

spring 2004

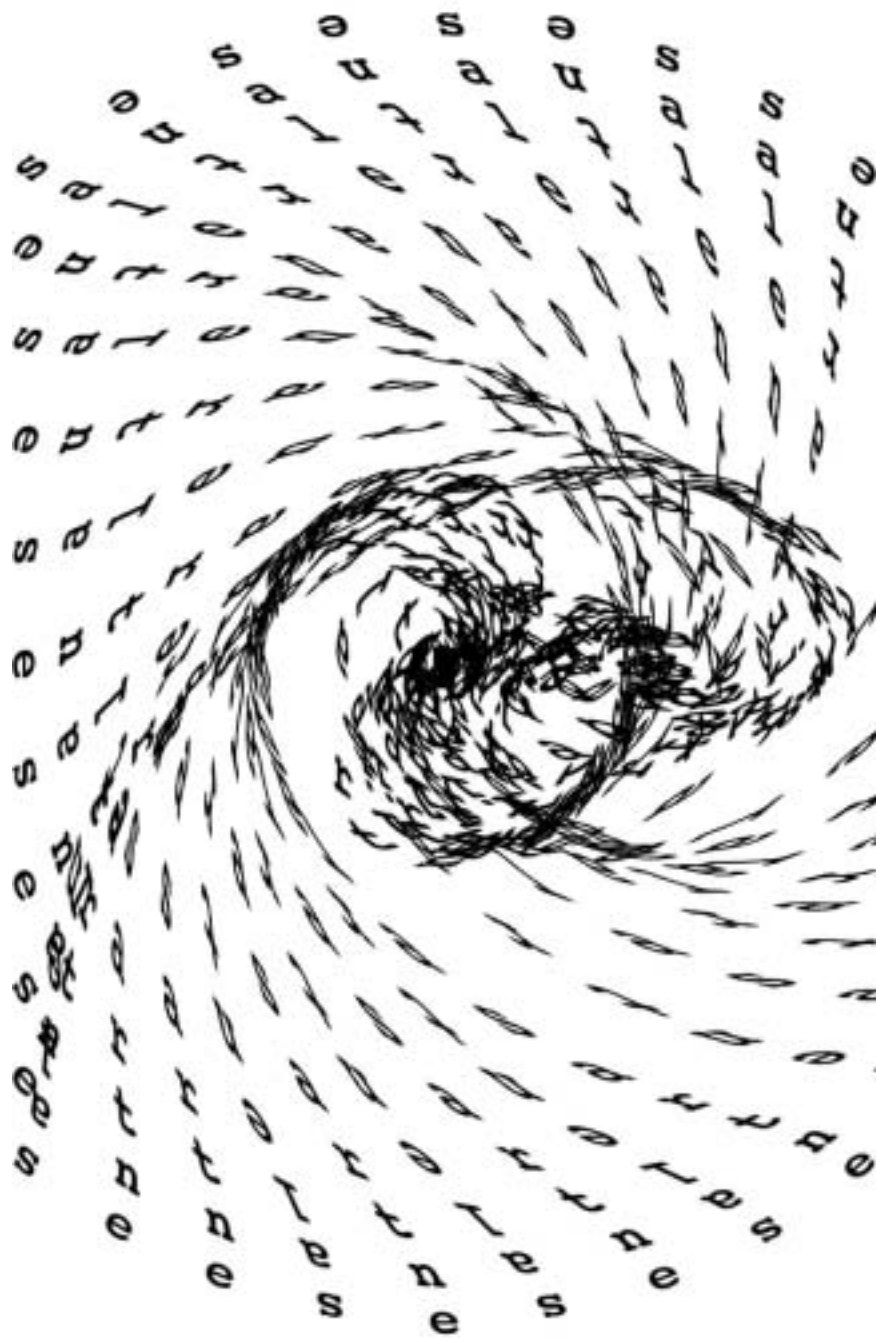
# zona de carga

universidad de wisconsin-madison  
departamento de español y portugués









Zona de Carga would not be possible without the generous support of the Associated Students of Madison, LACIS, and the UW Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Any of the views expressed by the contributing authors of this publication in no way represent the views or opinions of the aforementioned supporting agencies. Mil gracias...

Submission policy: Zona de Carga / Loading Zone accepts submissions until February 1st each year for its annual publication. Submissions may consist of up to seven pages of fiction, non-academic prose, translations, or poetry in English, Spanish, Portuguese or any combination thereof. Visual art consisting of black and white photos or other images is also welcome. Rights revert to the authors.

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zona de carga / loading zone  
revista de creación literaria

del departamento de  
español y portugués

universidad de wisconsin-madison

2004

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es ustedes, pero también es:

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y...



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'Tiene el sentido del humor  
de un tractor'  
- Alberto Blanco,  
de "El poeta tiene y no tiene"

## **Brazilian Sun**

Not sure why  
golden beaches,  
swaying palms,  
crashing waves  
combine to make  
a salty taste  
a lazy step,  
a lowered gaze...

Why steps  
in the sand  
wash away,  
while sun  
leaves a trace  
in the wind  
and miles and miles of sea-soaked skin...yes, miles and miles  
of sea-soaked skin.

**IN THE C****O****R****N****E**

Don't turn the key!

**R**

Crack open,

Fold over,

Feel the breeze

of ambiguities...

Then, (hem!)

Straighten up!

Face the corner!

Come get what you deserve!

A double-edged sword

sort of world,

and just the vertex

of a smile.

## **Hay un poco de ti dentro de mí**

Hay un poco de ti dentro de mí.  
Ese gusto raro por las madrugadas,  
tu manera de llamar al gato “compañero”  
y de vigilar perspicazmente a las ardillas.

Hay un poco de ti dentro de mí.  
Tu preferencia por los vinos  
y disgusto arbitrario por los vegetales.  
La tendencia de regresar a la cama  
después del café.

Hay un poco de ti dentro de mí.  
Tus sandwiches finos al estilo inglés,  
el aprecio de las carreteras sin fin  
y de los amigos espontáneos que se hacen  
en la gasolinera.

Hay un poco de ti dentro de mí.  
Tu mirada trágica y vulnerable,  
la voluntad de ser chico para siempre,  
de negar tener responsabilidades  
por la música o un simple ideal.

Hay un poco de ti dentro de mí,  
y ese poco me da cosquillas en la frente,  
despeina las cejas,  
y nunca, nunca, me deja sola.





## **Sometimes things don't rhyme**

*For ages 5 and up*

Sometimes,  
there's no reason to get up, out of bed,  
you've sunk to the bottom...  
your body's like lead.

Dreams are futile,  
t.v.'s too boring.  
And the twisted wind wonders,  
"what's *your* story?"

Sometimes,  
the mind's a block  
'cause nothing matches anymore  
and the clock never stops.

"Who you gonna blame?",  
snaps the door.  
So, you sit in your room  
tracing cracks in the wall.  
Some things just don't rhyme,  
they don't rhyme at all.

Then, you decide,  
you might as well try,  
so finally you're up  
with an AUGH and a sigh.

"No more excuses", snorts the bear,  
so you begin to pull your hair,  
but suddenly, you laugh...  
Ha-ha! I do not live in Disneyland!  
Not everything here is comically grand!

---

“Whatever!”, snarls the cat,  
“It should be just fine  
if things change over time.  
And, no, they don’t always rhyme –  
At *your* age shouldn’t you realize that?”

## **A vicious cycle**

Maybe I'll dream you again  
someday  
maybe I'll dream again  
maybe...

But if someday never comes  
I won't cry:  
My tears were a donation  
to a gray abyss smeared above us,  
oozing down in dreary strokes,  
oozing down  
draping everything in that grayness  
to paint your world gray too  
to paint your world away,  
maybe,  
like a dream built with a brush,  
to be shoved under a pillow,  
forgotten,  
and you're just a brushstroke away  
from being beauty or ugliness.  
My palette is a sky of tears.  
I dip my brush in the pools  
spiraling above,  
to drown out the howling winds  
with the silence of a violent love  
that stifles its own passion,  
bathes its flames  
with icy teardrops  
made of a bitter bile  
which, ironically, may be  
the divine nectar that turns some men  
into Gods  
and others into Shells.

Maybe...

Maybe I'll find you  
in a different café  
with someone else's face.  
You'll invite me to sit with you  
where, across from one another,  
we'll look past each other's shoulder,  
contemplate other people,  
dancing too,  
dancing our *danse macabre*  
while we dance theirs,  
or we'll look through windows  
that look out  
across rooftops like jelly  
and urban tombs  
where all are united by solitude,  
the fading faces of a million lovers  
we've never known,  
windows that look out  
across mountains,  
across oceans,  
across fields,  
across desert,  
across plains,  
across echoing forests  
and beaches raging at the sea,  
across a lunar eclipse  
and a bridge to the heavens  
where ships of glass navigate the clouds,  
and we'll fall through those windows,  
through those clouds,  
hand in hand  
but unsure why,  
because there's no love,  
there's no Love,

across the lunar desert that bridges us  
there's no love,  
between us there's an infinite quiet,  
just as there is in this infinite café  
where we sit  
back to back,  
conversing with ghosts  
that want to know,  
to remember,  
what it was,  
what it is  
to love.  
And maybe,  
maybe,  
we're ghosts too,  
you and I,  
for our ghosts are answered by silence.

Maybe...

Maybe you'll be my drinking companion  
tonight  
and tomorrow I still won't know  
who you are,  
because I drowned you in my beer,  
in my whisky,  
in my vodka martini,  
in my vomit.  
I'll spread myself thin,  
drip like syrup down the stool,  
stretch across the bar  
and creep up the walls,  
walls that I could paint  
with the grayness of years,  
my oozing gray,  
draping everything,

and I'll decorate the floor  
with a cacophony of cavernous smiles,  
and all of my lovers,  
all of my wannabe lovers,  
all of the lovers I wanted to be,  
all of you  
my sometime some-kind lovers  
stampede like feral elephants  
over the gaping mouths:  
One of them wide enough  
to swallow all of you whole:  
Then I can digest you  
process you  
purge you  
forget you  
leave you just dirty enough  
that you'll have to do the same,  
someday...  
while I'll be clean  
again...

...for a while...

And then I'll find you,  
again,  
maybe,  
in the same old different place,  
a place I'm sure I dreamed of,  
I'm sure I dreamed you there.  
I dreamed you loved me too,  
I'm sure,  
or at least that was how I painted you,  
once,  
for a moment  
at least,  
I gave you a smile that belonged to me

was made for me  
and I think your smile swallowed me whole.  
And as I slid down your throat  
coated with gray,  
I recalled  
how I could try to steal this from you,  
even though it was already my own.  
I could tear at your vocal cords,  
I could rend your heart  
I could pierce your lungs  
Could defile your liver  
annihilate your spleen  
poison your stomach  
shred your intestine:  
I could.  
But it would only be killing  
me.

Someday...

Maybe...

Maybe I'll dream you again.  
Maybe I'll dream again.  
Maybe I'll dream.  
Maybe...

### Sleep unbecoming

I was sleeping and you were watching me. Sleeping under the pressure of a million eyes, each one intently watching me sleep intensely. Only my desire to sleep made me do so; I wasn't tired—I wanted neither to dream nor to rest, only to sleep. Yet a clear mind and conscience are only found in the sleep of death.

So I dreamed.

I dreamt you watched me dream, as you watched me sleep. Dreaming I was dreaming of my sleep as you watched. I dreamed I dream as I dreamed my sleep.

And you watched it all.

You saw my sleep: my weakness in my weakest of states...helpless, defenseless. You watched me, in my unawareness of how unbecoming I had become in my sleep. I dreamed of my sleeping foulness under surveillance, a million eyes set upon:

The bead, which turned into a string, evolved into a drop and fell from my mouth to moisten my shirt,

The faces I made, all ugly or ridiculous, but never flattering,

The sounds that erupted, burst from my depths from one orifice or another—a grunt, a snore, a snuffle, or, perhaps, a slight escape of gas—all were perceived as I shamelessly slept doing shameful things.

But most shameful and heinous of all was how you saw me, watched me dream. In a twitch or a flinch, a brief mumbled word, you saw my dreaming, and I dreamed I saw you, in my dream, watching me.

And it disturbed my sleep.

It made me twitch,

It made me flinch,

It made me mumble,

It was a nightmare.



'We must have death, but young,  
present, ferocious, fresh death, the  
death of today, today's death.'  
- Hélène Cixous

**Simulacrum of Being**

*When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.*

—*Psalms 139 : 15-16*

The monument of the Self:

a moldering golem:

now bereft  
of ephemeral life:

magically bestowed.

What evil could forge such mockery?

The monument of the Self:

solitary:

fallen unto a garden  
where decay prevails:

vestiges of an indistinct moment  
lost in eternity.

Could evil forge such mockery?

The monument of the Self:

an empty gaze  
fixed in contemplation  
upon detritus and remnants,  
a gaze, contemplating nothing,  
frozen in the expanse of Time.

Is this garden to be entered never more?

Is this monument to be forgotten?

The monument of the Self

:beguiled into meditation  
:abandoned to vegetative rot  
:an organic implosion  
:a cathartic erosion

: a chaotic corrosion

: endless static motion

Self: a forsaken notion

Such mockery forges evil.

Neglected:

Without meaning,  
without purpose,

this statue's willful ruin:

Redundancy

which captivates no witness:  
and Time erodes:

No memory.

No memory can be engineered into life.

No memory can be carved into stone.

No memory can be.

No memory.

Disposable Memory:  
Meaning defined,  
purpose denied,

carga

in defiance of Time:  
The monument of the Self:  
the self-contrived demise of life.

**Anybody can get a library card**

The smell of an old book  
eventually  
reminds me  
of the library  
I opened before you.  
You got a card  
to check out my soul.  
The due-date was ignored,  
the shelves flew into disarray.  
The floor is strewn  
with the random pages  
of periodicals  
long forgotten,  
books are missing pages,  
the computerized catalogue  
has gone haywire.  
A sign on the door:  
The library will be closed  
to the public  
for restorative purposes.

## Gogh

This starry night is shades of  
purple better where a man  
with his guitar can question the  
existence of the moon.

The villagers below  
enjoy tastier suppers, drink  
grapes instead of wine while the finger  
picking poet swaddles his muse in locked arms.

The candlelight brightens table settings  
and smells of cinnamon, cumin, and warm  
tortillas rise through the ginger of his voice.

This starry night is a serenade,  
where the moon is the  
center of the sky.

## Trip to Rio Frio

Rio Frio is where we went one summer when Annie was still a happy half person in your belly. A couple of months later you would bring her into this world, nine pounds of infant glory looking to find her safe haven pocket beside you. We took the leisurely tube ride down the great strands of the river and I would sit on dad's tummy, not really a part of the world yet either, only counting about four years in the cosmopolitan sunlight. You, mom and me reunited in the shallow waters like Egyptian village women washing clothes in the Nile, three generations bonded by the womb but separated by so much more. Mom, who never tore apart the yellow wall paper that Gilmore found so essential, who could never seal the knot between emotion and expression, tried her best to scripture quote femininity to us, forgetting that you and I were the remains of her female pagan ancestors who made tortillas out of the corn god. During the ritual of birth, she exiled us from within and through the grandeur of metamorphosis, we were converted into two diamond-hearted individuals of the earth, and so we became the part of her that she could no longer be. Annie floated like a beach ball. The dragonflies heard her primitive murmurs and came to share their prophecies. They landed on your stomach to whisper their golden insect secrets or transmit with their feet into her baby ears, thoughts about the outside world. You were eighteen and swollen like a basket of fruit, waiting for the day when joy would ransack your life. Perhaps I don't remember this day like you do, and only reflect on it now objectively in a way that dullness and myth permit me to do. But I am certain of the pregnant glow that you had then, and the laughter that came from you and the little girl inside the playground of your uterine walls. And just like our mother gave us the semi-precious stones of her sisters, aunts, and grandmothers of a time now stored in the wishes of the moon, you too have passed on to your daughter something too sacred to be your own.



## Studying Feminism In a Foreign Country

Feminism is what brings me to your country  
Feminism is what surely shocks the sparkplugs,  
Suitcase in hand, traveling between hair follicles  
On the rooftops of your skin

Feminism is what they pay me to investigate  
To tear apart the antiquities  
Spread them like saw dust  
On a broken table

I'll make skewers out of Nelken,  
Martinez Sierra, make lemon spices  
Out of the works of Carmen de Burgos

I'll devour those 1920s Feminine Mystiques  
In two  
Three servings

I'll join their wrath,  
Bounce off the testicles  
Of the New Republic,  
Slap women's asses with the right to vote

And then a fascist thorn will prick my falange,  
And I'll be forgotten,  
forgotten,

Rusting metal on the side of the road...

## Sundays at Villa Pesquera

After Mass you'd stop quickly at home to change clothes  
 And cousins of all sizes would be arranged behind parents  
 To fill four modest vehicles  
 And be escorted to the beach at the Fisherman's Village.  
 In a spirit of unconscious reciprocity,  
 You would spend the remainder of the afternoon  
 Attempting to drive your parents to the *manicomio*,  
 The Carribean bedlam. Do you remember  
 Upon arriving at the shore where civilization  
 Is suspended, the first minutes of rediscovery  
 Spent in mayhem, thrashing and screaming?  
 The small stone owl that centuries of surf  
 Had carved into the top of the tallest stone shelf  
 Peered down disapprovingly at the sand compote applied  
 To the shoulder of a cousin who would not remain defenseless  
 Or innocent for long. You threw forth  
 Your faces to be sculpted by waves of jealousies and victories,  
 Disappointments and anger that would pass,  
 By the joy that also passes.  
 God would give one of you this beach for your wedding,  
 As to your parents before you, but this does not  
 Concern you now, your eyes bowl-full of splashing  
 And revenge.

The sun makes as if to fall a notch,  
 But rather climbs to its highest vantage,  
 Like the peak moment of history, its pomp left unremarked.  
 The iron pot slowly heats up.  
 Palms recede behind you as each swell  
 Bulldozes history, declaring this clearing,  
 Iodizing time, laundering matter,  
 Engineering the scene for our party.  
 The work of millenia, background to fricassé.  
 We display our new bathing suits, nurse our old wounds,  
 Discover what our new breasts can do,

Or intuit what our failing nerves cannot.  
We seek to gain approval, search unwittingly  
For love, tide-hypnotized, breathing  
The suggestion to conduct and control a passion  
Coursing and crashing over rough stone faces.  
The surf is as new as the blood from a lip cut shaving,  
As ancient as Ernesto's jean-cut shorts  
Faded by salt. We never speak of renewal,  
Only of what is best for ourselves and our children  
At this given hour.

In a brief moment

Alone with the tide, one of our party is transported  
By a dead crab lying near his feet,  
The grey and blue warts of its armor laid bare  
For an instant in leggy alienation.  
Its black knob-eyes don't respond  
To his advancing shadow. Suddenly  
It is reclaimed by a surge which reveals  
These segments never were dead!  
This space can bear the screams of a young boy's  
Terrified delight.

Mist rises

Like vanishing warmth. Moss creeps  
Into the craters carved by the uncaring tide  
That majesty seeks to absorb. How can it be  
That forces such as these here prepare  
A space for us? Slivers of cascading silver  
Drain down from the crown. Periodic  
Acquatic shrapnel explodes against the living rock  
As we eat, we do not attend  
To how the light gives birth to a new ocean  
Each fifth minute. The wind kicks up,  
And we do not see the tiniest hummingbird  
Ever to fly beneath human eye  
Surfing the air until beached in the grape trees.  
Scale is emptied and completely rethought.

Canine footprints next to the moss-caves  
Speak of stray dogs the size of Himalayas.  
The sea etches elaborate columnar streams  
Of sheaves and fronds into the cave-face  
The sand offers up, our prehistory  
Unrecognized, overlooked, erased  
Rewritten and misunderstood  
Ten thousand times this afternoon.  
Every moment, another world given,  
A new earth with every wave.  
Microverses of pebbles and rivulet-valleys  
Reveal themselves to Orion and his hunting-party  
Whose astral field glasses, trained upon them,  
Register thier motions. He knows his message-  
Bearing arrows will not reach us  
Before the passing hours snuff them out.  
All this passes in and out  
With the breath you use to cool your fricassé.  
Your aunt warns your cousin, mouth full,  
Speaking in the Spinach language,  
As someone late in the day shouts with surprise  
At the temperature of the water.  
Look up, and the green is different.  
The sea is new again. The sea sparrows,  
Registering the onset of night, pecking  
For their dinner here, as in the old week  
That has lasted now for millions of years.  
You make to leave, forgetting kingfisher hunting,  
The shells and pebbles, already feeling the cusp  
Of the new week about to begin.  
You clean your feet of sand and do not look  
To see that, again, the green is different,  
Again, the sea is brand new. Again.  
Again, the sea is brand new.

## Seven Embers (The Overlay)

### I.

Come, Lord, closer than binoculars.  
Reach into the cam screws of my heart,  
And lock me down. As you're going through  
The downstairs door that no one ever uses,  
Take with you a poem like a seahorse,  
Ridged like a tiny mountain range,  
Or one that has blue petals flecked in purple  
Sawdust fallen from the verbal workbench.

### II.

I offer up the windshield of my pride  
That you may smash it, Lord, with bricks of roses.  
Melt the shards and stitch in molten smoke  
A poem fine as lace or filigree,  
Lovely like the chasing for a chalice.  
Draw from me a poem like the Beatles,  
Like unexpected happiness, forgetful,  
Like corn in autumn, ripe and peeled for Thee.

### III.

In chains of images like tangled brambles,  
Red-brown strokes clot sticky leaves: blood ink  
Smears sap across the face of wrinkled rock.  
The folds of these hills stretch to touch which sea,  
Ridged and precipitous as mountains,  
Rigid and unchangeable as language?

### IV.

Keep me like a penny  
    Made in 1967.  
Keep me in the kitchen

Like an Illinois state quarter.  
 Keep me on your nightstand  
 Like a rosary as you sleep.  
 Keep me in your pocket  
 Like a little bead you like.  
 Keep me in the pages  
 Of your Bible, Lord.

Good night.

V.

Before breakfast, phrases flow in poems  
 Like a lengthy morning jog through languagetown.  
 Poetry: the verbal runner's high.  
 Phrases like the mountain of the past  
 Crease up through the meadow of the pavement.  
 Phrases like snapped rails of timber driftwood  
 Ran all through the night and tore  
 The surface of the morning, which bleeds sugar.  
 Verses darting one upon the other  
 Like the wolves in California snow,  
 Leaping up and folding over others,  
     Phrases like an ice-cold shower,  
     Phrases like a cup of coffee,  
     Phrases like fresh filtered water  
 Await you on the table served  
 In glasses meant for wine.

VI.

A jolly warehouse of a phrase,  
 A rustle of wild limbs and campfire chant  
 Rises through the floorboards, bringing rhythm.  
 Poetry: when speech and hearing fold  
 One another over like a bedspread,  
     Like both ends of a pretzel,  
 Like salt saliva soaking through the sheets.  
 When mystery and clarity together  
 Lay like slime across a dark pond's surface,

Like a vial of black ink mixed into  
A glass of sand, or vial of blue ink mixed  
Into a glass of melting snow,  
A phrase spreads like a piece of climber's gear  
Into a mountain crack and hoists itself,  
Emerging sometimes like a gruesome barb  
Over which you struggle not to fall.

Know Thou all my cells, Lord.  
Phrases like a bird trapped in a church,  
Injured, circle through vaulting arches  
Darkly like the light off broken bottles,  
Lightly like the brown-white ink of wheat.  
The interlay of saints filling the pews  
Like grains of sand, like specks of dust, like air,  
Like empty space filled thick with sound compression,  
The souls of all the saints who've gone before  
Pray now for us where "now" is contradiction,  
Pray now for us where "where" is drained of sense,  
Pray now for us where "sense" has lost its meaning,  
Pray now for us where "meaning" is fulfilled,  
Pray now from where "fulfillment" has no ending,  
Pray now for us where "end" has no beginning:

"Know Thou all our cells, Lord!"

## VII.

The Trinity stops for a moment, changing  
Like perfection laid across itself,  
And steps into the same two rivers twice.

'Hoy es siempre todavía.'  
- Antonio Machado



## The Expatriate Remembers September Eleventh

I have survived one hundred and eighty-nine days  
under the rubble at Ground Zero. They just  
Found me and, in the ambulance, gave me something  
to eat. At the hospital after prolonged consultation,  
It turns out that I am you. You have seen  
My image a lot in the news in the past few days  
And I'm sure you were startled to see me. I attacked  
A World Trade Tower in a jumbo jet. You recognized  
Me right away because you are my Twin.  
You have made of my form a Collosus of rubble;  
I am the seventh wonder of the next world.  
So I have killed you here that I might meet you  
Face to face in Valhalla where  
The feast is rich, the wine is sweet, and I long,  
In toast to you, to see it pour right through  
The gaping hole that had been ripped clean through  
My thorax at my glorious death and soak  
Sticky-sweet into the wool that keeps  
My entrails from spilling out and mixing  
With the banquet. Here's to you as I  
Await your rise from beneath the rubble,  
From beneath contempt, to join in sucking down  
The coagulating corpse of glory.  
My eyes and hands have offended me, so I  
Have cut them off, dismembered hands of traitors,  
Bond dealers, lawyers, daughters, deli-owners,  
Plucked out the eyes of firemen, potters,  
Herdsman, wives, suicide bombers,  
Taliban members. But even though  
I know I am the vehicle of justice,  
Still I have found impossible the breathing  
Of asbestos. So I will show you my  
Location deep beneath the rubble. Listen

Closely. You shall hear me tapping, tapping,  
Tapping, tapping, tapping, tapping, tapping.  
Deep within the vault of my ribs, the finger  
Of my heart continues tapping,  
Although the air is running out. Deep within  
The tangle of my spine, a wire tap  
Reports a coded conversation and  
I cannot decipher the signs.  
On the front page of the Wisconsin State Journal,  
a shot of a group of Pakistani men  
Lifting a banner that reads, "Afghanistan:  
America's Graveyard."  
On the front page of the Imaginary Times,  
A lithograph of three Afghan firemen  
Raising an American flag that reads:  
"Pakistan: Afghanistan's Graveyard."  
On the front page of the Islamabad State Journal,  
A tapestry depicting three American  
Widows visiting the ruins of  
Kabul, carrying a banner that reads, "Manhattan:  
Pakistan's Graveyard."  
On the back page of a Chinese newspaper  
Found in the earth of a Beijing graveyard, an article  
Reporting the U. S. Ambassador to Kenya's  
Request to issue a banner listing the names  
Of three thousand Pakistani orphans  
As the British Royal Palace Guard  
Played "God Bless Afghanistan."  
And for five years as I sang and danced,  
Cursed and squabbled, ate, drank, prayed,  
Got drunk, loved, and made mistakes; you,  
My brother, visualized a halo of fiery  
Glory, and so you studied, trained, planned,  
Weighed, considered, and offered my life, incensed  
By your offering, as well as your own, sanctified  
By daily suicide, five years of patient martyrdom.

And five years from this day, when striving at prayer,  
Focused, penitent and unaware,  
Shall you find your bones adorning earth,  
Emblem of my own revenge; and all  
Our family shall that unholy day  
Be fatherless and motherless and dead.  
And right now in another time zone, a terror  
Maker bearing the exact appearance  
Of my brother is waking up to plan  
A murder. My brother lies back down to clutch  
A few more minutes of delightful rest.  
When you sleep, and your mind is unwound, the flight  
Simulator of your mind is unplugged.  
As you sleep, return to four years old,  
Playing at war; return to the family we are—  
How have you rested with terrorist threat on your head?  
I wish to know for, soon, I will join you.  
So I must try not to wish your death,  
Or wish eternal death on your behalf.  
Nor must I try to bring your death about,  
Offering a poisoned cup you have  
Prepared for me as I do not protest  
Enough. Sleep is like mercy. And when I  
Return there, I rejoin all those on the other  
Side of the world, even those in another Time Zone  
Who are already awake and already attacking.



Photo by Dinorah Cortés-Vélez

## **Duermevela IV (lluvia)**

central standard time

dicen que llueve en Monterrey  
y yo saco mi paraguas en Madison

nunca el sol había mojado tanto

**Duermevela VII (Seis de la mañana)**

el cuerpo sigue estando ahí, aunque cierre los ojos para desaparecer; y mientras mece su respiración, se inventa otros nombres, se imagina de otros sudores.

el cuerpo se duele, se cansa e inventa temores que lo dejan frente a una puerta sin poder cambiar de posición. Con la luz encendida.

entiende mejor por eso se desgarrar por partes y sangra

se sabe completo y se burla si le explican que algo falta

el cuerpo se cambia de olores, abre la ventana a deshoras y me alcanza en una esquina a las seis de la mañana. finalmente pone sus manos en mis bolsillos y comentamos con pocas palabras que ya falta menos para que comience el verdadero invierno.

## **Púrpura $\frac{3}{4}$ (última duermevela)**

y la historia sencillamente podría ser que compró el boleto, subió al greyhound, viajó 6 horas y llegó

o que pagó 37 dólares con 67 centavos, buscó el asiento 11 y vio por la ventana: 35 vacas, 5 ardillas, 1 mapache y ningún perro muerto.

o que terminó una novela sobre la memoria, escuchó un cd con mensajes subliminales y leyó los dos primeros versos de un libro con una dedicatoria en subjuntivo.

o que se cambió de asiento cuatro veces, tuvo tres historias con dos vergas diferentes, cobró su cuota y cuando terminaron discretamente encendió la luz.

o que desayunó, se preparó un sándwich, compró un chicle y bajó en Kenosha para conseguir un chocolate y un vaso con leche.

o que durmió abrazando la chamarra, usándola de almohada, de cobija y soñó un poco mientras babeaba la bufanda, perdía los guates y dibujaba caritas con vapor en el cristal de la ventana.

o que finalmente recostó la cabeza en el olvido y despacito se susurro al oído un cuento de lunes trágicos, de gianninas muertas y de los 8 nuevos conjuros que había aprendido para traerlas de vuelta

## recorte de servicios

he decidido cancelar mi memoria  
dejar de pagar las cuotas mensuales y que me recorten el servicio  
por intereses atrasados.

voy a dejar de recordarme todas las mañanas, de llevar  
nomeolvides a mis tumbas personales y de poner atención a esos  
recuerdos inútiles que me dicen que: me llamo giannina, me  
gusta el otoño, tengo 26 años y me dan miedo los ratones.

quiero todas las mañanas levantarme y poder inventar un nombre  
nuevo para el lugar en donde me encuentro, descubrir mi cara  
en el espejo, oler mi café como si nos enamoráramos por primera  
vez y dejar de preocuparme por ser siempre una continuidad  
repetida de lo que conozco como yo.

tener, en fin, muchas vidas distintas o una sola que no se gaste  
con el uso.

conseguir, al fin, dejar de escribir poemas y poder crearme y  
recrearme con sólo una palabra que nunca sea capaz de recordar  
de esas que aún no encuentro en el diccionario y que rima,  
invariablemente, con olvido.



wrapped in the circus stripes of my life,  
the road will be paved in my cigarette butts  
and the water warmed by the path  
i cut back and forth between continents  
to be at all garden parties at once.

## Well's darkness

They ate and sat by the table, watched in silence a distant tree in the fields that spread stained light all around, in it a few unclear cattle were wondering, one of them lifted its head and mooed at the low sky for a long time. After the voice died, his wife sighed, but so softly that only after a while he understood what he had heard. She took away the plates and stacked them up on the masonry; crossed the dirt floor in her bare socks; then sat on a chair between the pails and other things of hers, —what she was doing there, Skridaila did not look. He thought to himself a few times that he needs to get the clay covered shovel from the entrance-room,<sup>1</sup> to finish digging the ditch, the ground is now so cold and sticky—it died together with its grass, trees, crops. He turned back to his wife: a white spot of an end of a sock in her hands, crisscrossed needles—like a curb of a wooden well, in its square black opening, the pails steam in the snow storm, the men bring those pails in, put them next to the feet, above the head an invisible chimney is smoking, the neighbors' faces look at it. A neighbor does not live to see the spring—so the carts linger down the road, in the third from the beginning sit the choristers, steam is coming out of their mouths, somebody laid down their spoon forever. I'm going to dig the ditch, thought Skridaila, his wife's head nod was barely noticeable, what will she think about left alone, long ago butchered cattle names will be wondering through her mind, blood steams on snow, those rare cattle deaths fed their children and grandchildren. The things, the stones and the trees that still will need to be seen and caressed by own hands, get fewer. Skridaila was digging hard, time and again straightening up and looking at the distance, work, like a fence, separates one from everything that is not necessary, in the distance there is nothing new, chunks of clay are so heavy, need more air in the chest. He felt that his head got dizzy, he thrust his weight upon the shovel, the hands were shaking, it should pass soon, there wasn't fear in his mind yet,

although the alder grove, the field and the tree took turns seeming black and red. Then he understood that it won't pass, this hour comes to everybody, all want it to be short and easy, but it's rarely like that. Grabbing the chest with his hands, he was dragging slowly back to the hut, he did not want to fall in the middle of that long road. When she saw a white face in the door, she didn't yell, only stood up slowly, as if she has been waiting like this for a long time. He lied obediently, drank what he was given, a cup in his palm looked as little as a flower, he listened to his inside for any changes, he couldn't understand what changed so suddenly. She was standing besides him, too shy to sit down when he wasn't well.

- Lay for a while longer, sleep, forget the ditch, you'll dig it in spring.

- In spring they will dig one for me. A short one.

- You want something maybe?

- No.

- Maybe I should bring something to ease the heart?

- Ok, bring it.

In the evening, nothing hurt anymore, only the head was still spinning, although very lightly, it was spinning. The walls were swimming away, her face and her voice were moving away without returning, he called her by the name, took her hand, told her to sit on the edge of the bed.

In the morning he felt better, the fear was gone, there was only sadness, he started remembering all sorts of old things; then, a little dog with crooked ears ran up to his bed, —he used to carry it in his bosom going into the meadows, after the war, a car crushed it, he buried it under an apple tree, it laid so light on a shovel.

- Mother, what was the name of the little dog that the car ran over?

- Rucis, —she answered without thinking.

- And the grey one?

- Meškis.<sup>2</sup> Why are you always remembering?

He answered something else.

- You know, by October 1<sup>st</sup> it will be exactly three months that I dream every night my father, mother. And I so little around the yard...—he listened to what she was going to say, but didn't hear anything. —What do think? How much longer will I dream that?

- Long, —she pronounced softly, —I dream with dead children for years.

- Every night?

- Almost.

- And I, every night. Father mother, father mother. And I so little around the yard. You remember: we lived in Dvarėininkai<sup>3</sup> village on a hill, on the bottom there were meadows, the horses used to neigh. And the well.

- No. You took me not from your village, —and she started to cry.

- Don't cry, —he threatened. —Your crying will bring misfortune.

She quieted down obediently, made a scratching noise with something and was sitting quieter than a mouse. A cracking of an apple tree was heard at the end of the garden. If only I could get some of that water, Skridaila said to himself : you pour it over you from a wooden pail, three forged metal hoops, it runs burning down your throat, under the well's curb—deep darkness, green lichen on the rocks, the water doesn't even shine in the deepness, in the evening, bats come flying out it, they silently flash across the face, in the morning the green meadows at the bottom of the hill suddenly glitter, in its front—twelve willows, the thirteenth one is only a child, a colt is standing next to it, it looks to the top of the hill, thinks, how hard it will be once it grows up, and the colorful women rake hay in the distance, they all take a drink, becoming joyful and beautiful, the handles of rakes are flashing in their hands...

- I don't know, —she became perplexed, —If the hill is still there. And how will I bring it back?

- Take the green yoke with you, it's not big at all, it won't be heavy—you'll bring it.

She smiled sadly, nodded her head:

- Maybe on Sunday?

- I'll suffer till then, —he promised.

On Sunday she rouse early, fed the cattle while it was still dark, she stopped by the bed in her white kerchief already and the green yoke in her hands, looked over the food, left on the chair:

- You want something else, maybe?

- But you'll be back soon?

- I'll come back, draw water and come back.

She closed the door quietly, she left. He slowly followed her little footsteps through the birch grove, there would be one or two late mushrooms, the last birds ran about between branches. She was walking without lifting her head to them, remembering everything all by herself, then he opened his eyes and began waiting even more eagerly. Behind the window, a grayish sky shined long and boring. He woke up—his wife was already back.

- I brought some.

He only took one sip, put the glass on the floor next to the bed:

- That is piss.

He didn't pity her, he didn't call her by the name from the kitchen. Enduring, she came to him herself.

- Where will I get it? There is no hill anymore or the well. I asked the old Mickienė.<sup>4</sup>

- And where is the hill?

- They ploughed it down.

- And the well?

- They covered it with stones. This year her daughter-in-law grew a ration<sup>5</sup> of turnips there.

He couldn't look any longer at her wrinkled red face, he turned towards the wall.

- I'm not lying, - she said.

- Your clothes smell of candles.

- I was there, but on the way out I met Mickienė—and so I asked.

- She is also lying.

At night she laid down on a different bed, sighing in darkness all by herself. He turned on his back—facing up, he pronounced:

- In the morning, I myself will go.

At first on the road, then through the birch grove, there would be one or two late mushrooms, the last birds ran about between branches, he was walking without lifting his head, remembering everything all by himself. He was climbing up a steep clay hillside, at the top he stopped: there weren't any longer meadows or willows, only tractor-ploughed dirt, footsteps of people and cattle—in them, yellow water dwelled. He scooped some of the cold water with his hands, looked at it, looked at it, spilled it on the ground. Crunched over he stood on top of the hill till it got dark.

In the darkness he felt her little hands on his wet cheeks.

- How did you get here? – he asked surprised.

- You were screaming so dreadfully, so dreadfully...

From *With butterfly on the lips*  
Vilnius: Presvika, 2000

Translated by Kristina Puotkalytė-Gurgel

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The entrance-rooms (priemenė) in old Lithuanian village houses were rooms almost always separated by the door from the main part of the house. They served for various purposes, often to keep or store various things. These special entrance-rooms and the word to designate them are associated with village life.

<sup>2</sup> The letter “š” in Lithuanian is pronounced as English “sh.”

<sup>3</sup> The letter “ė” in Lithuanian is pronounced as English “ch” (as in “choice”)

<sup>4</sup> In Lithuanian, a last name ending in “-ienė” denotes a married female.

<sup>5</sup> A ration here refers to rations in communist system.

## **Park Fort Williams, Cape Elizabeth**

The black, wet rocks of the shoreline cliffs  
are thick-crested with vegetation.  
Here are crowding locust, bayberry and wild rose,  
each holding the pale underside of its salt-toughened leaves  
stiff against the rough coastal breeze.

Grey waters pound the rocks,  
the tangles of abandoned kelp,  
under a leaden sky.

As if suspended  
over a carpet of white mist  
pale grey islands  
dot the edge of the world:  
assuring an indecipherable tongue  
of an order and complexity  
teeming beyond  
the infinite horizon.

## Borges Returns from the Dead

1.

But his life is already in reverse,  
a garden wall or a tree with edges blurred  
since in his city on the silver river  
the haze is eternal, the sun  
long ago replaced by an unkempt star.

2.

I come, without explanations, to inhabit  
the flat next door, a stranger  
recognized at once by the bleary eye.  
Bedside, I hold his dry hand  
as he narrates the outrages of the emperor  
and his henchmen. The names mean  
nothing to me, but when I say  
*Kipling*, the code is broken  
And the night is spent reading.

He is smiling into the unusual air  
like a found child.

3.

At dawn, of course, the soldiers come. One  
of us is an assassin, the other the victim.  
Borges pleads for the housekeeper  
To save him, but she is polishing the teapot  
from Adrogué, and can't be bothered.  
"Nothing ever meant more to me," he calls,  
then disappears.



4.

In the catacombs of violence  
where they have carried us,  
my decrepit beloved, I will  
find you. You will have forgotten me,  
but only let me spit upon your eyes  
so you can see it all, once: the patio  
in evening light, the damp pathway  
that leads to the beast, a single,  
illegible page left lying on the table  
by the bed where you died precisely  
and without further comment in some  
quaint century of your own invention.

**Maybe Grace**

The map of the soul  
is a migration  
of small glass birds  
of the obsidian wind.  
The reason  
of everything  
lodged in bonehollows.  
Who can we trust  
in such a weightless  
exchange of breath?  
The body is forever  
going again away,  
a speck on the lens  
wiped clean.

## San Juan

On a mountainside in Michoacán  
the skinned goat  
gives up the ghost. This is the terrifying  
symmetry of beasthood: one  
hoof hung against the other, clacking  
in the bodiless wind.

The night is cold. The horses are tired,  
steam rises from their eyes.  
They have traveled to the tin cross  
and back, they have eaten ash.  
One of them walks dreaming  
of his hands, of their whip.

In the valley a broken belltower  
Rises from cinder, leaning  
toward the moon. The ghosts  
of the Otomí veer  
their eyes. The chisels  
lift and fall, the granite rings.

**Two White Horses in a Row**

I'm an odd package.  
A black tin of buttons.  
I shout into the canyon  
and pebbles scatter  
like terrified armies  
but the tourists just sit  
on the bus and laugh.  
I clear my throat  
and the seasons change,  
backwards. Even  
my mother is disgusted.  
I love the word melancholy  
more than any other.  
The blue slant of October  
light. Gods and gnaw  
on the bones of girls.  
Stroke my throat  
and I will sing till  
it kills us both.  
I had a box of birds' nests.  
I had a glass gun.  
I had irrational hands.  
I was so good I died,  
after which the badgers  
built a glinting city  
on the table of sacrifice.

## Mapa del día

I am in all the places I  
want to be

Voy caminando por las  
calles de Madison  
mirando  
en el horizonte  
las montañas  
de Oaxaca  
and the clouds  
playing tricks  
on my gaze

Voy respirando  
el olor de las jacarandas  
y sudores  
del DF  
telling me  
of secrets  
wars  
and public  
pleasures

I find pieces of the moon  
on my nails  
murmurándome  
de encuentros  
en La Habana  
Jalapa  
y calle Dolores

Voy escuchando  
el gemido del mar  
del golfo

y del pacífico  
en un solo  
y enorme latido

I feel Winter's air  
of Minnesota  
bringing me  
mañanitas  
frías  
en Tijuana

Me voy a dormir  
en el centro  
de Monte Albán  
bajo las estrellas  
de Octubre  
and I wake up  
on a bus ride  
to Querétaro  
in the middle  
of January  
or at the edge  
of Lake Mendota  
en una noche  
de mayo

I am in all the places I  
want to be

Mi cuerpo  
es un país  
sin fronteras

Tácticamente  
speaking,  
estratégicamente  
viviendo.

## **Latino/a intellectual**

The secretary  
of Chicano Studies  
sends me  
this message:  
“The head of multicultural  
programming  
on campus  
needs a professor  
to speak  
next Monday  
about the history  
of the piñata  
and she’s wondering  
if you might  
be interested?”

Isabel Guadalupe

Long and delicate, but stronger than I'll ever be  
thickly woven with the language of my ancestors  
the kind of name imprinted into the backs of your eyelids  
and maybe a reflection of how I wish I were

I am named, first, for my grandmother, Diana Elizabeth  
Burrows

I don't remember her much, but I remember her beauty  
and sometimes I think of how Isabel, Spanish Elizabeth,  
could be more like Diana Burrows  
a sad, strong woman with fine but hard working hands and a  
past that I wish she could have forgotten before the sickness  
took her

my father's grandmother, Guadalupe Venegas  
another brave woman with years of hard work lining her face  
I try to remember her, too  
but the past seems too far away  
they tell me I have her nose- that I'm like her in many ways  
but Guadalupe is just another name I could never live up to  
the Virgin- her image cast on candles in my kitchen and  
bathroom  
and whether she's watching over me or her country  
in her silk green robe, with her golden stars, sun rays and  
angels at her feet,  
I could never be like her

Isabel Guadalupe

too thick to pronounce  
usually made out slowly and carefully so as not to choke on  
the language  
a name which I sometimes associate with ugly pale women in  
their 50's  
who tell me it's 'so lovely' without the tiniest bit of respect  
and I feel as though they've also taken my dignity



reducing my name to 7 syllables and nothing else  
no culture or history  
but just a pretty little name  
greener and yellower  
than la Virgin de Guadalupe

**Look back fondly**

You'll ask me if I remember those cheap  
    Payless shoes that turned my socks black  
And I'll tell you how I could run faster  
    than anyone on the playground in those shoes.  
You'll tell me about the tile on my kitchen floor,  
    how it was old and had holes in it  
And I'll tell you how on those cold days  
    I'd run barefoot to the places where the sun's  
    rays hit the floor and warmed it up.  
You'll tell me about that time when Santa Clause came to my  
    house, exposing how Santa  
    and his elves were social workers bringing presents  
    to the poor  
And I'll recount how happy I was  
    to open the presents I had received.  
You'll tell me about the crime  
    that plagued my neighborhood when I was small  
And I'll tell you about the summer days  
    when I played football in the alley with the  
    neighborhood kids till the streetlights  
    called me home.

## **Rio Grande**

You turn, stream and flow through the years  
Dividing two worlds  
At night I hear the moaning of your waters  
And witness as La Llorona dances on your surface  
Dark dark water, I cannot see the moon reflected  
In your mirror.  
Devourer you are, merciful you are not.

You are the divine children of Chac  
Gathered in the spiteful trench.  
Tell me, has the ancient rain god put you there  
To keep the tribes from returning to Aztlán  
Or do the demi gods scorn mankind?

I see the figures float in your body,  
Nameless and faceless  
Inatimate.  
They all swirl in your boiling whirlpool  
Create a sorrowful stew.  
Innocent you look, but evil you brew



"unrecognized boundry" by w.m. rueter

## **Yo no soy un poeta político**

yo no soy un poeta político  
mas la poesía es arma suficiente  
para acribillarle la consciencia al más péfido enemigo

quiero que conste que yo no soy  
de ninguna manera  
un poeta político

**Renuncia**

*O poeta é um fingidor.  
Finge tão completamente  
Que chega a fingir que é dor  
A dor que deveras sente.*

--Fernando Pessoa

hoy o mañana no seré nombrado “Poeta del Mes”  
ni mi fotografía colgará en las paredes  
de los fastfoods culturales  
ni ocuparé sitios de honor  
en los congresos de la universidad

ni mis poemas figurarán en las antojolías  
ni seré referido  
en los manuales de historia literaria de este país  
ni de ningún otro

ni seré pintado por Francis Bacon Antoni Tàpies  
Pancho Rodón Lucien Freud  
(mucho menos por Fernando Botero)

ni seré tema de discusión en los programas de la radio  
la prensa la tele o la internet  
por enésima vez el jurado rechazará mis textos  
en el certamen de Casa de las Américas  
ni seré alabado ni vilipendiado mil y una veces  
en las tertulias de fin de semana

ni seré perseguido por la CIA la INTERPOL  
los fundamentalistas religiosos  
ni siquiera por la ETA

a las feministas les ruego que si ven mi nombre  
avanzar sobre el pavimento tomen  
de inmediato la próxima bocacalle a la derecha

que sólo el olvido sea la última morada del poeta que fui  
y no tuvo por qué serlo

**Ocaso**

los dioses marcharon  
imperturbables  
hacia la caída del día

y  
a mí  
me dio  
por bostezar



## Retrato cubista de mujer sola

los senos  
—próximos a las rodillas—  
se confunden con sus gordos pensamientos  
las manos están incrustadas en las caderas  
un eco se asoma por las orejas  
con premeditación y alevosía  
el horizonte es ciego en el talle  
y dado que la nariz chorrea cabellos rubios  
su mirada entorpece la posibilidad de un pañuelo

todo lo que ella es  
tiene un nombre húmedo  
y sin sombra

en fin  
los colores le corren  
por la espalda  
como una leve y tierna interrogante

**Filosofema 1**

el orden  
de  
las cosas  
es  
un orden  
sin  
cosas

## **Filosofema 2**

la nada  
como otra nada alevosa  
ofrece al agonista  
un espejo debatido  
que conduce  
a un paisaje  
lleno de carencias

Dame tu aliento de sangre.

Mil ráfagas te dibujan frente a mis dedos  
que recorren la fisonomía del aire  
hallándote en el vacío;  
terrible agobio.

Implacables avenidas ahuman tu silueta destellante  
formando la tenue catadura que se asoma;  
mi mente recorre  
los suelos escabrosos,  
hollando miradas inmóviles y ceños inquietantes.  
Te busco en los árboles que bordean mi suelo,  
armada de la violencia de las horas  
que gimen el clamor de nuestra noche.  
El fragor estupefaciente de mis dedos  
destempla los caminos  
que te sitían.

Vuélquense en polvo  
las provincias despiadadas,  
para verte entre mi frente y tus piernas.  
Y mientras la noche nos tiende su puente de orlas  
besa mis rodillas con el camino hacia tus manos.

Vestigios de sangre  
acarrear el compás agitado  
de un testigo inquieto  
que asombra el silencio de las nubes.

Todo se agita.

Ante el destello voraz que se aproxima  
el mar se vuelve un cúmulo de olas  
que rompen  
agitadas  
su fuerza  
para anunciar que amanece en tus manos.

Te busco estripitosamente  
en la agitación acompasada de este suelo  
que se encrespita  
ante el sonido de tu alarma.

Crepitan las palpitations de tu aliento.

Llueve sobre mis ventanas.



Photo by Nancy Bird

Un golpe turbó tus pestañas  
en el torrente cáustico que te acechaba.  
La feroz enredadera te sumió en los páramos profundos  
del férreo tronar del abismo.  
Templado, en tus pupilas,  
gritaste ecos sin nombre.

El despertar fue el sueño de los inmediatos.

Frases inconexas aleteaban  
buscando tus palabras,  
y angostas, se ceñían sobre tu suelo acompasado.  
El aire tornábase de vidrio.  
Entre el jadear de tus poros profundos  
sonaba una alerta  
llamándote en el vacío.

Al asecho de seres sin órbita  
te asediaron los centinelas.  
Díscolos y pendencieros,  
terribles en sus reclamos fatuos,  
los heraldos violentos se aferraban a tu cuello,  
y, lineales, convocaban al batallón de los mudos.

Tal vez tu espera alimentaba sus hueses.

Entre el silencio de tus manos  
tronaba una luz exigua.

Aquel sueño jadeante  
en los vientos de la infancia  
se convocaba dichosamente;  
por bosques petrificados en la espuma  
asomaba una voz

mortificada por el humo de tantas pasiones dormidas.  
En aquel flagelar de tu sangre  
estaba la canción dormida  
que reclamaría a gritos  
tu esencia primigénea.  
Y allí, acostada sobre tus ansias,  
mi voz te llamó, desnuda.



Lírica "primitiva" (o "de tipo popular") inédita. Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid: manuscrito 3685 (660).

Marinero o pescador.  
Si pescador,  
traeré redes;  
si marinero,  
me iré siempre.

ooo

En el mar he de morir  
que no supe insistir.

ooo [*Casi ilegible*]

Malmaridada la niña  
no sabe de amores  
ni sabe de bares.

ooo

Malo es de guardar,  
dineros y amores por el ~~limonar~~.  
bulevar.\*

Salí del mercado, padre,  
mañanica de San Juan  
la calle como la albahaca  
que tenía que comprar.

Salí del mercado, amiga,  
mañanica de San Juan  
y tu casa olía a albahaca  
que acababa de mercar.

Salí de tu casa, amiga,  
mañanica de San Juan,  
la camisa oliendo a albahaca  
sin albahaca que llevar

Volví del mercado, padre,  
en la tarde de San Juan,  
sin amor y sin albahaca  
ni dineros que gastar.

Malo es de guardar,  
dineros y amores por el bulevar.

ooo

Por entrar en los bares  
dicen que bebo.  
Por entrar en los bares  
donde te espero

ooo

Los vagones del metro  
que te han dormido  
ahora mecen las luces  
con que te miro.

ooo

Que ya lo murmura el tráfico  
y se acerca el día.  
Y yo, con el alba y la tuya,  
aquí: despierto de tanta cercanía.

ooo

Camino del trabajo  
mi bien se aleja.  
Tiene café su aliento,  
su boca besos que despiertan.

[*Recopilación de Juan F. Egea*]

\* Así en el original



"Synagogue at James Madison Park"  
by w.m. rueter

## Égloga seis

Al dulce lamentar de dos pastores Giovanni el argentino y  
Panchito el mexicano  
El alto ascensor de Van Hise sube y baja con su rebaño blondo.  
Entre el piso 10 y el 11 tañendo su zampoña de lata  
Entre medieval y siglo de oro Giovanni canta  
Mientras una pastora huye con sonrisa de cartón:  
Oh Madison, más helado que la nieve no respondes a mis  
quejas!  
Y tu examen de maestría tan duro como masticar mármol  
Nadie sabe de mis cuitas ni nunca lo sabrá.  
He de explicarle a mis jefes los secretos de mi lengua  
Aprendida entre nodrizas indias y castizas,  
Bebida del amor incandescente de las musas callejeras?  
O he de quedarme como el loro repetitivo ante tu gesto y  
obediente?  
Cómo leer 150 libros y seguir amando la literatura  
Después de contemplar el fruto del corazón humano  
Vuelto lodo, papel corriente, instrumento autoritario e  
inclemente?  
Cómo he de reconocerte poesía cuando te encuentre frente a mí  
En alguna calle a medianoche o a media mañana en el ascensor  
Mientras me dirijo a recitar mis puntos de partida ante el  
rústico auditorio?  
Acaso las musas del piso 10 me dirán cómo tantear tu lomo  
mirar tu pie de página?  
Oh poesía, tus puertas se abren y veo tus fuentes venir hacia mí  
En arranque de zapato y zapatilla bajo la piel temblorosa del  
otoño!

## De qué se trata todo esto (Teoría literaria)

Se trata de partir una vaca en pedacitos  
y pasarla por el ojo de una aguja  
y entonces empiezas con el rollo

Si la vaca te queda chueca o masticada  
si se te perdió un churrasco en el camino  
hazte el cojudo

porque de eso se trata todo esto  
quien llega hasta el final  
cumpliendo su hora

el asunto es no perder la razón en dimes

para reconstruirla al otro lado sin que nadie se dé cuenta

que la cola es así o asá  
que la lengua es así o asá  
que las tetas (se dice ubres) asá o así

ellos también lo harán y lo entenderán

un poco incompleto quizá  
pero entero para pasar por caja

y directes que tal por cual la vida es así  
continúa goza lee medita descansa y vuelve  
alimenta y viste el humano sentir

disculpa hermano no me dí cuenta sigue  
con tu vaca a la pradera fraganciosa que

**Epitalamio**

*Para Paloma y John*

El sur y el norte se han encontrado en el medio oeste  
Pero el fuego arde en la nieve y no estamos solos  
Dime Candela dime Paloma dime que la noche es cierta  
Y que todavía hay tiempo para el amor y los cantos  
Después de escribir poesía o escuchar cómo dicen que  
    la escribieron otros con el oro de los siglos  
Porque siempre la canción de ahora es la mejor  
Y estamos aquí para celebrar novios y es ése nuestro oficio  
Levantar todos los días nuestro pequeño fósforo en la pradera  
    cenicienta  
Para alumbrar el camino adornado de ceros  
Como si entrásemos en la gramática comentada de las flores:  
El mundo son dos que se abrazan haciendo campo a los que  
    sueñan

*(Madison, 23 de noviembre 2003)*

## La konkista perfekta

(karma's smell)

Veo las praderas llenas de centros comerciales  
y añoro el búfalo salvaje  
En el cielo tan puro y azul brillante  
el lago con su águila dibujada en la colina del  
frente  
adivino el pez que no existe la danza con el fuego  
El esplendor de la raza blanca es abrumador  
Para verlo con normalidad  
hay que quitarse los libros de los ojos  
olvidar  
Mirar a lo bob dylan a lo elvis  
-negros tampoco are allowed in this vision-  
el horizonte  
veo lo que no veo  
me falta kultura  
mestaré bolviendo vruto?  
debo regresar a mi cursito de buenas maneras  
con los demás recién llegados del sur-oriente  
para que nos enseñen cómo debo ver  
y no llamar más la atención sobre los ausentes  
(los ausentes, cuyas sombras aletean tras los lagos  
escondidos en las hojas arrastradas del otoño  
más allá de la esquina de West Washington  
y sus manchas de petróleo sobre la pista elhada)

Desliza suave,  
resbala rutas,  
recorre origen,  
celebra surcos,  
discurre risa,  
color murmura,  
lame latidos,  
Sudor Salvaje,  
aislado por  
las movedizas dunas  
de mis pechos,  
en tanto el día  
oye del calor  
de ariscos pasos.





Photo by Dinorah Cortés-Vélez

**Geografía de tu axila**

Rozar de rubicunda lengua  
por los accidentes de tu piel,  
restregar de inquieta yema  
por la periferia  
de tu hueco trémulo,  
tierno mordisquear  
de tu térreo lunar,  
húmeda exploración  
de tu habla primera,  
¡Vuelta!

Un marido de días lentos,  
y otro de vida lenta,  
y ella corría , corría, corría. . .



Donde vivo no es mi casa  
no es que mi casa no sea donde vivo,  
es que mi casa no está donde vivo.



Mi cama es pequeña  
No espero invitados

El dia va cedir  
a l'imatge que en tenia d'ell  
No va ploure  
a  
Nova York

(El día cedió  
a la imagen que tenía de él  
No llovió  
en  
Nueva York)

De cop, suaument, íntimament  
amb l'alegria d'haberse trobat,  
el meu nom va ser pronunciat  
per tu i esdevinguer un so únic.  
Mantell instantani, campana de vidre,  
ignora el voltant  
capta, roba el temps,  
¡l'únic que tens!

(De pronto, suavemente, íntimamente  
con la alegría de haberse encontrado,  
mi nombre fue pronunciado  
por ti, y se tornó en un sonido único  
pálio instantáneo, campana de vidrio  
ignora el alrededor  
capta, roba el tiempo,  
¡lo único que tienes!)

## Sólo desaparecidos

*No basta con saber morir, hay que saber desaparecer.*

—Baudrillard

...y hoy está escribiendo al fin el nombre, hoy, al fin, pero no con esa letra suya tan cargada de trazos innecesarios, curvas, ganchillos, y siempre los copetes engominados sobre las mayúsculas y las líneas que se extienden como hilos de orina al término de cada palabra. Está escribiéndolo, el nombre, como si no quisiera acabar nunca, con una lentitud de semilla que revienta y echa fuera un tallo frágil, ridículo, sin hojas. Es una burda línea que tirándose hacia arriba está dando la “l” y ahora él gira la plumilla como si diera vuelta a la llave de gas de su estufa y será la “e” y luego la “t” igual que una cruz de madera clavándose sobre la tumba blanca del renglón y luego la “a” y entonces “Violeta”, sin apellido, sólo “Violeta”, se pensará que no existe otra, y sí, quizá para él, “Violeta”, sin murmurarse la advertencia habitual que usaba con los otros: *ya saben, sólo desaparecidos.*

Esto sucede hoy, pero ayer, ayer todavía se defendía con las combinaciones. Había empezado con ellas porque de pronto le cogió miedo a las personas y a los retratos que le empujaban ante los ojos hasta que su propia respiración empañaba los cristales. Una y otra vez dijo que era suficiente con los nombres. Pero explíqueme a todas esas mujeres que lo rodeaban, sobre todo mujeres y a sus hijos de ojos redondeados por el hambre y ahora por la esperanza, que unas letras eran más importantes que los rostros de las fotografías, rostros echados de la infancia a patadas, adultos prematuros con uniformes militares o con simples sacos adaptados que habrán pertenecido a algún abuelo. “Mi papá”, chillaban los niños; “mi hombre”, aullaban las mujeres; y él, también a gritos, “los nombres, sólo los nombres”.

Ayer todavía se sentaba en los restaurantes de *La Candelaria*, barrio adonde fue a parar porque allí nadie sabía nada de él ni de su directorio, se bebía tres cervezas *Costeñas* y se iba a vagar por el barrio hasta que lo alcanzaba de nuevo la sed o lo tiraba la borrachera. En el durante únicamente escribía; no tanto, tampoco se crea; apenas cuando el nombre de “Violeta” llegaba antes que la inconsciencia y él era incapaz de mantenerlo en la boca como un rezo inaudible. En esos momentos en que lo sentía escurrir desde sus labios, perder ingravidez e irse espesando camino a sus dedos, en esos instantes prefería inventar y recurría a cualquier otro nombre que no fuera el de Violeta, lo reunía con el primer apellido que se le ocurriera y abriendo el cuaderno donde el separador garabateaba rápidamente “Hugo Díaz” o “Josefina Caicedo” o simplemente “Liliana Silva”, meras combinaciones azarasas cuyo mérito estaba en contener el alud en que para entonces se le había convertido su “Violeta”. Él se defendía así y bien, pero las calles de *La Candelaria* ya desde ayer se estaban poblando con cantidad de gente extraña al barrio, gente viva y gente muerta.

Antier, todavía viviendo en su barrio y en su casa, enfundándose el saco de las coderas y echándose hacia atrás el largo cabello gris, intentando desconocerse en el espejo para hallar algo más que la interminable nariz de siempre y esos ojos de niño o de loco; saliendo él a la calle con el “Buenos días” a punta de boca para cada uno de sus vecinos, quienes, sin embargo, ya desde antier y también desde antes de antier, lo recibían con listas de nombres que le leían sin comas, juntando en una promiscuidad irrespetuosa a personas que no habían coincidido ni en sangre ni a voluntad cuando todavía estaban en el barrio, entre nosotros, o sería mejor, más propio, decir entre ellos, cuando todavía estaban entre ellos. Antier entonces, mientras la gente, su gente, se atropellaba repitiéndole los nombres que igual él conocía porque los había usado para saludar a sus dueñas y dueños y para despedirse y para llamar sus atenciones en el medio de todas las charlas comunes que tuvieron antes de la guerra y antes de los secuestros masivos y

antes de los asesinos a sueldo y las cuentas pendientes y las cacerías; antier, digo, mientras él interrumpía el vocerío para hacer la advertencia de siempre luego de cada nombre que le leían - *ni muerto ni vivo, ¿verdad?, ya saben, sólo desaparecidos* -, desde el restaurante de enfrente unos hombres de chaqueta sobre chaqueta y tinto tras tinto calentándoles la garganta lo miraban ya sin interrogarse entre sí pero con la pregunta muda en sus ojos “¿Y por qué el amigo Castrillón no escribe el nombre de su mujer?”

Antes antes de antier, o sea anteanteantier, o sea el domingo, fue cuando descubrí que algunos reaparecidos no le gustábamos. Entonces él todavía sentía curiosidad o una obligación por desplazarse con el gentío a fin de cotejar lo que para ese instante ya nadie ponía en duda. Casi siempre era un grito lo que hacía andar a las mujeres de faldas largas y siempre negras, a los niños de mejillas encostradas y lustrosas como el caparazón de una tortuga que recién sale del agua, a los ancianos que sin necesidad empujaban un bastón frente a sus zancadas artificiosamente cortas. Eso sí, nadie corría, a pesar de saber que otro había vuelto. Iban despaciosos, con un afán de demora, primero por las aceras y luego, cuando eran los suficientes ya como para detener el tránsito de los autos y las busetas, por las calles. En su silencio sólo lijado por el resbalar de las suelas y el roce de las ropas se presentía el miedo, un miedo casi siempre sin rastro aunque en ocasiones podía seguirse en el movimiento furtivo de una mano que guardaba en el bolso uno de aquellos retratos de hombres-niño o en el histérico mandato con el cual las madres, de pronto, enviaban de vuelta a las casas a sus hijos para ocuparse de quehaceres inexistentes. Supongo que en todas esas personas iban creciendo un par de certezas como dos serpientes que se enroscan: mi hombre está muerto; yo no voy a dar un espectáculo. Y sin embargo a la hora de llegar a la plazoleta, a la esquina, al quicio de la puerta de donde provenían los alaridos, una de las serpientes se desenroscaba y entonces los deudos caían de rodillas frente al recién llegado y de sus bocas comenzaba a brotar un lamento como de árbol que se va



quebrando por una tormenta. El árbol era esa fe pequeñita que había comenzado a crecer desde que el nombre de su hombre no había aparecido en la lista de los muertos que cada semana se adhería a los muros gigantes de la Fiscalía; un tallo que ganaba altura y grosor porque tampoco los diarios ni los noticieros de la televisión se iban ocupando de él y así, con el paso de las semanas, un árbol, y ya, no hay por qué extenderse en una imagen tan obvia. El caso es que pocos días ofrecieron la enseñanza de que los desaparecidos reaparecían en las calles del barrio por lo general con un agujero en la frente o sin piernas, como si del suelo hubiera emergido algo lleno de dientes y de hambre, y luego la mordida, y luego luego, no hay que ser genio, los chorros de sangre vaciándolos hasta dejarlos como los encontrábamos, acartonados por la deshidratación. Muertos sin cabeza, con el pecho destrozado a machetazos, con los mangos de los cuchillos todavía sobresaliendo de sus vientres; muertos azules, dulzonamente olorosos, desnudos e hinchados igual que de embarazo, pariendo todos una muerte prematura como prematura fue su adultez, si no véanles esas piernas flacas y las rótulas saltonas, como prematura habrá sido su vida si pudieron esperar a nacer en otra Colombia no tan efímera.

Los desaparecidos reapareciendo siempre muertos y él, el amigo Castrillón - era predecible - sacando siempre la plumilla con disimulo y palomeando el nombre que conocía de sobra o que, de desconocerlo, cazaba al vuelo en los murmullos de los deudos o en los círculos concéntricos de personas que lo repetían con alivio, agregándole apellidos y otros datos como hijo de quién y oriundo de dónde, y si del ejército o de la guerrilla o de los paramilitares o de los narcos o del bando siempre interminable de los inocentes.

En ocasiones, sin embargo, rarisimas ocasiones eso sí, las dos serpientes se desenroscaban juntas y en lugar de un cadáver y de nuestra boca apretada para no soltarnos a dar alaridos (y digo nuestras y soltarnos, así, en plural, para no sentirme tan solo), nos encontrábamos con un cuerpo todavía en pie, todavía sin otros orificios que los normales, los del desagüe del cuerpo

y los de la entrada del mundo, y entonces nuestras bocas (ahí voy de nuevo arrebañándome), nuestras bocas eran todo besos y nuestras manos palmadas y aplausos como en un teatro y cada palabra felicitaciones para quienes casi fueron huérfanos y casi fueron viudas, a pesar de la consigna compartida de no dar un espectáculo: la fiesta de los vueltos en vida.

Supongo que el amigo Castrillón tenía los ojos apropiados, como decir, cicatrizados, para distinguir lo que él suponía farsas, embustes; porque aunque los más de los reaparecidos permanecían estáticos en medio de la gente con esa estúpida sonrisa y los ojos húmedos como cuando la verga pierde la compostura y por la emoción se deja abrir, algunos no reaparecían con esa mirada de pantalones mojados y eran incapaces de dibujar una mínima sonrisa aunque fuera forzada. Ese domingo el amigo Castrillón miró al hombre de los cabellos largos y los ojos verdes, y supo de inmediato que allí no había existido un secuestro ni una amenaza de muerte ni nada que no hubiera sido una decisión propia por esfumarse, una desaparición voluntaria por motivos que me importan una mierda, infiero que pensaba él, así que cerró de golpe su cuaderno y dejó sin anotación el nombre de Eusebio Perdomo, que de las tierras calientes de valle, que policia de “El minuto de Dios”, que ¡hijo de puta!, alcanzó a rematar el amigo Castrillón.

Antes antes antes de antier, es decir, el sábado, ya empezaba a no ser tan milagroso su *Directorio de los desaparecidos*, como él le llamaba al cuaderno de tapas gruesas y hojas enmarcadas. Los reaparecidos ya estaban aquí y allá, despatarrados en las aceras, cuando las puertas se abrieron ese sábado por la mañana, y continuaban allí por la noche porque las autoridades no se daban abasto para tanto levantamiento de cadáveres. Era un exceso. Tanto la fetidez como las imágenes siempre macabras de rostros con los ojos abiertos y las bocas destrabadas, nos empujaban a dar rodeos por otras calles, las mujeres abrazaban a sus hijos para no dejarlos mirar, el tránsito se tornó insoportable pues de pronto apareció un muerto a mitad de la calle y a ver

quién lograba convencer al policía que el atropellamiento fue una redundancia, un sobre punto final donde ya existía un punto final. La cantidad de los reaparecidos, de los vueltos a casa, de los bienvenidos, de los hijos pródigo de ese sábado dejaron en claro lo que un día antes sólo había sido un mal presentimiento: vivos o muertos, quienes retornaban eran un estorbo, sobraban. Sus propias gentes, como los guerrilleros y los militares con los campesinos en el campo, los habían echado de un territorio que de pronto ya no les pertenecía, los desplazaron, porque los desplazados, allí, con su materialidad visible pero bien muerta, sólo servían para extinguir la esperanza que la palabra *Desaparecido*, siempre etérea y siempre abstracta, había sabido sembrar en las familias. Sus hombres-niño volvían del limbo sólo para atraer a las moscas, a los perros, a los buitres, a las camionetas blancas de la Fiscalía, sitio geográfico y legal adonde una vez hecho llegar el cuerpo y asentada en actas la presunta causa de la muerte requería de otros tantos metros de tierra para dar por inaugurada la siguiente fosa común. Por eso ya desde el sábado mismo resultaba sospechoso que el amigo Castrillón se entercara en continuar recorriendo el barrio, acercándose a los muros de La Defensoría del Pueblo donde se adherían los retratos de los desaparecidos, revisando en los periódicos todas las secciones de clasificados que eufemísticamente tenían un apartado titulado *Ausencias*, oyendo como sin querer las charlas en las cuales se mentaba un nombre con nostalgia, un nombre que sonaba a intemperie y a escarcha, y que hacía temblar. El amigo Castrillón había dicho, dicen, que escribía para corregir el destino, que su directorio tenía la finalidad de dar una segunda oportunidad a los desaparecidos, que si alguien aceptaba usar de nuevo los nombres de su cuadernos para los bautizos de los nuevos niños, de los recién nacidos, entonces se podrían completar las biografías inconclusas de quienes fallecieron a destiempo. Muy bonita, muy encomiable su obra y un argumento sin grietas como todo buen delirio, pero lo extraño, lo sospechoso es que mientras escribía en su libreta “María Isabel Vélez”, “Francisco Penagos”, “Ruperto Angarita”, con esa letra

suya tan llena de adornos como una hilera de carruajes montándose en el renglón, de su boca brotaba ese susurro que sólo cogía forma si uno se acercaba hasta la órbita de su aliento alcohólico y se le ponía a tiro, y entonces “Violeta”, siempre “Violeta”.

Antes antes antes antes de antier, es decir, el viernes, fue cuando comenzó esta historia. Era de mañana y mis oídos llevaban ya un rato abiertos extrañando el rumor del mar y cada poro de mi piel había pestañado sin encontrar los calores extremos para desbordarse en sudor, cuando abrí los ojos. Habré sido uno de los primeros reaparecidos porque el amigo Castrillón estaba metiendo sus manos frías y largas bajo mi camisa y resbalándolas sobre mi piel, buscando el sitio donde las balas tenían que haber entrado o haber salido. Cuando abrí los ojos, él, con toda su nariz y todos sus cabellos revueltos, se echó hacia atrás como si hubiera visto un fantasma y yo, a mi vez, grité. No fueron tan inmediatas nuestras reacciones naturales, sin embargo, como para que yo no hubiera tenido la oportunidad de encontrar antes en su manera de mirarme, en sus ojos de niño o de loco, algo semejante a los enormes boquetes que de pronto aparecen en los techos de las casas por donde luego se cuele la lluvia y va mojando los muebles y enmohecando las paredes hasta que todo termina por pudrirse. Vi la inundación y la podredumbre y la tristeza flotando en la superficie húmeda de su mirada, y después, ya se sabe, yo grité y él se fue de espaldas o tendría que decir de culo, porque su culo fue lo primero tocó suelo, posteriormente su espalda y, sólo al final, aterrizó su asombro al aceptar que se podía regresar vivo de donde se hubiera estado. “¡Vivo, Violeta!”, “¡vivo!”, comenzó a repetir como un rezo y yo seguí gritando porque no más playa en Rodadero y no más “Mi negra, linda” y no más los niños que aprendí a querer como míos, que es donde yo había estado desde que decidí, voluntariamente, largarme de esta vaina de ciudad. Ese viernes triste comenzó la historia, al menos para mí, porque para él, su historia, tuvo que haber empezado antes con el descubrimiento de su don, su virtud, su poder milagrero. Se lo

habrá topado de forma azarosa como la primera conversión que hizo el rey Midas, ¿se imaginan?, tropezar con un trozo de mierda para verla transformarse en oro; así habrá escrito el amigo Castrillón el primer nombre en su directorio, casi como sin querer, y vean nada más, de pronto como sin querer también, un Midas colombiano entre nosotros con el poder de reaparecer a los desaparecidos. La historia tuvo que haber empezado ahí o quizá un poco más atrás con una presumible llegada de él a su casa alguna muy tarde noche o muy temprana mañana para encontrarse con un silencio y con un frío que no conocía, y entonces los primeros llamados suaves como para no despertarla pero lo mismo para no consumirse de golpe la esperanza, “Violeta”, “Violeta”, y luego los zapatazos escaleras arriba y las puertas que se abren y se cierran, y entonces “¡Violeta!” ya a gritos histéricos, y quizá ya desde allí, aunque como asegurarlo si yo no me hallaba en esta historia en tal momento, quizá ya desde allí el temor por la miserable disyuntiva que nació con la ausencia de su mujer: muerta o desaparecida a voluntad.



Photo by Nancy Bird

## **La ruta**

El río arropó, durante el azote directo de lluvias interminables, terríficos vientos y rayos a granel, todo lo que encontró a su paso. El alma del pueblo -así le decían- sepultó muchos sectores.

Al otro día, el querido tío Pancho había recorrido cada una de los lugares que amó profundamente, vetas de su historia, dispersas en diferentes partes del pueblo. El hogar materno, jardín de dulces recuerdos, adornado en tiempos recientes de soledad con las hortensias y margaritas que sembró. La casa de la tía Lydia, recinto verde de intrépidas aventuras de adolescente en ramas de árboles: puntos de observación en los que contemplaba la belleza de la tarde. La casa de campo de los padres de María, estructura inmensa a las márgenes de una quebrada que ocultó el principio de un amor que supo trascender lo prohibido. Y continuó su trayecto cruzando el taller donde reparó autos por más de treinta años, más abajo se topó con la estación del tren que llevó a ciudades lejanas a sus hijos, y a una milla de distancia pasó cerca de la cruz que señalaba la última morada de su amada en el camino; así el tío Pancho recorrió todo el pueblo. Los mangles del río que daban al mar fueron su destino final; allí fue encontrado a la hora crepuscular.

**El cuarto**

Después de años de interminables reprimendas, un día observó que todo en el cuarto se encontraba como él lo deseaba; se sintió feliz, sin saber que ya nadie lo habitaba: su hijo se había ido.



'En mis ojos que viven el presente,  
esta mañana es un solo país.'  
- Antonio Deltoro,  
de "Días descalzos"

## After Class Sales

Every teacher sells stuff after class.  
Those three or four students you always thought  
were seeking advice after the bell  
were really out for a bargain.

A violin teacher once sold me a map of the streets  
that smelled most like music.

A history professor once sold me  
the ideal borders of Israel  
but they have little or no resale value.

I know a scholar of contemporary Cuban literature who sells  
impossibly supple black leather sofas  
that catch your dreams as they vanish into wakefulness.

You thought it was the aesthetic, the intense heat of self-  
discovery?  
Learning as a pure free thing.  
The word pure is contaminated.  
I read that in a Playboy interview  
I found in a stack of dirty magazines  
that a linguistics prof. unloaded on me.

It's the illumination  
of the bargain  
the blackmarket of ideas  
the currency of words,  
worth in the form of coins  
melted back to ore.  
Barter brought out of the caves and into the classroom,  
I mean to say  
carried from one cave  
to another.

## The Soup Conjurer

*for Paloma*

She stares at the gas flame  
slender blue dab of light  
on the canvas of the stovetop.

She then places a pot of water there  
for no obvious reason  
    until  
        steel and flame  
and water  
begin to laugh  
like a hebephrenic philosopher  
in a solitary cell,  
until the ladles begin to roll back in their drawers  
like feverish Billy goat eyes  
and the eggs on the counter become twelve vestal virgins  
waiting to be consommés  
Soon the celery stiffens  
and rises rises rises slow  
toward the rim of the colander.

The tomato is wet.

She is the Henri Rousseau of soups  
and we can't follow her  
any further into her fantasy  
because there is a lion atop the fridge,  
because the peacock in the cupboard goes for the eyes.  
What little knowledge we glean from the process is this:  
the aftertaste of ecstasy smacks of garlic and hot peppers.

## Dialogue With Streetlamps

The streetlights are introverts  
shy in their pockets of dark  
afraid to break the ice,  
reticent about partying with the moon.  
I tell them I wish poetry  
were less self-conscious.  
I wish sleep were optional,  
that tobacco were an antioxidant  
and that owls were city birds.  
The one time I thought nature was magical  
was when an owl's wing  
slid silent through my hands  
and the bugger flew off two seconds later.  
Streetlights are less likely to fly off two seconds later  
but they are not silent  
and after tonight I doubt their magic.  
They hum like a row of prisoners  
before the firing squad of our eyes.  
Electric hymn. *Oh shit I'm gonna die  
and all I do is throw light on the sidewalk.*  
Neurotics. Counting the four corners  
of each cement block that we walk across  
each day, on our way to work,  
on our way to love, on our way  
to pick up a pastrami on rye. Butler Street is four blocks  
with four streetlamps each. Sixteen candles lighting up  
the street's birthday cake. How about  
a deathday cake? You've had as many  
deathdays as birthdays you just don't  
know it. Are you one?  
Are you two? Are you dumber  
than a light on a post  
or than a man talking to filaments

as the ground and his feet come together to applaud  
his wise decision to call it a night?

**Ball In Hand**

Desire is the shadow  
in the bottom of the sidepocket  
of the pooltable.  
It's the smudge of chalk  
under the tobacco ash  
on the green felt of the table.  
It's the gentle weight of  
your buttocks on the edge of  
the table in a bar I never knew existed  
because I always walked by it  
by day when its doors were shut  
and its windows looked condemned. Desire  
is the beer in your throat and  
the sound of swallowing  
drowned out by rock songs  
and country songs and pop  
songs you've known how to hum  
for over ten years. Desire is  
distraction is not the lineal  
is not the thought is  
not the lineal thought.  
My hands are shaking.  
They are bending to your hips  
they are sinking through the air  
like two boots to the riverbottom.  
Now my hands are in the rivermud  
and the boots are on your hips.  
And people are starting to look.  
We are flowing on the pool table.  
We are two minor water deities gushing  
on the green felt like there was no Zeus.  
The ladies at the next table gasp cigarette-smoke Os  
at the sight of desire unleashed in a billiards hall,

all the balls sticky on our flesh, a nine-ball massage.  
We look back at the spectators.  
What? Are you surprised? If all the willing glances  
toward other thighs, other shoulders, other shining  
apparitions of flesh were consummated  
along with all the ten-second fantasies  
involving crumpled underwear and tongues  
then we would be up to our knees in sweat.  
Me and my baby we're letting off a little collective steam.  
Now get back to your Freudian little game before you  
develop a neurosis.

## About How Me Finding You Became a Fabulous Industry

-or-

### Why Would Anyone Need Valentine's Day?

It looks like I can order a catalog,  
J Crew models upon request,  
to look for my next date,  
or maybe, next time  
if I find the time  
if the browsing does not find me too late,  
I can just hit the right button  
on my unaccountable computer keyboard  
and voilà there he is,  
my ever-perfect mate  
drinking Corona with lime.

It looks like there's a wide variety  
of twenty and thirty-somethings,  
and beyond, I should add,  
who might just be  
a n y o f t h e m  
custom-made,  
ready to ship on tomorrow's UPS  
and meet me at my doorstep  
via Next Day Air  
(roses not included).

It looks like I can bid  
on the highest-rating chap  
as if now on E-bay  
I, and no other than I  
could find that hunk from the Gap.

But when the time, that is,



the moment of truth,  
finally arrives  
for me  
to place the order  
the connection unexpectedly quits.

C o n n e c t i o n..  
I am totally amiss...

Not that it was an illegal operation  
I must say, since I guess it doesn't click,  
but why,  
I die if I don't ask,  
why should anyone turn  
into a shopper's fantasy cliché?

Connection?  
I am totally amiss.

**El puente**

El puente se alarga  
paso a paso,  
rehaciéndose en sombras,  
permaneciendo,  
custodio de vías,  
paciente de corrientes,  
inmóvil fuerza  
llamando la vista,  
anclado siempre  
paso a paso, declarado,  
imponente  
tras las fotos del turista.

'Mirar el río hecho de tiempo y agua  
y recordar que el tiempo es otro río,  
saber que nos perdemos como el río  
y que los rostros pasan como el agua.'  
- Jorge Luis Borges

**Postmodern by Choice**

No hueles ni a mar ni a café,  
mucho menos naces  
de la tierra,  
ondeas distante y te pavoneas cercana,  
siempre fija y sin decirme nada,  
desentendida del salitre,  
de los vuelos y suelos  
que de océanos-mares emana.

## La llamada

La llamada  
es una interrupción colérica  
de la nada en una caterva de momentos...  
Momentos que laten  
o se disipan  
en un vientre aguado  
en el que los salmos  
no se cantan  
sino que se desvelan  
esperando el azafrán  
de una receta espléndida  
que dé lugar  
a un olvido incalculable  
como el grito de la esponja  
en medio del mar...

Ésa es mi vida,  
un paréntesis desprendido  
sin tribulaciones  
en el que las arcas  
de piratas milenarios  
han conjurado  
bellos y delicados mapas y rutas  
que si hoy las encontrara  
en algún antiguo castillo  
las extendería  
por la arena y trazaría acordes...  
Acordes que nadaran en una sinfonía  
transoceánica  
en la que tú no serías más  
que lo que siempre deseaste ser  
y yo  
felizmente

[pausa]

me alegro, y sonrío y continúo  
despegando hacia los abismos de un invento salvaje

sin encauzar a los leones, dejándoles  
desplazarse por plazas  
y ciudades de cartón.

No hay duda, la llamada se da puesto  
y yo al paso, sabiendo que hoy siempre es la víspera,  
voy madrugándola  
aunque sean las doce del día.

## **All That...**

I read, they splurge  
I crawl, you hypothesize  
they nest, I consider  
You abandon, I stumble...

All that  
and no water to drink.



“(t)here is too much reality” by W.M.Rueter & Trish Welsing



Vuelve la zona  
a anclarse en el mar de palabras,  
a regodearse en la memoria,  
deslizándose por soles brasileños  
y cielos a prueba de lágrimas.  
Se cuele entre faroles  
que nunca piensan en fundirse  
y te acompaña  
como fiel compinche, enroscadita a veces  
en tu axila (izquierda o derecha)  
a comprar un paraguas  
porque puede o no llover  
y más tarde salir el sol,  
desde desaparecidos  
hasta las afueras del programa multicultural,  
entre espejos y carencias,  
desde ríos fríos  
hasta filosofemas  
de ontología valentina,  
entre norte y sur,  
se vuelve  
la biblioteca ambulante  
en todos los lugares  
it wants to be.

Gracias...

Zona de Carga  
2004



**Kate Ternes** snarls “Whatever!”.

**William M. Rueter** is. At least he thinks he is.

**Amanda Rosas** is against the subjugation of Texan / Textual (Textualan?) women.

**Michael Roeschlein** writes about modernism and mysticism in his dissertation in the English department at UW. It seems he nearly always writes about that pair (or one or the other parts of it) when he sets aside time to write poetry. He really likes the ocean. He is very fortunate to see the Atlantic version of it pretty frequently when visiting the northern Puerto Rican coast, where “Sundays at Villa Pesquera” was written for his beloved bride, a prominent Isabelina.

**Giannina Reyes Giardiello:**

(Escoja la opción que considere correcta.)

- a) nació en un año bisiesto
- b) nunca terminó de leer “La Eneida”
- c) ha perdido 12 tarjetas bancarias, 5 pares de guantes y 1 pasaporte.
- d) canta cuando se baña
- e) todas las anteriores

**Erin Real** is currently a second year MA student preparing for her master’s examination but is more enthusiastically awaiting the springtime in general. Her poetry is most recently guided by a faith in life that only the winter can teach to a willing student. She takes a calm satisfaction from a cup of coffee and hopes that she helps her friends to experience the many pretty things in the world.

**Kristina Puotkalyte-Gurgel** is guilty of bringing lithuanian prose and poetry to Wisconsin. Zona de Carga loves her for that.

**Nancy Ellen Ogle** is a professor of music at the University of Maine at Orono. She has a distinguished international performance career.

This is **Melanie Nicholson's** first appearance in Zona de Carga.

**Rubén Medina** is an overfed, long-haired, leaping gnome.

**Isabel Medina** is a fictional character created in part by Ruben Medina as an attempt to solve gender identity crisis.

This is **Nathanial Martínez's** first appearance in Zona de Carga.

**Alberto Martínez-Márquez** (Bayamón, Puerto Rico, 1966). Poeta, narrador, dramaturgo y ensayista. Ha publicado: *El límite volcado: antología de la generación de poetas de los ochenta* (en colaboración con Mario R. Cancel, 2000) y *Las formas del vértigo* (poesía, 2001).

**Ivette Martí Caloca:** Amantísima admiradora de la poesía, cree que el sombrero de poeta le queda muy grande para modelarlo.

**Juan F. Egea** teaches contemporary Peninsular poetry, although he admits he does not know anything about what Italians poets are doing these days or about the state of modern poetry in Florida.”

**Juan Luis Dammert** poet, musician and literary theoretician. También conocido como el Gran Empujafronteras.

**Dinorah Córtes-Vélez** needs time to think. Y ya.

**Magda Coll**, para Cataluña. Cada veinte años cambia de residencia. Por el momento desconoce las dos próximas, pero no tiene ninguna duda sobre la tercera.

**Ricardo Chávez-Castañeda** es un agudo conspirador .

**Carlos Esteban Cana:** Comunicador y escritor puertorriqueño. Dirige la revista y el colectivo puertorriqueño *Taller Literario*. Ha publicado cuentos, poesías y ensayos en varias revistas y periódicos puertorriqueños. Tiene cuatro libros de cuentos inéditos.

**John Burns** persigue murciélagos que no pertenecen a este mundo.

**Nancy Bird-Soto** is a postcultural islander/being who knows the sidewalks of Madison very well. She would like to write urban poetic essays in the near future.

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