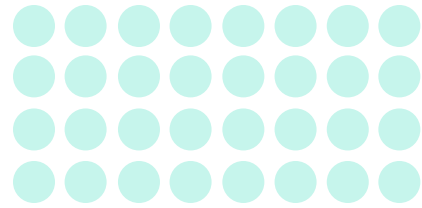
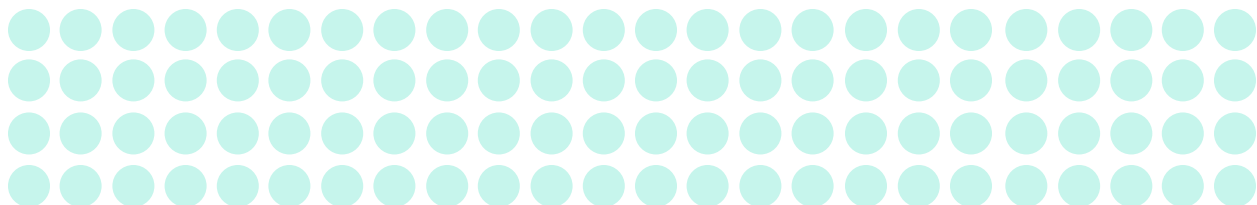


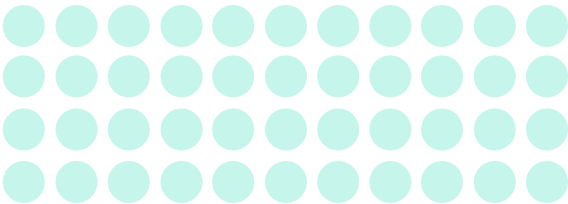
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Charles Bernstein & Eduardo Espina
Editors



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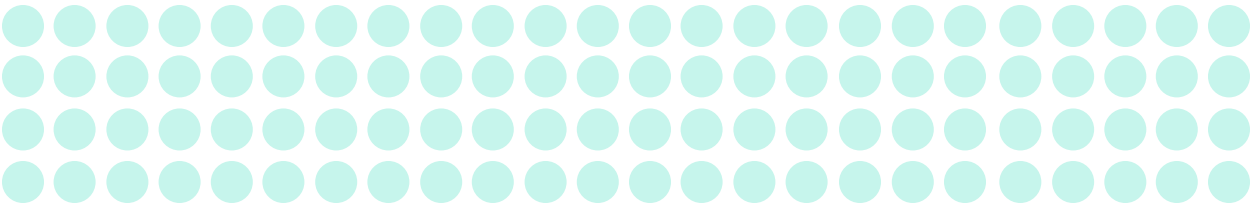
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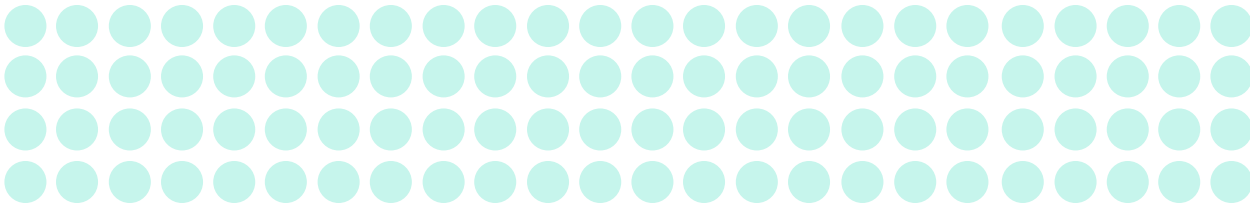
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Nuestras Américas: Nuevos mundos todavía en formación

Charles Bernstein
Traducción, Ernesto Livon-Grosman

“Cree el aldeano vanidoso que el mundo entero es su aldea”
José Martí, “Nuestra América”

“Sou um tupí tangendo um alaúde!”
“¡Soy un tupí tañiendo un laud!”
Mário de Andrade, “O trovador”
“Tupy, or not tupy that is the question.”
Oswald de Andrade, “Anthropophagite Manifesto”

1 Un día me gustaría escribir un ensayo titulado *Las Américas, un proceso*. En ese ensayo exploraría el aun imaginario espacio cultural de una “poética de las Américas” en el sentido de “Nuestra América” de José Martí y del “perfeccionismo moral” del que habla Emerson. Esta discusión sobre el perfeccionismo moral, que estaría en deuda con Stanley Cavell, sin duda me llevaría a una declaración de interdependencia: diría que la poética de las Américas no puede ser completa, porque si pudiera llegar a su fin destruiríamos su promesa de continuidad, de autoregeneración y autocanibalización.

En ese ensayo proclamaría, como un Edgar Poe dadá que sueña con Nicolás Guillén haciendo búsquedas en Google, que el poema de las Américas no existe. Porque las Américas es un espacio cultural imaginario cuyas múltiples y mutantes manifestaciones son tan evanescentes como el último aliento de una lengua moribunda.

& por eso diría que esa es la razón por la cual el imperativo de los poetas de las Américas, a diferencia de lo que sostiene cierta sabiduría convencional, ha sido el decir más que el mostrar. Porque decir es la tarea de gente, como decía Langston Hughes, “en transición”.

2 En *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americans* la antología que Jerome Rothenberg publicara en 1972, se enuncia con una inteligencia propia de Swift, un tema que sigue siendo fundamental, mientras en los EEUU hacemos la transición de una poética de los Estados Unidos a una poética de las Américas:

Digamos que durante un período de veinticinco años, es decir, el tiempo que le toma a una generación descubrir dónde vive, se podría reemplazar la épica griega de los primeros años de la universidad con las grandes épicas norteamericanas. Se podría estudiar el Popol Vuh donde ahora se estudia a Homero y estudiar a Homero donde ahora se estudia al Popol Vuh, es decir como una antropología exótica, etc. (Prefaces, p. 175)

En esa cita Rothenberg se hace eco de los sentimientos de “Nuestra América” de Martí que fuera publicado 80 años antes:

La historia de América, de los incas hasta acá, ha de enseñarse al detalle, aunque no se enseñe la de los arcontes de Grecia. Nuestra Grecia es preferible a la Grecia que no es nuestra. Nos es más necesaria.

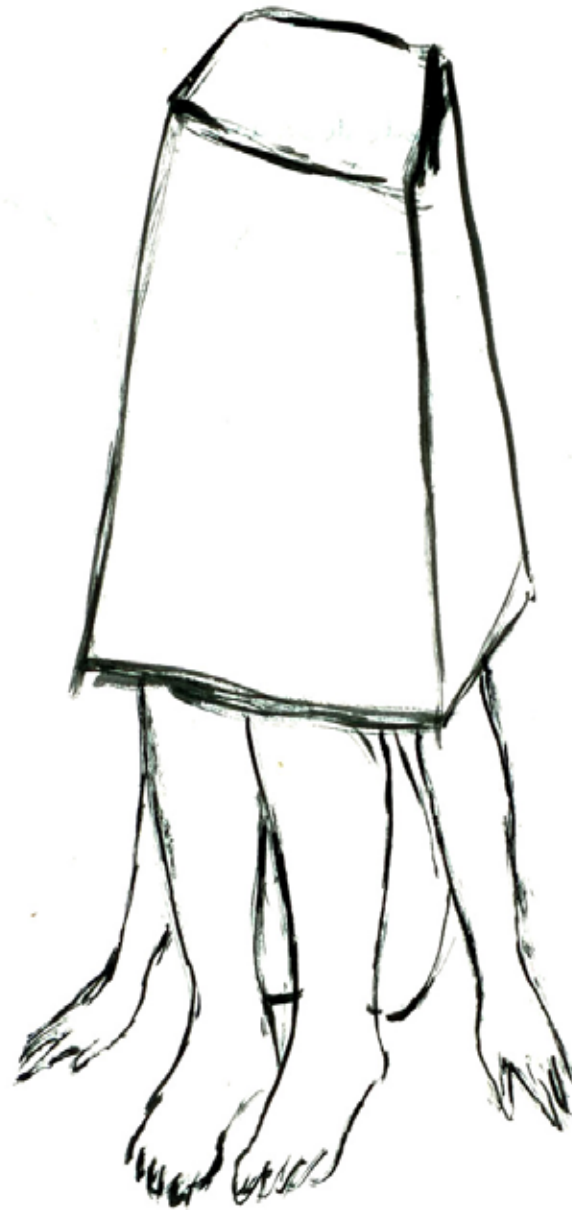
Las dos primeras antologías de Rothenberg, *Technicians of the Sacred* (1967) y *Shaking the Pumpkin* (1972) insistían en la importancia actual, más que histórica o antropológica, de la poesía “tribal” de los aborígenes americanos en un sentido continental, de los africanos y de los habitantes de Oceanía. En este sentido deberían ser leídos como documentos sobre las poéticas de los 60 y los 70 que fueron cruciales para la reconceptualización de la poesía norteamericana entendida como una poética de las Américas. Rothenberg propuso una crítica a la supremacía de la alta cultura occidental y una búsqueda activa para encontrar en otras culturas, que no son orientales ni occidentales,

aquello que está ausente en la nuestra. Por otra parte, la “recuperación” de la cultura aborígen americana por parte de un judío de primera generación nacido en Brooklyn y poeta antólogo, que en sus propias palabras es “un judío entre/ los indios”, y cuyas raíces estéticas estaban en la vanguardia europea, es un reconocimiento implícito de nuestro genocidio *nacional*, en todas las Américas, como parte del proceso de recuperación tanto de Auschwitz como de Hiroshima.

Las antologías de Rothenberg investigan la base pluricultural de las Américas y a la vez rechazan explícitamente la eurosupremacía desde el *interior* mismo de una perspectiva europea. Al mismo tiempo el trabajo de Rothenberg es notable por su claro rechazo de la visión popular, pero no por eso menos demagógica, de Europa y de lo europeo por parte de los poetas norteamericanos, esto es el rechazo de Europa en favor de una América única y singular.*

*Ver mi introducción a *Writing Through: Translations and Variations* de Jerome Rothenberg (Wesleyan Poetry, 2004).

3 La idea singular y unitaria de la literatura norteamericana está con frecuencia basada en violentas borraduras de la normativa anglosajona, de las culturas anteriores a la conquista, del pasaje por la Edad Media, de las lenguas de la inmigración y del surgimiento de nuevas lenguas.



4 La visita que Charles Olson, el más importante entre los poetas norteamericanos de la posguerra, realizó a Yucatán en 1951 fue un gesto influyente y significativo hacia una poética de las Américas. El rechazo expansivo de la trampa que el poeta Robin Blaser caracterizó en un ensayo sobre Olson como “El encajonamiento occidental” tiene ecos de Martí y a la vez anticipa a Rothenberg:

No es a los griegos a quien culpo. Se trata de nosotros, de que no hemos encontrado maneras de tallar, de experimentar tal como es, según nuestra propia definición y expresión de lo que es, en otras palabras, encontrar maneras de estar en el universo humano y no ser llevados en ningún punto y de ninguna manera a hacer una partición de la realidad. Porque esto es exactamente lo que hacemos, este el verdadero tema de lo que ha sido y del proceso, que tal como es en el presente se afirma a sí mismo y puede ser mostrado. Es la función, la *comparación*, o en su nombre más estridente su simbología. Estas son las caras falsas, demasiado vistas, los aspectos intelectuales que esconden y previenen que se usen la metáfora y la performance. [“Human Universe,” en *Collected Prose*, p 157]

Olson logró articular una poética del lugar que rechaza lo metafísico en favor de lo histórico y lo particular. Entrando en contacto directo con nuestras Américas, se dio cuenta de que no es a través de la analogía sino a través de un proceso de juxtaposición activa que se produce un tercer elemento.

Nuestras Américas es una performance.

5 Quiero insistir en la palabra *Américas* no sólo para abarcar a América del Norte y del Sur sino también como una manera de reconocer, esta multiplicidad, no una mera comparación, de nuestras múltiples perspectivas que son fundacionales para las poéticas de nuestras Américas.

En *Ül: four mapuche poets* (ed. Cecilia Vicuña, tr. John Bierhorst. Pittsburgh: Poetry in Indigenous Languages Series, Latin American Literary Review Press, 1998).

Vicuña cita a Jorge Teiller: “... mi arma contra el mundo es otra visión del mundo” (21). Lo que la poesía no tiene en eficacia lo recupera en poder conceptual, “La lucha mental” de Blake. O como dice Martí en “Nuestra América”: “...las armas del juicio, que vencen a las otras. Trincheras de ideas valen más que trincheras de piedra”.

Ningún tema ha preocupado más a la poesía durante las dos últimas décadas que la identidad social, étnica, racial y local. Como las Américas, la identidad es siempre plural. Como las Américas, la identidad es necesariamente, *a priori*, sincrética y entrelazada, autocanibalizante, tanto como el ADN que circula en nuestras mentes y concatena nuestras proyecciones mentales.

Al desarrollar no sólo la manera en la que pensamos en una poética de las Américas sino que, y esto es más importante, también al crearla es bueno que tengamos presente el comentario de Teiller y recordar que lo que estamos creando es otra visión del mundo, una que en su globalización no está siguiendo los dictados de la Organización Mundial de Comercio y del Banco Mundial y que en su localismo no está produciendo frutas exóticas para ser exportadas, sino que está comprometida con un proceso de canibalización y autocreación como la primera defensa contra el “encajonamiento occidental”. Una posibilidad

que nunca ha sido mejor expresada que en el Manifiesto Antropofágico de Oswald de Andrade:

Nuestra antropofagia nos une...
Contra todos los importadores de conciencia enlatada. La palpable existencia de vida. Y la mentalidad pre-lógica del estudio de Levi-Bruhl...
Contra la verdad de los misioneros, definida por la sagacidad de un antropólogo...
Pero aquellos que vinieron no eran cruzados. Eran fugitivos de una sociedad que estamos devorando, porque somos fuertes y vengativos como un Jabuti...

6 Una vez más Martí: “¡Los árboles se han de poner en fila para que no pase el gigante de las siete leguas!”

Un interesante modelo para una poética global/local es la del poeta escocés Hugh MacDiarmid, que no es el nombre con el que nació sino el nombre que aspiraba a tener, y que fuera expulsado del partido nacionalista escocés, a pesar de su trabajo poético en dialécto escocés, por haber sido demasiado localista.

En esa misma antología de poetas Mapuches, Elicura Chihuailaf escribe que “La poesía no sólo preserva la identidad cultural del pueblo, sino que también la crea”. De esta manera Chihuailaf enfatiza las fuerzas creativas de la poesía en contraste con los reflejos reproductivos de la teoría cultural. Una poética de las Américas estaría menos preocupada con analizar los temas y las narrativas producidas en la ficción en castellano e inglés que en escuchar, y componer, el collage de las diferentes prácticas lingüísticas de las Américas. Al reemplazar tema y sistema, “comparación” y “simbología” en las palabras de Olson, por superposiciones, palimpsestos y collages, estoy proponiendo que conceptualicemos nuestras Américas como una constelación hipertextual o sincrética, formada por capas alfabéticas, glíficas y/u orales. Una constelación es un modelo alternativo para lo que con frecuencia es definido como fragmentación, parataxis, aislamiento, insularidad, atomización y desarrollos separados del todo. La hipertextualidad dibuja un mapa sincrético que articula puntos de contacto y que potencia tanto las conexiones espaciales entre partes discrepantes como las superposiciones temporales que confluyen o se fusionan una con otra.

La aproximación palimpséstica del volumen de poesía mapuche surge directamente de las condiciones materiales de la poética de las Américas: no un multiculturalismo sino

lo que con frecuencia Chihuailaf llama (en la traducción que Bierhorst hace del mapudungun al inglés): *interculturalismo*. De hecho este es un libro en tres lenguas; inglés, castellano y mapudungun (la lengua de los mapuches). El mapudungun es la lengua que ha sido alfabetizada más recientemente, transliterada como escritura. En un principio estaba sorprendido de que no se incluyera el nombre del traductor al castellano pero más tarde me di cuenta que se daba por descontado que los poetas que se presentaban en mapudungun habían hecho sus propias traducciones al castellano, o más probablemente trabajaban de manera bilingüe en ambas lenguas, tal vez yendo y viniendo del castellano al mapudungun tanto como del original mapudungun a la traducción en castellano como si fuera una lengua extranjera. Quizás lo que hace que esto sea *indígena* para nuestras Américas no es únicamente la presencia del mapudungun sino el entrecruzamiento de las diferentes capas de lo aborígen, lo colonial, lo inmigrante: concretamente la unión de dos de esos elementos en contraste con un tercero que es percibido como una amenaza mayor. Basta recordar los versos de Rothenberg: “un judío/entre los indios”.

Martí nos habla de cómo nosotros trabajamos “...con los calzones de Inglaterra, el chaleco parisiense, el chaquetón de Norteamérica y la montera de España. [mientras] El indio, mudo, nos daba vueltas alrededor, y se iba al monte, a la cumbre del monte, a bautizar a sus hijos” y continúa enfatizando la necesidad de rechazar el racismo al reconocer no sólo a los que estaban aquí antes de la llegada de los europeos sino también a aquellos que fueron arrancados violentamente de Africa y traídos a la fuerza al Nuevo Mundo, aquellos que residen “solos e ignorados entre los ríos y los animales salvajes”. Martí hace un esfuerzo por no borrar la existencia de aquellos que fueron traídos a las Américas como esclavos. Pero también

reconoce que, como propone Jonathan Skinner en la revista del mismo nombre, nuestras Américas necesitan de una *ecopoética*.

En el espacio imaginario de las Américas, nadie tiene soberanía, no al menos en lo que respecta al sufrimiento o la tierra, la soberanía está reservada para los fantasmas y el viento, ya que ambos están perdidos por causa de y en el tiempo.

7 Las poéticas de las Américas han estado creando lenguas indígenas y sincréticas durante cuatrocientos años, diferentes dicciones respecto de los lenguas de la conquista y la inmigración: indígenas en el sentido de ser nacidos en una zona, originarios de un lugar. El lugar es el aquí, el tiempo es el ahora, necesariamente un cruce de caminos.

Ese es el por qué del énfasis que pongo en la búsqueda de los hilos que interconectan las poéticas de las Américas, innovación y un gran refinamiento como una manera de reconocer lo importante que la creatividad ha sido para las Américas. Esto es, los puntos de contacto que podemos encontrar entre los múltiples habitantes de las Américas puede que no sea la manera en que hemos extendido y elaborado las lenguas que recibimos de Europa, el inglés de Londres, el castellano de Madrid o el portugués de Lisboa, sino cómo esas poéticas han trabajado para subvertir el acento de una literatura de refinamiento y asimilación.

Espero que esto ofrezca una respuesta a una crítica frecuente a las propuestas de expandir el estudio de la literatura estadounidense a una literatura de las Américas. Si lo norteamericano es entendido como una extensión o un desarrollo de una literatura anterior, en su mayor parte británica, entonces necesariamente tenemos que mirar la literatura de Inglaterra para poder entender la nuestra. Esta es la lógica dominante detrás de la estructura de los departamentos de inglés, donde la enseñanza de la literatura estadounidense fue una pelea difícil durante los primeros años del siglo pasado. Digo Estados Unidos y no norteamérica porque los departamentos de inglés han prestado muy poca atención a las literaturas canadienses o mexicanas más antiguas, las cuales son vistas en el mejor de los casos como colaterales en lugar de fundacionales en el desarrollo de la literatura de los Estados Unidos.

En un trabajo reciente, Frank Davey señala que ha habido pocos puntos de contacto entre los poetas de Estados Unidos y Canadá después de 1950. Cuando han existido estas confluencias han permitido que poetas de ambos lados de las fronteras compartieran un compromiso político y estético en contra de posiciones más conservadoras, o incluso nativistas, de sus propios países. A la vez, las narrativas oficiales de las poéticas nacionales se han mantenido en su mayor parte separadas y desconectadas:

En la cultura canadiense siempre ha estado latente la creencia en que las raíces de Canadá comienzan con su disidencia respecto de los Estados Unidos y que Canadá ha sido reafirmada múltiples veces como la nación norteamericana alternativa... La primera camada de inmigrantes canadienses anglo-parlantes fueron refugiados leales al imperio británico escapados de la guerra de independencia norteamericana. La formación de Canadá como país, en 1867, fue en parte una respuesta a los grandes ejércitos estadounidenses creados durante la Guerra Civil. Así como los gobiernos de Canadá han estado limitados por esta compleja historia cultural en el grado de afiliación con las políticas de los Estados Unidos, los poetas canadienses han sido conciente e inconcientemente selectivos en sus asociaciones con la poesía y las poéticas de los Estados Unidos. Por lo general, los poetas canadienses han evitado asociarse con la poesía y las poéticas hegemónicas que han celebrado los Estados Unidos como una nación. ["Canadian Poetry and its Relationship to US Poetry," *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Poets and Poetry*, 2006]

Como argumenta Roland Greene, la necesidad para [de] cambiar los límites del campo de los estudios literarios y acercarse hacia lo que llama "New World Studies" es urgente. Vean especialmente su ensayo *New World Studies and the Limits of National Literatures* (Stanford

Humanities Review, 6:1, 1998), del cual he tomado el epígrafe de "O trovador" de Andrade:

Para los estudios de literatura mundial las zonas de contacto no son sólo los lugares de encuentro cultural en un sentido literal, sino los espacios concatenados donde los mundos, esto es sistemas intelectuales o espirituales representados por versiones a través de los cuales puedan ser entendidos o evaluados, se mueven en una relación crítica mutua. El uso del término y el concepto mismo de lo "mundial" es vital para este proyecto.

8 Una poética sincrética de creatividad e invención, un collage y un palimpsesto, es adversa al modelo acumulativo y progresivo de la literatura que aun impera en las universidades norteamericanas y en otras partes de las Américas. Si pensamos en la literatura como un desarrollo, a través de una fertilización cruzada y una canibalización, hacia la invención de un indigenismo sintético de los nuevos mundos, entonces es posible que encontremos necesario considerar la posibilidad de poesías paralelas en lugar de poesías vinculadas por relaciones causales: la coincidencia se vuelve más importante para nosotros que el linaje, los puntos de contacto más resonantes que la idea de un origen común. *O en todo caso*: igualmente importantes. Esa es la razón por la cual la observación de Ernesto Livon-Grosman sobre la sincronicidad de $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E$ (1978-1981) en Nueva York y Xul (1980-1997) en Buenos Aires es tan atractiva: porque no reclama una influencia, ni una relación de causa y efecto; estos son desarrollos simultáneos que están estructural y poéticamente relacionados, incluso entrelazados. (Vean "The Questioning of the Americas" de Livon-Grosman, en *99 Poets/1999: An International Poetics Symposium*, número que edité para *boundary 2* en 1999 y que es el punto de partida para este ensayo.)

La poética de las Américas que estoy imaginando no se basa en las comparaciones: sino en el encuentro, en el cambio a través del encuentro, porque si uno aun sigue siendo el mismo después de esto, entonces no hubo encuentro.

9 El proyecto de América, de las Américas, es un proceso incompleto, un proceso que nunca podrá terminarse.

Porque cuando esté terminado, habrá llegado a su fin.

Nuestras Américas es un proceso: una conversación, un experimento, un ensayo. Por otra parte quizás nuestras Américas sean un procedimiento formal, una hipótesis o un estado condicional, que requiere intervención estética, una creatividad radical y otras reinventaciones del mundo.

Y esta quizás sea la razón por la cual vemos las posibilidades de nuestras Américas más claramente en la poesía: nuestras poéticas vistas bajo el signo de nuestro intercambio.

New York, 1 de mayo del 2007 ■

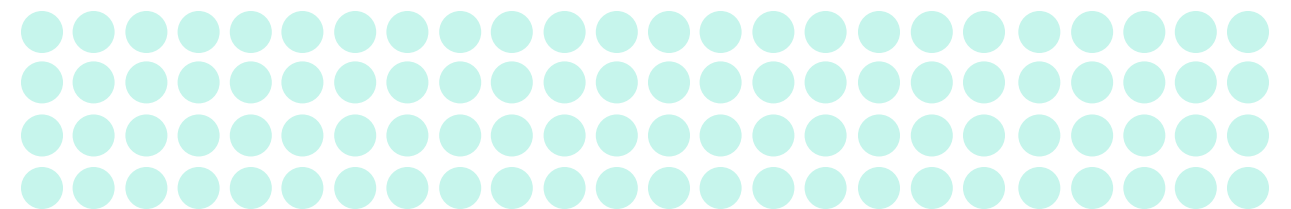
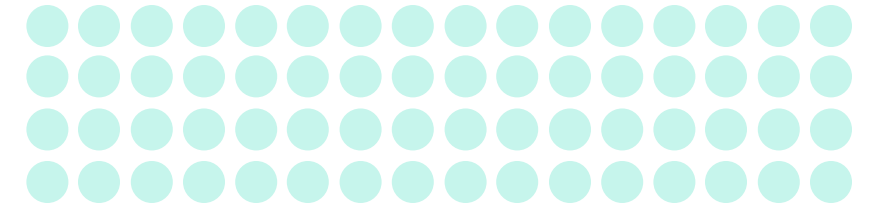
{ Blue Tile

a poem by Régis Bonvicino
Translation, Charles Bernstein

My pa & mine ma
dead
no ones
some

one
double
silence
uninterrupted

jagged shards
that, now,
by act of accumulation
I rejoin



The Neo Baroque: A Converging in Latin American Poetry

José Kozér

“The shore is pebbled with eroding brick”
Robert Lowell, *Notebook*. “Long Summer”

I see two basic lines in today’s Latin American poetry. One is a thin line, the other thick. The geometry of the thin is linear, its expression familiar, colloquial. The geometry of the thick is prismatic, convoluted, its expression turbulent and dense. The first line I associate more with American and the more traditional Latin American poetry, aspects of its already assimilated Avant-garde included. I associate this line with say, Robert Lowell, a certain pellucid Eliot, or the work of Elizabeth Bishop. The second line, meaning the thick line, I associate with international poetry, a stronger converging and diversity, indeed more opaque, but in spite of thickness, more encompassing. This international poetry includes aspects of 20th Century American poetry, as well as a basic source rooted in the Spanish Golden Century Baroque, Góngora and Quevedo above all, plus some sprinkling of the English Metaphysical poets, an attachment to the poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé, and a strong and fruitful contact

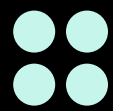
with the work of, for instance, Ezra Pound; and in certain younger poets, with Louis Zukofsky, Charles Olson and John Berryman: were you to move into modern music, John Cage, Philip Glass and the French Catholic mystic composer Olivier Messiaen could represent a diversity of musical sources transfused into this thicker trend of poetry.

Let me now say that the thin line of poetry in Latin America proliferated during the first half of the 20th Century. You find it, for instance, in Vicente Huidobro, Pablo Neruda, Gabriela Mistral, Eduardo Carranza, Salvador Novo, Octavio Paz, Nicanor Parra, Ernesto Cardenal, Heberto Padilla, Eliseo Diego and Gonzalo Rojas, to name a few. There is an intermediate line, which gets thicker, and includes the great Peruvian poet César Vallejo, the Argentinean surrealist Oliverio Girondo and his confrere the Peruvian Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, as well as Carlos Germán Belli and Francisco

Madariaga. A poetry to be associated with the spheres of James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Herman Broch and Gertrude Stein, with our own Golden Century, and the Baroque of Francisco Medrano, the Mexican Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the previously mentioned Góngora and Quevedo, will be primarily found in the more recent poetry of the so called Neo Baroque poets, a group, or rather groups of individuals, living (some have recently died) from the second half of the 20th Century to today. They work, abundantly, in all the Spanish speaking countries of this continent, Brazil very much included. This poetry, to help you contextually, has the oozing, the curling, the entanglement and reverberation of multiplicity and proliferation that you find in the works of Virginia Woolf and, above all, Gertrude Stein. Its Latin American foundational fathers are the Cuban José Lezama Lima and the recently deceased Brazilian poet Haroldo de Campos. These two writers are our progenitors, the father figures of a fairly large group of poets working voraciously and productively from Patagonia to Havana, in both Spanish and Portuguese. It is at the same time a dispersed and yet highly coherent, and resilient group. Dispersed, because these poets live in different countries, far away from each other, but related, since their aesthetical points of contact are manifold, and since communication is now instantaneously possible among them through the enslaving magic of internet. They constitute an elite; not an elite of money but rather of the literate and the culturally rich. Moreover, I would term them an open minded elite, unwilling to reject any materials that can be reconfigured, reconverted, into poetry. They work in extreme dislocation, stretching language to the utmost, all sorts of language, joyfully participating in the liberties of the Baroque: their writing is not geared to lust but at best to lust as worship; each and all of them, rather than Poet, is a configuration of many voices, polyphonic, choral. And those

voices manifest themselves more athematically than otherwise, showing a tendency towards atonality, the obscured to be revealed through perusal and reading, and the obscure as an instrument for understanding the spiritual, as well as reality, when conformed by variety and the threat and dread of Nothingness.

Reading these Neo Baroque poets requires patience, patience and great reading experience. The asana or body posture has to collaborate with the act of reading, which has to be unprejudiced, open to the new, aware of different traditions in different languages, ready for immersion in miscegenation. You can, at this point in history, read Borges, Neruda, Parra or Paz more rapidly, since their poetry has fewer obstacles than ours: it is more conceptual, symmetrical, harmonious. Moreover, their adventurous vanguardism has been by now assimilated. However, reading Vallejo, especially *Trilce*, requires the patience of the eye that moves slowly, as the tip of the finger ought to move when reading inwardly the Bible. The texture in a *Trilce* poem is dense, full of breaking points, lines of evasion, dispersion, proliferation, disjunction, propagation within the text through anacoluthon, and the unexpected through language manipulated to its extremes. It transfigures itself as text through the abrupt, the unexpected. It is as if words were rushing to the outside of the written page; or as if their gravitation was simultaneously vertical and horizontal, “mixing memory and desire”, heaven and earth, with subsoil. Vallejo, however, is a poet that stays within a given framework. If compared with, for instance, Ernesto Cardenal, his poetry is less linear; an epigram of Cardenal is, in its linearity, a brief, immediately comprehended syllogism. At the same time, both Vallejo and Cardenal are less traditional in their conceptions of poetry than, say, Pablo Antonio Cuadra or Eduardo Carranza. A Neo Baroque poet, different from all of them, tends not to stay within a given



This poetry, to help you contextually, has the oozing, the curling, the entanglement and reverberation of multiplicity and proliferation that you find in the works of Virginia Woolf and, above all, Gertrude Stein.

framework but rather, I would say, is all over the place. He deals in abrupt syntax, displacement, and a non systematic system that can be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in the poetry of Olson and Zukofsky. The space of the Neo Baroque poet is splintered. It has, of course, its own logic, a logic which includes, and at times prefers, the illogical, in the way an atheist includes God in his thoughts.

Now, the poetry of José Lezama Lima and Haroldo de Campos is still more complex than, say, Vallejo's. To read them, and therefore, to read us, you have to breathe differently: more asthmatically. Oxygen in them is somewhat lacking, or rather, it concentrates more at the subsoil level, among the worms. Thus, the Argentinean poet Néstor Perlongher writes: "vermes de rosicler urdiendo bajo el césped un laberinto de relámpagos" ("rosy hue of dawn worms warping under the lawn a labyrinth of lightning"). These poets are ideologically naked,

"All of us [Neo Baroque], comprise a family (as in every family, there are plenty of quarrels, dissidence and malicious gossip). We do not reject, but rather incorporate, the linear and the traditional, at times mocking it lovingly, at times furiously distorting it, at times quietly and respectfully accepting it."

both in terms of politics and poetry. Therefore, you can only deal with them, referentially, in terms of the poem itself, and not through political or poetical analogies that tend to explain through context. There is, basically, no need for context in order to read Lezama or a Neo Baroque poet: there is a need for slow immersion, a deep sea diver immersion in a milieu where gravitation changes constantly, and the pace is different since it can move in all sorts of directions at the same time, without a specific chronology, and where the breathing requires new forms of concentration. And a faith, an acceptance, that these diverse

materials do function as unity; if you wish, a mess in unity, but nonetheless a cohesion and not pure chaos and disconnection.

The Neo Baroque does not comprise a group in the sense that the Generation of 98 or the Generation of 27 in Spain comprised a group; yet these poets have a family air, a congruous homogeneity in disparity. Their ages range from Gerardo Deniz, Rodolfo Hinostroza, Roberto Echavarren and myself being in our sixties, to a younger generation of poets in their forties and fifties, among whom I know and enjoy the work of the Mexicans David Huerta, Coral Bracho and José Javier Villarreal, the Uruguayans Eduardo Espina, Eduardo Milán, Silvia Guerra and Víctor Sosa, the Brazilians Claudio Daniel, Josely Vianna Baptista and Glauco Mattoso, and the Argentineans Tamara Kamenszain, Arturo Carrera and Reynaldo Jiménez, to name just a few. All of them, all of us, and please bear in mind that in this story there is a we, there is an

us, comprise a family (as in every family, there are plenty of quarrels, dissidence and malicious gossip). We do not reject, but rather incorporate, the

linear and the traditional, at times mocking it lovingly, at times furiously distorting it, at times quietly and respectfully accepting it. We read and humbly acknowledge the work of, say, a Sylvia Plath, an Anne Sexton, a James Schuyler or a James Merrill, and their Latin American differing counterparts, the Venezuelan Rafael Cadenas, the Nicaraguan Carlos Martínez Rivas, the Chilean Enrique Lihn or the Cuban Gastón Baquero. However, we are made of different stuff: dense, asymmetrical, more dodecaphonic than classical, without a specific center but rather involved with a proliferation of centers, no real program to offer, no basic theme above

and beyond the inescapable themes of Eros and Thanatos, themes which we tend to distort, mock, deconstruct, and hopefully revitalize. This is a poetry where language is both King and Queen. An all inclusive language that does not reject any materials, for it can squeeze poetry out of coprophilia or necrophilia as much as from the beauty of vegetation. It is cosmopolitan in nature yet highly localized, so that a Neo Baroque poet is comfortable with a Havana street or Li Po drinking with his friends a cup of saké wine at the foot of the Sacred Mountain of Tai Chan, with the denseness of the Amazons or Matto Grosso, as well as with the surface visual experience of the Pampas, the Atacama desert or the Russian tundra. This poetry does not fear detritus and garbage, it exalts the pestilential and decayed, never presents reality in black and white, it moves sideways like the crab, and it constantly weaves like the spider: its movement tends towards the zigzag, which, as in the case of insects, constitute an organization, with means and ways, modes and quirks, based on variety and variation, modern imagery, clips, shots, and the intermittent. Our diversity and zigzagging is natural, attuned to the times we live in.

Our poetry is difficult to read, we are fairly unknown and isolated, we don't sell, we make no money, many of us are broke (fortunately I am not) we are constituted by different races, sex, sexual orientation, religions, nationalities and ethnicities, and as we write our performances are all over the place, yet in more ways than one we are realistic: there is a form of Neo Baroque wisdom that knows how to live, or perhaps survive, in the modern world. Our work is open and androgynous, hard to place. We accept, for didactic reasons, the Neo Baroque label, yet we reject such a limitation. This poetry operates as syntax in distortion, contains a rich vocabulary, mixes levels as well as national peculiarities of Spanish and/or Portuguese, at times being regional and at times universal. This mixed language is Neorican,

Chicano, Peninsular, Mexican, Colombian, Nordeste, and recurs openly to expressions in Esperanto, the European languages, Greek, Latin, or as in my case, Yiddish plus Cuban idiolects. Wilson Bueno, the Brazilian poet from Curitiba, combines Português (itself a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish) with the guaraní language. The Mexican Gerardo Deniz is Golden Century Baroque combined with mexicanisms, plus scientific and pseudo scientific language. He is comfortable writing about the myth of Marsyas, the long gone Belle Époque or Rousseau's Nouvelle Héloïse. The Argentinean Néstor Perlongher operates in a transvestite's world, whereas the Uruguayan Roberto Echavarren directs his attention and his language to a homoerotic world, as in his poem The Lady of Shanghai. Tamara Kamenszain is an Argentinean poet who exalts the Japanese No theatre, and the Brazilian Haroldo de Campos is more comfortable in the Milky Way than on this earth, the very earth that a few weeks ago took his body and sent it to the Milky Way. The Mexican Coral Bracho writes about what goes on in the interstices and the subsoil, and not about actual political issues. The Argentinean Reynaldo Jiménez writes about moss, miniatures, incidental noise a la John Cage, or the circularity of Nothingness, but not about the traditions of tango, the Pampas and drinking mate tea. The Uruguayan Eduardo Espina is a thick poet, highly compressed, tragic when comical and comical when tragic: to read him you need patience, a patience, I can assure you, that is rewarding. To read any of us you need the expertise and devoted patience that is required when reading Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, Mallarmé's *Igitur* and *Un coup de dés* or Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* (a slang word, by the way, meaning clitoris). Gertrude Stein says, for instance, "Dining is west." What sense can we make out of this? Perhaps much more than saying, at this point in the history of literature, that dining is nice, that dining in an expensive restaurant makes me happy,

or simply describing a la Zola or a la Balzac, in a naturalistic fashion, each and all of the elements that compose a restaurant as physical reality: a morose, slow moving description, that goes hand in hand with a realistic, human, all too human drama unfolding, textually, in the page. In my case I recombine my Jewish background with my Cuban nationality, my American experience, my devotion for Asian culture and literature, to produce a work which I consider transnational and multicultural. I am not only what I eat, I am also, and perhaps mostly, what I read (and bear in mind that I normally read six hours a day, whereas I spend thirty minutes or so eating; wine excluded).

Our forefathers read with intensity and devotion: we are perfectly aware of the reading voracity of Lezama, Borges, Haroldo de Campos, Paz; yet there is a difference in our diverging reading experiences. To put it bluntly, we also read the comics. We read and utilize in our work sub rosa literature, the so called “culebrones” or soap operas, digesting, regurgitating and rewinding all this cheap matter. To give you an example, I published recently in Mexico a short book containing the poems and prose texts I have written throughout the years in honor of Franz Kafka. Its title is *Un caso llamado FK* (A case called FK). I sent the book to Contador Borges, a young Brazilian poet, who always calls himself Borges the Minor. He wrote back telling me about a parallel he found between some of my prose texts and Bat Masterson. I imagine Kafka turning in his grave, or perhaps Bat Masterson. Perhaps Mr. Contador was being facetious, perhaps he was debunking my texts, which I wouldn’t mind, since I think it’s all for the good of poetry; in any event, and this I would like to emphasize, his reading is an open, extreme way of reading, which is typically Neo Baroque. It doesn’t fear a kitsch interpretation, neither fooling around with the text, in the sense that literature is not stiff, non pliable matter. The

Cuban poet Eugenio Florit claimed that he spent the last years of his long life reading Goethe. I believe he did. Not that he was a specialist, but he belonged to a generation more attuned to the Classical. We, however, belong to a period in history which is attuned to the Classical, plus detritus; attuned to Order as well as Chaos. We read in a dispersed, somewhat uncontrolled and multidirectional way. I cannot conceive a Neo Baroque poet spending the last years of his life reading a single author or about a given theme, without constantly deviating in his reading. Recently, while in Mexico, I was taking a walk with David Huerta, and we started talking, enthusiastically, about the work of Haroldo de Campos, and ended discussing certain aspects of Berceo, including his rather open minded religiosity and aspects of his anti-Semitism. Which then moved us to Quevedo’s anti-Semitism and his particular rejection of Góngora’s poetry. We also joked, myself explaining some esoteric aspects of Cuban joking, and Huerta explaining the way Mexican “albures” operate (these are highly distorted jokes, mostly based on punning and language contraptions). Thus, we read, and discuss literature “a salto de mata” or jumping frames, shifting from one thing to the other. The American essayist, translator of the Classics, and fiction writer Guy Davenport says that he reads throughout the day different texts in accordance to the passage of the hours, the season of the year, his personal mood, even having a need to change rooms, body position and place of reading (at times a chair, at times a sofa, others a bed) in accordance to the material he reads. It seems to me this is how a Neo Baroque poet reads. I, for instance, will begin the day reading poetry, then spend hours reading fiction, afterwards I normally read a chapter of the Bible (obviously both Testaments), a few pages of a dictionary or an encyclopaedia (I am nowadays reading a huge dictionary of religions), spend some time reading the young, who usually send me their

books for an opinion or plain sharing, and will end up the day again reading fiction. Also, I read every day alternating Spanish and English. All the Neo Baroque poets I’m in contact with read this way. They never single out a writer and read him or her systematically; rather, as I said before, the trend is to jump from one thing to the other, and to include all possible literary genders. Everything fits in our poetry, nothing is, in principle, discarded. The discarded, waste, rubbish, the refused, is part of the text, and many times is the text.

To give a more concrete view of what we are doing, let me recur to the didactic, and somewhat superficially create three basic (here I would underline the word basic) models. I would like to term these three models or categories as Heavy, Medium Heavy (or perhaps Medium Light) and Light. In the Heavy vein I would include Gerardo Deniz, Wilson Bueno, Paulo Leminski, Eduardo Espina, and Reynaldo Jiménez. In the Medium Heavy or Medium Light: Roberto Echavarren, Néstor Perlongher, Osvaldo Lamborghini, and Coral Bracho. And in the Light: Tamara Kamenszain, Rodolfo Hinostroza, David Huerta and Raúl Zurita. All these poets are dense and complex, difficult to follow and digest, yet the texture of their material moves from heavy to light. What they write, if compared, for instance, with the Antipoetry of Nicanor Parra, lacks in steadiness, a unity of form and content, a chronology. Take a poem by Parra and notice its syllogistic structure: it moves forward, line by line, stating, pushing linearly ahead from main to secondary premise, to a conclusion or dramatic denouement. It normally ends with a punch line, a final impact that in a sense is programmatic; its purpose is to kick the butt of the bourgeois. In the case of the Neo Baroque, the procedure or strategy is lateral, non programmatic, sharp edged or purposely flat, detached or falsely sentimental, containing no story or using story as pretext for language exploration. It can be

a dull edge construction, containing splinters, rather than an entablature perfectly joined.

Just like we have the three suggested categories of Neo Baroque poetry, I would like to say that in our poetry we avoid sentimentality, that Neo Baroque poetry hardly ever falls into the vaguely sentimental, the opportunistic sentimental, the nationalistic sentimental (patriotic gore) that pretends to enlighten and move to tears. Many linear Latin American poets fall into sentimentality, the rhetorics and verbosity of sentimentality, which placing open the right hand on the heart, reeks to tears. On the other hand, the Neo Baroque poet hardly ever falls for sentimentality, and when used, its for the purpose of debunking, which is achieved through irony and parody. Some lighter Neo Baroque poets at times fall for sentimentality, but there is in my mind a law that says that the heavier the poetry the least sentimental. I can find some sentimentality for instance in Huerta and Zurita but not in Echavarren, Espina, Jiménez or Leminsky.

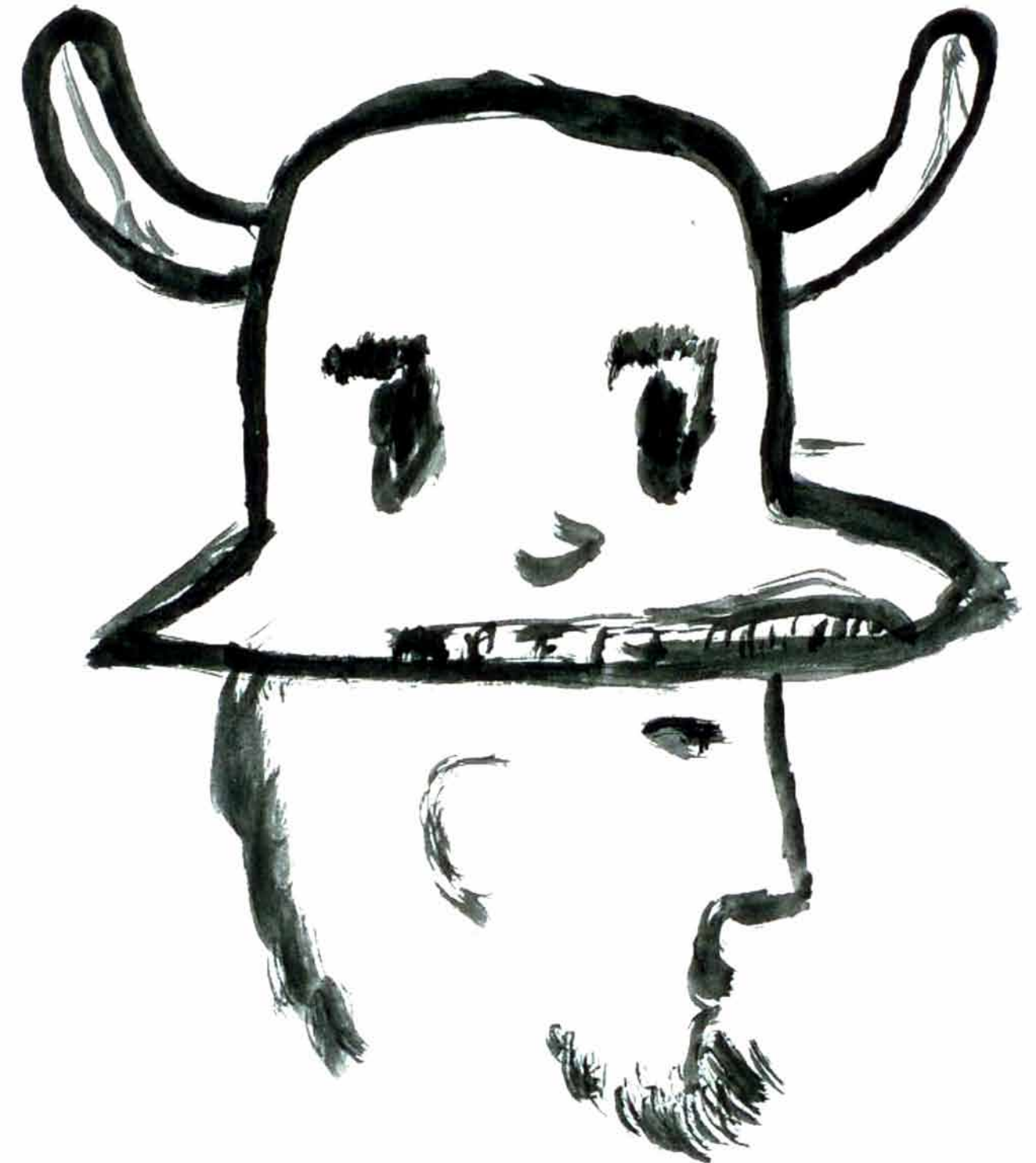
Charles Ives, the great American composer, has dedicated a lucid essay to Thoreau, in which at one point, he says: “He seems [Thoreau] rather to let Nature put him under her microscope than to hold her under his.” And he adds: “The study of Nature may tend to make one dogmatic but the love of Nature surely does not.” Were we, simply, to write Poetry where Ives writes Nature, we would have a good view of the credo that a Neo Baroque poet expresses in his work; wherein he is an instrument of Poetry and not Poetry, a humble potter and craftsman at work, and not a Creator; the Hand of the Dyer, let us say, rather than the Dyer. A summary of Neo Baroque poetry would include notions such as dispersion, the re-appropriation of former styles, styles that move in barbaric landscapes, where ruins are put together; a writing where the *trobar clus*

and the hermetic proliferates, where there is great turbulence, unnatural mixtures, the joy of combining languages, the dissolving of a unidirectional sense, no praising of the Self or the Ego or the I; polyphony, polyvalence and versatility, utilization of former styles in order to deconstruct them, creating a true explosion of different forms of writing, a soiling of materials, a signature towards the ugly, the sordid, the recyclable.

Since the death of both Octavio Paz and Haroldo de Campos, there are no more sacred cows when it comes to poetry in Latin America. When I say sacred cows I don't mean this derogatorily but simply as description of a historical situation. Our forefathers, Neruda, Huidobro, Vallejo, Lezama, or Paz, were perceived as grand, grandiose, never interchangeable, as separate as boulders in a landscape. What you have now, on the other hand, is a new phenomenon: a group of poets (I can easily mention forty, fifty of them that I read with respect and a growing interest) to be considered as *Primus inter pares*, not boulders but gravel, wherein instead of competition you have a hybrid group, ideologically naked. There is, I realize, a level of idealization in what I'm saying; yet I feel that we are moved by historical forces that are divorcing themselves from excessive vanity and egolatry. When I was young, I was walking one day on Eight Street, Greenwich Village, New York, with a famous Latin American poet. At one point he grabbed me by the arm and said to me: "José, don't you think I beat Vallejo by a nose?" I looked at him and replied, instinctively: "Please remember that you are flat nosed." ("No te olvides, por favor, que eres ñato"). Obviously, he never talked to me again. I didn't mind and I don't mind to this day. I don't think poetry is a rat race or a dog beats dog affair. On the contrary, poetry to me is an experiment in the Unknown, a search for beauty, knowledge and wisdom through the mystery of a complex,

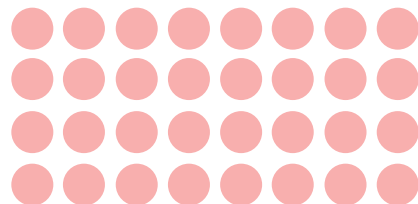
multidimensional, simultaneous language, that at a given point is received, transmitted, and yet not fully understood or rigidly controlled by the poet. ■

"Poetry to me is an experiment in the Unknown, a search for beauty, knowledge and wisdom through the mystery of a complex, multidimensional, simultaneous language."





Oliverio Girondo



Introduction and translations, Molly Weigel

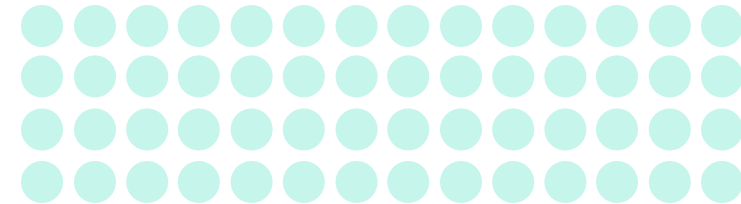
Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1891, Oliverio Girondo studied and traveled widely in Europe as a young man, serving as a European correspondent for Argentine literary magazines and establishing close friendships with writers and artists who introduced him to surrealism and other vanguard movements. Among Girondo's circle of friends and influences throughout his life were Blaise Cendrars, Salvador Dalí, Macedonio Fernández, and Federico García Lorca, as well as Rafael Alberti and Pablo Neruda, both of whom dedicated poems to him. Author of seven volumes of poetry, Girondo published his first book, *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en un tranvía*, in 1922. He belonged to the Argentine ultraist vanguard, which also included Jorge Luis Borges, and returned to Argentina in 1924 to cofound the Ultraist magazine *Martín Fierro*, for which he wrote the manifesto. It exalted vitality and faith in self and in Latin American intellectual values. Ultraism started to dissolve in 1927; *Espantapájaros* (1932) begins with a questioning of the referential function of language and a declaration of nihilism, elements that would continue in his work and culminate in *En la masmédula* (1956). In the 1940s and 50s, the home of Girondo and his wife, writer Norah Lange, served as a meeting place for the younger literary generation, including Francisco Madariaga, Enrique Molina, and Olga Orozco. Girondo died in Buenos Aires in 1967.

These poems are from *En la masmédula* (*In the Moremarrow*), which culminates Girondo's career of poetic engagement with the vanguard; his lifelong rejection of academic authority and search for new forms of poetic articulation find their last and best expression here. With this last volume, according to Trinidad Barrera, Girondo puts a period to the Latin American modernism begun in the 1920s, of which he was a central figure, and provides a model and a jumping off point for contemporary Latin American poetry's concern with the nature of referentiality. Girondo's work and especially *In the Moremarrow* is an inspiration to many contemporary Latin American poets, including Jorge Santiago Perednik and Néstor Perlongher, among others. Like Vallejo's *Trilce* and Huidobro's *Altazor*, with which it is frequently compared, *In the Moremarrow* forges from the Spanish language a new poetic language with its own psychic vocabulary and syntax, constituting a journey into the uncharted space of whatever "more" the marrow of language may or may not hold. The poems persistently struggle with a basic human dissatisfaction with language and other forms of human communication and with the question of whether there is anything beyond or even whether the beyond is to be found within the limitation itself. With seemingly unlimited combinatory properties and multivalence, Girondo's language, or "pure impure mix" ("La mezcla/The Mix," *En la masmédula/In the Moremarrow*), communicates desire and disgust, moves fluidly between ironic distance and unguarded sadness or wonder at the limits and possibilities of signification. According to Argentine poet and critic Enrique Molina, each line of *En la masmédula* (*In the Moremarrow*) is "a verbal galaxy," an alchemy of the word in which "the language is rushing into a state of eruption."

More Oliverio Girondo poems, translated by
Molly Weigel to come in future issues of *S/N*.



Recent Then

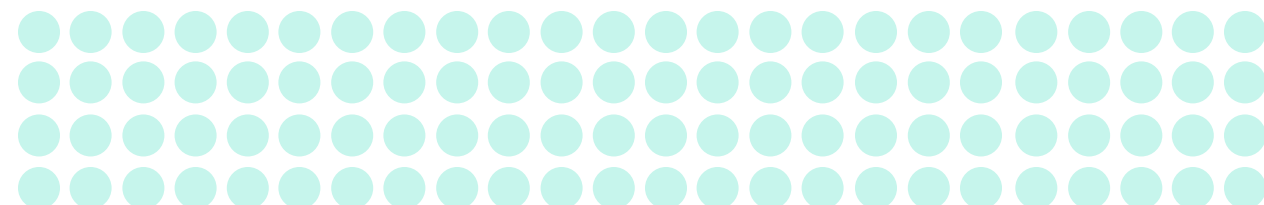


If the setting
the subslurping
the barter bang burrow
the bitterly begotten
the spawning
to the gills
if the herniated egohollow
the co-gutspilling to zero
the catalogues of disgust
the abeliefs
the finite family were less able
if they were exincapable barely of the vital scrapings
the bellyful in chains
the pallid postmasticated
if the final sinister swallow of light, fog of affliction weren't so forecapable
ah
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only its sphere only

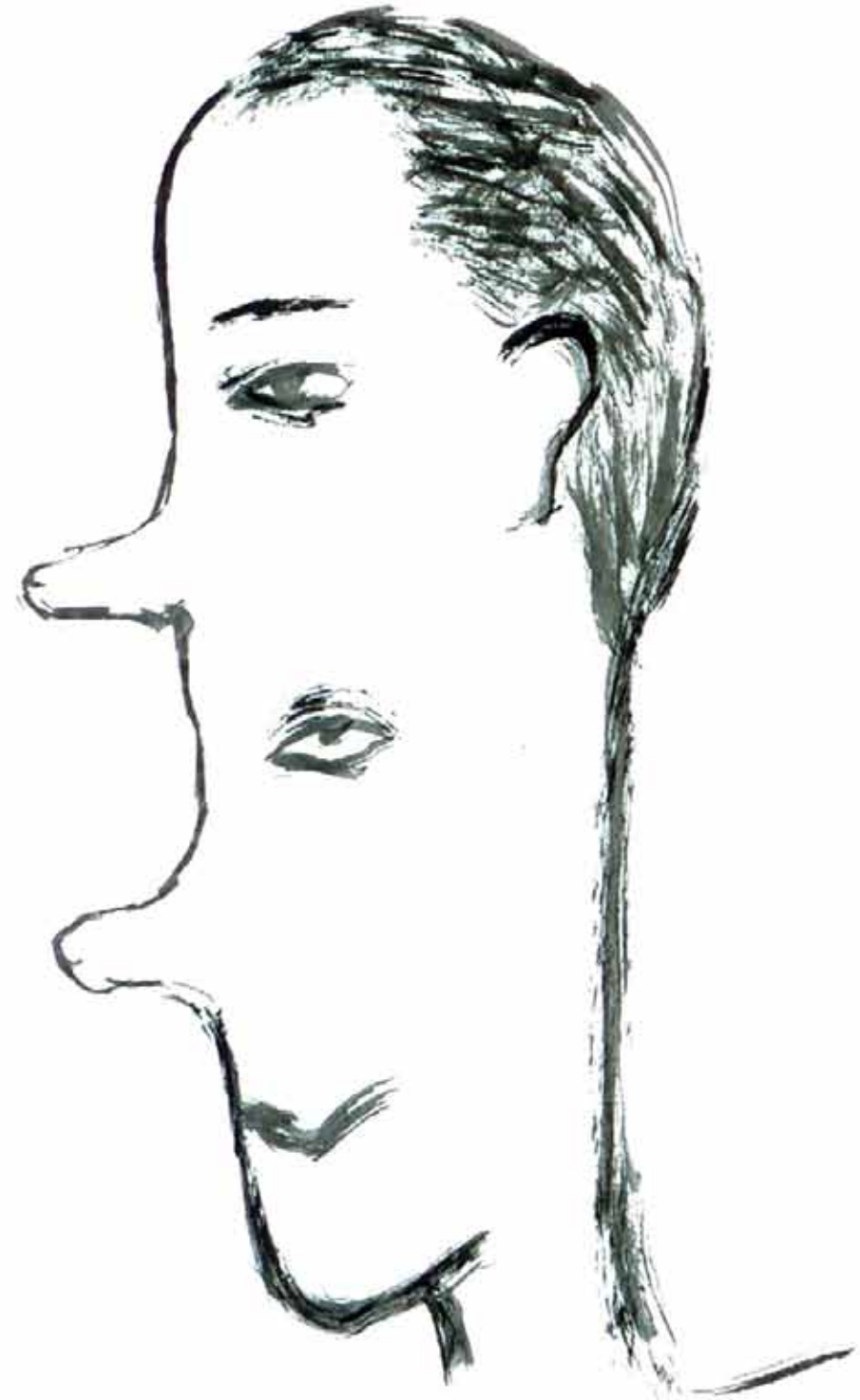
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El desafío del lenguaje: Entrevista con Marjorie Perloff

Enrique Mallen

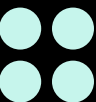
Esta entrevista fue realizada en abril de 2007, durante el congreso “The Poetry of the Americas”, realizado en Texas A&M University.

¿CUÁL ES SU OPINIÓN SOBRE LA POESÍA “EXPERIMENTAL” CONTEMPORÁNEA?

Para empezar con el tema, la palabra “experimental” no me atrae especialmente, ya que implica que la poesía en cuestión es sólo un experimento, idea que bien puede fracasar. Imagínese a Baudelaire catalogado como un poeta “experimental”. O a Rimbaud. Prefiero el adjetivo “radical” u “oposicional”, o incluso el conocido epíteto “avant-garde”.

SIN EMBARGO USTED SUGIRIÓ QUE LA POESÍA CONTEMPORÁNEA DEBERÍA SER “UNA POESÍA EXPERIMENTAL CONSTRUCTIVISTA” QUE CRITIQUE LAS PRÁCTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS CULTURALES MEDIANTE AQUELLA IDEA DE WITTGENSTEIN: “DESCONFIÉ DE LA GRAMÁTICA [...], DE LA POÉTICA QUE DIRIGE SU ATENCIÓN A LA TEXTUALIDAD”. ¿PODRÍA USTED EXPLICAR ESTO?

Sí. Creo realmente que hoy sería imposible escribir poesía desde la sencillez, o mediante las oraciones consecutivas que abundan en el mundo impreso contemporáneo. Tenemos tanto lenguaje a nuestro alrededor –de hecho, estamos bombardeados por él– que pienso que el papel de la poesía es desmontar las prácticas de la lengua dominante, ponerlas en crisis con el objetivo de proveer una crítica cultural. Por otra parte, el simple hecho de disyunción o asintacticalidad no significa mucho. Fue el gran crítico Hugh Kenner quien bromeó diciendo que solo la vanguardia podría ser tan aburrida como cualquier otra cosa. Esa es una buena idea a tener en cuenta. Hay poetas hoy que piensan que todo lo que tienen que hacer es omitir las conexiones gramaticales y fragmentar las palabras, y entonces ya tienen una poesía interesante. Y, por el contrario, una cosa que me enseñó sin duda Wittgenstein es que la frase u oración aparentemente más simple –una que



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The Challenge of Language: Interview with Marjorie Perloff

Enrique Mallen

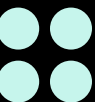
This interview was conducted in April, 2007, at “The Poetry of the Americas” conference, Texas A&M University.

WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF CONTEMPORARY “EXPERIMENTAL” POETRY?

To begin with, I don’t especially care for the word “experimental,” which implies that the poetry in question is just an experiment, that it may well fail. Imagine Baudelaire being called an “experimental” poet. Or Rimbaud. I prefer the adjective “radical” or “oppositional” or even the familiar epithet “avant-garde.”

BUT YOU DID SUGGEST THAT CONTEMPORARY POETRY SHOULD BE “AN EXPERIMENTAL CONSTRUCTIVIST POETRY” THAT CRITICIZES CULTURAL LINGUISTIC PRACTICES THROUGH A WITTGENSTEINIAN “DISTRUST OF GRAMMAR,” “A POETICS THAT DIRECTS ITS INQUIRY TO TEXTUALITY”. CAN YOU ELABORATE ON THIS?

Yes. I really do think that today it would be impossible to write poetry in the straightforward, consecutive sentences of the contemporary print world. We have so much language all around us—indeed, we’re bombarded by it—so that I think the role of poetry is to deconstruct dominant language practices, to call it into question, to provide cultural critique. On the other hand, the mere fact of disjunction or asyntacticality doesn’t mean much. It was the great critic Hugh Kenner who quipped that the avant-garde could be just as boring as anything else. That’s always a good thing to remember. There are poets today who think all you have to do is leave out grammatical connectives and fragment words and then you’ve got interesting poetry. And conversely, one thing that Wittgenstein certainly taught me is that the seemingly simplest phrase or sentence, one that does seem grammatical, can



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parezca gramatical— puede ser increíblemente interesante, dependiendo del contexto. Uno de mis ídolos es sin duda Samuel Beckett, y usted tiene, por ejemplo, en el *Watt* de Beckett, oraciones tan simples como: “A Mr. Knott se le cayeron sus brazos.” ¿Pero qué significa “caer sus brazos”? ¿Cómo hablamos de ello?

¿EL LECTOR DEBE PRESTARLE ATENCIÓN A UNA EXPRESIÓN EN PARTICULAR?

Principalmente es una cuestión de contexto. Creo que el contexto resulta esencial. ¿Cómo contextualizamos algo? ¿Qué significa un término en un contexto y qué significaría en otro? En cierto contexto podría alcanzar perfectamente un sentido; pero no en otro. Wittgenstein presenta maravillosos ejemplos del cálculo del dolor. Sugiere que cuando digo “Tengo un dolor”, ¿cómo saber lo que yo quiero decir realmente? ¿Podría yo estar fingiendo dolor? No existe la manera en que usted pueda saber por completo cuán severo es mi dolor, o si de hecho apenas estoy fingiendo tener dolor. La palabra “leer” es similar. Si digo: “Voy a leerte esta historia”, quizá la haya simplemente memorizado y la esté recitando. ¿En realidad qué significa “leer”? Por eso las palabras y oraciones más simples pueden resultar las más complicadas.

UNA DE LAS COSAS QUE HE ENCONTRADO FASCINANTE EN LA POESÍA DE EDUARDO ESPINA ES SU APARENTE DEGRAMATICALIDAD. CUANDO UNO LO LEE POR VEZ PRIMERA TIENE LA SENSACIÓN DE QUE DE ALGUNA MANERA SE HAN QUEBRADO LAS REGLAS DE LA GRAMÁTICA. NO OBSTANTE CUANDO EMPECÉ A ANALIZARLO DESCUBRÍ QUE NO HAY DEGRAMATICALIDAD DE NINGÚN TIPO. SE TRATABA SIMPLEMENTE DE UN PROCESO DE DECONTEXTUALIZACIÓN LÉXICA.

Exacto, esa era mi idea.

OTRA PREGUNTA QUE TENGO ES CONCERNIENTE A GERTRUDE STEIN, Y LO QUE USTED DENOMINA “MOVIMIENTO GRAMATICAL”. USTED HA DICHO QUE LA INNOVACIÓN DE STEIN EN *TENDER BUTTONS* FUE “COLOCAR EN UN PRIMER PLANO, CON PALABRAS, EL ARREGLO COMPOSICIONAL DE LAS COSAS VISTAS”. ¿ALGÚN OTRO POETA HA SEGUIDO ESTOS PASOS?

Por supuesto, la degramaticalidad steiniana se encuentra en George Oppen, Louis Zukofsky, o Charles Bernstein. Pero Stein es *sui generis*. Usted sabe, ella tiene un “*Tender Button*” llamado “Roast Potatoes” que tiene sólo tres palabras: “Roast potatoes for” [Ase patatas para]. ¿Para qué o para quién? ¿Asar patatas para la cena? ¿Asar patatas para mí? ¿*Roast potatoes for*, como un retruécano en “four”, que significa “horno” en francés, por lo que *pommes du four* [papas al horno] significa asado de patatas? Existen sorprendentes construcciones verbales en Stein. Pero de nuevo, no todas son degramaticales. Hay esa famosa frase enigmática de Gertrude Stein, “A white hunter is nearly crazy” [un cazador blanco está casi loco], y nadie sabe qué significa. Originalmente los lectores pensaron: ¿ella está hablando de Hemingway? ¿O de quién? Pues, justamente el otro día mi nieta de dieciséis años de edad me contaba sobre un viaje a Oaxaca con su padre y su tía, y me dijo: “Papá me vuelve loca. Él lleva puesto este enorme sombrero y eso no se debe usar cuando vas a las ruinas”. Ella está en la edad en la que tiene una relación de amor-odio con su padre. Y al decirme ella: “él me vuelve loco”, le contesté entonces por escrito: “Sabes, tu frase finalmente me explica la locución de Gertrude Stein. Así es como tu padre luce ahora mismo”. Las frases de Stein son muy provocativas; sus enigmas nos asedian.

También podríamos hablar sobre el tema de la precisión, de la exactitud en términos de Pound.

be incredibly interesting, depending on the context. One of my idols is certainly Samuel Beckett, and you have, say, in Beckett’s *Watt*, sentences as simple as: “Mr. Knott dropped his arms.” But what does that mean, to drop your arms? How do we talk about it?

ONE MUST PAY ATTENTION TO A PARTICULAR EXPRESSION?

Well, primarily it’s a question of context. I think context is the crucial thing. How do we contextualize something? What does a term mean in one context and what would it mean in another? In one context it might make perfectly good sense, but in another, not. Wittgenstein gives wonderful examples of the pain calculus. He suggests that when I say “I have a pain,” how can you tell what I really mean? Could I be faking pain? There’s no way you can fully know how severe my pain is, or indeed whether I am just pretending to have pain. The word “read” is similar. If I say, “I’m going to read you this story,” perhaps I have simply memorized it and am reciting it. What does “reading” really mean? So the simplest words and sentences can be the most complicated.

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I HAVE FOUND FASCINATING IN EDUARDO ESPINA’S POETRY IS ITS APPARENT UNGRAMMATICALITY. WHEN READING IT AT FIRST ONE GETS A SENSE OF SOMETHING THAT SOMEHOW BROKE THE RULES OF GRAMMAR, BUT THEN WHAT I DISCOVERED WHEN I STARTED ANALYZING IT IS THAT THERE WAS NO UNGRAMMATICALITY

WHATSOEVER. IT WAS SIMPLY A QUESTION OF DE-CONTEXTUALIZING WORDS.

Yes, that was my point.

ANOTHER QUESTION I HAVE CONCERNS GERTRUDE STEIN, AND WHAT YOU REFER TO AS “GRAMMATICAL MOVEMENT.” YOU HAVE STATED THAT STEIN’S INNOVATION IN *TENDER BUTTONS* WAS “TO FOREGROUND IN WORDS THE COMPOSITIONAL ARRANGEMENT OF THINGS SEEN”. HAS ANY OTHER POET FOLLOWED THESE STEPS?

Certainly. One finds Steinian agrammaticality in George Oppen or Louis Zukofsky or Charles Bernstein. But Stein is *sui generis*. You know, she has one “Tender Button” called “Roast Potatoes” that has just three words: “Roast potatoes for.” For what or whom? Roast potatoes for

dinner? Roast potatoes for me? Roast potatoes for, as a pun on four, meaning “oven” in French, so *pommes du four*: roast potatoes? There are amazing verbal constructions in Stein. But again, they’re not all ungrammatical. There’s Gertrude Stein’s famous enigmatic phrase, “A white hunter is nearly crazy”. And nobody knows what that means. Readers originally thought; ‘Is she talking about Hemingway? Or whom? Well just the other day my 16-year old granddaughter was telling me about her trip to Oaxaca with her father and her aunt, and she said: “Daddy’s driving me crazy. He wears this huge hat and it’s not the right thing to wear when you go to the ruins.” She’s at the age where [she has] a love/hate relationship with her father. And she said, “He’s driving me crazy.” And I wrote back to her, “You know, your sentence finally explains to me Gertrude Stein’s ‘A white hunter is nearly crazy.’ That’s what your

Usted es un lingüista, por lo que esto tiene que interesarle mucho, por ejemplo, la idea de Ezra Pound según la cual incluso en la poesía más degramatical y más disyuntiva tiene que haber una entidad tal como la precisión, y por eso quiero decir *le mot juste* [la palabra precisa]. Si se utiliza una palabra, tiene que existir una razón para usarla. No se usa así como así una palabra antigua. Recientemente leí un poema en *American Poetry Review* sobre los pesares de la edad avanzada, las dificultades al llegar a los setenta años. La poeta escribió: “Y, saben, tu memoria se va”, etcétera. Y agrega: “Pero después de todo, el sol desaparece cada día y al día siguiente se asoma”. Pero de hecho el sol no desaparece: sólo que no es visto más por el observador en un lugar determinado. “Desaparecer” no es aquí *le mot juste*.

USTED HA IDENTIFICADO EL LINAJE LITERARIO DE LOS POETAS DEL LENGUAJE CON LA TEORÍA POST-ESTRUCTURALISTA (DERRIDA, LYOTARD, Y DELEUZE), LOS ESCRITORES STEIN, WILLIAMS, ZUKOFSKY, Y LAS TRADICIONES VANGUARDISTAS DEL FUTURISMO Y DADÁ. TODOS ESTOS ESCRITORES EXAMINARON LAS PRÁCTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS DOMINANTES ASÍ COMO LAS MARGINALIZADAS. ¿ES ESTO TAMBIÉN ALGO CARACTERÍSTICO DE LA POESÍA DE HOY EN DÍA?

¿Examinar las prácticas de lenguajes marginalizados? Sí, creo que sí. Ahora estamos estudiando mucho más de cerca los idiomas de las culturas post-coloniales y de grupos étnicos.

USTED TAMBIÉN HA MENCIONADO QUE UNA PRÁCTICA COMÚN DE LAS NUEVAS POÉTICAS ES LA APROPIACIÓN DE PALABRAS Y DE FRASES DE OTRAS FUENTES. ¿ES ESTO IMPORTANTE?

Oh sí. Tome el libreto de Charles Bernstein, *Shadowtime*, que es el libreto para una ópera que escribió el año pasado con Brian Ferneyhough. El libreto se puede leer

independientemente y trata sobre la vida y obra —empezando en sus últimos días— de Walter Benjamin. Pero no es en lo absoluto un “drama histórico” en el sentido tradicional. Lo que Charles hace aquí es usar palabras textuales de Benjamin e insertarlas en su texto. Así por ejemplo, en una pequeña sección en la que cita un famoso ensayo de Benjamin, “Hashisch in Marseilles”, Charles selecciona aproximadamente diez frases del ensayo y las modula, reformándolas con una buena cantidad de onomatopeyas a fin de lograr que se escuche como una fantasía endrogada. Hoy la escritura es espesamente citativa e intertextual.

EN ESTE CONTEXTO LO QUE VIENE A LA MENTE SON LAS FRECUENTES ACUSACIONES DE PLAGIO CONTRA PICASSO, DE QUE TOMABA IDEAS DE OTROS PINTORES. PERO NO ES EL CASO —Y ESTO ES CIERTO SIN DUDA EN LA PINTURA—, YA QUE CUANDO SE TOMAN ELEMENTOS DE NUMEROSOS ARTISTAS Y SE RECOMBINAN DE UNA MANERA CREATIVA, ESO CONSTITUYE UNA NUEVA CREACIÓN.

Eso es muy interesante. Incluso pienso que realmente se ha ido mucho más lejos. Es decir, se puede argumentar que poetas y pintores siempre citaron otras obras y las reconstruyeron siempre de nuevas maneras, pero en la actualidad se hacen obras en las cuales toda la composición es un texto encontrado, o al menos un texto específico que se enmarca de una manera distinta. Bueno, es lo que Borges hizo, usted sabe, por lo que no es nada novedoso. Por supuesto, muchos lectores desaprueban tales textos. He escuchado a personas decir: “Bien, pero X no usa ninguna palabra original”, pero ni siquiera resulta fácil hacer una réplica del texto original. Una de las revelaciones para mí fue escuchar a John Cage interpretar sus “writings through” [escrituras atravesadas], por ejemplo *Roaratorio*, que es un “escrito atravesado” por *Finnegans Wake*, o por *Empty Words* [Palabras

father is looking like right now.” Stein’s are just very suggestive sentences; their enigmas haunt us.

We could also talk about the whole issue of precision, of accuracy in Poundian terms. You’re a linguist so this must interest you a lot, namely Ezra Pound’s idea that even in the most ungrammatical and disjunctive poetry, there has to be such a thing as precision, and by that I mean *le mot juste*. If you use a word, there has to be a reason for using it. You don’t just use any old word. I recently read a poem in *American Poetry Review* about the sorrows of old age, the difficulties of turning seventy. The poet wrote, ‘And, you know, your memory goes,’ and so on. And she added, ‘But after all, the sun disappears everyday and comes up the next day.’ But the sun doesn’t in fact disappear: it just isn’t seen any more by the observer in a particular place. “Disappear” is not the *mot juste* here.

YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED THE LITERARY LINEAGE OF LANGUAGE POETS IN POST-STRUCTURALIST THEORY (DERRIDA, LYOTARD, AND DELEUZE), THE WRITERS STEIN, WILLIAMS, ZUKOFSKY, AND THE AVANT-GARDE TRADITIONS OF FUTURISM AND DADA. ALL OF THESE WRITERS EXAMINED DOMINANT AS WELL AS MARGINALIZED LANGUAGE PRACTICES. IS THIS ALSO A CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF POETRY NOWADAYS?

To examine marginalized language practices? Yes, I think so. We are now studying the languages of post-colonial cultures and ethnic groups much more closely.

YOU HAVE ALSO MENTIONED THAT A COMMON PRACTICE OF THE NEW POETICS IS THE

“Even in the most ungrammatical and disjunctive poetry, there has to be such a thing as precision, and by that I mean *le mot juste*. If you use a word, there has to be a reason for using it. You don’t just use any old word.”

APPROPRIATION OF WORDS AND SENTENCES FROM OTHER SOURCES. IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Oh yes. Take Charles Bernstein’s libretto, *Shadowtime*, which is the libretto for an opera that he wrote last year with Brian Ferneyhough. But the libretto can be read independently and it’s about the life and work—beginning with the last days—of Walter Benjamin. But in no way is it an “historical drama” in the traditional sense. What Charles does here is to use Benjamin’s actual words and insert them into his text. So for instance, there’s a little section that cites Benjamin’s famous essay

“Hashisch in Marseilles”; Charles takes about ten sentences out of the essay and modulates them, rephrasing them with a lot of onomatopoeia so as to create what sounds like a drug fantasy. Writing today is heavily citational and intertextual.

IN THIS CONTEXT WHAT COMES TO MIND ARE THE FREQUENT ACCUSATIONS AGAINST PICASSO OF PLAGIARISM, OF TAKING IDEAS FROM OTHER PAINTERS. BUT ISN’T IT THE CASE — AND THIS IS TRUE CERTAINLY OF PAINTING — THAT WHEN YOU TAKE ELEMENTS FROM NUMEROUS ARTISTS AND RECOMBINE THEM IN A CREATIVE MANNER, THIS CONSTITUTES A NEW CREATION.

That’s very interesting. Actually I think it’s gone even much further. I mean, you can argue that poets and painters always cited other works and recreated them in new ways, but today you have works in which the whole composition is a found text, or at least an appropriated text framed in a new way. Well, it’s what Borges did, you know, so it’s nothing so new. Of course many readers disapprove of such texts. I’ve heard

vacías] de Thoreau. Cage utilizaba reglas elaboradas para “escribir atravesado” por esos textos predecesores y así emerger como poemas muy diferentes. Yo estoy escribiendo un libro a llamarse *Unoriginal Genius* [*Genio poco original*] sobre ese proceso.

VOLVIENDO A GERTRUDE STEIN: SOLÍA SUPONERSE QUE FUE INFLUENCIADA POR PICASSO, QUE TOMÓ ALGUNAS DE LAS IDEAS DEL CUBISMO Y LAS APLICÓ A LA LITERATURA. PERO AHORA SE HA ARGUMENTADO QUE TAL VEZ ESO NO SE DIO EN UNA SOLA DIRECCIÓN. ELLA PODRÍA IGUALMENTE HABER INFLUIDO A PICASSO, A PESAR DE QUE ÉL NO LEÍA EN INGLÉS.

Exacto, y sin duda ella tuvo muchísimas influencia, digamos, por ejemplo, Duchamp. De hecho, en mi *Poetics of Indeterminacy* (1981), escribí sobre el “cubismo” de Stein à la Picasso, pero ya no estoy tan segura de que el término sea acertado para su trabajo. Picasso fue obviamente el ídolo de Stein, no hay dudas acerca de eso, pero su ejemplo fue menos importante que el de Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp de hecho leía —y apreciaba— algunos ejemplares de su trabajo, mientras que Picasso no le prestó ninguna atención a la obra de ella. Él la tenía a ella como una gran mecenas: a él le encantaba su salón y ella compraba sus pinturas. Pero Duchamp comprendió que su propia estética era similar a la de ella. Como la Stein de *Tender Buttons*, él tomó objetos completamente ordinarios, como un portabotellas o un perchero de ropas, y los descontextualizó. Y eso significó de hecho una revolución estética.

USTED A MENUDO SE HA REFERIDO A “LA ESTÉTICA REALMENTE GRANDE DE LOS AÑOS 60”, LA DE JOHN CAGE, MERCE CUNNINGHAM, JASPER JOHNS, MORTON FELDMAN, JACKSON MAC LOW, FRANK O’HARA, Y JOHN ASHBERY. ¿SEGÚN USTED QUÉ ES LO QUE HACE A ESA GENERACIÓN AUTÉNTICAMENTE VANGUARDISTA?

Bueno, los poetas autoritarios en los años 60 fueron, por un lado, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath y su círculo, y, por otra parte, Allen Ginsberg y los Beats. Me gusta mucho Ginsberg, pero realmente no se le puede llamar *avant-garde*, ya que su concepto de la lírica y del lenguaje poético no fue especialmente innovador. E incluso no estoy segura que se podría llamar a O’Hara vanguardia si entendemos por ese término algún tipo de avance importante y reconcepción de lo que es la poesía.

¿SERÁ PORQUE O’HARA NO LE PRESTA ESPECIAL ATENCIÓN AL LENGUAJE?

No, no. El lenguaje de O’Hara es brillante. Pero su concepción de lo lírico es demasiado tradicional. En muchos sentidos, O’Hara es un romántico estadounidense en la tradición de Whitman y Hart Crane. Su tratamiento muy abierto de la cultura gay es sin duda novedoso como lo es también su extravagante humor maravilloso, pero formalmente lo que está escribiendo son odas, elegías, poemas autobiográficos. Fue Cage quien inició a ambos, O’Hara y Ashbery, en las nuevas posibilidades “abstractas”. Simplemente piense en la implementación que hizo Cage de la grabadora. Fue Cage quien entendió —Steve McCaffery tiene un ensayo muy bueno sobre este tema en la colección de Dee Morris, *Sound States*— que lo que la grabadora permitió hacer a los poetas fue un empalme de voces y superposición de una voz encima de otra de manera que no se obtenga justamente un collage, sino un nuevo tipo de tejido, muy diferente de lo que Lowell o Ginsberg habían hecho. La poesía de Ginsberg es todavía lineal: desde “Vi las mejores mentes de mi generación” hasta “Moloch!”, incluso después.

AHORA BIEN, USTED TAMBIÉN HA SEÑALADO QUE PARTE DE LA POESÍA MÁS INTERESANTE QUE SE ESCRIBE EN LA ACTUALIDAD ES

people say; “Well, X doesn’t use any original words,” but it’s not so easy to replicate a source text. One of the revelations for me was hearing John Cage perform his various “writings through,” for example, *Roaratorio*, which is a “writing through” *Finnegans Wake*, or *Empty Words* (Thoreau). Cage used elaborate rules to “write through” his parent texts and they emerge as very different poems. I am writing a book on this process to be called *Unoriginal Genius*.

TO RETURN TO STEIN: IT USED TO BE ASSUMED THAT GERTRUDE STEIN WAS INFLUENCED BY PICASSO, THAT SHE TOOK SOME OF THE IDEAS FROM CUBISM AND APPLIED THEM TO LITERATURE. BUT NOW IT HAS BEEN ARGUED THAT MAYBE THAT WAS NOT GOING IN ONE DIRECTION ONLY. SHE MIGHT HAVE EQUALLY INFLUENCED PICASSO, EVEN THOUGH HE COULD NOT READ ENGLISH.

Exactly, and she certainly had a lot of influence, say on Duchamp. Actually, in my *Poetics of Indeterminacy* (1981), I wrote about Stein’s “cubism” à la Picasso, but I am no longer so sure the term is apt for her work. Picasso was obviously Stein’s idol, there’s no question about that, but his example was less important than that of Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp actually read—and appreciated—some of her work, whereas Picasso paid no attention to it at all. He thought of her as a great patroness; he loved her salon and she bought his paintings. But Duchamp understood because his own aesthetic was so similar. Like the Stein of *Tender Buttons*, he took totally ordinary objects, like a bottle rack or a clothes hanger, out of their contexts. And that was indeed an aesthetic revolution.

YOU HAVE OFTEN REFERRED TO “THE REALLY GREAT SIXTIES AESTHETIC”, THAT OF JOHN CAGE, MERCE CUNNINGHAM, JASPER JOHNS, MORTON FELDMAN, JACKSON MAC LOW,

FRANK O’HARA, AND JOHN ASHBERY. WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES THIS GROUP GENUINELY AVANT-GARDE?

Well, the dominant poets in the 60’s were, on the one hand, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath and their circle, and, on the other, Allen Ginsberg and the Beats. I am very fond of Ginsberg but one can’t quite call him avant-garde, since his concept of the lyric and of poetic language were not especially innovative. And I’m not even sure one could call O’Hara avant-garde if by that term we mean some sort of major breakthrough and reconception of what poetry is.

IS THAT BECAUSE O’HARA DOES NOT PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO LANGUAGE?

No, no. O’Hara’s language is brilliant. But his conception of the lyric is quite traditional. In many ways, O’Hara is an American Romantic in the tradition of Whitman and Hart Crane. His very open treatment of gay culture is certainly new as is his wonderful campy humor, but formally he is writing odes, elegies, autobiographical poems. It was Cage who introduced both O’Hara and Ashbery to new “abstract” possibilities. Just think of Cage’s deployment of the tape recorder. And it was Cage who understood —Steve McCaffery has a very good essay on this subject in Dee Morris’s collection *Sound States*—that what the tape-recorder allowed poets to do is to splice voices and superimpose one voice on top of another so that you get not just collage but a new kind of layering, quite unlike anything Lowell or Ginsberg had done. Ginsberg’s poetry is still linear: from “I saw the best minds of my generation” to “Moloch!” and beyond.

NOW, YOU HAVE ALSO SAID THAT SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING POETRY BEING WRITTEN TODAY IS CONCEPTUAL: YOU MENTIONED CRAIG DWORKIN, CHRISTIAN BÖK, KENNETH

CONCEPTUAL: USTED HA MENCIONADO A CRAIG DWORKIN, CHRISTIAN BÖK, KENNETH GOLDSMITH, CAROLINE BERGVALL Y OTROS POETAS. ¿PODRÍA EXPLICAR?

Comencemos con Robert Smithson quien ha usado espacios específicos para replantear por completo algún problema. ¿Qué es un monumento? ¿Una laguna? ¿Cómo puede la tierra temporal en sí misma cambiar nuestras percepciones? Otro artista conceptual importante en la tradición de Wittgenstein fue Joseph Kosuth, de quien hablé en *Wittgenstein's Ladder* [*La Escala de Wittgenstein*]. Pero una vez más, el primer gran artista conceptual fue sin duda Duchamp. La poesía conceptual es la más difícil de definir porque, mientras que los artistas conceptuales y visuales se desplazan hacia el lenguaje, los poetas están ya usando el lenguaje, por definición. Pero en su nuevo libro, *The Weather* [*El Clima*], Kenneth Goldsmith recicla un año de radioemisiones meteorológicas. Puede parecer una simple copia, pero la narrativa estacional es muy interesante. Así, cuando llegas a la primavera, el estado de ánimo y el conjunto de referentes cambia porque la guerra iraquí ha comenzado: de repente todos los reportes del tiempo están prontos a ocurrir desde Irak, y así es que leemos, “120 grados hoy en el desierto”, etcétera. Lo que la convierte en poesía en lugar de ser sólo una réplica de la noticia es ese proceso de desfamiliarización de las palabras que oímos cada día. Al omitir ciertos días festivos y otros días semejantes el boletín diario pierde su continuidad, haciendo hincapié en cuán inexactos son en realidad los

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reportes del tiempo. Es decir, leemos: ‘Nieve esta tarde, comenzando temprano y luego llegando a ser espesa al anochecer’, pero a continuación no nieva, quizás porque el libro se salta un día o porque ¡no nevó después de todo! Es muy seductor. Otro poeta conceptual muy interesante sobre el que escribí para la revista *Parkett* fue Vito Acconci —un creador anterior—, que luego se convirtió en un artista pero comenzó como poeta en la Universidad de Iowa y creó una extraña mezcla de efectos de la “realidad”. Un tercer poeta sería David Antin, cuyas “talk pieces” [piezas habladas], concebidas como “conferencias”, son en realidad trabajos de arte conceptuales, dependientes de estructuraciones metonímicas.

¿CUÁL ES SU OPINIÓN ACERCA DE LA “POESÍA SLAM”? ¿NO CREE USTED QUE PROPONE UNA INTERESANTE “POESÍA SONORA” QUE SE PIERDE EN LA PÁGINA?

A veces sí. Dos cosas han sucedido últimamente. En la convención de la MLA*, mi Foro Presidencial y unos talleres relacionados tuvieron como tema, “El sonido en la poesía”, lo que sentí que era importante debido a que el sonido es actualmente un elemento desatendido en los debates sobre poesía. Nuestra propia poesía norteamericana ha llegado a ser tan prosaica que en realidad no parece ni suena como poesía. Es sólo una especie de prosa picada en trozos. Con el sonido en primer plano estamos volviendo a la lectura hablada, pero querría distinguir entre la lectura típica de la poesía y la poesía performativa. La mayoría de los recitales de poesía no tienen vida; no son en realidad funciones. Por otro lado, el difunto Jackson Mac Low, un poeta difícil que nunca fue muy popular en cuanto a recepción de su escritura, ahora puede

* de 2006

GOLDSMITH, CAROLINE BERGVALL AND OTHER POETS. CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

Let’s begin with Robert Smithson who has used specific sites to rethink some problem completely. What is a monument? A lagoon? How can changing the earth itself change our perceptions? Another important conceptual artist in the Wittgenstein tradition was Joseph Kosuth, whom I talk about in *Wittgenstein's Ladder*. But again, the first great conceptual artist was surely Duchamp. Conceptual poetry is harder to define because, whereas visual conceptual artists shift to language, poets are already using language, by definition. But in his new book *The Weather*, Kenneth Goldsmith recycles a year’s worth of actual radio weather reports. It may seem to be mere copying but the seasonal narrative is very interesting. When you come to the spring, the mood and set of referents shifts because the Iraqi war has begun: suddenly all the weather reports are coming in from Iraq, and so we read, “120 degrees today in the desert,” and so on. What makes it poetry rather than just a replica of the news is its defamiliarization of words we hear every day. In leaving out holidays and certain other days, the daily bulletin loses its continuity, emphasizing how inaccurate weather reports actually are. That is, we read, ‘Snow this afternoon, starting early and then becoming thick by nightfall’ but then it doesn’t snow, perhaps because the book skips a day or because it didn’t snow after all! It’s very tantalizing. Another very interesting conceptual poet I just wrote about for the journal *Parkett*—an earlier figure—was Vito Acconci, who then became an artist but started out as a poet at the University of Iowa and created a strange mix of “reality” effects. A third would be David

“Conceptual poetry is harder to define because, whereas visual conceptual artists shift to language, poets are already using language, by definition.”

Antin, whose “talk pieces,” framed as “lectures,” are really conceptual artworks, dependent on metonymic structuring. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF “SLAM POETRY”? DO YOU NOT THINK THAT THIS PRESENTS AN INTERESTING “AURAL POETRY” THAT IS LOST ON THE PAGE?

Sometimes, yes. Two things have happened lately. At the MLA convention*, my Presidential Forum and related workshops had as their theme, Sound in Poetry; I felt this to be important since sound is currently the neglected element in discussions of poetry. Our own North American poetry has become so prosaic that it doesn’t look or sound like poetry at all. It’s just a sort of chopped up prose. In foregrounding sound, we are coming back to the spoken voice, but I would want to distinguish between the typical poetry reading and performative poetry. Most poetry readings don’t come alive; they are not really performances. On the other hand, the late Jackson Mac Low, a difficult poet who was never very popular on the page, can now be heard on CD and is beginning to be understood as a major figure. Caroline Bergvall is a great performance artist. I’ve just been listening in my car to some of her CD’s and they are quite amazing. She has also made superb videos like “Ambient Fish.”

NOW, YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY HINTED AT THIS ALREADY, BUT ISN’T THERE A CERTAIN DANGER THAT IN CONCENTRATING ON THE SOUND MIGHT DETRACT FROM THE TEXTUAL NATURE OF THE POEM?

No, I think hearing poetry is a necessary corrective to its classroom presentation as silent text. There are now wonderful sites online like *PennSound* where you can hear the leading poets read their work. Of course you want to

* 2006

oírse en CD y comienza a ser comprendido como una figura principal. Caroline Bergvall es una gran artista de *performance*. Recién escuchaba en mi coche a algunos de sus discos y son realmente asombrosos. También ha hecho magníficos videos como “*Ambient Fish*.”

AHORA BIEN, Y TAL VEZ ESTO YA USTED LO INSINUÓ, PERO ¿NO HAY UN CIERTO PELIGRO AL CONCENTRARSE EN EL SONIDO, YA QUE PODRÍA DESVIARSE DE LA NATURALEZA TEXTUAL DEL POEMA?

No, pienso que escuchar poesía es un correctivo necesario en las aulas, ya que va más allá de la percepción de la poesía como un texto silencioso. Ahora contamos con maravillosos sitios en Internet como *PennSound*, donde se puede oír a los poetas principales leer su trabajo. Por supuesto que uno desea mirar a los poemas también de cerca, pero los dos van de la mano.

¿ES EL POETA EL MEJOR INTÉRPRETE DE SU TRABAJO?

No necesariamente. Pero siempre resulta interesante saber cómo X o Y conciben sus poemas. Charles Bernstein lo ha hecho convincentemente. Por ejemplo, John Ashbery no es un lector muy “bueno”. Él tiene un particular acento de Rochester, New York, que suena monótono y neutral, y a veces pienso que preferiría oír a otra persona leer su poesía, pero de todas formas, su propia interpretación tiene realmente importancia. No pienso que Frank O’Hara fuera especialmente un buen lector, su acento de New England era nasal y a veces aburrido. ¿Fue Gertrude Stein una lectora tan buena de su trabajo? No, no especialmente. Eliot leía con una voz pomposa, con un cuidado y asumido inglés monárquico, y eso puede resultar irritante. Por otro lado, ¿queremos que los actores lean la poesía? Usted sabe, tenemos grabaciones de grandes actores leyendo a Yeats,

o leyendo a Beckett, y por lo general lo exageran. Billie Whitelaw ha hecho interpretaciones maravillosas de Beckett; aún así, ¡preferiría oír a Beckett leer sus propios textos!

Tengo problemas, sin embargo, con la lectura de poesía como género. No puedo soportar esas lecturas de poesía de grupo (en el MLA y en otros lugares), donde cada poeta tiene cinco o diez minutos para leer. Después de un rato, todos suenan igual. E incluso cuando alguien se destaca, es difícil captar cualquier clase de poesía difícil en una lectura. ¿Está usted de acuerdo?

COMPARTO SU OPINIÓN. CREO QUE LO MISMO PUEDE DECIRSE DE LA PINTURA, DE LA MANERA EN QUE LA GENTE VISITA MUSEOS. UNO QUEDA ABRUMADO AL CABO DE UN RATO Y NO LE PRESTA ATENCIÓN A LA OBRA DELANTE DE SUS OJOS.

Sí, pero al menos en el Museo uno puede ir a su propio ritmo. En un recital de poesía no se puede. Supongo que las lecturas han llegado a ser acontecimientos primeramente sociales y eso tiene algún valor, pero...

¿CÓMO USTED DIAGNOSTICARÍA “LA NUEVA” POESÍA QUE SE ESTÁ ESCRIBIENDO ACTUALMENTE, CUANDO YA TODO PARECE HABER SIDO HECHO? ¿EN QUÉ ÁREA DE LA POESÍA SE PUEDE BUSCAR TODAVÍA LO “NUEVO” O LA POSIBILIDAD DE “ORIGINALIDAD”?

Bueno, ¡lo interesante es que no “todo” ya se ha hecho! El punto principal es que la poesía tiene que pertenecer a su tiempo del mismo modo que tiene que trascenderlo. Actualmente hay interminables poemas panteístas que parecen sostenerse en la concepción de que nada ha cambiado desde los tiempos de Wordsworth. Poesía es poesía. Pero si usted cree que el mundo cambia, entonces la poesía más estricta va a cambiar también. Tome el

look closely at poems as well, but the two go hand in hand.

IS THE POET THE BEST PERFORMER OF HIS OR HER WORK?

Not necessarily. But it’s always interesting to know how X or Y conceive of their poems. Charles Bernstein has made this case convincingly. For example, John Ashbery is not a very “good” reader. He has a particular Rochester, New York twang that sounds purposely flat and neutral, and sometimes I think I would prefer to hear someone else read his poetry, but then again, his self-interpretation really matters. I don’t think Frank O’Hara was an especially good reader; his New England accent was nasal and sometimes monotonous. Was Gertrude Stein such a good reader of her work? No, not especially. Eliot read in a pompous voice, in carefully assumed King’s English, and that can be irritating. On the other hand; do we want actors to read poetry? You know, we have recordings of great actresses reading Yeats, or reading Beckett, and they usually overdo it. Billie Whitelaw has given marvelous renditions of Beckett; even so, I’d rather hear Beckett read his own work!

I do have problems, though, with the poetry reading as a genre. I can’t stand those group poetry readings (at MLA and elsewhere), where each poet gets five or ten minutes. After a while, everyone sounds the same. And even when someone stands out, it’s difficult to absorb any sort of difficult poetry at a reading. Do you agree?

I SHARE THE SAME OPINION. I THINK THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF PAINTING: THE MANNER IN WHICH PEOPLE VISIT MUSEUMS. ONE GETS OVERWHELMED AFTER A WHILE AND DOES NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THE WORK IN FRONT OF THEIR EYES.

Yes, but at least in the museum you can go at your own pace. At a poetry reading you can’t. I

suppose readings have become primarily social events and that has some value, but....

HOW WOULD YOU DIAGNOSE “THE NEW” POETRY THAT IS BEING WRITTEN AT THE PRESENT TIME, WHEN EVERYTHING SEEMS TO HAVE ALREADY BEEN DONE? IN WHAT AREA OF POETRY CAN YOU STILL SEARCH FOR THE “NEW” OR THE POSSIBILITY OF “ORIGINALITY”?

Well, the interesting thing is that “everything” has not already been done! The main point is that poetry has to be of its time even as it has to transcend that time. There are currently endless nature poems that seem to be built on the assumption that nothing has changed since Wordsworth’s time. Poetry is poetry. But if you believe the world changes then the more stringent poetry is going to change too. Take the Language Poetry theorem, derived from post-Structuralism, that there’s no full presence, nobody has their “own” voice, and there are no truth statements. Oddly, the events of 9/11 changed all that. The idea that language is only a trace structure no longer seemed as convincing. Wittgenstein, incidentally, never questioned meaning-making as Derrida did. Wittgenstein recognized that if I say to you, a native English speaker, “Pass that bottle of water,” you know exactly what I mean, there’s no difficulty at all. Derrida, by contrast, would say that even this simple command has a subtext. So the questions we ask inevitably change. Christian Bök, who writes sound poetry, is doing things with digital sounds and with experiments in DNA, using a lot of scientific material that wasn’t around ten years ago, and he is creating sound networks out of those or out of video games. I’ve been in the audience when he’s performed this new work for a group of engineers at UCLA, and the audience adored it. Bök presents them with a heightened image of a world they understand.

DO YOU THINK THAT THE GAP BETWEEN

teorema de la Poesía del Lenguaje, derivado del Post-estructuralismo, según el cual no existe una presencia totalizante, nadie tiene su voz “propia”, y no hay declaraciones de verdad.

Curiosamente, los acontecimientos del 11 de septiembre de 2001 lo cambiaron todo. La idea de que el lenguaje es sólo una cadena estructural ya no parece tan convincente. Wittgenstein, por cierto, nunca cuestionaba el *meaning-making* [creación de significado] como lo hizo Derrida. Wittgenstein reconoció lo siguiente: si le digo a usted, un angloparlante nativo, “Pass that bottle of water” [Alcanza esa botella de agua], usted sabría exactamente lo que quise decir, no tendría ninguna dificultad para entenderlo. Por el contrario, Derrida diría que incluso ese simple enunciado tiene un subtexto. Es decir, las preguntas que hacemos inevitablemente cambian. Christian Bök, quien escribe poesía sonora, está haciendo cosas con sonidos digitales y con experimentos en ADN, usando una buena cantidad de material científico que no estaba disponible diez años atrás. Está creando redes de sonido de todo esto, o de los juegos de video. He estado en el público cuando él ha mostrado estas nuevas obras a un grupo de ingenieros en UCLA, y al público le encantó. Bök les presenta una imagen intensificada de un mundo que ellos entienden.

¿CREE USTED QUE LA BRECHA ENTRE LA “INNOVACIÓN” Y LOS LECTORES DE POESÍA ES HOY MÁS AMPLIA QUE ANTES, O HAY NUEVOS LECTORES QUE ESTÁN ABIERTOS A TODO TIPO DE EXPERIENCIA FORMAL?

¡Esa es una pregunta delicada! John Cage una vez me dijo: “yo puedo lograr una mejor audiencia

en la Universidad de Kansas o Knox College en Tennessee, que en la Universidad de Harvard

¡lo interesante es que no “todo” ya se ha hecho! Poesía es poesía. Pero si usted cree que el mundo cambia, entonces la poesía más estricta va a cambiar también.

donde, cuando di el ciclo de conferencias Charles Eliot Norton, la mayoría de las personas se fue”. Lo que John quiso decir es que la audiencia en Kansas tenía menos ideas preconcebidas, por lo que podría llegar a la obra con una mente más abierta que los de la Ivy League. Yo siempre he tenido la misma experiencia. En Stanford, los períodos literarios anteriores se enseñan maravillosamente, pero enseñar el presente resulta incomodo. Pero así sucede siempre: James Laughlin, el gran editor de *New Directions*, ha dado algunos testimonios de sus días en Harvard en los años treinta: él no podía convencer a alguien que Pound podría ser un gran poeta. O William Carlos Williams. Susan Howe vive en Guilford, Connecticut; su esposo trabajaba en el Departamento de Arte de Yale, a veinte minutos de distancia, pero Susan fue completamente ignorada allí hasta hace muy poco.

¿CUÁL ES LA SITUACIÓN ACTUAL DE LA CRÍTICA DE POESÍA EN ESTADOS UNIDOS?

Creo que es bastante desalentadora. Pienso que parte del problema es que, a diferencia de los años 50 y 60, cuando la división estaba entre “lo crudo” y “lo cocido”, entre el pensamiento dominante y la oposición, hoy no hay ninguna distinción clara y entonces puede pasar que todo el mundo pretenda ser “imparcial” con toda clase de poesía, y como resultado se descuida el discurso, por demás totalmente falto de sentido crítico.

Una vez más, los teóricos no quieren hablar de poesía en lo absoluto, o al menos no

“INNOVATION” AND POETRY READERS IS WIDER, OR ARE THERE NEW READERS WHO ARE NOW OPEN TO ALL KINDS OF FORMAL EXPERIENCE?

This is a tricky issue! John Cage once told me, “I can get a better audience at the University of Kansas or at Knox College in Tennessee than at Harvard where, when I gave the Charles Eliot Norton lectures, most of the people walked out.” What John meant is that the audience at Kansas had fewer preconceptions and could come to the work with a more open mind than is found in the Ivy League. I’ve always had the same experience. At Stanford, the earlier literary periods are beautifully taught, but the present is troublesome. The New is regarded with suspicion. But it was always thus: James Laughlin, the great publisher of *New Directions*, gave many accounts of his Harvard days in the thirties: he couldn’t convince anyone that Pound might be a great poet. Or William Carlos Williams. Susan Howe lives in Guilford, Connecticut; her husband was in the art department at Yale, twenty minutes away, but Susan was ignored there completely until very recently.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION OF POETRY CRITICISM IN THE USA?

I think it’s pretty disheartening. I think part of the problem is that, unlike the 50’s and 60’s, when the division was between the “raw” and the “cooked,” between the mainstream and the opposition, today there is no clear distinction and so everyone tries to be “fair” to every kind of poetry, with the result that the discourse is careless and wholly uncritical.

Again, the theorists don’t want to talk about poetry at all, or at least not contemporary poetry. People are afraid of adjudicating the work of the present. They are especially afraid—we all are—of criticizing a minority poet. I think this is really a shame, and especially from

the point of view of a conference like this one, committed to the idea that great work is being done in Latin America, that we feel we have to think approvingly of all the poetry “made in America” and yet don’t even know the poetry made in the other America, south of our border.

THIS CONNECTS TO MY NEXT QUESTION. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF CULTURAL STUDIES?

Yeah. I think it has done incredible harm.

DO YOU THINK IT IS ON ITS WAY OUT?

I hope so but it hasn’t happened yet. And what I really don’t like is what’s now called ‘globalism-transnationalism’. Transnationalism is really Comparative Literature without any foreign languages. I want to restore the study of language. And even when, as in my case with Portuguese, one doesn’t know the language in question well, one can try, with bilingual texts, to understand it. It’s a wonderful feeling when one does!

AND WE ARE TALKING ABOUT ONE OF THE MAJOR LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD, SPANISH!

And even a lot of the Latino students I teach don’t really know enough Spanish to read poetry. What’s really needed today to change this situation is much more exchange between North and South America than there is. US Imperialism dies hard! But a new interest in Latin American poetry *is* developing, for instance right here in Texas.

I WROTE A FEW YEARS BACK A BOOK ON ESPINA CALLED *CON/FIGURACIÓN SINTÁCTICA: POESÍA DE DES/LENGUAJE*, AND I WONDER IF I SHOULD HAVE WRITTEN IT IN IN ENGLISH BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE HAD A WIDER AUDIENCE. THE SAME APPLIES TO THE ONE WHICH I HAVE JUST FINISHED CALLED *POESÍA DEL LENGUAJE: DE T.S. ELIOT A EDUARDO ESPINA*.

de la poesía contemporánea. La gente tiene miedo de juzgar la labor de la actualidad. Especialmente todos temen —tememos todos— criticar a un poeta menor. Pienso que esto es realmente vergonzoso, y especialmente desde el punto de vista de un Congreso como este, comprometido con la idea de que importantes creaciones se están haciendo en Latinoamérica, que en la opinión de los académicos estadounidenses, tenemos que pensar aprobando toda la poesía “made in America” [hecha en América], y ni siquiera conocemos a fondo la poesía escrita en la otra América, al sur de nuestra frontera.

ESTO SE CONECTA A MI PRÓXIMA PREGUNTA.
¿QUÉ PIENSA USTED DE LOS ESTUDIOS CULTURALES?

Pienso que han hecho un daño increíble.

¿CREE QUE ESTÁN EN CAMINO DE DESAPARECER?

Así lo espero, pero no ha ocurrido aún. Y lo que realmente me disgusta es lo que ahora se denomina “globalización y transnacionalismo”. Transnacionalismo es en realidad Literatura Comparada sin ninguna lengua extranjera. Yo quiero restaurar el estudio del lenguaje. Y aun

“Lo que en realidad se necesita hoy en día para cambiar esta situación es mucho más intercambio del que existe entre América del Norte y del Sur. ¡El Imperialismo estadounidense es testarudo!”

cuando, como en mi caso con el portugués, uno no conoce bien el idioma en cuestión, uno puede intentar entenderlo mediante textos bilingües. ¡Es un sentimiento maravilloso cuando uno lo logra!

Y ESTAMOS HABLANDO DE UNO DE LOS PRINCIPALES IDIOMAS DEL MUNDO, ¡EL ESPAÑOL!

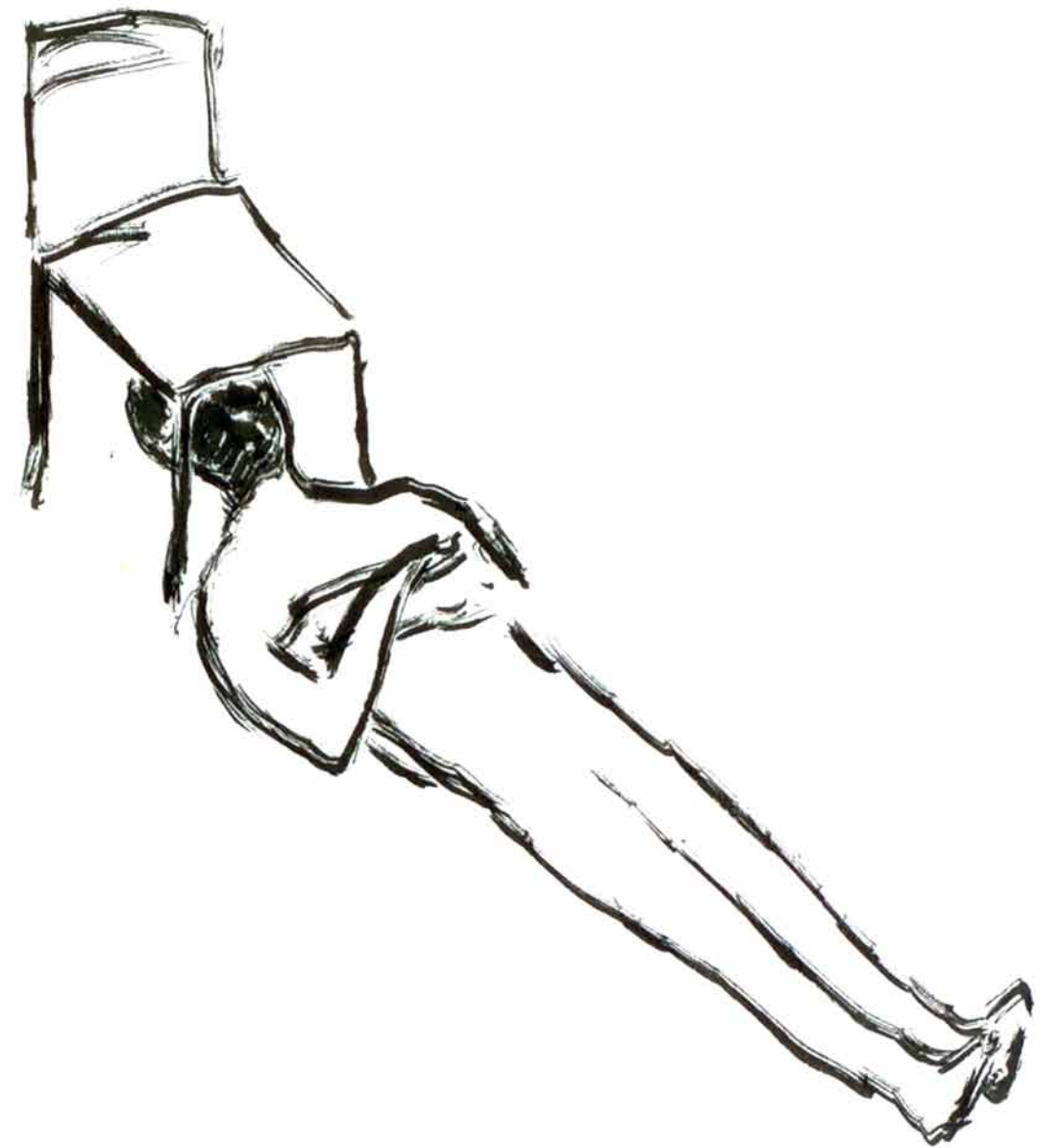
E incluso muchos de los estudiantes latinos a quienes enseño, realmente no saben suficiente español como para leer poesía. Lo que en realidad se necesita hoy en día para cambiar esta situación es mucho más intercambio del que existe entre América del Norte y del Sur. ¡El Imperialismo estadounidense es testarudo! Pero sí que se está desarrollando un nuevo interés por la poesía latinoamericana, por ejemplo aquí en Texas.

HACE ALGUNOS AÑOS ESCRIBÍ UN LIBRO SOBRE LA POESÍA DE ESPINA QUE SE TITULA CON/FIGURACIÓN SINTÁCTICA: POESÍA DE DES/LENGUAJE, Y ME PREGUNTABA SI DEBÍ HABERLO ESCRITO EN INGLÉS YA QUE HABRÍA TENIDO UNA MAYOR RECEPCIÓN. LO MISMO PASÓ CON EL QUE ACABO DE TERMINAR, TITULADO POESÍA DEL LENGUAJE: DE T.S. ELIOT A EDUARDO ESPINA.

Eso es lo que necesitamos con urgencia. ¿Ves? Hay departamentos de idioma en los Estados Unidos donde un libro académico escrito en otro idioma (digamos español) no cuenta para el *tenure*, porque los comités externos no lo pueden leer. Sé, por ejemplo, de un departamento de literatura alemana que no aceptó un estudio de Fritz Lang, el gran cineasta, ¡porque estaba escrito en alemán! Una solución a nuestro provincialismo sería que usted, Enrique, envíe un artículo a una publicación

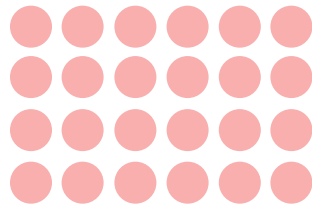
This is what we desperately need. You see? There are language departments in the US where a scholarly book written in the language in question (say, Spanish) doesn't count for tenure, because external committees can't read it. I know, for example, of a German department that would not accept a study of Fritz Lang, the great filmmaker, because it was in German! One solution to our parochialism would be for you, Enrique, to send an article to a mainstream journal like *Modernism/Modernity*. After all, such journals are supposed to be devoted to Modernism in general. At this writing, the ACLA (American Comparative Literature Association) is meeting in Puebla, but the program is entirely in English and it includes little poetry anyway. ■

representativa como *Modernism/Modernity*, pues se supone que revistas así se dedican al modernismo en general. Pero mire qué situación enfrentamos: en el momento de responder a esta entrevista, la ACLA (la Asociación Americana de Literatura Comparada) está reunida en Puebla, pero el programa está enteramente en inglés, y como si fuera poco, incluye poca poesía. ■





{ Carlos Germán Belli



Introduction and translations, Rose Shapiro

The Peruvian poet Carlos Germán Belli (1927) has been publishing poetry since the late 1950s, and by the 1970s he had established a reputation as a leading contemporary Peruvian poet. He enjoys an international reputation today, although the difficulty of his poetic language has delayed the translation of work into English (there have been a few poems published in journals and one anthology, and those several years ago).

Belli is a fascinating voice in the Latin American scene —and he will be new for North Americans. He often writes in the Spanish of the Golden Age, and his poetry is a compelling blend of past and present, envy and nostalgia, suffering and elegance. Belli is a truly innovative poet, one whose work is immediately recognized and whose work has been honored many times with a variety of prestigious awards and, most recently, a Nobel nomination.

Belli's poetry is characterized by several features, and his work is easily recognized once these features are understood. While in his earlier volumes he experimented quite a bit with a number of styles and forms (composing poems from nonsense or near-nonsense syllables, for instance), he has in the main developed an increasingly complex formalism based on what he calls *plagio*: plagiaristic appropriations, especially from the late medieval Italian tradition (Dante and Petrarch) and, predominantly, the Spanish Golden Age (Góngora, Quevedo, and a host of minor poets). The rhetoric of *plagio* as it is developed over the course of several volumes provides provocative theories of authorship, originality, and textuality. In the forms themselves of his poetry we see this "poor amanuensis of Peru" wrestling with (or bowing down to or digesting or copying) European literary tradition. He has worked extensively with forms like the *silva*, the *canzone*, and the *sestina*, not only inhabiting the form but also often remaining faithful to the original thematic premises (of Dante, Petrarch, Góngora, etc.). He takes other thematic inspiration from sources as diverse as the pastoral tradition, the street language of Lima, and a sort of utopian science fiction mostly of his own creation. Despair is often the guiding emotion of these wanderings; but we also find anger, pettiness, envy, annoyance, thwarted desire. In recent work his poetic voice is more expansive and even celebratory, but the spirit of the amanuensis is always with us.

Much of his poetry centers on the body, its functions and dysfunctions, its pleasures and pains, its strangeness and crudity. The body in his poetry is often deformed (maimed, crippled, cross-eyed) or preformed (the miserable fetus appears in his work with regularity, as it does in the illustrations of Beardsley and with much the same aspect). His landscape is populated with hybrids, freaks, and failures. In fact, the persona's own failure and his own sense of smallness and inadequacy lend him a special

understanding of the world of misfits he has created. He is also obsessed with digestion and defecation, and understanding the semantic range of these terms in his work helps the reader to trace the development of a sort of theory of influence. For instance, he employs the elegant and tortuous syntax of Golden Age poetry in several poems that purport to praise the *bolo alimenticio*, the mass of chewed but undigested food that is at the beginning of its journey through the alimentary canal. The *bolo* sometimes signifies accumulated knowledge that the amanuensis is not able to use to enrich himself or to improve his circumstances. There are many such examples of startling juxtapositions. As Belli is a master of meter and has an unerring ear for sound combinations and the elegance of the line, these sometimes grotesque subjects are explored in very elegant poems indeed, poems that bring together feces, deformed characters of the pastoral tradition, and unrelenting descriptions of endless labor.

We follow the difficult and strange road down which his poems travel because we sense that there is something unutterably true and even timeless in all that difficulty and strangeness. I only hope that these translations can approximate that sense of discovery among English-speaking readers.

{ (after Pedro de Quirós)

Not once have they been envied:
my humble home, your oak tree,
my love, yours,
my lute, your song;
oh my turtledove!— is it thus with you,
so brief, so envied,
so great, so scorned?

Rather than take sweet human form,
why did my elders not exist
as a stone, an elm tree, or a stag,
which, it seems, are not plagued by sense
and never to the other say:
“do not stray from this safe grove,
in which you understand
whence the bitter north wind blows, and whither the south.”

A mysterious voice once said to me:
“you shall not lie with Phyllis, shall not, in the field,
if with forceps they pull you out
of your luminous cloister, fetus mine”;
and now, finding myself here
in these crude quarters, year upon year,
I ask why I was not flung down
from the highest peak
for being a stutterer or a cripple or maimed or cross-eyed.



{ To My Brother Alfonso

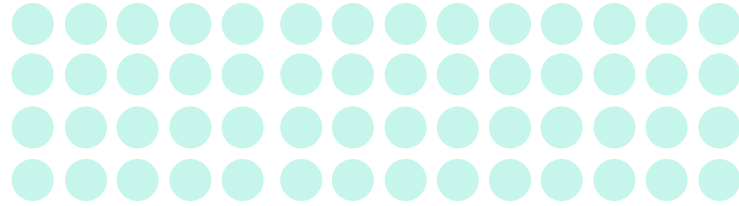
In equal measure the timber and the crude iron
of the stocks cruelly subjugate you;
and they make of your body a single organ
reaching from your neck down to the soles of your feet,
not only over your poor hide
but also in the bone, your deepest marrow;
so they leave you like an oyster here
firmly rooted in the surface of the world;
and the subtle flight
which the bird in cerulean cloister plies
more swiftly than the warm south wind—
when at last will it come for you?,
while you below in the fold, alone,
do not move a single bone
nor agitate your clumsy tongue
to mouth words into empty air;
for in the world all comes and goes,
blown about by the breath of life,
which comes with lavish grace
for many and which for no fewer others comes
harsh, in vain, or as nothing for ever.

Know this, my parents, oh know it well:
an insect cannot be translated as a man,
but a man is indeed translatable as insect!;

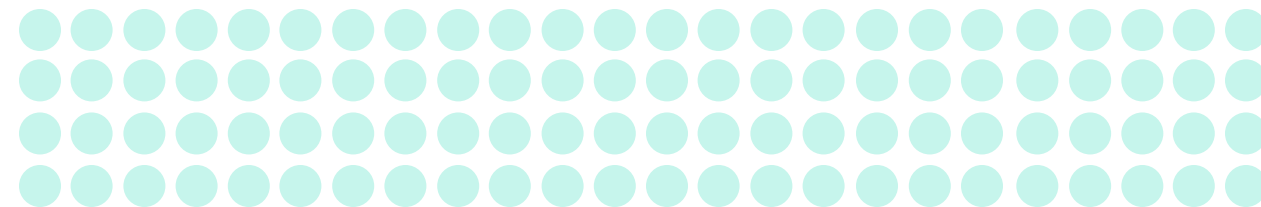
perhaps you didn't think much of it when
here on earth, without meaning to, you killed
some poor insect,
who had, in distant woods, in the furthest, safest spot,
stayed tucked away in the darkness there
to elude the human eye,
by light of day or under cover of night,
—didn't you think, I ask you, that in time
a few of your beloved sons
would become just so, insects defenseless and meek,
despite even your thousand pains
to guarantee that at all times
they would have the weight and measure of human things?

Your shinbone as it left your mother's womb
possessed not even a splintered bit
of foot, nor your speechless throat
a splintered bit of tongue,
yet why did others from the womb possess
both nimble foot and golden tongue
with which to walk, to speak?
How many stumbles have you witnessed
among the firm shinbones of passers-by,
as between sharp whistles the swift stag races,
faster even than the wind that goads him;
and how many gossipy tongues
wagging, though their owners may not mean to,
day and night, for no reason at all,
and you burn up, you roast beneath your skin
seeing that for some sweet shepherdess your throat
won't cough up a single word.

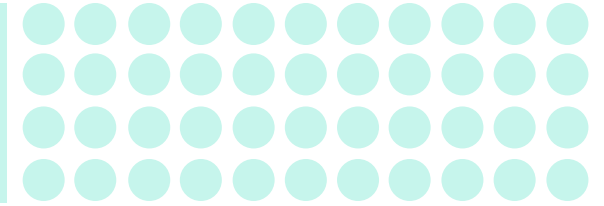
{ Amanuensis



Even as I'm collapsing on the floor, panting,
exhausted to the bone, all broken down,
still, all day long, I toil, moving mountains
from here to there, heaving and coughing,
my tongue hanging out a hundred thousand lengths,
falling to pieces just as my poor parents did;
and all this, in fact, because of my barren brain
and the stock market and draft board and mean boss-men—
they march on, leaving me stuck at the bottom of the heap;
so I am stuffed to the gullet and can do no more,
bent with shame at my daughters' feet,
just a poor amanuensis of Peru.



{ The Stocks of Lima

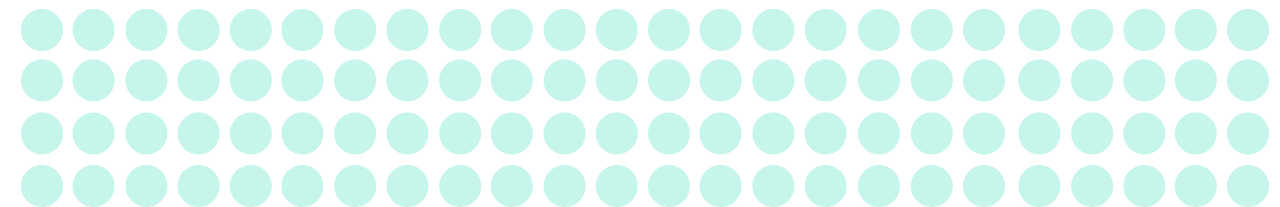


Like a rooster's cockscomb chopped off,
a long, grainy flap of skin
dangles obscenely from my throat;

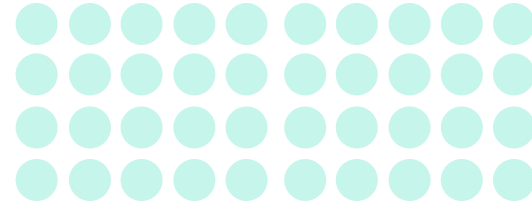
and beneath my two chicken-feet I find
debris, not of plaster but of flesh,
like the melancholy ruins of a fallen house.

Why do these mounds of rubble heaped
and this sagging skin plague me so
when I am not a scrawny, hunchbacked old man?

Your stocks do this, oh Lima, I know it well;
as much a cradle as a perpetual tomb
for whoever here is born, lives, and dies.



{ Sestina: *mea culpa*



Forgive me, Dad, Mom, because my error
was the birthplace of your unnamable damage,
since that time when first my brains
wove the knotted mesh of deeds
with the twisted ropes I found in the back,
this hole where I lie captive 'til my death.

Like a hot-air balloon released upon my death,
swollen with the bitter gall of errors,
my conscience will rise up from out back,
for to die like this, fenced in by so much damage,
is in all the world the most wretched deed,
not the fate of a sophisticated brain.

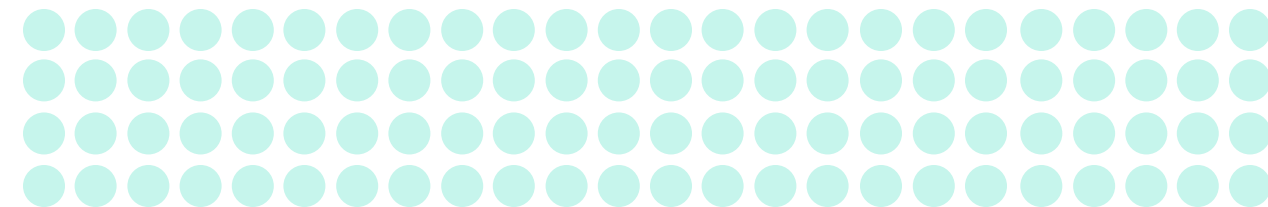
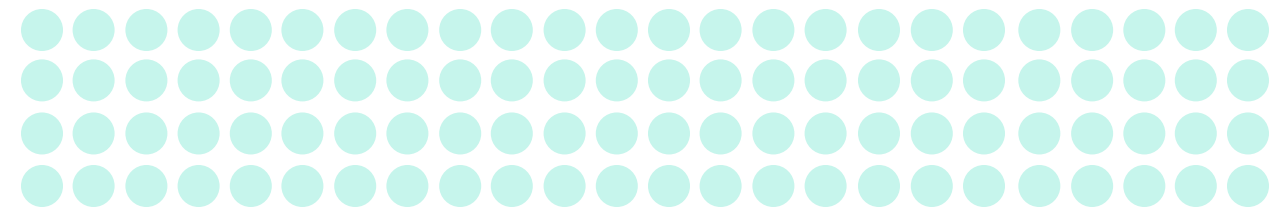
But this is the nonsense of a bewildered brain,
not to be revived, not even in death,
and in truth it is an unendurable deed
that the soul devote itself to committing errors
until, brought low by all the damage,
the body turns to dust, stuck in the back.

With my love life and career consigned to the back
of the line by exclusive design of my brains,
I am left like this by all the deadly damage,
even at the threshold, at the moment of death,
which itself was wrought in welding errors
to the heavy ingots of my life's deeds.

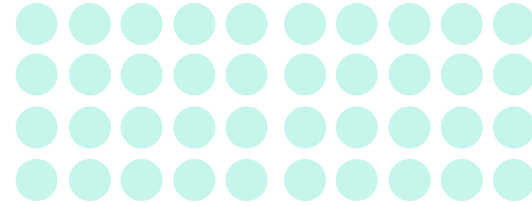
Dad, Mom, your sweetest deeds—
how I soured them, just languishing in the back,
lost in the forest of errors;
and so distressed you were by my poor brain—
hounded by firebrands in the lair of death,
trapped beneath the flood of all that damage.

Because error engages the wheels of damage,
upon erring I damaged you, such an ugly deed,
pitching you so early to your death,
and all the while I lay unmoving in the back,
a slave to the will of my rat's nest of a brain,
crude origin of the deadliest errors.

If my brain stays stuck, Mom, Dad, in the back,
may this be its last deed in the face of death:
to compensate the damage and to purge the errors.

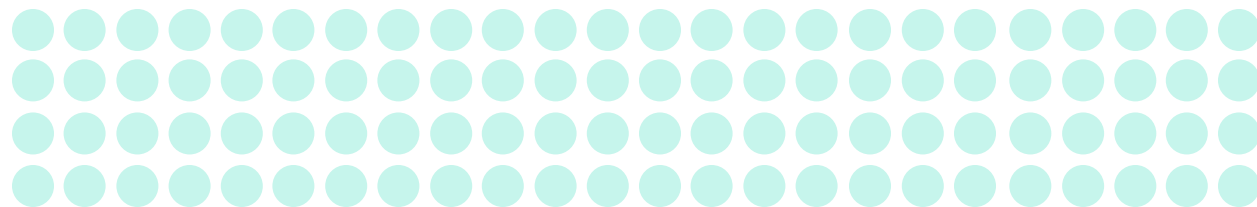


{ Walking Meditation



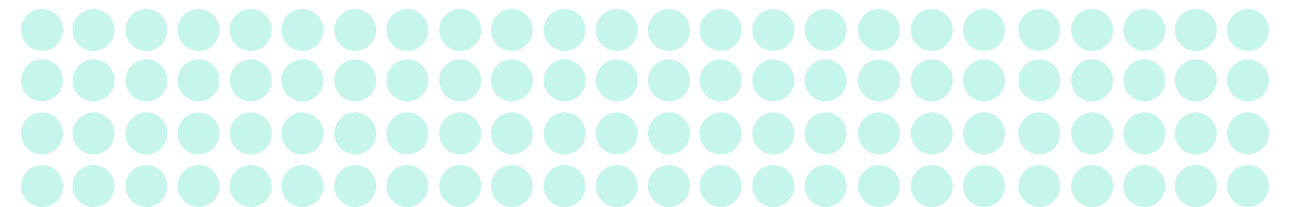
I always take a daily walk
upon the surface of the sublunary world
to preserve my health,
and I prefer to do so in a park,
where plants and tiny animals
live side by side in harmony;
and happily there I stroll
without stopping to consider that, unwittingly,
I might tread upon some beings,
who, just like me, are fully alive.

And, in truth, how fit I feel,
though I'm mass-murdering
those who lie beneath me,
torn between heaven and earth,
unable to avoid death,
which befalls them so suddenly
when someone comes along and in two great strides
with the sole of his heavy shoe
without further ado annihilates
the humblest son of God.



I have before me the multitude of ants
who take their last breath,
crushed by the thousand footsteps
of an average walker
turned homicidal
without intending it, no doubt;
but such are the circumstances
when a human giant kills
an invisible little animal,
unarmed, defenseless against another's passing.

It is most inexplicable
and, what's more, absurd
that someone, trying to stay in shape
— just as I do, every day —
with a swift blow cuts short the life
of one who never hurt another creature,
not even the merest mite;
just so may the heavens fall
like a house of cards
upon me one ill-fated day. So be it.



Baroque and Neobaroque

Roberto Echavarren

At the time José Kozer and I put together *Medusario*, in the early nineties, there was no internet. We were Prediluvian. We had to rely on the post to get and send information through Latin America. Books were brought by friends or imposed by strangers. In any case, one had to make a certain kind of effort if one wanted to keep informed of what was going on in the continent. Transcontinental distribution of small press poetry publications being next to nothing, each book was more or less destined to bloom and die in the limited circuit of its own city, or country of publication, without the chance of being related to equivalent efforts throughout. So it became relevant to juxtapose works and trends and play them together.

Nowadays, on the other hand, there are two blogs, one from Perú, the other from Chile, which offer dossiers about Neobaroque and *Medusario*.

At a certain point, it occurred to me to make a sample, some sort of precipitate, of what was going on according to us. I wanted to put together a reader of what was most interesting to us.

Our purpose was diverse from an anthology. An anthology supposedly offers a comprehensive panorama, and does justice to a more or less random series of writers, representative of a certain context or tradition, whereas the taking of a sample makes us rather like curators of plastic works, or disc jockeys sampling music. By taking a stance, we traced a figure. Most visible to us.

In Uruguay, where I come from, there were several good women poets in the late sixties and early seventies. Yet, the kind of writing that predominated then was rather simple and flat colloquialism. It answered to imperatives

the left considered moral or correct, be it the urban guerrilla or the Communist Party. Pro Cuba tendencies. Poetry had to contribute to the “revolution”, conceived as the overtaking of a central power of government.

People did not, at that point, talk about minorities, or sexual rights, or gender troubles. Neither drugs, such as marihuana, were the subject for any kind of public discussion. Contemporary music, rock and roll, was suspected of imperialist penetration and perversion. Only nationalistic folkloric or pseudo folkloric unplugged bards, the “cantautores”, were in sight. Everything else reaked of bourgeois or capitalistic infatuation.

The Tupamaro guerilla excluded homosexuals, the Communist Party demonized them. Since the second half of the sixties there were in Fidel Castro’s Cuba forced labor camps for the internment of homosexuals and other undesirable categories, youngsters with a different stylistic code or lifestyle.

Looking back, not in anger this time, but in admiration, I consider Modernism (roughly 1890-1920) a high point of our poetical tradition. A constellation of authors, preceded and headed by the itinerant Nicaraguan, Rubén Darío, inaugurated art nouveau sensibility in Argentina, Cuba, México, Uruguay, and other places. The modernists overcame epigonal romanticism, and renovated the themes and language of poetry. These poets read and translated *fin de siècle* French poetry from Baudelaire to the Uruguayan francophone Jules Laforgue, to Mallarmé.

Later, avantgarde poets such as Huidobro, Neruda and Vallejo radicalized modernist procedures experimenting with free verse. They were confronted by events like the Spanish civil war, and had to opt for communism, fascism, or other forms of socialism. This political urgency,

either in the thirties or later, or through the cold war in the fifties and sixties, led some of their successors to write in plainer romance, with purposes of propaganda. They wanted to be understood by everybody, by a wide audience of supposedly progressive peoples.

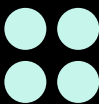
This trend was initiated by Pablo Neruda, among others.

Nicanor Parra made spoken language his own, but divorced himself from political compromise, thus creating sharp, absurdist, humorous anti-poems.

It was against this background that I met Rodolfo Hinostroza in Paris in the late sixties. He was the first writer that impressed me as starting a new phase in Latin American poetry, opening up a new kind of alternative, a new lifestyle and viewpoint, political or otherwise, with his book *Contranatura*, published in 1970.

Instead of being nationalistic, instead of being concerned by the ancient Leninist left, Hinostroza’s poetry went through and beyond territories, spoke of migrations, of breaking frontiers. For the first time it was possible for American and European young people to travel unassisted through northern Africa and Asia. The rebellion of the sixties, which in some ways culminated in May 68 in Paris, was concerned with music, sex and drugs. The hippie outlook and way of life broke the image of the conventional male and female person, and brought up an alternative set of priorities. Eastern thought and practices, religious or not, permeated the younger culture.

Hinostroza declared:
“I wanted to create a world full of diverse characters sustained by a mysterious unity, from the point of view of a subject who voluntarily seeks dispersion.”



Our purpose was diverse from an anthology...the taking of a sample makes us rather like curators of plastic works, or disc jockeys sampling music. By taking a stance, we traced a figure. Most visible to us.

Dispersion. Singularity. Dissent. The individuals abandoned their conventional identity, gender, and role behavior. No fatherland, rather foreign trajectories to explore. Eros and humor eroded rigid conventional morals. *Contranatura* partakes also of esoteric knowledge, of resurrected chamanistic traditions, modes of divination, alchemy, Tarot and astrology, disciplines all linked to a life practice, to the interpretation of events, to action. No other poetry that I know in Spanish incarnates so well these new horizons of the period.

Travelling to Summer...
We will camp under the stars...
Not overrun by the barbarians in power...
Androgynous and beautiful, millions of
hitchhikers silently advance...
The other margin perchance shall we reach.

The androgynous new creature is defined by long hair, a persistent fetish throughout the book: “The energy emanating from your hair will be magic enough”. “My hair is as long as yours”, and “*Un coup de cheveux*, and I will fall down”. Just as Samson, the new creature looses its power with a haircut. This is the new look. Certainly not Christian Dior’s. A new image, a new attitude: gender distinctions become to a point irrelevant, masculine and feminine genders are erased in favor of a new undertaking: the experience of bodily intensities. The body here is not divided, not weakened by compelling gender models. “You were not a single body, you were two before birth... from there you saw the eclipse... two tend towards the center of the universe.”

The whole book states art as “counter behavior”; *Contranatura*, counterpsychiatry, testimony of a conflict, a reevaluation of all values. The young embrace the right to be singular. This adventure of alternative lifestyles works here through a plurilingual verse in the tradition of Ezra Pound, a patchwork of tongues

corresponding to this transnational enterprise of hatching a brave new world, with blended perfumes of “millennia, myrrh, and sodomy”.

The Spanish poets of the Generation of 1927, notably Federico García Lorca, rediscovered the poetry of Luis de Góngora and the Baroque.

Later, through the forties, fifties and sixties the poet and critic Dámaso Alonso wrote enlightened essays on Góngora, and prose transliterations of his major poems, making possible for younger readers to have ready access to the Baroque achievement.

As we know, the publication of Wölflin’s landmark essay, *Clasicism and Baroque* (1888), made visible from a different viewpoint long uncomprehended and discredited poetic and artistic works of the XVIIth century. In the light of these new appreciations, Góngora was acknowledged the highest point of “*españolismo*”, or golden age of Spanish literature, a phenomenon which spread over Europe at his time.

José Lezama Lima, a Cuban poet, wrote an essay titled *Sierpe de Don Luis de Góngora*. Lezama elaborated in his poetry, essays and novels a complex baroque syntax and deployed learned realms of the “image” (his own term), a second degree mimesis articulated by metaphors and double meaning.

In *Medusario* we included three of his poems as an Incipit.

He was a major influence on several neobaroque poets, such as the Argentinian Néstor Perlongher, who published his first book: *Austria-Hungría* in 1980. Perlongher’s poetry was political in a gender bender way. It played with camp humor, but went beyond camp sensibility towards masochistic erotic violence, with breathtaking freedom, intensity, and dare.

I met Néstor in 1983 in Sao Paulo, at the book opening of Haroldo de Campos’ *Galaxias*. At the end of the eighties I reunited two Argentinian writers, Perlongher and Osvaldo Lamborghini, with the Uruguayan Marosa di Giorgio, in a new selection, under the title *Transplatinos*. It came out in Mexico in 1991. Almost at the same time Néstor prepared a bilingual anthology of Spanish American neobaroque poetry, which appeared in Sao Pablo, titled *Caribe transplatino*. This adjective, *transplatino*, applied well to Perlongher. His first book, *Austria-Hungría*, suggested a transnational trajectory, a geographical and poetical pilgrimage. If, according to Jacques Lacan, a signifier represents a subject before another signifier, and we don’t need to believe in essential identities, here we can say that Argentine speech represented a subject before Brazilian speech, and soon they polluted each other, as it became manifest in the following books by Perlongher, who was then living in Sao Paulo. *Portuñol*, Spanglish, are instances of translinguistic contamination. Perlongher made a virtue out of it, and his writing is all the richer for that. *Transplatino* refers literally to the lands on the other side of the Río de la Plata. Beyond national frontiers, and by an act of poetic justice, Perlongher takes into account the geopolitical unity of the region, so that the second poem of Austria-Hungría is titled: “Los orientales”, that is, citizens of the República Oriental del Uruguay. And the first poem of the following book, *Alambres*, takes the form of a letter written by the military commander Fructuoso Rivera to his wife Bernardina, at the time of the Guerra Grande, when the troops of the Argentinian dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas besieged the town of Montevideo. Nevertheless, some of his major poems have to do with an Argentinian obsession: Eva Perón. “El cadáver de la nación” alludes to the embalmed body of Evita, but it also hints at the genocide carried on by the military in the seventies in the name of a mythical “nation”.

The last period of Perlongher’s work coincides with his discovery of a drug called ayahuasca or yagüé. Prepared primarily by Amazonian Indians, the ayahuasca is also consumed ritually by non-Indian peasants in the forests of Acre, a Brazilian state bordering Peru and Bolivia. Their eclectic rituals and religion, built around the taking of ayahuasca, are called “Santo Daime”. In the eighties some anthropologists interested in it formed in Sao Paulo a group dedicated to the ritual consumption of the drug according to the hymns and dances of the Acre peasants. Perlongher wrote a book of poems, *Aguas aéreas*, under the influence of ayahuasca, and recreated its perceptual enhancements, the “miraciones” or visions experienced in a trance.

Here is an example of Perlongher’s verse:

Cuadran, culan,
En el kuleo de ese periplo
Porque en esas salas, acalambradas
De lagartos que azules ejos ciñen, o arrastran,
babeándose
Por los corredores de cortina, atrapalhada
como una toalla
Que se desliza o se deja caer en los tablones
De madera, mad, que toca, madra, toca lo
madrastal de ese tocado...

These verses are impossible to translate, unless we recreate them entirely. I only want to call attention here to the Portuguese word, *atrapalhada* (confused, disordered, perplexed, embarrassed, in the feminine form) which adds a humorous confusion to this string of associations. Let’s look more closely: *madera* (wood), becomes *mad* (crazy), and then *madra* and *madrastal* (motherly, belonging to the mother). The verses do not stop at this Freudian fantasy; mother is not a point of arrival; it offers only transitory support to a web of deformations and associations which continue on and on, until the poem dissolves itself by mere exhaustion of its lines of strength.

Signifiers evoke smells, sticky textures, synthetic stuffs, body secretions (sperm, transpiration, drivel) overwhelmingly physical, palpable. Erotic excitement is involved in an ever material flow of plastic significations, in a humorous series of puns, alternating the attractive and the repugnant, with lewdness, anguish, and transgender desire.

The Venezuelan Marco Antonio Ettedgui died in 1981 when he was only 23, from a supposedly accidental rifle shot onstage, “*como si toda la vida culminara en la expresión de un solo gesto*” (as if an entire life culminated in the expression of a single gesture). He left mostly unpublished materials. Some poems, ideas for performances, fragments of theatrical plays, were gathered by his friends in a posthumous edition under the title: *Arte información para la comunidad*.

His writing is made of the interaction of several disciplines, contexts of reference, rock and pop music, alternative styles and ways of living. Angels in platform shoes here remind us of Swedenborg’s angels wearing complicated hats. Actor, performer, and poet, Ettedgui longs for transgender experiences and fetishism:

Draw on my skin a glass ring
And then eat it as if it was a medlar
But draw it in such a way that
It looks like the rape of a female child
And draw it right upon my crotch
There rapes become somewhat loving.

A swaying gender uneasiness, a hesitation, a vacillation:

A non harmonious element after synthesis in
fear
Changes me from man to woman
In the wink of an eye, a noise in its
terminology.

This freedom from conventional roles and constraints becomes somewhat tragic. His own difference or deviation from the standards prevalent in a given community, to which he belongs by reason of time and place, makes the individual vulnerable, if not doomed. Nevertheless, tragedy is lifted here by play and humor, as it is in Oscar Wilde, García Lorca, and Perlongher. Ettedgui is both a minimalist and a baroque; “a minimalist with a baroque companion”. At first sight his poetry gives the impression of quick and disordered jottings and notations. His playful casualness acquires intensity through juxtaposition and multipolar allusion, therefore: “I changed the structure from minimalist to baroque.”

Another poet included in *Medusario*, the Peruvian Argentinian Reynaldo Jiménez, wrote a “Masturbating Self Portrait”, in which the body acquires “the consistency of another animal species”, and acknowledges an androgynous condition: “I desire the woman I find in myself, I desire the man I find in myself”; an echo, no doubt, of a Brazilian hit of the eighties, by Pepeu Gomes: “*Se deus é minina e minino/ eu sou masculino e feminino*” (If god is a girl and a boy/ I am masculine and feminine).

This tendency which we call *neobaroque*, as different from the old avant garde, does not bet on a single method of experimentation, be it chaotic enumeration, the suppression of syntax, or any other more or less exclusive stylistic device. It does not become prisoner of a definite procedure. In this sense, neobaroque poetry has no style. It verges sometimes on the essay, sometimes on apparently mindless phonetic games. It can be ironical, at moments colloquial, at moments metapoetical. In reaction against the avantgarde, it avoids utopian didacticism. In reaction against “engaged” colloquialism and propagandism of the populist kind, it does not accept a “middle level” of poetic communication,

and is not afraid of becoming obscure and overcomplicated.

Algirdas Greimas and François Rastier call isotopy “all iteration”, or multiple repetition, or redundancy in a text. Isotopies are of three levels: phonological (assonance, alliteration, rhyme), syntactic (concordance by redundancy of traits) or semantic (equivalence of definition, sequence of narrative functions). Phonological and syntactic isotopies have served to sort out, due to their concentration or regularity, a poem from other types of discourse. But semantic isotopies in poetry have received less attention. In general it is assumed that a poem follows a line of thought, speaks about something (a referent). Nevertheless, it is a demonstrable hypothesis that a poem develops, or can develop, several parallel semantic isotopies, several storylines at the same time. And it can also refer to itself, to the process of its production, to the practice that engenders it. Rastier establishes three semantic isotopies in a sonnet by Mallarmé: the sonnet refers to a banquet and a toast, to navigation, and to poetry, a practice that reunites the assistants to the banquet. A reductive attention would fetch only one or two of these themes. Góngora, in the *Soledades*, also refers at the same time to rowing and writing, to water currents and writing, to the flying of birds and writing. Writing is figured through other practices. It is not a mirror of reality. It is a way of running across it.

Our time is a turn of the screw concerning the complementary ideals of the XIX century: illusory subjectivism and authoritarian utopianism. The interest of the neobaroque in the present situation has to do with tolerance, with allowing for the singular, the particular, the lustful erratic, without being checked by prejudice and dogma. Information is the result of a fight of powers. Individuals are divided not only by income or by class origins. They are also

divided by education, race, erotic tendencies, and artistic lifestyles.

In this situation, what does the baroque mean to us?

The universe of Marsilio Ficino, a renaissance commentator of Plato’s *Banquet* in the court of Florence; the universe of Petrarch, as well as Dante’s before him, was a closed universe. The earth stayed immobile, and the celestial bodies run around it, within a series of crystal spheres. A delicate and well tempered navigation device.

The discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo dismantled this self centered vision. They passed from a closed universe into an off-centered infinite one, alien in fact to our usual perception powers, full of mysteries, and impossible to grasp. These discoveries challenged the teachings of the Bible and the Church. Profane knowledge seemed to contradict religious dogma. Space and time lost their axles. This was an anguishing experience for a XVIIth century man. He became freer, but he lost his handhold, and his self-centered confidence was lost.

In this infinite universe, Giordano Bruno writes, there is only one kind of matter, be it in the earth, in the moon, or in the celestial bodies. According to Spinoza, there is a single substance which perpetually differentiates itself from itself. Poetical discourse begins to be conceived as such continuous stretchable substance, as an infinite flow. Its limits are only the human faculties and human strength.

The long baroque poetical sentences, full of parenthesis, subordinate clauses, rambling digressions, attempt to grasp disparate levels of meaning, different fields of knowledge, a multipolar reality, as if poetry was the place for the synthetic articulation of them all, in the most plausible manner of true thought. The

convoluted phrases, the incantatory rhythms, make it difficult for the reader sometimes to decide about the correctness of the syntax.

"The long baroque poetical sentences, full of parenthesis, subordinate clauses, rambling digressions, attempt to grasp disparate levels of meaning, different fields of knowledge, a multipolar reality, as if poetry was the place for the synthetic articulation of them all, in the most plausible manner of true thought."

The "*poemas de arte mayor*" in the Spanish language, *silvas*, or *selvas* (forests, woods), by Góngora and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, alternate de *endecasílabo* and the *heptasílabo* type of verse. They use an open form, plastic and free, of great length (about a thousand verses each poem). These poems incorporate and discuss mythological allusions, antique and contemporary geographical information, medical and scientific knowledge, philosophical problems.

But there are two distinctive moments in our poetical baroque. One is Góngora's *Soledades*. The other, *El sueño* by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Góngora's *Soledades* transfigures the world of everyday coexistence in a more luminous, more stimulant, and more difficult verbal habitation. Neoplatonism had appropriated Hesiod's distinction of several human "ages". As the neoplatonist and petrarchist Philip Sidney wrote, poetry effects the passage from a "bronze age" of routine everyday cohabitation into a "golden age" of personal intensities. These "ages" are not thought of as successive, but as parallel to each other: poetry opens up a dimension, neither past nor future, a resplendent realm of verbal (sensible, intellectual) experience. In Góngora, the flux of the "*poema de arte mayor*" is framed by shipwreck and catastrophe. A privileged island floats by, but before arriving to it, and after leaving, mishap or death awaits the "*peregrino*". This "golden age" of the poem

is not the unequivocal contemplation of the dead Laura, or the platonic idea, as in Petrarch, but the achievement of a crafted opus through hard work. Góngora builds the poem with the relief of a jewel, intensifies verbal impact through artifice.

The idiomatic basis on the foreground of our language is made of the noun and its immediate representation, but in Góngora it is formed by metaphor and the splendid and unreal vision that it immediately suggests. Metaphor substitutes the name, or common concept, or current designation. Let's take an example: "birds of prey" are not named as such, but substituted by the expression "*los raudos torbellinos de Noruega*" (the quick whirlwinds of Norway). Góngora puts before our eyes the sensible robust impression of the flight of these birds. He leaves the reader in this realm of neat and strong sensible impressions, which lean on each other, and lend density to the whole. By suppressing their commonplace referents, or terms of comparison, Góngora obscures the meaning but enlightens the perception. So we sometimes do not know what he is talking about, yet we inhabit magnificent, neat, exact, luminous sensual impressions put into value by choice and placement of words.

In the *poema de arte mayor El sueño*, by the Mexican Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the human body being at rest and asleep during the night, the soul undertakes a cosmic trip which carries it as high as the moon. Yet when it reaches the utmost heights, it discovers its limitations. The mind's faculties: memory, understanding, and

even phantasy (or imagination), condition the soul's performance. These faculties are far from adequate to process a sufficient knowledge about the universe. The soul strives to obtain a clue. But our senses are weak and not reliable. Telescope and microscope alter our perceptions, as if under the effects of a drug. So the senses deliver only certain aspects of reality, and sensual information depends on the relative powers of the organs of perception. The capabilities of the soul are not its own. Its highs and lows depend on bodily functions, on digestion, on the lack or plenty of food. In *El sueño*, the flight of the soul is framed by descriptions of the physiological processes of the different organs (lungs, stomach, heart) according to medical science, leading to sleep or awakening. For Galeno, already, the soul is not immortal, since it is affected, energized or deprived of strength by bodily changes. Having lost the platonic idea (no instant intuition of the soul can reach the secret model of the universe), and finding the Aristotelian categories incapable of processing and clarifying the unending series of events, the soul in *El sueño* fails in its task.

The categories of the understanding, and even the flights of poetical fantasy, are instruments incapable or revealing anything beyond perceptible but uncertain phenomena. The baroque decentering of man is a source of anguish and doubt. So the newly gained expansion of perspectives is lived with frustration. The ancient sun, the ancient earth, are lost for ever. No human intelligence can tell us where to find them again. Men investigate new planets and new worlds, and they frankly confess that the world they thought they knew is finished. The platonic idea, aristotelian science, or christian dogma, do not guarantee knowledge anymore.

On the other hand, the atomism of Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*), and before him Democritus and the epicureans, seem to offer the most

correct model for this newly discovered infinite universe. Campanella acknowledges: "Thus, as man's thought develops, he thinks about the sun, and afterwards beyond the sun, and afterwards outside heaven, and afterwards about other worlds, as infinite as the epicureans imagined."

Testing the limits and exploring desire, the baroque poem nevertheless nourishes the animus, nourishes the spirit by means of *mots d'esprit*, *agudeza*, *arte de ingenio*, wit, fantasy. The baroque *conchetto* or conceit is synthetic: it brings together opposites by paradox, and finds double meaning in a single noun with diverse acceptations,

"*significa a dos luces o en varios sentidos*". Contingency is the occasion for discourse, the occasion for the poem, as far as it abandons itself to circumstantial associations, to the attractions of fetish and decoy.

"Testing the limits and exploring desire, the baroque poem nevertheless nourishes the animus, nourishes the spirit by means of mots d'esprit, agudeza, arte de ingenio, wit, fantasy."

The latent fermentation, and the spreading of the disturbing feeling of the infinite, makes for the uneasiness and proliferation of the new forms. The poem is neither subject to literary models, nor to the crystallized resources of the language. According to *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*, by Baltasar Gracián, there is no kind of valid normative or prescriptive indications. The poet invents by linking, producing synapses, instant contraptions out of apparently distant

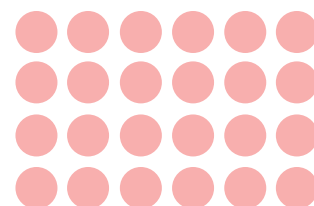
materials, or by dividing or unfolding what seemed of one piece. The baroque lived the multipolarity of the real among rough bouts of naturalistic violence and frustrated metaphysical strivings. Its restiveness, as a new anguish in man, brings stylistic nervousness and syntactic surprise, not without pomposity at times or a taste for scenographic grandeur.

By unchaining the boat and letting it drift, the baroque manifests our shock of recognition, the loosening up of our fixity, a challenge to identities and the compulsive roles determined by tradition. In actual fact, we owe to it the acknowledgment of our new situation. ■





Robert Creeley



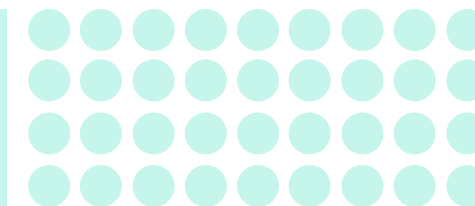
Traducciones, Ernesto Livon-Grosman
Notas de Charles Bernstein

“Todo lo que queda por decirse”
Cinco poemas de Robert Creeley que hay que conocer

La Poetry Foundation.org le pidió al poeta Charles Bernstein que recomiende cinco poemas de Robert Creeley para incluir en su archivo.



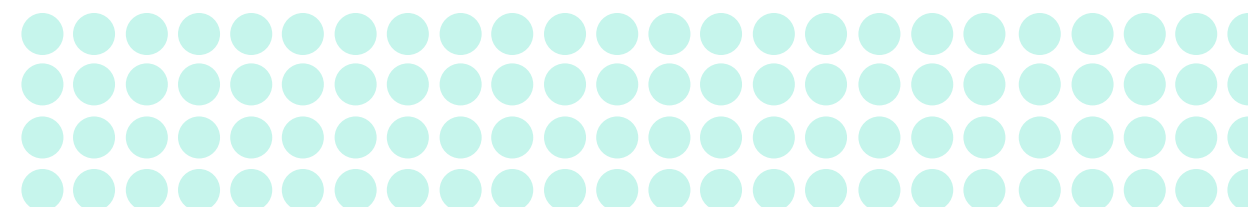
Un gesto (de *For Love*)



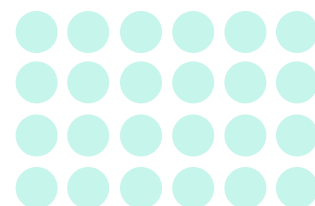
Mi señora
bella con
brazos
delicados, qué

puedo decirte,
palabras y palabras
como si todos
los universos estuvieran allí.

¿Las palabras son capaces de decir todo lo que queremos decir o todo lo que necesitamos decir? En los poemas de *For Love*, escritos en los 50, Creeley transforma el poema lírico de amor en un lugar tanto para la ansiedad existencial como la reflexión filosófica.



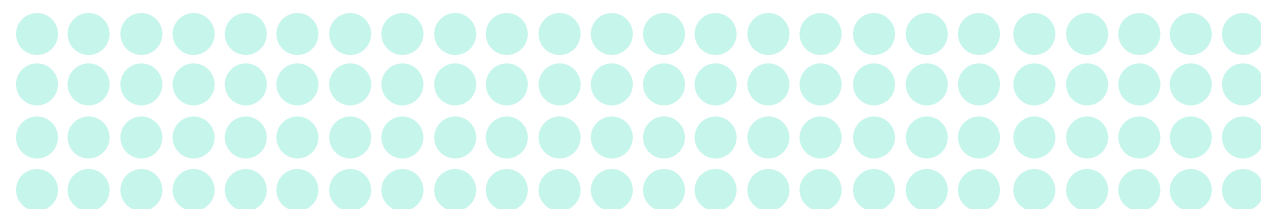
{ La advertencia (de *For Love*)



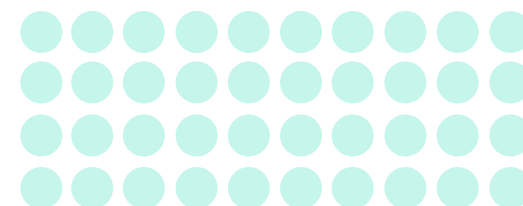
Por amor, abriría
tu cabeza y pondría
una vela detrás
de los ojos.

El amor se nos muere
si olvidamos
las virtudes de un amuleto
y la pequeña sorpresa.

Siguiendo a William Carlos Williams y a Louis Zukofsky, hay versos cortos en los que cada palabra cuenta. Cuánto se perdería si fueran escritos como dos oraciones en prosa. En la primera estrofa el ritmo y la emoción provienen del quiebre del verso en la mitad de la frase (encabalgamiento), un marcado contraste con el verso fraseado de la segunda estrofa. En *For Love*, Creeley tiene muchos poemas sin precedentes que exploran el enojo masculino. El poema tiene 32 palabras en ocho versos, dos estrofas, sin contar el título. Esta glosa dice tanto menos en 97 palabras.



{ La lengua (de *Words*)



Encuentra el yo
te amo en al
guna parte en los

dientes y
ojos, muérde
lo pero

ten cuidado de no
lastimarlo, deseas
tanto

y tan
poco. Las palabras
lo dicen todo.

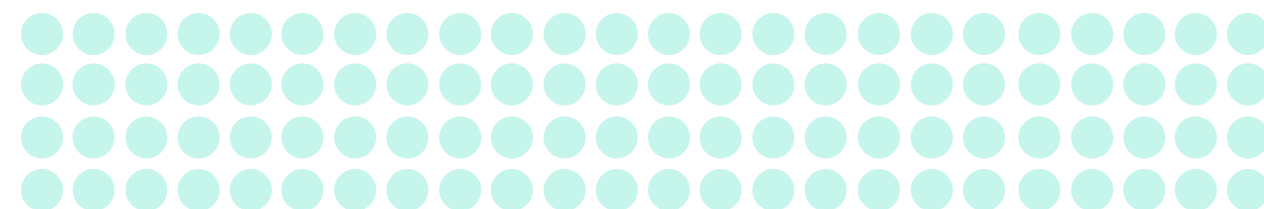
Te
amo
otra vez,

entonces
para qué sirve
el vacío. Para

llenar y llenar.
Escucho palabras
y palabras llenas

de agujeros
doloridos. La lengua
es una boca.

En *Words*, escrito a principio de los años 60, Creeley hace que cada palabra, cada frase, cada sílaba vuelva sobre sí misma, como si dentro de ellas pudiera encontrar una respuesta que no puede encontrar en el mundo sólo para descubrir que las palabras y el mundo están entretejidos, como el cuerpo y la mente. O tal vez como amantes en una pelea. Una referencia es siempre una relación.



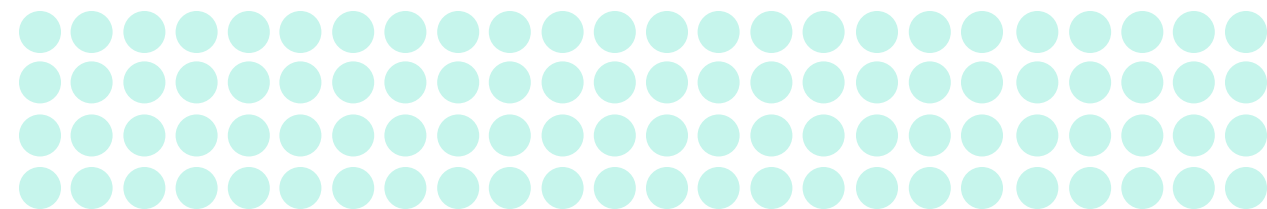
{ La medida (de *Words*)

No puedo
moverme hacia atrás
o hacia adelante.
Estoy atrapado

en el tiempo
como medida.
Lo que pensamos
de lo que pensamos de,

sin otra razón
pensamos en lugar
de simplemente pensar,
cada uno por sí mismo.

¿Cuál es la medida del poema: las palabras,
las frases, el metro, los versos, las estrofas...
o el pensamiento? Cada verso tiene su propia
gravedad y sin embargo conecta, aunque con
dificultad, con el siguiente. Estamos atrapados
entre el tiempo, en el ahora aprendemos, cada
momento a la vez, sólo para nosotros.



{ La matriz (de *Words*)

Tan pronto
hablo, el yo
habla. El

quiere ser
libre, pero
incompasivo miente

en dirección
a sus
palabras. Dejemos

que x sea igual a x , x
también es
igual a x . ¿Hablo

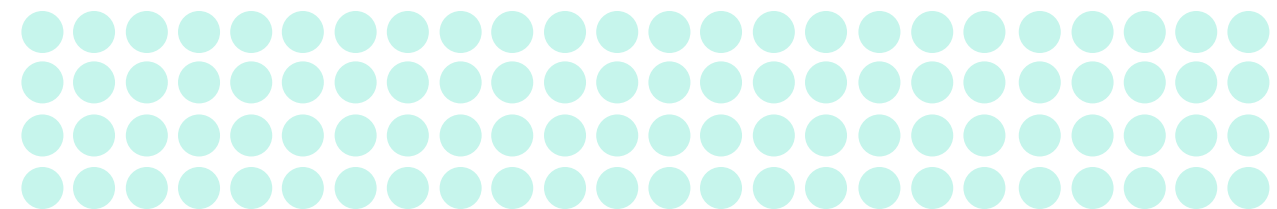
para
escucharme
hablar? No

tenía idea
de que algo
así lo había

deshecho. Era
una idea
propia.

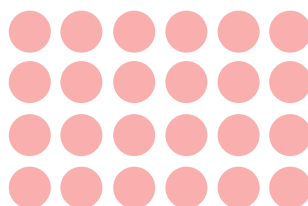
¿Quién habla en un poema? ¿Es el autor,
como se suele suponer en el poema lírico
tradicional (“Yo hablo”). En el álgebra
poética de Creeley, el “Yo” del poema habla
y esto no es igual a cuando “Yo hablo”. En
este giro literalizador de la frase, Creeley
crea la ya famosa y clásica formulación
del poema que habla de sí mismo como
un “ello” que prueba su propia actividad
creando su propio tiempo en la espesura de
su pensamiento.

Todos los poemas pertenecen a *The Collected Poems
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Harryette Mullen



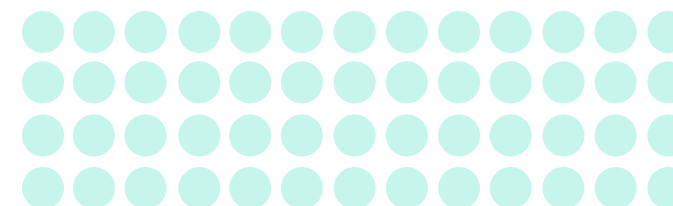
Introducción y traducción, Pedro Serrano

La vida de Harryette Mullen recorre toda la media luna del sur de los Estados Unidos, y su poesía hace eco de esas distintas realidades. Nacida en Alabama en 1953, creció en Texas y vive en California. A su paso por esa larga línea geográfica, Mullen fue incorporando, primero en su vida y después en su poesía, una realidad variada y conflictiva, entrechocada y enfática, en la que los lenguajes de la calle y la academia se intercalan y los conocimientos íntimos abarcan todas las voces que ha ido encontrando, en un juego lingüístico que incorpora elementos del español, desgarramientos afroamericanos y una conciencia crítica enfocada al mismo tiempo en las acciones humanas y en el lenguaje en que estas se codifican. Su trabajo académico incluye la creación, la poesía estadounidense y la literatura afroamericana, en un eclecticismo abierto e incorporativo equivalente al de su propia vida. Su obra puede ser vista como parte de la poesía afroamericana y también como parte de la poesía del lenguaje, dependiendo del interés teórico de la crítica. A mí me importa más poner énfasis en la realidad a la vez investigativa y emocional de sus poemas, que yo veo más como aberturas expuestas que como objetos cerrados o campos de fuerza, lo que hace que en su lectura sean las referencias del lector las que marquen el umbral de percepción en que los poemas suceden y trabajan. Sus poemas se mueven de manera desequilibrante tanto en el nivel del ritmo como en el del lenguaje y en el de su referencialidad. *Durmiendo con el diccionario*, el libro al que estos poemas pertenecen, es tanto en el título como en la estrategia de escritura, reflejo de esto. El diccionario es un objeto físico pero también una realidad mental, y la rigidez que inevitablemente construye está siendo ironizada en la conversión figurativa que el título convoca. Es decir, eso que lo humaniza como objeto, lo rigidiza como realidad del otro, sea percibido como almohada o como pareja. Es en este múltiple juego errante en el que los poemas de Mullen pueden ser apropiados por quien sea, y en donde se muestra cómo es más importante la eficacia real de un poema que su pertenencia a corrientes poéticas determinadas.

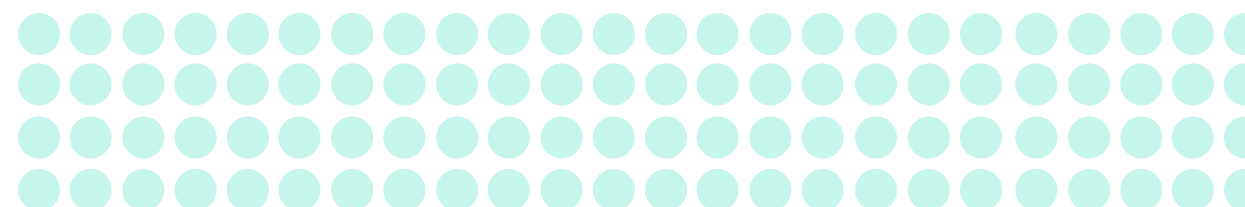
Más poemas de Harryette Mullen, traducidos por Pedro Serrano en próximos números de *S/N*.



Nachas negras



Tanto como el rey Tut necesitaba un barco, nosotros necesitamos monedas. Un esclavo podía llevarlo remando al cielo desde su cripta en Egipto repleta de plata. Hemos vivido en calma entre las estrellas, sabiendo que el dinero no es lo que importa. Cuando agarramos un aventón en el transbordador de luz, trajimos únicamente lo indispensable para la propina del conductor del servicio de transporte. Este cometa es capaz de rastrear todo el planeta. Hacer que brille como un excusado corriendo intensamente azul. O sólo acercarse lo suficiente como para rozar unas cuantas almas perdidas. El tiempo se está pudriendo mientras nuestros cuerpos esperan puesto que ahora yo me entrego a la tierra. Arañas silenciosas y pacientes nos pagan con suciedad cuando lo que esperamos es polvo de estrellas. Si la naturaleza rechaza un aparato caro, ¿por qué el planeta mama ozono? Este es un bofetazo, un viaje espeso. Por favor pegue nuestra casa y visite nuestro suspiro en la amplia marea de la tierra. Sólo señale y chasquee al ver nuestros nuevos zapatos de persuasión. Estamos abriendo la puerta que abre nuestros contenedores al reciclaje. Tiempo de lanzarse para abajo y de irnos en nuestra lancha. Este vuelo va a liberar al gato encerrado. La emoción de la victoria es: estamos saliendo de la tierra. Estamos dejando toda esta suciedad.



I Am My Favorite Poet

Eduardo Espina

Translation, Travis Sorenson

I hereby confirm a truism that continues to be true: it is hard to write in any language, regardless of where you are or what your particular vocation is. The difficulty is the same whether the writing instrument is a pencil, a finger in the sand, a laptop, or a ballpoint pen. A diehard romantic sentiment suggests that poetic writing may favor certain areas of reality over others; areas where the muses might feel better (happy, even totally satisfied) or come easily, without having been summoned. In this ideal context advantageous elements are present: place of birth, the smell of certain trees, the echoes of childhood reflected in the color of the sky, better neighbors, the moisture of choice downpours that always happen the same way, sounds in the street that resemble only what they are, certain winds with their sharpness and clouds of dust, etc., along with so many other, not always necessary things. Ascesis and onomastics: the process of naming everything all over again.

In a certain sense, the appearance of words in their best order – when poetry feels most like itself – can be favored by a virtualizable reality (a spurious mix of the virtual and the virtuous), which always waits, crouched down, anticipating these actions, even before carrying them out. Poetry exists first as a promise of itself, and the excuse of propitiatory elements perhaps has real value applicable to literary life. Gabriel García Márquez stated bluntly: “The importance of the place where one writes is one of the unsolvable mysteries of literary creation”. Another person from another time and place, whose name I could come up with if necessary, told me that in his “new” country (the “old” one being that of his birth) it was impossible for him to write because the smells and tastes were different. Could that be possible?

In my case, the context, whether geographical, sentimental, or culinary, is neutral. The empty

page (bull’s eye of the solitary) is the only region to be inhabited, the only cause for crisis. It is *clause* and effect in its tentativeness, the first thing you see, the tranquil path of a chimera in disuse where feelings stand out in instant development, images that don’t get to the dark room, Polaroid photos that increase the emotional scene painted by language. It is a sea of circumstances, an ocean awaiting the writer’s whim. It is a white target. The empty page’s splendid emptiness promotes the great risk, not all that goes on outside of it, such as the sense of touch, the earthly smells, or the effects of the local landscape. All of that matters little, and less and less each time. It is the page, devoid of any facilitating conditions, this invisible shore of salvation, which one must reach and build a shelter upon in which to dwell. It becomes home inhabited exclusively by the poet.

On the page, the depiction of the archival file is agreed upon. It is a project of attitude: life based on what is lived, what is lively. The page makes current the need to synchronize your watch with that of the past, because it is perhaps there, among the unforeseeable mountain of brownish-gray photographs of people whose faces I barely recognize and whose names I have almost forgotten, where wasted time, impossible to recover, is buried. As Kafka stated: “With our eyes open we walk through a dream - ourselves only a ghost of a vanished age.” With their black didactics loaded with indecipherable and whimsical codes, time and space end up being free from explanation and, therefore, from interpretation. The catharsis of memory will, from that moment on, live according to the melody of small details rescued from dissolution, from the wordless pauses inserted in the middle of events. Now all you have to do is look back in order to know what lies ahead and continue on with a lifestyle that is similar – due to opposition – to none other, but which words make possible.

In this way, the information from/about what is real, exhibited by intimacy, includes opinions and keeping tabs on feelings as a form of enabling a kind of access that you have not taken into account before. It constitutes a successful exodus toward a point of departure in permanent travel mode. The plotted chart of the inverted origin is the goal. It is there, within reach, even though continually moving: it exists in a flight of continual permanence. Not in vain, the amendments to probability (what can always be even if it does not exist) are somewhat greater than those of reason established and justified (in its performance) by logical-linear prerogatives. But this is not the only reason in play. There exists another, a parallel one: co-reason.* It is the heart with reason. In all of this, without exception, there is a disposition towards an ideal wandering that lacks an objective but overflows with subjectivity. It is a matter of writing in order to ensure long-term salvation or to die less in the attempt. It is in these moments that cannot be postponed that silence completes its phrases, when solitude in a low flight path has nothing more to say to the untimely absence of language. Time asks itself melodic questions, though we should understand it in its aphonia.

“It is a matter of writing in order to ensure long-term salvation or to die less in the attempt. It is in these moments that cannot be postponed that silence completes its phrases...”

Am I still the same person? Exile suffers from Alzheimer’s. It is composed of observations that conscience desires to visit but cannot manage to remember, and of stories interspersed by time, precisely when the past, always too distant, is the only possible exception. The discovery of the reality to be inhabited ignores

*Translator’s note: There is a play on words here in the original Spanish whose meaning does not translate. It says *co-razón*, which, while it means “co-reason,” is also meant to be read as it would be without the hyphen, *corazón*, which means “heart.”

the foreign-resident status of the host turned guest: comforted by its echo, the voice parries with the same words adapted to another language. The recognition and overcoming of anything that is, or may still be, lacks a cause

“Acting on ulterior motives, the words feel entertained, even happy, with their new similarity between, as well as outside, of themselves, telling the tale of a pending euphoria, of a reserve – that of the words themselves – on the margin of purpose. Their appearances do not deceive: they are themselves.”

because it can have all causes. But the soul, which has recovered its validity, does not strive anxiously to discover the map of its itineraries, or to smooth out the irregularities of the landscape that surrounds it (or one could say the irregularities in the expression). It refers to going outside language to better observe how it looks, as if it were itself. It has more than enough motives. Its images, which need be seen by nothing or no one, go on vacation; they are no longer the preparative whim of something unexplainable. It is the sudden shift from glance to vision, the transition of all that has happened to whatever could yet occur. It is the journey of no return to a different state of mind. It is a metaphysic (not cultural) alternative that resides in the impossible in order to make it less probable.

The variants that have arrived at this place of trans-territorialization (not always without setting out to do just this) take charge of occupying the main page precisely at those times when days find their honorable golden age outside the nucleus without feeling like intruders in their permanence. Words put into circulation, worlds recently created, where the previous reality functions next to the newly arrived reality about which not all, but at the same time not a little, has been said. They activate presences and meanings without knowing what footprint

is being sought, or if there is one in which to enter and relocate all one is (and believes to know). This is so even now, when the things that are known want to learn in order to continue being more interesting, or at least as interesting

as each and every other thing. Acting on ulterior motives, the words feel entertained, even happy, with their new similarity between, as

well as outside, of themselves, telling the tale of a pending euphoria, of a reserve – that of the words themselves – on the margin of purpose. Their appearances do not deceive: they are themselves.

Therefore, according to what has been said, can someone think differently by being in another geographic location that in reality is “another”? Or because such a person inhabits surroundings as inhospitable as they are unexpected that articulate other fictions in the use of language? Does one write better or worse, or does writing lose its future and exactness for having changed from one place to another, leaving under siege the identity created by origin? This type of question was always outside of my raw materials of writing. In Uruguay, a country where poetry has been systematically scorned and poorly read, I wrote poetry. Wandering about in a state of existence that was just better than no existence at all (because the years in Uruguay between 1973 and 1982 made it thus), I felt like Gary Cooper waiting for the bad guys in *High Noon*. It was actually even worse in my case because I am no hero and do not wear a cowboy hat. I lived in the Guinness Book of World Records of Lost Hours. Syntax and solipsism. And what a paradox (Uruguayan): in the solitude of silence, words still came forth with the desire to save themselves. I continue

to insist on the same thing in the United States, where the tradition of rupture and prophecy in great American poetry is on its way to extinction, and where the poets celebrate the triumphalism of the common place and of the poor word that speaks because it doesn’t know how to sing. And I continue to insist on this, no matter how insignificant it may be or how true it might be that US readers of poetry existed in a past that was perhaps superior and, what’s worse, in English.

Removed from the catharsis of confession, from the avatar with the appearance of fact and reproaches, I enter the Paleolithic future of imagination dressed in silken clothing in order to look like the day after tomorrow. I see myself in the mirror extending forward, and the mirror is transparent to the eye. There, in the now that has been moved forward in response to the imperfect tense in the process of being erased, there arises a conditional tense. This tense originated in the reality that became a referent of the poet that I am still (though I am not quite sure if this occurred by chance or causality), and it can even be seen as an uncertain future of the same being that used to be another (almost the same but partly different). It entails nothing less than correctly positioning one’s gaze and knowing how to see what always emerges identically. Does Ecclesiastes speak the truth in stating that there is nothing new under the sun? I appeal to Alexander Dumas to synthesize a similar story: “My imagination, confronted with reality, resembles a man who, visiting the ruins of an old building, must walk over the rubble, follow the passageways, bend down to go through doorways, so as to reconstruct an approximate picture of the original building when it was full of life, when joy filled it with laughter and song, or when it echoed with sobs of sorrow”.

Between the customary paradoxes of imagination and the ruins of life moving toward a place they have never been, words

do everything in their power to become poetry. They build their vertical apartheid. They are rhythm and caesura. Their names dream in prosody. The reader does not matter. If extant, reader will not be celebrated; if not, the reader will not be punished. Just as was the case before there were mammoths or fire (and on the walls of Altamira Cave there are wild boars), people write poetry today for two reasons: because they have something to say and because they want to talk to themselves. There – space against time – the poet can hear her/himself as never before. Poetry is nothing more than a sacred task assuring the survival of the immediate today. Words no longer make predictions about the past.

Just as is the case with a lonely person who goes in a church because there is nowhere else to go, I enter language to pray and hope that the miracle of feeling closer to myself when I am me will come to pass. And until now, with explainable exceptions, the miracle has come to pass. I write in order to recognize myself better than I do in the mirror, in order to feel that I continue to be my favorite poet. It is the flattery of the hunter who has fired into the air, knowing that beasts walk along the ground. It is the shotgun blast without cause, the hired guns who shoot themselves in the foot, the reason for lyric falconry. Poetry is a hunting lodge, a kind of sorcery that comes without instructions on how it is to be used. It is the happy conscience of one who inopportunely celebrates his favorite mistake, his untimely swim against the current, while hearing, just as happens to me almost daily, the musical score of a robust brown river named the Brazos, which was born translated. In my version, Texas is a long river, a liquid highway on its way to the sea, even if it is hard to love its lack of wonder. Reality learned to live on the third shore. In the soft and not always indulgent (or accessible) realm of the imaginary river flow, language sways fervently, wavering back and

forth as if seeking to save itself in the first verse (mine) that it finds. It feels disdain for the banality in vogue. It prefers to escape the rituals of the style and worship of the ephemeral that define the present day, our day. Words act as if to sanctify diction, as if they were seeking to arrive at the region of a specific sound texture which, when it wishes, can be foreign. They are alliterations and homophonies, now safe and sound: the obedient metaphor erases the error of what is utilitarian. And that is also what writing is about, to save language and carry it to the perfect hut of him who has yet to build it but who, nonetheless, already lives there. Writing poetry with language as an exclusive example is, therefore, to think differently: it forces one to go beyond evidence, move as if it were nothing – and through nothing – from the body to the soul and vice versa. It means finding among the tempest of penitent sounds, the constant rumor, a geometry of innumerable zigzags. It means discovering an indivisible territory in all that might resemble a breath of life or death, responding with the original voice to the echo within. In any event, life is an incomplete response in which things happen and events both large and small stand out.

The question of whom I write for is immediately superseded by another, which is obstinate and surely without answer: why do I write? The only serious answer would be because I cannot stop doing so. In that tautology crossed by an untold spell, and at the same time by a wound that has multiple causes, I am the victim of seduction. Narcissus swims so that he won't have to look at himself. In the solitude of his swimming, the return will always be toward a place with words, where the vision is one and unanimous. In the end, the reader is a partial referent, a derivation that avoids being defined. It is better not to do it. Writing poetry, whether here or in Andorra, Morocco, or Burma, is to round out the synthesis of one's being. It is

the irreparable expiration that brushes up completely against the absolute, making it new again, and again unrecognizable.

I use writing as a metaphysical emergency exit, or as the off-hours arrival at a *meta física* (physical goal).

When it so desires, the body is the rider of the soul. If it comes, I am always there. I follow its gallop. It matters little at this point (the point being as tall as the top of a sequoia) who can decipher my exaggerated discoveries, or the immovable round of a solitude disturbed by silent screams. What does it matter if there are only two or three thousand readers, or if no one reads it and there is no longer anyone there to invite to language? We change owners and even avatars that abandon us. I am, rather, like the child in the Jewish fable who walked through the streets crying: "I have a great answer; who has a question to ask me?"

One question has paid attention to me. I live apart in this country that has given me residency (in the *United States* I *dis-unite*) and I write, as I used to do before in other places. I go out, I go to bars, I shop at the supermarket, I pay taxes, I call a seven-digit phone number (wrong number, responds a computer), I look out the window when the rain has ceased to be the only thing possible (there is a world out there), I prepare garlic shrimp and pasta with capers, I inquire about the flavors, I hear identical sounds, I breathe, I scratch my back,

"I use writing as a metaphysical emergency exit, or as the off-hours arrival at a *meta física* (physical goal). When it so desires, the body is the rider of the soul. If it comes, I am always there. I follow its gallop."

and I drink water like everyone else. Sometimes I see snow fall, and I see it at other times as well.

I am the same person, one who writes, one who casts his lot with an anachronistic act: writing poetry and continuing to do so when the written word is suffering its worst crisis in the great markets of ideology, an ill-fated metamorphosis. It suffers agony in order to be more beautiful. But it is an ironic victory; I do not know how to do anything else. All the alternatives have failed: I tried changing my diet and my schedule, running 10 miles a day, getting married, not going for walks, having children, changing residences and my bicycle and my wife and my French cologne, taking a *siesta*, eating fewer oranges, and many, many other things. But poetry has kept coming back, even without readers or editors, and without being asked. There was never an unnecessary what for, much less a why. Why? Today the island is definitive and I no longer want to stop being my (often) almost happy Robinson Crusoe. The lone island is also an archipelago: the South and East of a world that remains distinct as long as the definitions do not begin.

The metonymic tremor and the accelerated closeness of being, only allow themselves to be interrupted by their future as it travels in written form in all directions. Linguistic actions, acts of language, have ceased to be incompletely vain. In the act of breathing and in the generous silence of invisibility in disuse, I am the person who sees himself delayed in his patient drip-drop of writing. As an accomplice, as a creator and antagonist of an impossibility, I depart from the announced hour in order to satisfy the unusual complaints and fissures of desire, in order to write from and within a language in which I preserve images of always and of almost never, because in these images I recognize myself and feel like the main protagonist. I am not always the same person, but I am moving toward him. I have the same

self-help that can be had by an earthworm or a beetle seeking a path of return. It is part of the penance: we love all that was and which cannot be replaced by what is. It is the dictionary of life open to the letter z.

Poetic writing, a territory and an inhabitant laid bare, is, furthermore, the only discipline that I practice constantly. Even though I teach literature (to earn a salary, not to gain readers), I consider language as something more than an instrument of communication, something of greater importance than a mere coincidence of grammatical rules. I could live without diphthongs or diereses (but not without the ñ). Pedro Salinas was right when he said from his exile in the United States in a letter written to his wife: "Today, in my opinion, the language is the best memory of my country, and since I study it and explain it, it turns out that, without wanting it to be so, without desiring to remember, I am remembering it at all hours."

I also remember the memorable passage from the movie *Eternity and a Day*, when the dying poet reflects: "Why have I lived my life in exile? Why is it that the only moments when I returned were those rare times when I was still granted the favor of speaking in my language? My own language. When I could still recover lost words or retrieve forgotten words from the silence." With its kaleidoscopic destiny and its cross-dressing appearances, one's native language (whether it is to teach or to continue learning) is a source of interruptions, onslaughts, and detours. As such, the effect of speech on the page is a driver of absurdities more than it is an intermediary of usefulness. It is the great epiphanic machine that responds through questioning in order to find questions, if there are any. That is where I go to quench my thirst. It is the art that conserves heartbeats. It spares metonymies and *metas nimias* (trivial goals).

It is the show-business of the language and of

transcendence. Each reunion with words, then, ends with optimism. It is not the optimism of one who believes in the images and offerings of the outside world and who confuses a passing truce with happiness, but rather the optimism of one who celebrates the ability of words to conceal themselves and allow themselves to be mistreated, before and after dealing with the language. In its perseverance (which seeks neither excuses nor reasons), language has permitted me to delve deeper into anonymity, into purposes scarcely disturbed before: solipsism and trans-territorialization. In other words (which are also these): here, in the United States, I do not exist completely, and for that reason I can remain as a dispensable piece that decided to live outside of the puzzle. The present no longer hears complaints. What purpose would it serve? I have more time to read; I engage in encyclopedic tourism in the place nearest the backyard.

To pass the time I look at hibiscus plants, cardinals (non-religious birds), and yellow butterflies. Each volume of sight and of existence is an ascesis, another incomprehensible reason to justify my having left Uruguay. Uselessness, satisfied, scatters ancestral virtues. The exchange that is achieved in addition is one that has an improbable image: since I do not speak (because outside there is no one and I pretend that I cannot hear), I write. I am the ventriloquist of an aphonia. I only exist in the torrential language dedicated to residing in scribbled-on pages. The words enjoy the chosen exile and the anchorite celebrates the inexistence of all other

things. The problem posed by the reception of words has not disturbed my slumber. Why not continue to celebrate the self-satisfaction of the most minimal part of the invisible world? Why stop doing it?

I came here to find different birds, with a silence in no way similar to those from before, and trees that I must rename. And then there are these new mornings, beautiful to the point of confirming their beauty, which put memories up against the firing squad wall, a vivid contrast to a time that has grown old and which is crumbling, no longer with the possibility of returning to the night of birth, to the native plan from which no one knows his destiny. I have learned to exercise the happy mastery of unnecessary moments. All of Greece from its best past enters through the window of my house, a progressive Greece ushered in by the trill of cardinals and robins, by the sensation of coming to know for the first time all that was not known. The survival instinct is tied to the desire of wanting to love what is found adrift by one's gaze: clarity that comes all at once, an invisible wind, a wind that never learned to be any other way. Perhaps the abundance of light and clarity emitted by this place is associated with the possibility of illumination (a la Rimbaud?), with the freedom of understanding that comes from wanting to understand or imagine what thought wants.

Imagination is the agora, the house and seed of written speech, the goddess of the house, the only cannon of the absolute day that is today, where every once in a while astonishment

“Imagination is the agora, the house and seed of written speech, the goddess of the house, the only cannon of the absolute day that is today, where every once in a while astonishment shows its face, with its transparent melancholy that someday plans to have extraordinary character and belong to the realistic world.

shows its face, with its transparent melancholy that someday plans to have extraordinary character and belong to the realistic world. Faced with this dilemma, I look to see what and how much I will never be able to know. It is unadorned wonder (*thaumasia*) in the presence of harmony. Therefore, on a daily basis I feel like the apprentice of a conjecture occurring in an ugly place that does not reach the extent of being infernal, such as this place, where at times I bring myself modestly to say, in plural with the old Greek masters: “We love knowledge, we love learning, but above all we love life.”

Building a literary work on the outskirts of attachment to one's birthplace, and accepting the mirages of changing moods, means giving form to the elusive biographical sketch of an exiled man. It is this same man who has gone out to look at himself in the world when no one can see him, and in fact he is not there. From the crevasses of silence, at the precise moment when he begins to speak, to “see” what he is saying (the sense is visual), from the fissured remains of his untranslatable future, poetic writing intensifies the dissolution of limits, those which were before and all those that will come after, whether it be eventually or immediately. There is no return and it is much too late to start rewinding. Furthermore, my inability to practice confessional poetry is absolute. This is the life that has been my lot to live, and I accept it. Preserving it here (on the page as a lair for the soul) is a form of adapting the work of poetry to the accidental continuity of life. There is no other beginning: the beginning of the unreal is the offshoot of self-satisfaction, of the intermediary and its creator. It is a utopian task: to succeed in getting the ancientness of the language to arrive with enthusiasm at the day after tomorrow, which is already today.

In the desert -the incomplete desert of the present– the only certain and predictable thing

is the image of the thirsty man reflected in the turbulent water of a mirage. Poetry doubts the things upon which it rests its sight, though it does not doubt sight. In the complicity of the eye, the word seeks its greatest exactness. What profound faith. There is no resolution: the person who writes is the statement of her/his own representation, the best of the innumerable consequences. That is who I am, and in the language I likewise awake. Several things started while the world was looking elsewhere. This kind of platonic randomness, rarely a happy one, has placed me, by the imposition of perseverance, in a place of complete inexistence, both social and literary, though not textual. As Paul Valéry has stated: “Fear of ridicule, terror of banality; being pointed out, not being noticed – two abysses”.

I write more than before – that is to say, I still write – and I perceive the nostalgia for a supposed reader, a divine hypothesis, as another abominable simulation of reason, though this reason is not always correct. And it scarcely has before it an entertaining nothingness from which there emerge whirlwinds of resigned silence accompanying the visibility of a language arranged by the intimacy of its mission. This depends but little on the randomness of thought and much on the moods of imagination, of the language's monologues, where it has not been determined what images or ideas have the greatest importance. In this friendly verification of existence that always ends up doing whatever it feels like (differentiating infamy from faith and happiness), there remain to be deciphered vestiges of masks, the past remaining in a spiral, a totem that cannot be supplanted by consecrated memory and of whose importance it exhibits the first late signs.

In my comings and goings, I have gone from being *che-man** to a shaman, without ever having ceased to belong to a patriotic

* Translator's note: In River Plate Spanish *che* is used to address people informally or to get their attention. “Man” is borrowed from English.

abstraction that includes all the identities and attributions of reality. In spite of trans-territorialization, one retains the desire to preserve their birthplace in language, to prolong the duration (that chronological scam) of a very early stage where life, about to be forgotten, is the only documental piece of evidence on which to make an accounting. It is poorly trained time that returns to its perpetual present with the force of a geyser. Therefore, in order to continue prowling around the customs of language, it is merely a question of meeting the task, of not moving away more than is necessary from the preferred words when they are better surrounded by themselves.

So then, what are the limits of living and writing in a country where another language is spoken? There are many, and at the same time there are none. Should I write poetry thinking about an immediate reader, as if I lived in Madrid, Bogotá, Laredo with narco-dealers as polite neighbors, or on the Montevideo street where I was born and the other where I lived for even longer, or in a town in Bolivia surrounded by alpacas, mountains, and Bolivians? What for? I do not live there, but rather in a place in Texas that you can't find on some maps. Nothingness lacks signs of identity, and as a metaphysical and spiritual life-preserver it is impossible for me to imagine something different (nor do I want to) from a page written at the demand of existence, along with all the other blank pages that will come without avenging anything, as surely they will come. Let it be thus in these conditions of absolute isolation and of excessive barren land. In Greek, the word to define this status outside of identification is "xenitis": a stranger

in any place, a foreigner even on the line of the horizon. But I am not alone.

"I think, I love, I dream, I doubt, I say *sí* and *no*, I promise, and I write in Spanish. It is that other me without distance that is my only country."

In these cosmopolitan surroundings, with the fumes of universal metropolises (I have one neighbor who is Chinese, another who is Hindu and, between both of them, nothingness, and farther down a Nigerian practicing voodoo), where English is the obligatory language (when you are out on the street). I think, I love, I dream, I doubt, I say *sí* and *no*, I promise, and I write in Spanish. It is that other me without distance that is my only country. It is the liturgy of one's being within the self that the disdain of days has not been able to overthrow. Like a conquistador devoured by Indians (Solís was not alone), I allow proparoxytones to come in so that silence or the language of others get choked off. I cannot do anything else, nor do I know how. Surely the ideal thing would be for my readers and me to live in identical thought, for us to speak the same language, for us to share the instant dream of similitude, for poetry to have the same social status as sports, for people to yell "Goal!" each time they found a metaphor or adjective well used. Nevertheless, for a long time now the ideal and I have not coincided. The last time it happened I was not yet writing and the world did not know how to read.

In any event, I must continue in these mundane tasks of filling the page: destiny is written and writing is destiny. It is an angel as exchange. The private war against time is also one against the oblivion that promotes transitory and perishable things: it is in favor of what is beautiful – the ideal impossibility of loveliness – and which has no memory. I take as my own the prayer of the Navajos: "With beauty above me, may I walk. With beauty below me, may I walk. With beauty all around me, may I walk. In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may

I walk. In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk. It is finished in beauty."

In this epiphanic stance, the happy dimension of beauty distrusts its inexact size as well as the excessive memory of its past performances. Before they were a sonnet, but now they must make sound however they can. They are words that have been taken from the world and that do not belong to any particular technique. They are words at war with what the author's universe lacks in order to be complete. Sufficient for the rhythm are its uninhabited chords, the excesses of a lone being who is alone. Between words that make a sound, the auditory objective of desire allows itself to be caught nearby and reciprocally, though it can never be reached (an interrupted hunt): either desire moves too quickly or its object is too halted.

It is in this breach that I find myself and I get on (as a burro resisting its weary trot) my best image, which is not psychotic but rather neurotic. I do not substitute; I avoid. (As the Viennese professor stated: "Neurosis does not deny reality, it merely tries to ignore it; psychosis denies reality and tries to substitute something else for it.") I remain at the point of friction, nerves on end: I avoid the paradigm and the complaint. The blame does not lie with the origin or its circumstances. There is neither flagellation nor heroic implantation. The desire, illegal but legitimate, is also insatiable (including in the superficiality of its atypical movements). I owe myself to it, to its closing phase in process, to its round-trip fetishism, to the nomadism that has not forgotten from whence it came. I would like to be another person in order to be this one, the earlier one and the next one, the same ones without a difference (but the method of continuing to be one's self does not always prevail). One carries his birth to a point where no one can know of it. In this way, destiny is appropriated and its notion will never be an obstacle to representing the experience

to the extent possible. Sooner or later the reconfiguration will come.

Many people look to the future, but in my case the present has been the main goal and the exclusive distraction. It is not that the future has little importance, but the present has been the protective space, preventing the past to come in. My only predictions were about what could happen today, starting now, in order to demonstrate in this way that oblivion is not resolved so quickly, nor does language want to take anything for granted. Just as a piece of music unable to overcome the theme, poetry, feeling symbolically advanced, becomes what it can still be in order to have, in this way, something in common with the rest of the world. This tangibility is the result of a challenge that of resisting even if there is no reason to do it. *Habemus poeta* (We have a poet). Poetry, which has turned into resurrection without the need of special effects in order for this to occur, deals with the in-no-way-minor erudition of emotion.

Ever since I came to Texas I've been asking myself what I am doing here. I lived in Amherst, Massachusetts, for a period that for me was too long. The snow and the desolation, mixed with tedium (a fatal combination), were a ubiquitous and daily presence in my life. How can one live that way? Can anyone? Robert Frost was able to do it, but he was not Uruguayan. Between the arctic air and the lack of a fireplace, my life moved between barbarous solitude and the bar. I lived between the penultimate drink and the next one. Alcohol ruins worlds, but it can also save them. It depends. I have never seen sad people in a bar. My poetry owes more to Johnnie Walker and Jack Daniels than it does to Walt Whitman and Wallace Stevens. Be as it were, with the feeling of neglect weighing upon me, and with the smell of whisky on my soul, I lived with a desire to leave, to depart as soon as possible.

In that overrated Massachusetts town, I walked daily past the house of Emily Dickinson, the museum of the lone ghost, and I heard the same exact rumor of nothing, an otherworld silence, not interrupted by my indifferent steps. In the library of Amherst College, I would sit nearly every afternoon on an ugly, worn-out sofa which was, according to what I was told, the place where Robert Frost used to sit and read. I never liked Frost's poetry. It contains a disinterest in illogical universality, in timeless incomprehensibility, as if the only important thing in the world were the American reality, with its landscapes and locutions.

I arrived in Texas one day without having planned to do so (actually the plane landed late at night, the night before the beginning of the cruelest month). I should have thought it out better. Tired of the grayness, of the snow and cold, I was seduced by the first shining sun. Before that, Texas for me was an abstraction. That was until I came and saw a cowboy that reminded me of Robert Ryan in the opening scenes of *The Wild Bunch*. A cowboy is not an abstraction. Quite the opposite. That is perhaps the most unacceptable part of this long season in Texan territory where the odd days, as opposed to the even ones, seem to be the main existence. How does one live in a place without abstractions, where metaphysics has been annihilated in the same way as the bison and pro-independence Texans? In order to survive, which is not easy, I seek and search for that metaphysics in books, in the written life that continues to be somewhere else, a life that does not judge equally all that is at hand but which nonetheless writes. Houston, we have a poem.

Without my realizing it, life began a short time ago. Time from before fades, time right now comes less and less, and, notwithstanding, all that it knows is how to be on top of me without proposing a good plan. I frequently arise in the morning asking myself to what extent my

new life has depended on randomness, on those moments of truth which all together are not sufficient to begin a new method, but rather at the most a criterion, though without any guarantee it last or turn out well. In this life dedicated exclusively to poetry, the search for happiness has done whatever it pleases, or any other thing that can help it to live by this happiness, by the rewards it promises. I have learned to live in an invisibility that protects me and exempts me from the idea that everything is of the same interest and worth. This is not the case. The past is constantly reborn, freed from oblivion, and all of it very much above the question of origins. Furthermore, what sense does it make to worry about reality as an objective if nothing happens here except for nothingness in slow motion?

In this shifting steadiness that has become a synonym for life and childhood in reverse, I often wonder from where the language came that expresses all that has been turned into poetry by the will and the randomness of signs. From where, since what prevails here is inexistence? Every now and again, time has a personal problem about which no one knows, time that claims to be a direct descendent of nothingness. Every now and then silence raises its voice. Could it be that language speaks because I came here to learn something? Could that be why I came? Located in the nucleus of a learning process that highlights the validity of a past that does not know how to repeat itself, this language, with its truths that no longer depend on anyone, prevents one from ignoring the feelings of attachment. What would life do if faced with such a situation? Without seeking such a situation, the former South has found this other South with its accompanying beauty in between.

It would seem that life has reserved for words this dance initiated without effort. For the moment, I only aspire to one day be one of my possible images, the one that is surely already marching

ahead, or the one unable to free itself from the rear-view mirror. My epitaph could coincide with the end of *The Great Gatsby*: "And so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." Meanwhile, I am obliged to imagine what remains alive because it cannot be completely dead. Ithaca gave me the journey, the prolongation of expectations. The Odyssey has meant being able to know such things.

Ithaca is always on my mind, and there are days when destiny coincides with the place where I came to be. From here, immortality, due to fatigue, looks closer, or at least its existence seems less improbable. Could the world be this tedious for the gods sentenced to exile on Earth? The Texan agora is an exclusive discovery of chance, because, after all, exile is not kryptonite. On its traveling alter, many things come face to face and rise to the surface, because only there, under such conditions – on the edge of both waste and ruin – do the necessary words

begin to exist. They are words surrounded and protected by frenzied wannabe cowgirls, those who adapt their bodies to needs of the gazes which they seek and which

are rewarded with that Puritan exhibitionism that at a certain point can change intentions. The privileged areas of the language found a reason to pay attention to reality. They came to hibernate in reverse and in a state of nostalgia where, paradoxically, nothing from the past can remain under lock and key. This is not insignificant. There they hope that something of greater importance than the past will arrive, and they do so with a topless faith, a faith that has brought itself to change the decor and the rules of the game. That which dissipates does not disappear completely.

"I did not decide to write in Spanish, but this language (or the pearly shadow of the Arcipreste de Hita entering through the window) has followed me, as futurity, anachronism, and will of authenticity. It has done this for me. It is also a way of recovering a marginalized but not lost childhood, and liberating the language from its utilitarian prison and from instant gratification."

Then, of what importance is it now to be able to respond or not to the questions that Professor Hart (University of London) put to me so many years ago: "To what point is the Hispanic mode of writing conditioned by the created expectations, magic realism, gangs, *barrios*, and rural character of New Mexico and Texas?" I do not know. I doubt in order not to have to know, or to say it. I would hardly dare to say that a multicultural threat and the wretched melting pot lie in wait, no matter how much Robinson refuses to leave his Spanish-speaking island. He will die there before death as well as before language, with its diphthongs, diereses, and whispers. There is hope.

I did not decide to write in Spanish, but this language (or the pearly shadow of the Arcipreste de Hita entering through the window) has followed me, as futurity, anachronism, and will of authenticity. It has done this for me. It is also a way of recovering

a marginalized but not lost childhood, and liberating the language from its utilitarian prison and from instant gratification. Removed as I am from the native setting of the Spanish language (thus hearing it less), I can reconstruct it, help to restore its native privacy. That is what I want. I feel up to it. I add prosodies and lapses of syntax. What high-flown reciprocal language! There are no litotes, but there are hypotyposes and, fortunately or unfortunately, much uninformed epimone in order to hear in this sonorous stew the yearned-for presence,

the beginning of the cosmic spheres applied to the earthly forms. These linguistic features concern me.

I remember others who were in a similar situation. Petrarch appropriated Italian in a French province. Robert Browning and Ezra Pound caused short circuits in the English language while living in Italy. Certain others (and this is not an exhaustive list) did something similar: José Martí in New York; William Henry Hudson in Argentina. This is understandable. Language splits in two. Or, more precisely, it becomes encrypted. It only has literary value. While the new language fulfills the tasks of the everyday, the old one breaks forth, exorcized, with the scent of the brand new. In speech it meets up with something grammatical and universally earthbound that resides therein, where the improbable has ceased to be insignificant.

There is joy in the vocabulary which arrives after having lost its anxiousness due to the basic, and until then unnamable, silence. Not in vain, poetry is the simple ritual of seeking an objective. From out of nowhere burgeons forth time yet to be inhabited, time that is not a loss of time, which is not lost in time. In its timeless zeal, imagination (an imagination that can be present all the time, and also which has been for some time) goes out on the town and is a workaholic at its partying in order to continue being active.

When I use English as a resource in daily life (orality has an agenda), Spanish remains as a remover of trivialities and of all this entails. I cease to speak Spanish in order to write it. It exists as a mirror image of he who halfway wants to be a complete image, and sometimes is. In this scraping toward the expanded edges, toward the acceptance of impurities, I enter into the Spanish portion by another way. I do this in order to understand how much it has

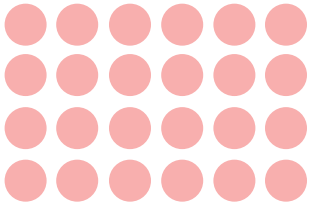
affected me, and so that my body has something to say. A row of names cuts my body off at the pass. It will be necessary to return to the sources of thought, which are those of language. Among the incomplete ruins can be seen the luminosity of what has not been said, not even in the following phrase: an indescribability that makes real its exact beauty.

There, justified, is the reason for writing and of wanting to continue doing so. The demand of language is one of inspiration and haziness, of a precipice in the making whose reward must certify the risk accumulated in writing: a *summa* between lines of all those who knew how to be quiet at the appropriate time. I still have something to say, all that others have left to me. It is the remnant of a tradition pursued from back to front, which even in its depleted endings manages to dress in new clothes. That is where I am, and where I want, after now, to stay.

In this universalization of difference and anonymity, in this accumulation of the diaspora and the margin, I live and I write, which is the same thing. Nomadism in quarantine cannot go beyond the surroundings of the future. Therefore, awake in the living ruins of language, I demand the definitive conversion of exile, whether it be joyfully and in favor of its cause, or for reasons no longer very rational. What more could I ask of the will of the poet who has not finished leaving, or arriving, or being completely here? ■



{ Tom Raworth



Introducción y traducciones, Gabriela Jauregui

Tom Raworth es el poeta de la urgencia moderna. Es el poeta de las sensaciones que son más veloces que los pensamientos, del lenguaje que se extraña y extraña, y por lo tanto es un poeta que, como se vislumbra en estas páginas, es casi intraducible. Pero todo es traducible ya que toda traducción es siempre una versión, reversión (¿perversión?). Y toda selección una suerte de apropiación.

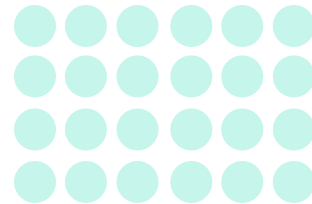
Por más de treinta años, Raworth, como apunta la crítica Marjorie Perloff, ha sido el *odd man out* (el bicho raro) de la poesía inglesa contemporánea. A pesar de ser inglés de fuertes raíces irlandesas, se le ha hermanado siempre con sus contemporáneos norteamericanos de la escuela de la poesía “L=A-N=G=U=A=G=E” —gran amigo de Creeley, de Dorn, de Hejinian, de Bernstein— su poética es más cercana a las de estos autores, que a la de los poetas de su misma generación británicos, mucho más conservadores. Incluso, Emmanuel Hocquard y Claude Royet-Journaud, antologadores franceses de la colección de poesía contemporánea estadounidense *21+1* (Delta, 1986) lo incluyen como el +1.

Las páginas que se incluyen a continuación, incluyen un poema de su primer libro (*La nave de relaciones*, 1966) y de uno de sus más recientes libros (*Llamador y otras piezas*, 2006) que han sido antologados por primera vez en español en *El tiempo se volvió cuero* (México, sur+ ediciones). En sus primeros poemas, más líricos acaso, ya se deja entrever esta preocupación raworthiana por los juegos de palabras, por la singularidad de las palabras mismas (pronunciadas en voz alta, o escritas en papel). Sus poemas más tardíos desarrollan esta extrañeza, o mejor dicho, este extrañamiento, a manera de bromas, a partir de frases mal escuchadas, mal interpretadas, a partir de dobles sentidos, de asonancias y rimas enterradas, donde las líneas son en general cortas y se juntan de manera impredecible: algunas líneas permanecen aisladas, otras se juntan en patrones semánticos.

En mi traducción de estos juegos de palabras, bromas, fragmentos de diálogo, axiomas patafísicos e insultos y lenguajes inventados o apropiados, he procurado mantener la extrañeza, parataxis y falta de gramática (o gramática inventada) de algunos fragmentos del inglés en mis versiones en español. Esto puede parecer complicado a primera vista, pero espero que el lector de estas versiones, como si cazara mariposas raras o armara un rompecabezas, disfrute de la belleza, las sorpresas y la dificultad de algunos de estos textos pues allí se encuentra el secreto de la lengua. Sea cual sea.

Más poemas de Tom Raworth, traducidos por Gabriela Jauregui en próximos números de *S/N*.

{ Ni debajo del acebo ni de las ramas verdes



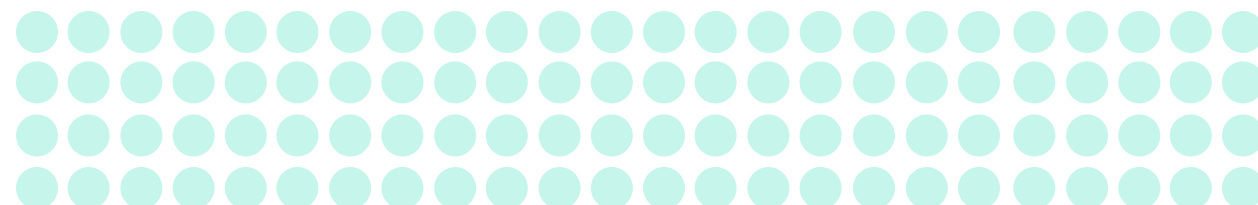
las voces se mueven. caminan. es tiempo
es tiempo. se mueven, caminando
hablando

algo apenas dulce
las pastillitas de limón
dialogan

una pausa ellas
hablan en lugar
este es hans frente a
ellas y en el fondo son abrazadas y
también en las películas

este es el estandarte. música. en la luz del sol
el whiskey entra en el agua como gelatina la grava
blanca. banderas raídas. cuando ella sonríe la piel
se estira alrededor de su nariz

un disco que guardamos para ciertos días



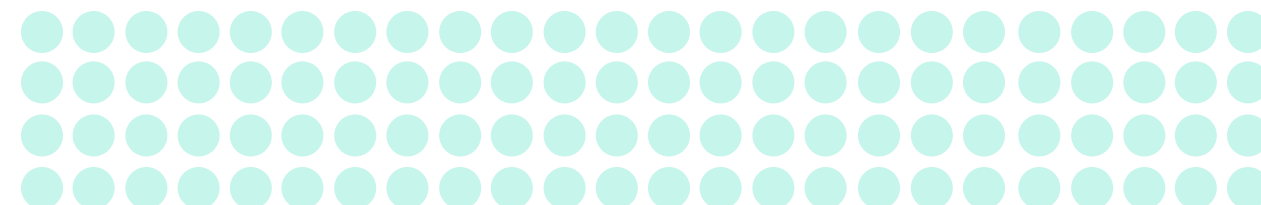
en españa la garrota veinte años
la mujer dijo dibujando en grande el número con su dedo
un tornillo apretándose, las líneas se reducen él
las guardaría en un cajón en este cuarto nuevo
con el banco viejo

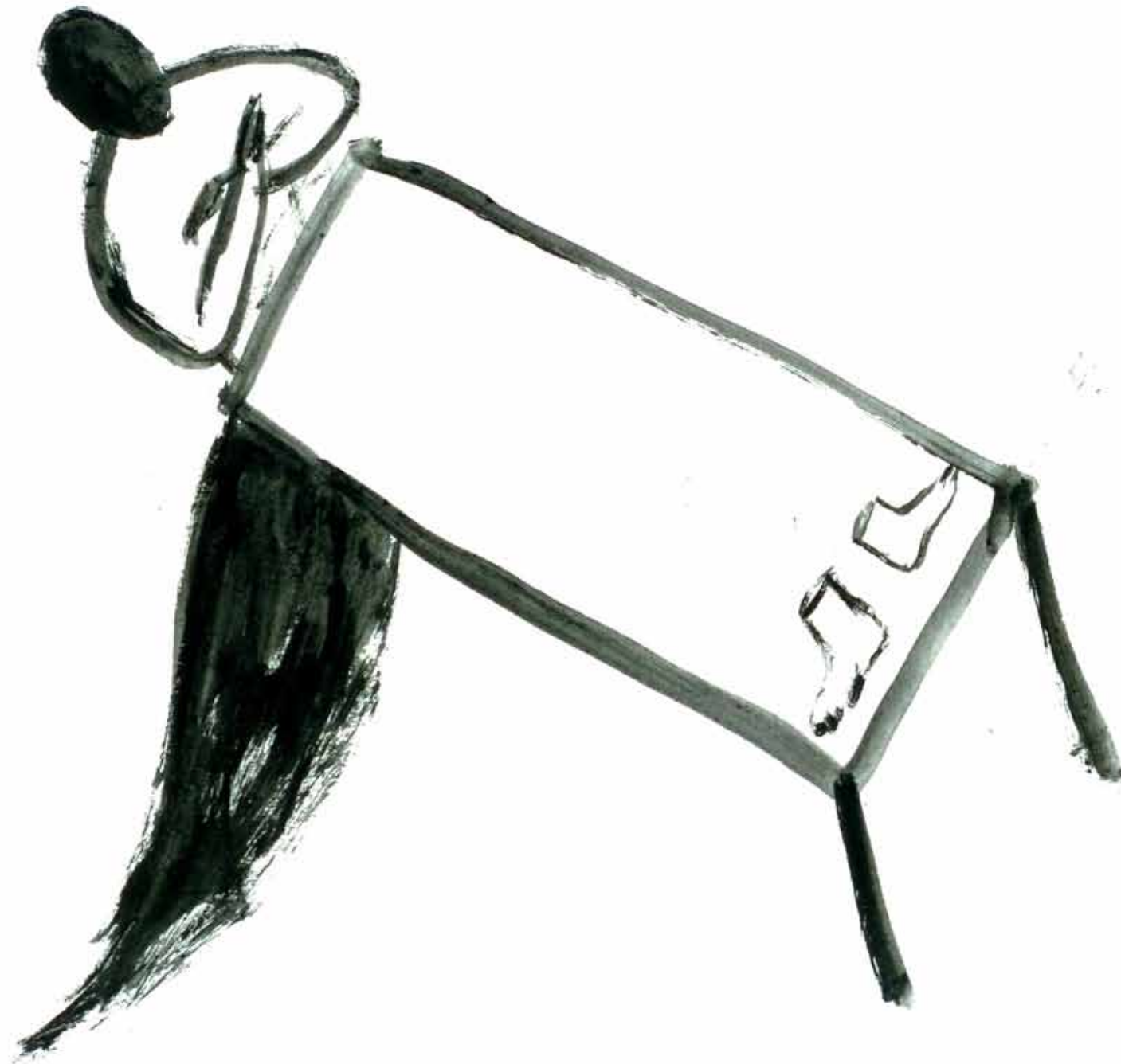
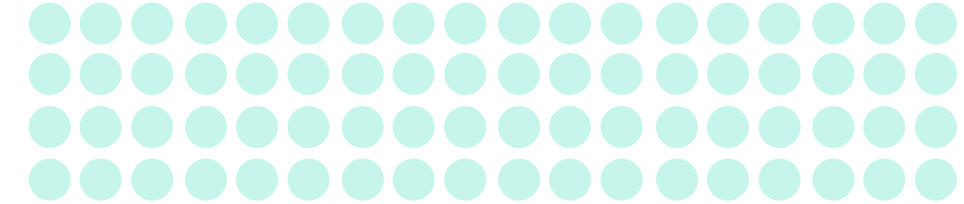
años antes
el pronóstico de una guerra presente. este
es nuestro trabajo

gitana en el paquete se mueve entre el humo

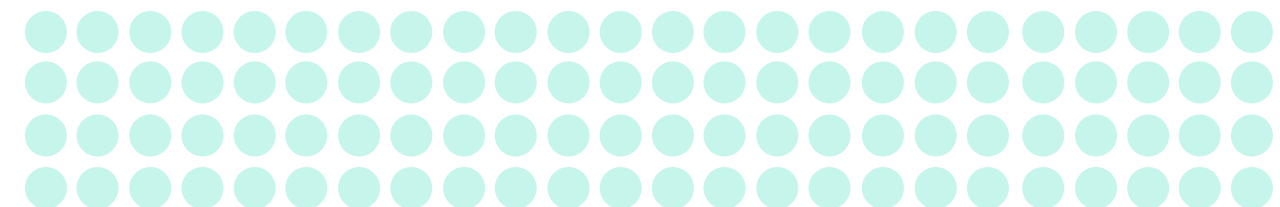
el sitio estaba vacío las escaleras
tenían marcas de alfombra vieja la
estela del avión se dispersó en nube
él entró al auto en el semáforo y me dió una manzana

pasamos el arco a las siete
ya bajo el sol la flama era invisible un lugar
puedes tomarte un trago en cualquier momento. aquí
el jardín está lleno de hierbas. dientes de león
ranúnculos. amarillas. inclinamos la cabeza hacia atrás.
se detienen. están viendo.





afecta más de cuatro millones
 pues la decisión del presidente har
 especialista en diagnósticos cere
 de sus confusiones habló de l
 doctores que había conocido en Harvard
 para desarrollar una idea no parecía
 en grandes rondas por la ciudad de Boston e
 estaba haciendo un punto hasta q
 1912 habla de su grado-s
 saben que en esos momentos él com
 no parecía saber en un principi
 en una voz amigable como si los do
 un paciente se colapsó re
 en el modo ensayado en que los doctor
 a punto de irse de su cuarto tomó m
 idish todavía pensó por un m
 cuando visitó ahora trato de llevar mi d
 talle y se siente en frente de él y
 estiró la mano para tocarle la cabe
 perdiste esa habilidad como has estado p
 yo estuve allí entendiste todo n
 simplemente apretará mi brazo y det
 reconoció mi cara pero no e
 las serias preocupaciones económicas qu
 permiten que mi madre de 96 a



What Are The United States And Why Are There So Many of Them? (Work in Progress)

Heriberto Yépez

Are we are even more conservative than the mainstream?

Common sense was one of the founding forces of American modern literature.

Vox populi has been a strong influence, not only in obvious places—like Whitman’s democratic poetics—but also in authors who we have learned to identify as difficult or *paradoxical*—literally meaning, *aside from doxa*, away from common sense—like Stein, Pound or Olson, whose varieties of patriotic experience are only the tip of the common sense iceberg in all of them.

We cannot discuss the influence of common sense in American conceptual writing without remembering that American common sense is pragmatic at its core.

American pragmatism was a strong element

in the formation, for example, of Stein’s word play—her desire, let’s say, of removing connotation or prior meaning, and just staying with the word or phrase in its materiality, staying there, so as to understand that along with the fabulous complexity in her writing there is also in it a crucial will toward the “simple”: a rose as just a rose.

There’s a pervasive *positivistic impulse* in *American experimentalism*.

Common sense also played a role in the construction of other early experimental American works like Pound’s, whose prose shows his muscular interest in “getting it across”. I’m referring, of course, to books like *ABC of Reading* or *Guide to Kulchur*. His didactic approach—a prolongation of his famous poetic economic principle of not letting anything unnecessary get into page—resonates with archetypical American phraseologies like “cut the crap” or “straight talk” (McCain’s 2008 slogan).

Charles Olson’s work not only relates to imperialistic patterns of working through otherness but most importantly his work is guided by what we can say is the basic pragmatic principle—and which also informs most post-modern writing: the transition *from indivisible to fragmented time and then from fragmented time into fitting space*.



We are shifting from a civilization based on the experience of “History”—a notion mostly naturalized since Hegel—toward a new paradigm, a new way of experiencing and ordering reality—still in the making—in which circular, spiral or linear *timeness* is no longer the semantic master, the central element that gives order to fragments distributed along its field of influence—the control is now exercised by relational space.

In this model space is the giver of being and sense.

This move away from “History” more or less consists in the dissolution of the linear ordering called “time” in favor of playing with those now loose fragments inside a total space of collected *cultural signs*, a *pantopia*.

A pantopia is an imaginary space or archive of persistent ruins and new components that not only constitute a compilation of free parts but most importantly makes possible the construction of a *neo-memory*—in which lightness-of-being permeates every stratum of reality.

By neo-memory I mean the possibility of remaking the archive into another one, with more or less parts than the last one.

The American dream means the dream of a

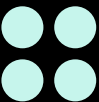
new memory.
That dream has given rise to the turn from History to pantopia, a total space of remixing everything that used to be chained together. Pantopias are History’s junkyards. Modern poetry in its entirety foreshadowed different avatars of pantopia in the form of techniques, metaphors, images and representations—utopias or dystopias—that allude to a total-market-space in which meaning can be *rewired*.

“Modern poetry in its entirety foreshadowed different avatars of pantopia in the form of techniques, metaphors, images and representations—utopias or dystopias—that allude to a total-market-space in which meaning can be *rewired*.”

Pantopias are all about *networking*. Negative networking to be exact in which difference is the new ruler of co-control—composed by the simultaneous domain of matriarchy and patriarchy.

In pantopia *choice* is the prime category. It may well be that the urban capitalistic experience of having *choices*—what to see, what to buy, what to consume—choice of market the social element that triggered the imagining of pantopia, the sum and at the same time precondition of every choice one can made.

Baudelaire’s *dandy*, for example, is one of the first pantopic attempts—the *dandy* as the subject of a total sight, a sight that appropriates everything through his at the same time indifferent and voracious eyesight.



We cannot discuss the influence of common sense in American conceptual writing without remembering that American common sense is pragmatic at its core.

Bataille called it *acephale* and Artaud's, Burroughs and Deleuze's *body-without-organs*. Borges calls it *aleph* while Pound imagines it as a *vortex*.

Stein and Olson praised it as "American Space". Benjamin, by the way, saw it coming. But also Lezama Lima—"Gnostic space" and Oswald de Andrade—"anthropofagy". I'm bulding here, by the way, a pantopic list of pantopia's prophets.

Pantopia has been also explored by American science-fiction and Hollywood movies—in order to develop a *cybermnemics*, a control of memories.

In this shift from historical time to total containment-space, gathering, remixing, cross-reference and archiving are the rules of the game.

The pantopic logic is widespread and shapes both the avant-garde and the market. We are now fully entering a pantopic epoch.



If the pantopic is replacing what used to be the historical, then what we ordinarily understand as "post-modern" would be a more explicit way in which this change is organizing itself *aesthetically*.

Citation, de-contextualization, fragmentation, and disjunction in general, could be—whatever this makes us feel in the different experimental scenes—modes of production that unwillingly

"Citation, de-contextualization, fragmentation, and disjunction in general, could be—whatever this makes us feel in the different experimental scenes—modes of production that unwillingly mirror and predict psychohistorical hegemonic formations at the social levels in the next decades."

mirror and predict psychohistorical hegemonic formations at the social levels in the next decades. This shouldn't surprise us. In writing almost everything is reactionary in advance.

Literature can be defined as the forerunner of new methods of co-control in the upcoming de-capitalism.

If the concept of History is metaphysically founded, *pantopia is mostly a chaosmic fantasy constructed by crypto-pragmatism*.



Filodoxical pragmatism—friendly to common sense—is in itself a way of *synthesizing a corpus of texts, a way of appropriating with great velocity a greater body to form a manageable text-complex-net*.

"Cut the chase" is how History was dismembered. And how cut spatialized time invented both *short story* and *collage*.

Pragmatic speech or writing (whatever its complexity may be) is based on the premise of *writing as inclusion* of cues, keys, hints, gestures to insiders or stimulus to the reader. Writing conceived as an exercise on *cybermnemics*.

And a *smart-ass* clandestine method to continue a de-capitalism that unites in one logic both *citation* and *outsourcing*.

In that sense, even the hermetic tendency of

contemporary conceptual American writing has a very definitive correlation with pragmatism. I would argue that investigative poetry, appropriation and archive are approaches that have developed in the light of this strange correlation between common sense and experimentalism.

The page as a pantopic opportunity to have many times inside a single space.

American avant-garde and post-modern techniques posses a missing link with American mainstream pragmatism.

That pragmatism is at the center of even opposed poetics such as the first thought, best thought don't worry practice of Ginsberg or Kerouac's immediate acceptance writing and his quintessential no bullshit no hassle attitude, which is more pragmatic than, in fact, Buddhist. The same can be said of Cage's experimental Zen.

And pragmatism is also present in the apparently different ideas or methods of Language and Post-Language writing, where the avoidance of metaphysics shows that Marxism, (mostly hidden) Russian formalism and post-structuralism can be put in the service of, or at least combined with, the typically American pragmatic stance. Now in its pantopic avatars.

Charles Bernstein's *anti-absorption* can be understood as a playful variety of pragmatic realism and most definitively an anti-metaphysical and rationalistic poetics based on an intelligent management of archives. A poetics of clearly knowing the artificiality of pantopia, and playing with it.

Unfortunately the brilliance of Bernstein—and that entire generation—can be used as just an entrance to pure clever poetics, i.e, aesthetic dilettantism in which "small things" become inflated "big deal" in the context of career ego fantasy.

English, in its entirety, could be a collection of pragmatic quotes.

Discussing appropriation without challenging its relationship with rising modes of capitalistic ordering would be uncritical.

We in the experimental field may well be one of pragmatism's secret and cryptic branches.

Allowing History to turn into pantopia, contemporary art and writing have become *cryptocapitalisms*.



Hanna Arendt writes in *The Human Condition* that the enchantment of "little things" characterizes both modern poetry and the bourgeois spirit. Being caught up in little decisions is one of the defining procedures of most experimentalism, where the presence of a mere comma or the inclusion of a certain word becomes a heroic either/or. The transformation of the little into the Big Deal is not only one defining category of the American experimental poet but also of the American identity in general. It is capitalistic choice—endless possibilities of choosing-among—that which builds the neo-bourgeois bridge between experimentalism and the mainstream.



The conceptual turn in art and writing lets us see a crucial moment in the development of the Western intellectual and social mind frame. And so the question is made: is conceptual art a truly progressive mode of representation?

By progressive I mean a departure away from hegemonic tendencies in our civilization.

If we understand its polemical relationship with the Romantic aspects of our high and low cultures,

conceptualism does represent a critical alternative to the traditional definition of modern subjects and practices. But we also need to take into account that at the same time that conceptualism departs from Romantic understandings it also closely follows the rationalistic model that also characterizes Modernity.

Conceptual art can be seen as a form of neo-rationalism.

In part conceptual pantopism appeared to prevent the ‘shamanistic’ tendencies of certain avant-gardes that posed the possibility of destroying the clean-cut art form. (By *shamanistic* I mean how the animal evolves from one orbital of consciousness into another). The minimalist and cool aspects of early

“Conceptual art served as a counterweight to tendencies in art which threatened to return us to an understanding of art as coming from a depth-world in the ‘soul’.”

conceptual art show us its clear communication with the way pragmatism and rationalism in general defend theory-based works against bodily mess and spiritual verticality.

Conceptual art has a historical relationship with analytical philosophy, that is, anti-vertical tendencies, founded

on mathematical thinking—Wittgenstein and how Wittgenstein was used by pragmatism in the Anglo world—Conceptualism has a great deal to do with posing an alternative to the psychoanalytic impulse in which art seemed again to be rooted in something more than *reception* in the social sphere.

Conceptual art served as a counterweight to tendencies in art which threatened to return us to an understanding of art as coming from

a depth-world in the “soul”. Conceptual art kept the definition of the aesthetic experience as mostly social. More philosophic than psychological. More cultural than genetic.

The key here was semiotic sign versus psychic symbol. If the work of art, or text, is understood as set of arbitrary-cultural-historical signs—doesn’t matter if it’s in Saussure’s or in Derrida’s sense—and not as a series of symbols deeply seated in the movement of psychological autonomous entities, then, we can get rid of the risk of getting close to a non-rationalistic explanation of what are the foundations of art. Semiotics and its offspring—conceptual art—resolves too quickly and in a very traditionally Western way—a rationalistic and pragmatic way—the question about whether there’s a non-social element or “root” in representation.

It could well be that Khlebnikov and not Saussure was right.

The “sign” does have a trans-mental charge or meaning prior to its social sense.

Derrida broke with many things Western, but not with its central axis: rationalism. Derrida himself defined deconstruction as a new form of rationality.

He mainly discussed with Freud—not Jung, who he didn’t take seriously at all.

Deconstruction was built on the basis of a critique on Levi-Strauss positivistic view of myth not on Eliade’s. Derrida is mostly rationalistic.

And so are we.

Conceptual art could be the coolest conservatism we have constructed in order to safeguard our most retrograde rationalistic world view.

And that’s problematic.



The post-historical union of fragmented “cultural” states is what I call the United-States, the central manifestation of pantopia.

The denial of depth in current American experimentalism and the denial of mammal evolution in the human species in American mainstream schools are part of the same American logic: *this*—We—is the only reality that can exist. Nothing can surpass us or be more profound than this. We. Here. As it is. And nothing more. Just This. The Supreme.



We are still living inside the *semiotic age of art*.

Conceptual art and writing has a strong relationship with the dominant definition of man in our contemporary societies and particularly in the university social classes. And this has everything to do with archiving and handling collections of signs. Society at large implies and employs consumption as its immediate category. We are writing—whether verbally or visually—texts that appeal to our consumption ridden tendencies. An experimental piece, for example, most of the times is executed and understood as a series of signals or calls made to us to become aware that the piece implies playing with horizontal codes that ask for the possession of a corpus which translates those signs into others.

Conceptual art and writing fundamentally are practices sustained by a certain antropeotic project—conceptual practices construct a certain human subject which relates to otherness in certain ways. This antropeiosis—man making—consists in the formation of *semiotic man*.

Deregulated man merely floating in the free market of purely relational economy.

Semiotic man builds structures in which pleasure is derived from relating entities arbitrarily as if the disappointment of the non-existence of ‘Nature’ or ‘Essence’ asked for a vengeance in defense of absurdity. A turn from metaphysical to *telephysical fancy*.

Semiotic *laissez faire* attain excellence when perfected by higher education—where education is understood as the acquisition of a corpus of complex references which help us experience a free translation of one text into another toward the formation of a semiotic United-States of cultural fragments.

And how playing with the right—and left—codes of pantopic culture gives us a sense of both *mastering* and *belonging*: co-control.



The pleasure of episteme: we find delight in understanding a text beyond others.

And we find delight in consciously controlling the pantopic production of meaning—as to assure the I that consumes, the I who is called the reader, still is the main agency in the prison-house of language.

Quotes assure us we’re socially real.

And integrate us into the cybermnemic.



Academia is scholarly pantopia.



We know that mainstream writing and art have a lot to do with the traditional scheme of Judeo-Christianity and how poetry, narrative or images reiterate beliefs, emotions, “neurosis”, and all forms of *denial of experience*—what Debord called ‘spectacle’—and we also know that we must continue to destroy all of those reactionary values.

But we are at the point—after more than a half century of experience with conceptualism and other forms of avant-garde or post-modern experimental practices— where we need to see we are not the “good ones”, regardless of how much feminism, deconstruction, post-colonialism and all our theoretical bibles push us to believe we are the saved pack.

New social modes of production are suggested by old ones. The suggestion is frequently picked up, knowingly or not, by literature and art. In that way, art is tricked to feel itself ahead of its time.

In the experimental mode of production of visual and verbal aesthetic materials we are now at the point where along with the constant emphasis of fighting against the paradigms of Judeo-Christianity without granting any opportunity for its return—something which I think American universities have mostly renounced to in the name of “political correctness” and “religious tolerance” in the class room—we also need to radicalize our definition of ourselves as thinkers-writer-artist-professors.

Pantopia is reached when cultural relativism is canonical.

The be-careful educational American system is stopping intellectual development in its thinkers, writers and artists. The conservative moralist tendencies—both from the left and the right—inside universities are the main force against the emergence of new radical forms. Not the market.

We are teaching students to become perfect

intellectual consumers.

We are handling knowledge as a collection of discourses that can be safely mixed in a “critical” pantopia, where everything, at the end, becomes units of information—that later becomes cultural capital.



Having become a giver of pantopic information, the professor plays the role of the knower who, in fact, does not possess any superior ethical knowledge. I am stating this in the context of discussing archive and appropriation because when *parrhesia* is removed from the teaching profession—when the teacher does not work in oneself in order to acquire *parrhesia*—then the professor becomes a cultural worker whose function is to guide students on how to practice the consumption of diverse discourses, texts and con-texts, a know-how that will insert him or her in the national and international division of academic or aesthetic labor—where *how to appropriate* is the key to succeed.

The teacher and subsequently the writer or artist is conceived as somebody who possesses the right references and knows how to play with the endless semiotic possibilities derived from the surface of the text.

An expert on archive.



Parrhesia basically means “fearless speech”, a knowledge that is gained when you have embarked in a long process of putting your body, emotions and mind in disensual states of being—in tension with oneself. Once you have acquired parrhesia you are responsible of using it in society, not only knowing that exercising parrhesia can be detrimental to your safety but also knowing that just claming you

have parrhesia is going to put you in a difficult position in a society which may be offended or simple does not believed there are superior ways of experiencing consciousness other than the ones it is accustomed to.

We should credit Foucault with returning the term parrhesia to philosophical and, in general, contemporary theoretical circulation. But let’s not forget that Foucault himself, because he didn’t want to abandon the traditional Western figure of the “just” being a professor or “just” being an academic writer, consisted, as an intellectual figure, in not accepting parrhesia!

Until the end of his career and life, he portrayed himself as a traditional Western intellectual subject—as though what he researched in his late work—how the subject is historically constructed—didn’t change him a bit—when the case was, in fact, the evidence he uncovered could give him the opportunity to change his own definition of himself as “professor” or “academic writer” *but he didn’t*.

Foucault saw himself, at the end, as a social scientist, who could study all these subjects without putting his own subjectivity into question. That was a failure on Foucault’s part to go beyond the technologies of the self in Western literature and theory.



Duchamp knew all of this.

Ready made was one of Duchamp’s word plays. And *ready made* means *ready-maid* (an irony there). An irony on how transparency can not happen. How maid-surrender is not possible. How the maid is not ready.

So what apparently hasn’t been understood is that *ready made* (being ironical!) translates as not-ready, not-made, not-ready-made.

As a not-ready-made it asks for a *something-else*.

That something-else can be a concept in a rationalistic age. But it could also be asking for a something-else which is a psychic depth.

Ready made is not only a sign but also a symbol.

In either case it is a *diabolo*.

A *diabolo* or *diabol* (a devil) is something that breaks unity, disarticulates.

(Ready made is pure philately.).

Ready made means how no interpretation can arise from the experience of the piece as it is. It needs something-else.

“Ready made means how no interpretation can arise from the experience of the piece as it is. It needs something-else.”

So ready made also means not ready to be Read.

Not ready. Not maid. Not Rhea. Not readable-made. (In that sense, Duchamp hasn’t being understood at all. In the United States, Duchamp has been read as if he was Warhol.)

Ready made indicates the isolation gained by every fragment of culture when it became separated from its previous order (“history”) and entered into the pantopic archive where the capitalistic ‘everything goes’ translates into all sorts of ‘cultural’ practices. Ready made is self-ironical. Not literal—as is has mostly being taken: as if Duchamp was Danto.

Duchamp’s ready made *is a self made irony*. Those object-gestures are ambivalent—ironical—toward the dichotomy depth/surface in meaning production. It is no accident that a fountain and a shovel—to just mention two of

the most philatelic of the ready-mades—allude to depth and at the same its disconnect. The ready made is not only an immediate satori but also a Kafkaesque delay of sense. “Ready”, I repeat, alludes to *read*. As if Duchamp, knowingly or not, suspected that from then on we would fall into an epoch of aesthetic production where works were basically going to be *made* to be *read*. And he was making fun of this ready-read age. Ready made, then, implies an irony against works which are made to be read in a (pragmatic) *ready way*.

Works made to be ready to be read.

Which I think is a concise definition of conceptualism, i.e., practices which consider and engage with the preeminence of the (social-conscious) *reader*.

An antropoiesis of man as subject of free *legein*—understanding *legein* as the virtue of freely choosing parts from a pantopic archive with no hierarchy inside.

But that brings all sorts of Western notions into play and at the same time ignores important knowledge and challenging evidence that put those same notions into question. And that’s problematic.



Is language empty or is it already charge or full with meaning before the readers get to it? It depends, first, on who the reader is. If the reader is the conscious reader, the visible one, you or I, then we can say yes, it is half empty or half full with social meaning, half empty and half full of historical components. But that response is now totally obvious, that is, immediate to our dogmatic scheme of how current Western theories understand texts.

So it’s undeniable, first, that there is a social

reading happening in every case reading takes place, so reading is always—as conceptualism understands—unstable, relative and arbitrary—historically determined.

But if the reader of the text is not the conscious reader—or at least not the only one, not the only reader reading the text—the given response falls out of place.

I won’t say, by the way, that the other reader I’m referring to reads the text at the same time that the conscious reader. It may well be the case that *(s)he* reads the text at a different time and not the same than the conscious reader does. Nor will I say the conscious reader reads it first. It may well be *s(he)* reads it before or much later than the visible *she* or *he*.

We just don’t know in how many simultaneous times does reading take place.

Pantopia, by the way, builds the illusion that only one space and that only one space controls all findings and remains. MySpace!

So *there are at least two readers*. Or, more precisely, three: because *(s)he* can be two. And none of them is unitary. Everyone is more a puzzle than a clear body.

But the two—or three—of them are not necessarily *one* big—unitary—mess. It appears there’s at least one border between the conscious reader and the other.

When we read, there’s a social reader active but also another reader which I’m not going to call unconscious because that would be to define it from the point of view of the ego—the point of view we need to abandon soon, as we have known from a long time now, but maybe that’s something we can never accomplish.

The unconscious reader is not the so-called “unconscious” but *consciousness*, which is mostly unconscious of the existence of the so-

called “unconscious”. So what we have called the “unconscious” is, in fact, our consciousness—unconscious about the existence of what it calls the “unconscious”. So I would simple call it here—both of them—the *other reader*.

And that other reader—I’m sorry to tell all of us—educated in semiotics, deconstruction and other forms of advanced theoretical neo-rationalistic modes of thinking—does not necessarily read according to social or “historical” patterns.

I like to tell my students—when I play the professor role—that in art and literature—in the life of language or bio-graphy—we are at a problematic stage, similar to that of physics, which has to deal with two sets of different and incompatible laws: those of classic (Newtonian) physics and those of quantum physics.

In our case, in language practices we are split by semiotics—to cover a plural set of social theories that explain the production and reading of social *signs*—and those discoveries made by psychoanalysis and deep psychology in general.

This means this is one of those epochs when “Negative capability” (Keats) is needed or we are going to suffer a “Crack up” (Fitzgerald). This is the problematic field in which I ask myself what is writing and what is art. And what is the task of those of us who ask.

We can train the conscious reader to be open and to not cling to fixed meanings of texts or train it to realize signs have different meanings in cultural space and historical time.

And this training is what we call higher education. Which is fine.

But this is not—like it or not—necessarily the way the other reader, the *othereader* (“the

unconscious”) operates. To *(s)he*—it appears—signs are symbols of un-historical kind.

So *(s)he* is more akin to a finality, as if *(s)he* didn’t care about critical theory.

Or postmodernism.

The *othereader* appears to have a somewhat finite and determined sets of meanings that are attached to the language it experiences, regardless of the conscious reader’s social context.

Is the *othereader* reactionary too?

It may be so.

If the conscious reader operates in pantopia, the other reader operates in timeness.

For now we don’t know enough about *(s)he*.



To describe the state of language of both being (social) (conventional) sign and (unhistorical) (“natural”) symbol I used the term *philatelia*.

As I have explained elsewhere philatelia means both friend of meaning, friend of finality (telos) and friend of non-sense, friend of the incomplete (atelos).

Philatelia—thanks to an error by Georges Herpin—who invented the term (in a wrong way!) in the middle of the 19th Century—instead of writing philotelia—*teleia* meaning *their tax* (taken care of by the sender, i.e, “already-paid” postage)—wrote philately, because he had figure out—erratically—atelia could mean “tax-free”, “tax-exempt”.

At the end, *philately* carries two polar meanings

in one word. As maybe every word should.
And gives us—by *erratics*—the opportunity to
employ this word with these two opposite set
of meanings.

Philately describes how language is both (social)
sign and (non-social) symbol. A postal stamp, for
example, is an arbitrary sign for the conscious
mind but a mythic symbol for deep timeness.
Every social concept triggers a parallel and
maybe contradictory inner process.

We need to move from a conceptual-social-
semiotic understanding of our practices to a
philatelic acceptance of reality.

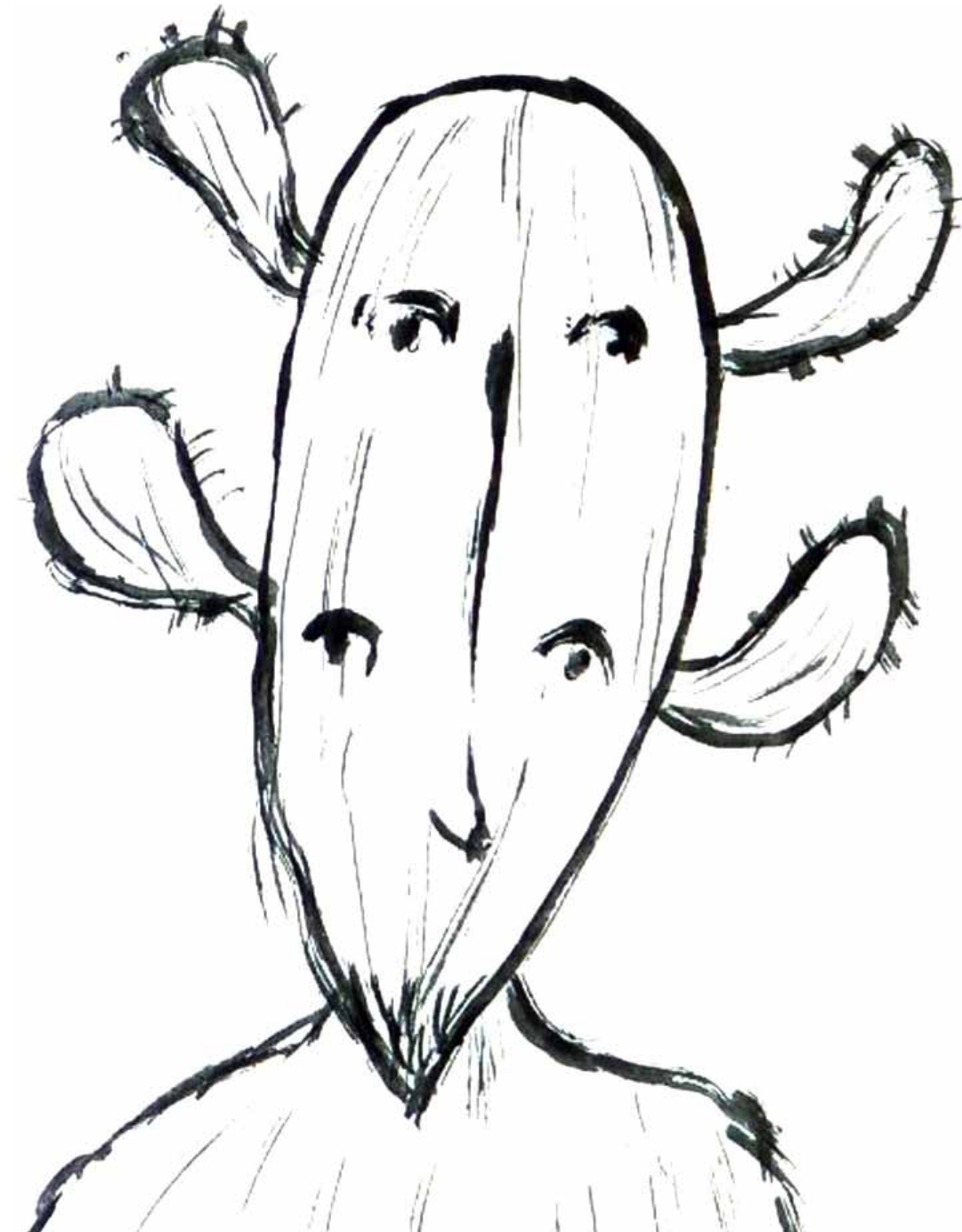
The paradigms of post-modern or experimental
writing coming out of the 20th Century
theory-based practices—their rationalistic and
pragmatic blindness of deep psychology—are
simple not enough.

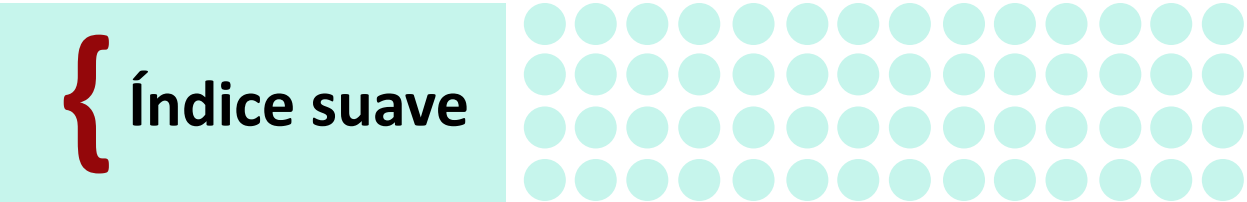
But nor do I think of writing in the inherited
notions of the NeoRomantic school. It would be
plain silly to ignore Marxism and what came after.

Let's define ourselves as philatelists. *Writing
and art are philatelia*: both love of sense and
non-sense, both a social and a non-social
phenomenon.

The philatelic condition of writing and the body-
mind escape all of our current categories to
describe the two of them.

Philatelia I predict will be the key exploration of
our time. ■





Índice suave

Tan Lin
Traducción, Julia Stanka

(De repitiendo LUGARES, GENTE Y OBRAS)

TODAS las obras presentadas sin alteración se indican en el texto entre comillas. La ausencia de comillas indica material parafraseado o formulado con palabras ligeramente diferentes. Todas las páginas y sus ideas correspondientes son aproximadas. Todo el material en esta obra ha sido extraído de otras fuentes. Todos los ritos reservados. Minúsculas reglas básicas de formato se aplican. Una renuncia de responsabilidad aparece al final de la obra.

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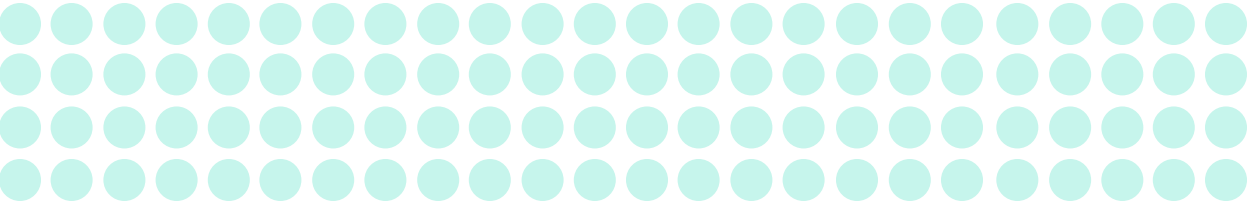
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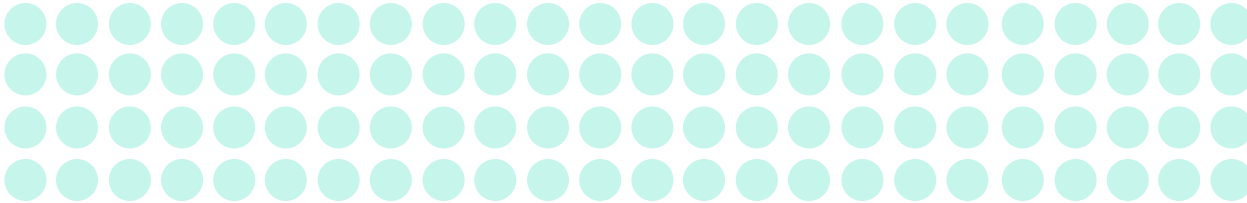
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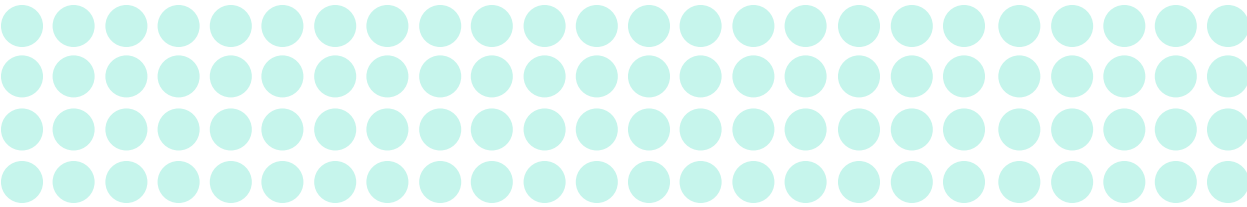
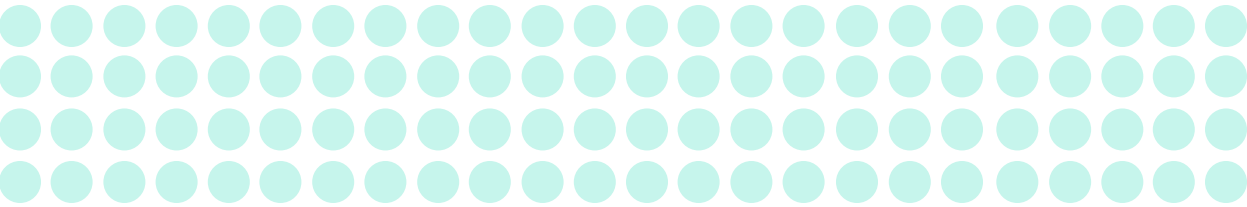
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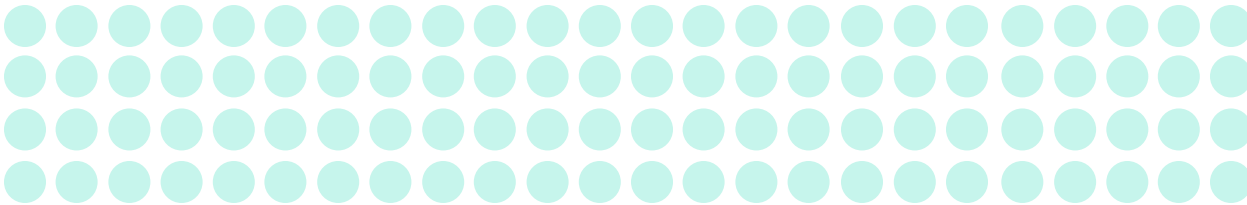
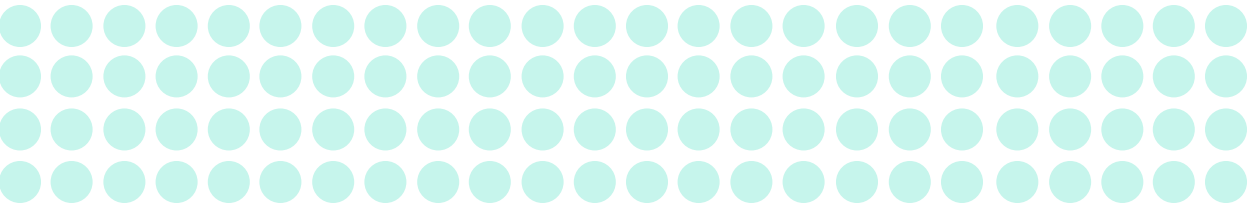
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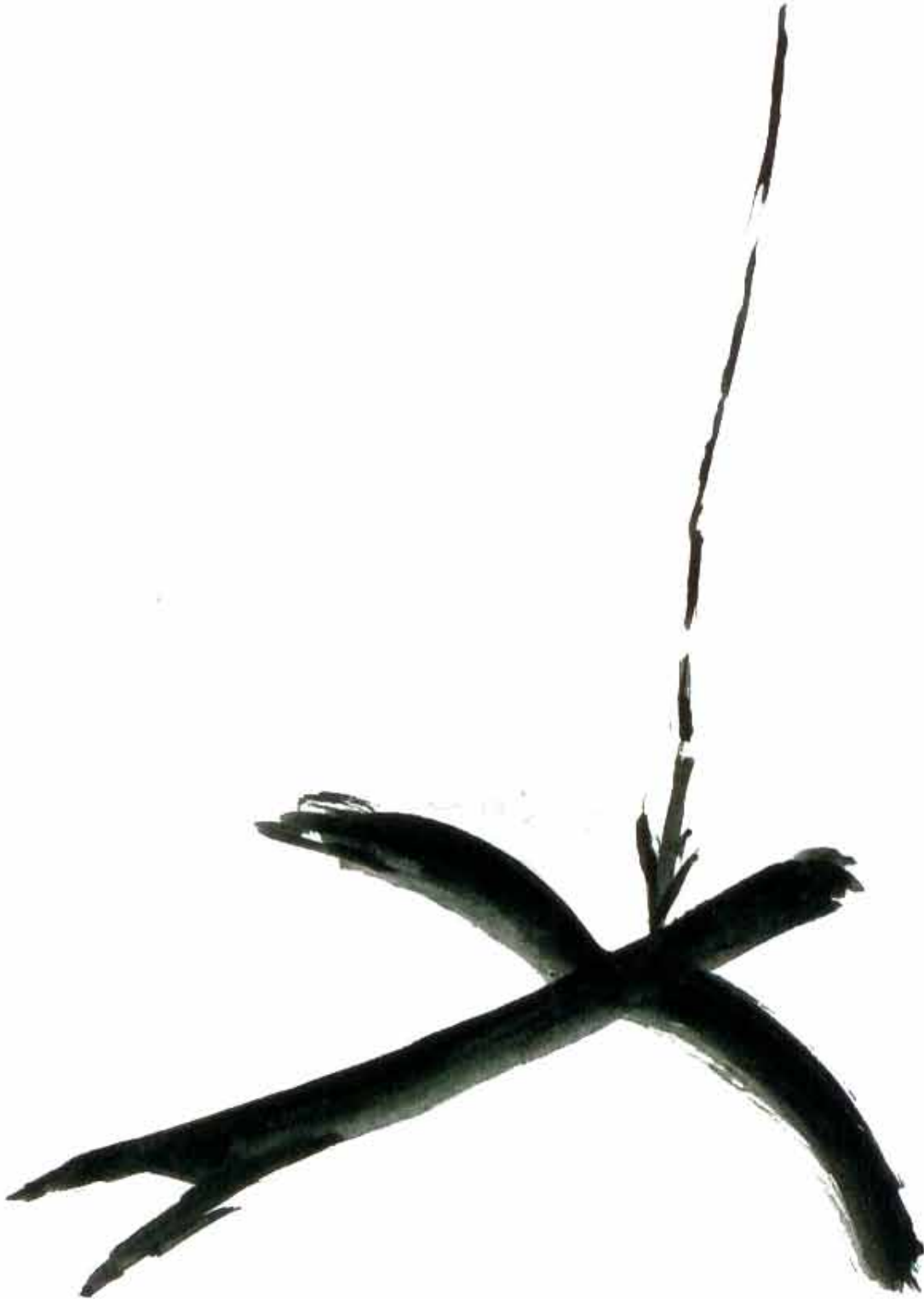
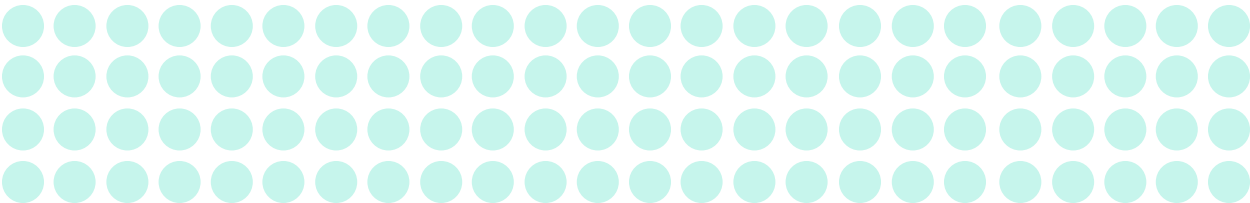
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Carlos Germán Belli (Lima, 1927) has been publishing poetry since the late 1950s, and by the 1970s he had been established as a leading Peruvian poet. He enjoys an international reputation today and has won a number of major international poetry prizes. He is widely considered one of the most important poets writing in the world today, and he has been deeply admired by such figures as Mario Vargas Llosa, Enrique Lihn, and Jean Franco for his unique style, derived in part from innovative reworkings of Golden Age themes and forms.

Charles Bernstein nació en Nueva York en 1950. Ha publicado más de 20 libros de poesía y tres de ensayo, entre los que figuran *Girly Man*, *My Way: Speeches and Poems*, *Republics of Reality: Poems 1975-1995*, *Shadowtime*, y *Blind Witness: Three American Operas*. *All the Whisky in Heaven: Selected Poems*, será publicado en 2010 por Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Entre 1978-1981 co-editó, junto con Bruce Andrews, la revista *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*. Durante la década de 1990 co-fundó y dirigió el Poetics Program at the State University of New York–Buffalo. Bernstein, Donald T. Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature en la Universidad de Pennsylvania, es asimismo co-director del PennSound (writing.upenn.edu/pennsound) y editor del Electronic Poetry Center (epc.buffalo.edu).

Régis Bonvicino has come to be recognized as one of the most talented and innovative of Brazilian writers. Among his

many publications are *Página Órfa*, *Ossos de Borboleta*, *33 Poemas*, *Más companhias*, *Primeiro Tempo*, and a children's book, *Num zoológica de letras*. Bonvicino has edited and translated Oliverio Girondo's work and books by Jules Laforgue, Robert Creeley, Charles Bernstein and Douglas Messerli. He also edited the correspondence of Brazilian poet and novelist Paulo Leminski. He is editor of the São Paulo magazine *Sibila* <http://www.sibila.com.br>

Robert Creeley (1926-2005) es una de las principales figuras de la poesía estadounidense del siglo XX. La editorial de la universidad de California ha publicado sus poemas completos y seleccionados.

Roberto Echavarren is a Uruguayan poet, novelist and essayist. He has won the Nancy Bacelo Prize in 2009 for his collection of poems *El expreso entre el sueño y la vigilia*, and the Ministry of Culture Prize in 2007 for his previous collection, *Centralasia*. With José Koser and José Sefamí, he authored the anthology of Neobaroque Latin American Poetry, *Medusario*, 1996. His novels are: *Ave roc*, *Julián*, and *Yo era una brasa* (2009). Among his essays are *Arte andrógino*, *Estilo versus moda* (1998, 2008), and *Fuera de género, criaturas de la invención erótica* (2007). He has translated works by Friedrich Nietzsche, William Shakespeare, John Ashbery, Wallace Stevens, Marina Tsvetáieva, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Haroldo de Campos, among others.

Eduardo Espina was born in Montevideo, Uruguay. He has published the books of poetry: *Valores Personales* (1982), *La caza nupcial* (1993; 1997), *El oro y la liviandad del brillo* (1994), *Coto de casa* (1995), *Lee un poco más despacio* (1999), *Mínimo de mundo visible* (2003), and *El cutis patrio* (2006; 2009). He is also the author of the books of essays: *El disfraz de la modernidad* (1992), *Las ruinas de lo imaginario* (1996), *La condición Milli Vanilli. Ensayos de dos siglos* (2003) and *Historia Universal del Uruguay* (2008). He has won the Premio Nacional de Ensayo of Uruguay twice, and the Premio Municipal de Poesía. Doctoral theses and books of criticism have been written about his poetic works and his poetry has been partially translated to French, Italian, English, Portuguese, Croatian and Albanian. In 1980 he was the first Uruguayan writer invited to the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Since then he resides in the US. He teaches at Texas A&M University.

Gabriela Jauregui (born in Mexico City, 1979) is author of *Controlled Decay* (NY: Akashic Books and LA: Black Goat Press, 2008). Her critical and creative work has been published in journals and anthologies in Mexico, The United States, and Europe. *El tiempo se volvió cuero*, her translation of Tom Raworth was published in the editorial *Sur+* in Mexico in September 2009 and her collaborative translations of the French poet Paul Braffort were published in *New American Writing* 27 and appeared in *Lana Turner* 2. Gabriela is a Doctoral Candidate

in Comparative Literature in the University of Southern California y Soros Scholar. She lives and Works in Los Angeles and in Mexico City. (www.gabrielajauregui.net.)

José Koser, born in Havana, Cuba (1940) of Jewish parents who emigrated from Poland (father) and Czechoslovakia (mother), left his native land in 1960, lived in New York until 1997, year in which he retired from Queens College as Full Professor, where he taught Spanish and Latin American literatures for thirty-two years. He lives in Florida. His poetry has been partially translated to English, Portuguese, French, Italian, German, Hebrew and Greek. There are several master and doctoral dissertations written on his work. The editorial house Aldus in México City published two books of prose by Koser entitled *Mezcla para dos tiempos* and *Una huella destartalada*. He is the author of several books of poetry, among them, *Bajo este cien*, *Anima*, *Y del esparto la invariabilidad*, *Trasvasando*, and *Semovientes*, published recently in Havana, Cuba. Junction Press, New York, just published a bilingual (English/Spanish) anthology of Koser's work entitled *STET*, translated by Mark Weiss.

Tan Lin Tan Lin es autor de *Lotion Bullwhip Giraffe*, *BlipSoak01*, *ambience is a novel with a logo*, y *Heath: Plagiarism/Outsource*. *7 Controlled Vocabularies* and *Obituary 2004 The Joy of Cooking* está pendiente de Wesleyan University Press. Es el recipiente

de una Getty Distinguished Scholar Grant y una Warhol Foundation/Creative Capital Arts Writing Grant para completar un libro sobre las escrituras Andy Warhol. Recién terminó una novela tomada por muestras, *Our Feelings Were Made By Hand*. Es Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing en New Jersey City University.

Ernesto Livon-Grosman is Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies in the Department of Romance Languages and Cultures at Boston College. He is co-editor of *The Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology*, just out from Oxford University Press. He also has several ongoing digitalization projects; among them is *ailleurs*, a journal on poetics and visual arts published in Paris by Uruguayan poet Carmelo Arden Quin during the early 1960s. The digitalization of *Ailleurs* is part of a larger project designed to make available, through the web, out of print South American journals dedicated to experimental writing. The first example of these efforts is *XULdigital*, a public project made possible thanks to O'Neill Library and Boston College.

Enrique Mallen was born in Sevilla, Spain. He obtained his Ph. D. in Linguistics from Cornell University. He has published numerous articles and books on linguistics, literary criticism and art criticism. Among his books are *Con/figuración Sintáctica: Poesía del Des/lenguaje* (2002); *The Visual Grammar of Pablo Picasso* (2003) and *La Sintaxis de la Carne: Pablo Picasso y Marie-*

Thérèse Walter. (2005). He is a recognized worldwide expert in Pablo Picasso. Most recently, Mallen has completed a comprehensive Concordance of Pablo Picasso's Spanish Writings and is currently working on a concordance of his French writings. In 2008 he also published the book *Poesía Del Lenguaje: De T. S. Eliot A Eduardo Espina* (Editorial Aldus). This book was selected as "best book of literary criticism of 2008" by Prensa Fondo (Mexico). A critical anthology of "language poetry" was published by Editorial Aldus this year.

Harryette Mullen nació en Florence, Alabama, en 1953. A su primer libro, *Tree Tall Woman*, publicado en 1981, siguieron: *Trimnings* (1991), *S*PeRM**K*T* (1992), *Muse & Drudge* (1995), *Sleeping with the Dictionary* (2002), (finalista del premio National Book Award), *Blues Baby* (2002), y *Recyclopedia: Trimnings, S*PeRM**K*T, and Muse and Drudge* (2006). Fue profesora en la Universidad de Cornell, y en la actualidad enseña poesía estadounidense, literatura afro-americana y escritura creativa en la Universidad de California, Los Ángeles.

Marjorie Perloff es una de las críticas de poesía contemporánea más influyentes de los últimos 50 años. Ha publicado, entre otras obras, *The Vienna Paradox*, *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre*, y *el Language of Rupture*, con nuevo prefacio, y *DIFFERENTIALS: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy*. La versión en lengua española de *Wittgenstein's Ladder* (*La escalera de*

Wittgenstein) será publicada por la editorial Aldus en México, en 2010.

Tom Raworth has been writing to amuse himself for half-a-century: the random threads from this hedonism have led him to China and the North Eastern Tibetan plateau, L.A., and Mexico. In Italy three years ago he was awarded the Antonio Delfini Prize for "lifetime career achievement" though he is not yet dead. His *Collected Poems* was published in 2003 by Carcanet, also publisher of a 2010 book of poems. His *Collected Prose* appeared from SALT this year. He has occasionally taught in the UK, the USA and South Africa; and has read his work in more than 20 countries. His graphic work has been exhibited in Europe, the USA and South Africa, and he has collaborated with musicians, painters and other poets. His children, grandchildren and a few friends keep him awake.

Pedro Serrano was born in 1957 in Montreal. He studied at the University of Mexico and at the University of London. He has published five books of poems, *El miedo*, *Ignorancia*, *Tres poemas*, *Turba*, *Desplazamientos* and *Nueces*. With Carlos López Beltrán he edited and translated *La generación del cordero* (*The Lamb generation*) a bilingual anthology of Contemporary British Poetry, and an anthology of the Irish poet Matthew Sweeney. His poems have appeared in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *Verse*, *Sirena*, *Reversible Monuments* and *Connecting Lines*. He teaches Poetry and Translation at the University of Mexico and is the Editor of

Periódico de Poesía, a poetry journal on line (www.periodicodepoesia.unam.mx).

Rose Shapiro fue profesora asociada en el departamento de Inglés y Ciencias de la Comunicación en la Universidad de Fontbonne en Saint Louis. Publicó *Carlos Germán Belli: Selected Poems* y una edición bilingüe de *Morada al sur de Aurelio Arturo*. En el momento de su muerte, en octubre de 2009, estaba trabajando en una edición bilingüe del poeta colombiano Giovanni Quessep y preparando una antología de la poesía colombiana desde el siglo XVI hasta el presente.

Travis Sorenson nació y creció en el norte de Utah. Después de pasar dos años en Argentina y de graduarse de Utah State University, obtuvo una maestría en traducción al español en el Monterey Institute of International Studies. Trabajó para el gobierno estadounidense como traductor durante cinco años, tres de ellos en Washington D.C., y dos en Centroamérica. Obtuvo su doctorado en Lingüística en Texas A&M University. Enseña en University of Central Arkansas.

Julia Stanka nació en Houston, Texas. Traduce poesía de lengua castellana al inglés, y viceversa. Es editora de *S/N: NewWorldPoetics*.

Molly Weigel, poeta y traductora. Ha traducido poetas del grupo *XUL*, incluyendo a Perednik y Cerda, poetas gauchos, y otros poetas latinoamericanos, incluyendo a Francisco Madariaga y Dávila Andrade. Sus traducciones fueron publicadas en *Boundary 2*, *American Poetry Review*, *Sulfur*, y otras revistas. Tradujo asimismo el ensayo crítico de Josefina Ludmer, *The Gaucho Genre* (Duke University). Obtuvo su doctorado en poesía estadounidense de Princeton University. Tras recibir una beca en 2008 del National Endowment for the Arts por dicho proyecto, tradujo al inglés *En la masmédula / In the Moremarrow* de Oliverio Girondo.

Designer Award and Uruguay's National Visual Art Award. He worked as fashion editor for various Indonesian magazines. Now, he teaches at the Strasser Fashion Design School in Montevideo. He has held numerous solo and collective art shows in Asia (Indonesia, Brunei) and Latin America (Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil).

Heriberto Yépez defines himself as a post-Mexican writer living in Tijuana. His work ranges from poetry and fiction to experimental writing and translation. His latest books are: *Wars*; *Threesomes*; *Drafts*; and *Mothers* (Factory School, 2007), written in English, his analysis of Charles Olson's ideas and experience on Mexico in *El Imperio de la neomemoria* (Almadia, 2007), his poetry collection *El órgano de la risa* (Aldus, 2008) and his novel *Al otro lado* (Planeta, 2008). He teaches art theory at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California.

Yudi Yudoyoko, Jakarta, Indonesian born artist, lives in Uruguay since 2003. He graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia. Winner of Indonesia's Fashion