio los ecos)
por el vaho vigilante,
la valla,
de altas noches en calma.

Temporal Perception

The fly descends,
overwhelms the thin rind of space with its subtle touch, plunges
its head, thrusts its antennas all the way down
(plunges, like a wire quivers, like night)

—breaks—

loses a second, spins, settles back in time,
in contact with the humus.

(a moment of fluvial texture)

The fly gets up, searches for its form,
seeks its figure, like ivy it adapts and materializes,
then spreads its wings,
and rests.

The fire dances,
penetrates, like the hyena leaps
to the whistling flesh of the willows

—your gaze drowns—

the fire feels around as it advances, traces its steps and changes what it touches.

Percepción temporal

La mosca baja,

Abruma con suaves toques la delgada corteza del espacio, hunde

la cabeza, pega las antenas al fondo

(Hunde, como un alambre vibra, como una noche)

—rompe—

pierde un segundo, gira, vuelve al tiempo,

al contacto del humus.

(un momento de textura fluvial)

La mosca se incorpora, busca su forma,

fija su contorno, como la hiedra se acomoda y se plasma,

luego extiende las alas,

y reposa.

El fuego danza,

entra, como salta la hiena

a la carne silbante de los sauces

—tu mirada se ahoga—

el fuego palpa una como se interna, calca sus pisadas y cambia lo que toca.

Omnivorous

opaque

sphere, time flows.

Because everyone circulates on its blades, because

nobody approaches,

because the edge is the force of the abyss that absorbs,

time flows,

because the edge is the force of the abyss that exhales,

time

is a sphere, its edge

or contour is agile, its fragments, germinal periods.

Sometimes

these seconds grow prodigiously

and transcend the influx of other areas.

There are four principle areas:

The nucleus. A magnetized cavity that transforms and devours certain compounds; it only assimilates the remains that earlier, in former areas, integrated the forms that it now crushes and eliminates.

Omnívora

esfera

opaca, el tiempo fluye.

Porque todos circulan en sus aspas, porque

nadie se acerca

porque el borde es la fuerza del abismo que absorbe,

el tiempo fluye,

porque el borde es la fuerza del abismo que exhala,

el tiempo

es una esfera, su borde

o contorno es ágil; sus fragmentos, periodos germinales. A veces

estos segundos crecen extraordinariamente

y trascienden la afluencia de otras áreas.

Las áreas principales son cuatro:

El núcleo. Cavidad imantada que transforma y devora los compuestos; asimila tan sólo los despojos que antes, en áreas precedentes, integraron las formas que ella tritura ahora y elimina.

The humus. An area that supports lives that grow from contact; it is smooth, fluid, without corpuscles, is indifferent, covered by a sticky substance, attractive and viscous, that summons and triggers the instinctive integration of the being that completes it.

The rim. This is the external contour of the sphere. Its frontal complexion is varied, more voluminous than flat. It exhibits constant activity, autonomous forms, expansive nuclei and germinal reserves. The fragments that shape it expand indefinitely and sometimes create diluted spaces of intense acoustic and luminous clarity. Seen from the most external area (halo), it has an abysmal appearance, this, supported by gases of the finest points and connotations, keeps it almost entirely deserted.

The Halo. This is a bland, compact surface, which turns in annular rotations with respect to the rim, it has a spongy, plush opacity that permeates the consciousness that floats between its blades.

Its blades: the static foliar contour that envelopes the form of its beings with habitual lethargy,

here they rest,

and float, and abstain;

only sometimes

do they detect,

between dreams,

the inviting and bright emanation from the edge,

El humus. Área que soporta existencias que crecen del contacto; es lisa, fluida, no presenta corpúsculos, es indiferenciada, cubierta por una substancia adherente, atractiva y viscosa, que llama y desencadena la instintiva integración del ser que la completa.

El borde. Es el perfil externo de la esfera. Su complexión frontal es muy variada, más voluminosa que plana. Presenta actividad constante, formas autónomas, núcleos expansivos y fondos germinales. Los fragmentos que la conforman se expanden indefinidamente y crean a veces espacios muy diluidos de intensa claridad acústica y lumínica. Tiene una apariencia abismal cuando vista del área más externa (halo), esto, secundado por gases de finísimas puntas y matices, la mantiene casi por completo desierta.

El halo. Es una superficie blanda, compacta, que gira en posición anular respecto al borde, tiene una esponjosa opacidad afelpada que impregna la conciencia que flota entre sus aspas.

Sus aspas: el contorno foliar estático que envuelve con sopor habitual la forma de sus seres,

aquí descansan,

y flotan, y se abstienen;

sólo a veces

detectan,

entre sueños,

la incitante emanación lumínica del borde,

they smell its influx,
they listen,
they forebode it; some (most of them) hang on
with renewed strength between the blades,
others
go down carefully or allow
the attraction to cover them
in hypnotic oblation and it pulls them;
here,

they spin try to leave and they splash flee the liminal suction keen rhythm return dazzled,
panting, reserved

to the quiet abundance of their blades

others
descend to the edge and remain there,
they open, turn over, expand their elastic skill in time,
time yields,
germinates
springs up convulsing and agile over itself, bites its softest sequence.

huelen su afluencia,
escuchan,
la presienten; unos (los más) se aferran
con renovada fuerza entre las aspas,
otros
bajan con cautela o dejan
que la atracción los cubra
en oblación hipnótica y los jale;
aquí,
giran intentan sueltan y salpican huyen la succión liminal incisiva cadencia vuelvan
deslumbrados, jadeantes, inhibidos
a la abundancia quieta de sus aspas,
otros
bajan al borde y permanecen,
abren, vuelcan, expanden su habilidad elástica en el tiempo,
el tiempo cede,
germina
brota convulsionado y ágil sobre sí mismo, muerde su secuencia suavísima.

Time

without light or touch.

Fire feels around as it penetrates traces its steps and changes what it touches; the fire dances, enters like the hyena leaping up to the whistling flesh

A fly steepers itself,

fastens its mouth to the channel

that adopts it,

one

fly

descends

vibrates, loses a second,

flies, (loses a second?)

crosses rooms, windows,

touches the forms covers the distances

—a fly walks on the walls.

Tiempo

sin luz ni tacto.

El fuego palpa una como se interna calca sus pisadas y cambia lo que toca; el fuego
danza, entra como salta la hiena a la carne silbante

Una mosca se impregna, se adhesiona,

pliega su boca al cauce

que la adopta,

una

mosca

baja

vibra, (pierde un segundo)

vuela, (¿pierde un segundo?)

atraviesa los cuartos, las ventanas,

palpa las formas cubre las distancias

—una mosca camina en las paredes.

Fish of Fleeting Skin

The edge is a tiny mouth, a sharp and dazzling excision –the black like a form of light that marks shores, hindered spaces, fires at the boarder—. The water changes as I move forward.

The festival was pervaded by small, intractable monkeys. Someone inlay over the mud a grid of hollow branches and it was like opening a mirror onto the anxieties of swimming.

Everything scatters in yellow. The monkeys jump.

Before, when looking at time like smoothly feeling silk, like gobbling up small fish. The sun tore handfuls of dust from the air.

It is an abrupt but precise space, from there on the trees. Down below, uncontrollable desires.

The monkeys, as everyone said, were wild; taut, yellowish little bodies. The game was portentous, rootless; hands full of mud.

The water gleams, slow and drowsy fish; in their eyes the night is a vague and wavering impulse, a dark sliver, a short edge, it traces it.

Peces de piel fugaz

El borde es una boca finísima, una escisión aguda y deslumbrante —el negro como una forma de luz que marca orillas, espacios entorpecidos, fuegos limítrofes—. A medida que avanzo el agua cambia.

La fiesta estaba impregnada de pequeños monos inabordables. Alguien incrustó sobre el lodo una estructura cuadrículada de ramas huecas y fue como abrir un espejo a las ansias de nado.

Todo se esparce en amarillos. Los monos saltan.

Antes, cuando miraba el tiempo como se palpa suavemente una seda, como se engullen peces pequeños. El sol desgajaba del aire haces de polvo.

Es un espacio abrupto pero preciso, a partir de entonces los árboles. Hacia abajo las ganas irrefrenables.

Los monos, como dijeron todos, eran salvajes; cuerpecillos tirantes y amarillentos. El juego era portentoso, desarraigado; las manos llenas de lodo.

El agua brilla, pez lento y adormecido; en sus ojos la noche es un impulso vago y oscilatorio, una tajada oscura, borde brevísimo, lo delinea.

But beginning here with the consolation of seeing everything inflamed, and suddenly looking at their hybrid, childlike fingers.

Little seething voices that erupt, deserted.

At the edge there is an abyss of tones, sharpness, forms. It would have to be entered slowly, slyly in that instant of dance.

There is a crack here, in this lapse. In the cave roots adhere with fanatic cunning, branches unfold gracefully.

This is instead of biting the newly grown thicket, or separating the shadows—frothy and light—with a feint of the faun. Close by, it rains.

In back, umbrellas extend beyond the waves. Some have slow colors and hurtful shapes. The hours swirl. And I have faith, because that's what they say about ponds.

Little fish of shimmering ivy.

There were cats, insects, tigers; and when they tried to open the doors, and everything, from the entrance of the temple was gathered into two lines; two fragments of a carnival.

They dance on the shores.

Pero empezar aquí con el consuelo de ver a todos enardecidos, y mirar de improviso sus dedos híbridos, infantiles.

Vocecitas hirvientes que revientan desiertas.

Al margen hay un abismo de tonos, de nitidez, de formas. Habría que entrar levemente, oscuramente en ese instante de danza.

Hay una grieta aquí, en este lapso. En la cueva las raíces se adhieren con fanática astucia, las ramas se desdoblan con gracia.

Es en vez de morder la espesura reciente, o separar las sombras –espumosas y leves– con un esguince de fauno. De cerca, llueve.

Atrás los paraguas se extienden sobre las olas. Los hay de colores lentos y de formas hirientes. Las horas se arremolinan. Y tengo fe, porque así como dicen de los estanques.

Pequeños peces de hiedra tornasolados.

Había gatos, insectos, tigres; y cuando quisieron abrir las puertas, y todo, desde el templo de entrada estaba concentrado en dos líneas; dos fragmentos de feria.

Bailan en las orillas.

And they recede, because showing themselves without piers is the attraction. Where bracing the calm of looking from afar without jeopardizing touch.

The outcomes are elusive. Sometimes shadows open slowly. Threshold region of softened nostalgia, of clean and dry words.

But it's the land of salt. Nobody returns or measures. Water that drains into uncertainty, and in forgetting, calm backwaters of the sea.

So she stays so far away. And her thin and cold little hands like an acute skill emerged from unassailable spaces.

From here, the trunks and brush gleam their intact sharpness. Virgin who exhales an indifferent and absorbed cadence. The fish jump.

The monkeys jump. In the background the light narrows and the bodies diminish. And so the asphyxia breaks away; a wide and albuminous thirst.

They drink halting sips of tea.

And if one lowers its face to see more up close.

Y retroceden, porque asomarse es la atracción sin muelles. Donde apoyar la calma de mirar desde lejos sin arriesgar el tacto.

Son alusivos los desenlaces. Las sombras se abren a veces lentamente Región umbral de nostalgias reblandecidas, de palabras limpias y secas.

Pero es la tierra de sal. Nadie que vuelva o que mida. Agua que drena en la certidumbre y en el olvido remansos breves de mar.

Queda entonces tan lejos. Y sus manitas flacas y frías como una aguda destreza emergida de espacios inexpugnables.

De aquí, los troncos y la maleza brillan su nitidez intacta. Virgen que exhala una cadencia tibia y ensimismada. Los peces saltan.

Los monos saltan. En el fondo la luz se angosta y los cuerpos empequeñecen. Entonces se desprende la asfixia; una sed amplia y albuminosa.

Beben pausados sorbos de té.

Y si uno hunde la cara para ver más de cerca.

They also combed the tents. The circus; the entire shore like a fire, the animals scurried into ditches and over platforms.

In order to sustain itself, perhaps. The hard part. Sometimes their eruptions open an orange space.

It becomes beautiful then to touch the waters. The sky is concentrated in deep blues. The greens grow until you can touch them.

It stretches their small elastic arms in a soothing whirl.

The roots inhale. Just slide your fingers, little by little, across the rocks to know them, smooth and depopulated. Crystal trees.

And it is the instant of unusualing the boat by the keel and delineating the edge. The fingers large and thin.

Their eyes are clear.

This silky stupor that spills over. But beginning here.

The festival –tiny shadow—slow. From the cave their voices open out like smooth clusters. Juicy stones. From the nectar of the circus.

También rastrearon las carpas. El circo; toda la orilla era como un incendio, los animales se escurrieron en zanjas y plataformas.

Para sostenerse, tal vez. Lo difícil. A veces sus irrupciones abren un espacio naranja.

Es hermoso palpar entonces las aguas. El cielo se reconcentra en azules profundos. Lo verdes crecen hasta tocarlas.

Estira sus bracitos elásticos en un giro aliviante.

Las raíces inhalan. Basta deslizar poco a poco los dedos sobre las rocas para saberlas lisas y despobladas. Árboles de cristal.

Y es el instante de inusitar la lancha por la quilla y deslindar el filo. Los dedos largos y finos.

Sus ojos límpidos.

Este estupor de seda que se derrama. Pero empezar aquí.

La fiesta –sombra finísima- lenta. De la cueva se desprenden sus voces como suaves racimos. Piedras jugosas. Desde el zumo del circo.

And it is the instant; but beginning here. Their hungry eyes, unfathomable. In their terse
boarders, the voices, the waters change. Fish of fleeting skin.

Y es el instante; pero empezar aquí. Sus ojos ávidos, insondables. En sus bordes escuetos, las voces, las aguas cambian. Peces de piel fugaz.

Small Slivers

Over the valves
of this thirsty and imprisoned street,
the dwarves embed
small slivers of nacre.

Piezas pequeñas

Sobre las valvas

de esta calle sedienta y aprisionada,

los enanes incrustan

pequeñas piezas de nácar.

I conclude this project with several of my own poems. I used this personal process of writing as a way to connect to the poetry I translated. Though I use a lot of Bracho's language, often consciously, this was not an attempt to "embody" the poet. I did not want Bracho to speak through me. I want, instead, to be fully present. In writing these poems I hope to have expressed my own voice, as well as pieces of the relationship I formed with Bracho's.

The Saints

Silk and impassioned tendon taut
I am violet swings of suddenly.
Always doomed
sometimes singing need of
rapture housing
is these bones of suddenly.
Times to worship
makes forever and is floating
sudden bones of tenderly.
I am housing saints of
riff and raff in
shades of lulls of lovingly.
Sinks in daunting
finding peace in
sleep and eat and
blindly moving
timely catching
gist of tracking tight
in caption frames in
keeping light refraction
jest of talking click –
uncoil.

We lie together after.

You bring me
 back to quiet.
 As if I am blind, too.
 Deaf. Dumb.
 But I am of my mouth,
 of the turning of
 symbols, to read the mossy undersides,
 the curvature of their backsides
 putting your words inside my mouth
 to feel their shape and
 sucking like a child—

Dumb,
 without pebble or fish
 to draw lines circling outward
 towards an edge struck deeply inward
 back to the center of black water
 sand beneath the ripples forming
 spheres of inclines
 the beating as you stand like a tree
 crossing the expanse of widening and
 silken reaches of the ground
 against the water
 reflecting over the surface

Your branches flicker

To see the presence of a thing
 through its silence. To feel
 the impact of movement like a blind
 deaf dumb force
 to feel blind, deaf and mute

The black of the lake is motionless.
 Water moves beneath it
 color drains into earth
 it feeds upon the darkness the cold
 into its branches
 and its bark
 curls up at its base

To communicate silently, slyly
 to make silent what stood
 against me

felling the flicker of its leaves
until it lies on top of me
roots once in me

Now I eat it
for quiet
until quiet comes.

Two Moons

Unaware unaccustomed softness
of the tabled moss
slithers onward backward taut
like marble coolers
fill the mouth with brick
tight
brittle handshakes of tree-like
solemnity. Scent of moss
quakes the bed posts

our time sings the tundra
of the deep mammoth middle hearts

The time for the handshakes
and the lush of naked falling
from our mouths
is approaching he shakes
from the pulpy touch
to say so quietly
against a slice of orange
crushing sleet down
chimney necks

the houses are bright moons
above the bedposts

Elliptic space inside my heart
where the locusts fly,
points unknown, what is flying

(the dream space the hovering map
the pointing upward to the other
on the axis,
dripping candle
wax)

what is moving
if we're in circles,
are we overlapping,
I don't know

The verb is haunting.
To be
all the time, are we?
To ask without a subject
how daring of me.
The locus of the space inside
where the locusts fly
as one humming noise
what are we

All this
 solace
 step forward
 behind the birds

winding unleash—
 (and drag me forward) Please
 over you .

crisp pale eucalyptus siphoned

through to

crystal
 or crater)

have I told you I'm hungry
 beet child hunger
 grape child mouth hunger

the barking birds|stride grafting stride

I am Thirsty I drank it all so tough like meat thirst
 listless stories of lamb tongues suction
 unbearable thirst

treaties of milk

god your shoulders
 building
 a
 straight
 vertical
 c
 i
 r
 c
 l
 e

decanter. You,

just tip over.

Hot August, 1976.

His hand grows in her stomach of tunnels
the growth of dark is darkening and deepening
there a cave to excavate.

Their shadows form the contour of five stamens.

Hands on the table.

The fluid breath of quiet
for a long time.

Burrower

Rabbit legs burrowing for meals
 you are not to blame for

Sweet earth in our mouths
 against our teeth how could we not
 Oh rabbit furr,
 you are not to blame for

Guttural handfuls in our talking
 throats raw carrots blame for
 taking it along the rut

Not to rain or cloud
 sheets of frozen sky
 nightshadows in the mud
 when the clouds
 don't move.

Icicles growing
 to burrow into warm earth
 down into warmth where worms dig

the rabbit legs

fuck 'em.

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