
ESPACIO CREACIÓN/CREATION SPACE

Invertebrate Images: Poet Ethel Barja Cuyutupa (Peru)

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Interview with Peruvian poet Ethel Barja Cuyutupa and selection of her poetry. She shares her thoughts on poetic inspiration, creative processes, translation for connection, violence against women, and poetry as a means of creating and understanding realities.

Keywords: poetry, Peruvian literature, women writers, migrations, US Latinx literature

Entrevista con la poeta peruana Ethel Barja Cuyutupa y una selección de sus poemas. Comparte sus ideas sobre la inspiración poética, los procesos creativos, la traducción para conectarse con otros, la violencia contra las mujeres y la poesía como modo de crear y comprender realidades.

Palabras clave: poesía, literatura peruana, mujeres escritoras, migraciones, literatura latinx



Ethel Barja Cuyutupa (Peru)

Ethel Barja Cuyutupa is the author of several poetry collections: *Trofeo imaginado entre dientes* (2011), *Gravitaciones / Gravitations* (2013; bilingual edition Spanish-English, 2017), *Insomnio vocal* (2016), *Travesía invertebrada / Rambling Journey* (2019), *Hope is Tanning on a Nudist Beach* (2022), and *La muda* (2023).

Her poems have been selected for *Voces al norte de la cordillera: Antología de voces andinas en los Estados Unidos* (2016), *Revista Lucerna* (Peru), *Los Bárbaros* (New York), *alba.lateinamerika lesen* and *Lateinamerika Nachrichten* (Germany). She was invited to participate in the Latinale International Poetry Festival (Germany) in 2018.

She won the Cartografía Poética Prize (2019), Oversound Chapbook Prize (2021), and an International Latino Book Award for poetry (2023). Her work has been translated into French, German, Portuguese, and English.

Born in Huanchar (Peru) in 1988, Barja Cuyutupa holds an MA in Hispanic Literature and Culture from University of Illinois at Chicago and a PhD in Hispanic Studies from Brown University. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at Salisbury University, Salisbury, Maryland, and the director of the portal *Gociterra* (<https://gociterra.wordpress.com>). Her website hosts a number of downloadable texts, audios, and visuals: <https://www.ethelbarja.com>. Connect with her: ethel.barja@gmail.com & @ethelbarja (IG).

Her book of literary criticism, *Poesía e insurrección: La Revolución cubana en el imaginario latinoamericano (Poetry and Insurrection: The Cuban Revolution in the Latin American Imaginary)*, focuses on the impact of the Cuban revolution on poetry in the 1960s and 70s in Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Peru, and Chile.

Published Poetry Collections (and sites with downloadable poems)

Trofeo imaginado entre dientes. Lima, Peru: Senaju (Secretaría Nacional de la Juventud, Ministerio de Educación), 2011. Premio Nacional Juvenil de Poesía "Javier Heraud," 2011.

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Insomnio vocal. Lima, Peru: Alastor, 2016.

https://www.ethelbarja.com/files/ugd/d2c790_b5c3c250089e4db4adde3469587c1fd0.pdf

Gravitaciones / Gravitations. Bilingual edition. Translated by Lisa James. Lima, Peru: Paracaídas Editores, 2017.

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<https://www.oversoundpoetry.com/2022/10/13/ethel-barja-hope-is-tanning-on-a-nudist-beach/>

La muda. Mexico City, Mexico: Editora Nómada, 2023.

https://www.ethelbarja.com/files/ugd/d2c790_5f6268c228a24cd2bb772843a15f276a.pdf

Presentation in Mexico City:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38lxoFA-EH8&t=4s>

Several poems in audio and translation in German:

<https://www.lyrikline.org/en/authors/ethel-barja>

Other Publications

Poesía e insurrección: La Revolución cubana en el imaginario latinoamericano.
Madrid / Frankfurt: Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2023.

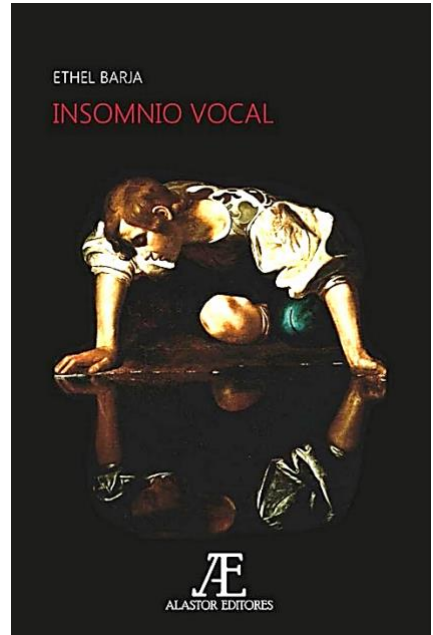
Correspondencia de Julio Ortega con Julio Cortázar. Edited by Ethel Mylene Barja Cuyutupa. Madrid: Centro Cultural, 2018.

Interview with Ethel Barja Cuyutupa

Ethel Barja Cuyutupa and I spoke virtually on a September afternoon in 2023. Despite the physical distance, within minutes Ethel's warmth and passion for poetry created a welcoming and engaging space. We talked about her poetic inspirations and processes and her thoughts on poetry as a way of knowing. I was especially inspired by her most recent book, *La muda*, a haunting collection of poems about missing and murdered women in Latin America. Her use of language, visual art, and storytelling opens a poetic world of alternative knowledges and possibilities.

MCA: How did you come to poetry?

EBC: Thank you, Cecilia, for your question. I think that at the beginning there was a natural approach that began in the setting of the solitude of the Andean landscape and with some monologues that I remember I had in my head from when I was a child. Then, in elementary and high school I was exposed to poetry. I particularly remember my teacher, Enrique Ortiz, who made all the students memorize one poem from *Trilce* by César Vallejo. I remember I had to memorize a poem that starts something like “All of you are dead.” You can imagine how that kind of existentialist questioning, mourning, and death can both mark and challenge a twelve-year old in multiple ways.



After that, I started reading more poetry. I remember reading Antonio Machado’s *Campos de Castilla*. That was an important moment because it connected poetry to my feeling about nature and living in a small town in Andean Peru.

Years later, in college, I realized I could also be a producer of poetry. This transformation was happening when I had the chance to see living poets perform their poetry in a series of public readings in bars in the historic center of Lima, Peru. I realized that beyond being a reader, I could also engage with the mechanisms of poetry—that I could myself start doing that more consciously. I think about the beginning of my relationship with poetry through these memories.

MCA: What are some of your formative poetic influences?

EBC: I started with a variety of Peruvian poets, like César Vallejo, Blanca Varela, Eduardo Eielson, and with nineteenth-century French poets, like Baudelaire. During this time, it was important for me to know what poetry was doing that was different from other kinds of language.

In the works of poets like Blanca Varela, to whom I dedicated my undergraduate thesis at the Pontifical Catholic University in Lima, I discovered a power in thinking in and through images that I wanted to learn more about and play with. These readings proposed puzzles to figure out a sort of language that was enticing and foreign.

Eduardo Eielson challenged me to think about a poetic language that goes beyond its own linguistic boundaries. Eielson was also an artist, painter, and sculptor. I've always liked painting and art. I didn't really think that I was able to do it, but I appreciated the invitation to think about form and image. To find out that you can make poetry that can have these productive crossings of language blew my mind.

MCA: Is that what inspired you to paint alongside your poetry and include some of the work from your series *Veloces* in your latest publication, *La muda* (2023)?

EBC: Poetry has taught me so much. I have learned from poetry that daring is power, and it's very rewarding in the end. I always wanted to create art since a very young age, but I didn't have the space or the tools to do it. I have a lot of respect toward art and art makers, and I thought you had to have a certain education to create art. Then, while I was working on my PhD at Brown University, I felt that I really needed another kind of language to continue thinking in a poetic way through images, which is central to how I understand my process of thinking poetry.

I started painting small images, and then I started daring to paint on larger scales. It was a joy for me to just unleash my imagination. I have no formal education beyond a couple of lessons in high school, so I was just having fun with it. Daring to paint. Then, I started to think about my painting alongside my poetry writing. I see them both as part of the same impulse of creation. The poem animates my painting.

Now, when I reflect on a finished piece, I see how writing is conceived through and along with the shape and texture of the painting. It's as if the painting is giving shape to the language and the language is giving shape to the image. For example, I want to discover something on the canvas, and I start experimenting with colors, much like how I address poetry.

I have found something in painting that is analogous to writing. As you can see in my latest book, *La muda*, I include abstract paintings from my series *Veloces*. At the same time, the poems in the book engage with recognizable forms and shapes, like history, but I stick to that discovery while I am producing and creating.

MCA: In most of your books there's an element of finding and creating meaning in a poem from different angles. We just talked about the visual element. Could you tell us about your translation process and journey?

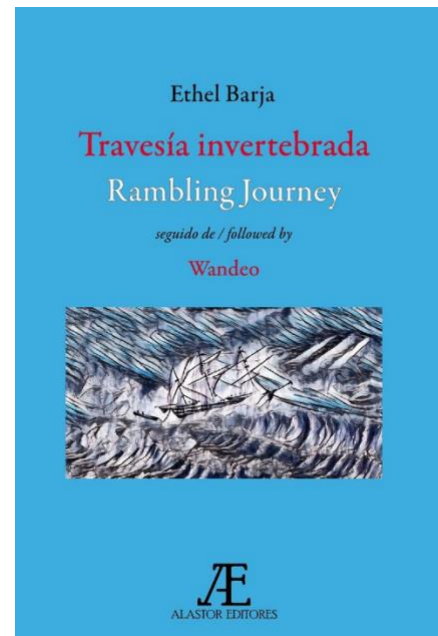


EBC: I have been engaged with translation in different ways throughout the years. In 2014, Lisa James and I started the project of translating my book *Gravitaciones* (2013) into *Gravitations* (2017). I decided to translate my work as a means to connect with other people. Once I moved to the US to continue my education, I felt that it was the best way to connect with people and foster a community of belonging. And I couldn't belong in this new space if I couldn't connect in English. This journey and approach to English has been progressive throughout the years.

Part of this learning has been connecting with my conception of what poetry does. To me, poetry belongs to a language that is in the foundation of human capability. This means that you have this language that has a body in English, in painting, and in Spanish. So, I thought that to grasp the foundation of the universal grammar of poetry, you have to open yourself to experience poetry in other shapes too.

I wanted my poetry to take the shape of English—that was the closest foreign language to me at the time. Through this experience, I learned to appreciate the music of English. From this process we published *Gravitations* in 2017.

After that, I started writing in English—a little note here and there—but not a proper book. In 2019, I published a book in Spanish, *Travesía invertebrada*, through Alastor Editores. I decided that I wanted to translate the book, but I still didn't know how much I could translate by myself in English. That's why I collaborated with David Silverberg, who is my partner. We collaborated on the revision of some lexical choices and structures. It was funny. David doesn't speak Spanish, so I was constantly translating from Spanish into images to communicate the sensations that I wanted to communicate to readers in English. In a way, it was a translation within a translation. This collaborative work led to the production of *Travesía invertebrada / Rambling Journey* (2019).



After that experience in 2018, I thought I was ready to write in English. There were a lot of factors that contributed to this decision. Overall, I felt that my emotional connection with English was stronger. I felt a primal need to write in English in 2021. We were undergoing the horrors and traumatic effects of the pandemic. In 2020, I wrote very little. I was unable to write in Spanish. I think this was part pandemic, part academia. At the time, I was writing my dissertation in Spanish for a PhD in Hispanic Studies, and I was working on revising an article for publication in English. I was struggling with language. I sat myself down and had a conversation with myself. I remembered the idea of a universal grammar. I kept telling myself that if I really believed that language corresponds to a primal imaginative layer, I had to be able to write in this Western academic language.

I started writing poetry in English out of that feeling of frustration. I took a break from revising that article in English. I ended up publishing it later. But at that moment, I started writing poetry in English. I ended up writing *Hope is Tanning at a Nudist Beach* (2022) in three weeks, which is very fast for most poetry manuscripts.



I wrote it out of these emotions, and also in conversation with what was happening in the world. How do we hope when people are dying because of COVID-19? How do we hope when we are living with injustices, like the murder of George Floyd? That was very alive at that moment, along with other kinds of violence that were also calling me to think and meditate on why hope matters now. That's what the book is about. That's how I ended up writing in English. I believe that if we come equipped

with this poetic language, we have to use it, whether in English or in Spanish.

And I am very curious about languages in general. I've learned French, German, and Quechua. I just love it. I wish I could write in all of those, but I don't dare. But I also love daring, so maybe in the future. Who knows?

MCA: Thank you for sharing these processes with us. You have such a rich and generative understanding of human collective grammar both linguistically and visually. Thematically, I also see this process present in the tensions you explore between the human and the non-human, the edges of the human, the inorganic as an entry point to this grammar. Could you share with us what the non-human means to you in your writing?

EBC: The non-human for me is an opening. We as humans belong to this greater architecture. I am talking in an organic way. We share a commonality of functions with non-human creatures, like plants or animals. We are stripped of those connections out of a need of functionality and social constructions that actually take away and disconnect us from experiences that are enriching to understand who we are.

I think that the function of the non-human presences in my poetry also comes from a cultural perspective that is talking to my origins as an Andean woman. I grew up in a small town of Huanchar in Junin. I remember my grandma going out to clash her knives together on the patio to let the sky know that the hailstorm had to stop. That was a natural practice when I was growing up. This practice is intertwined with the notion that there is a language in nature and that we can reply to nature as well. I think the capability of togetherness with nature is also a way of survival. It's something that informs my poetry and all the characters that I introduce in my poems.

I think poetry is a way of knowing and perceiving a reality. Therefore, to pay attention to the surroundings is part of that sort of epistemological action. As poets, we probably do not go to nature with our empirical method to do inductive processes or form hypotheses. We as poets go with a sort of method to see what exists, to interpret, to better understand ways that are very autonomous, that probably don't exist yet. It's a method that is also an anti-method because it doesn't have a shape yet. So as a poet, you have to create a shape for that infrastructure that will help you understand your reality. And then you come with your landscapes and your characters.

I work hard on creating these fictional atmospheres. In *Gravitations*, you have Gea as this embodiment of the organic world that goes around transforming into different kinds of creatures. In my book *Insomnio vocal* (2016), published by Alastor Editores, you have two mythological characters, Echo and Narcissus. Narcissus is in love with himself, and Echo is trying to communicate with him. I use them as a metaphor for human interactions and encounters.

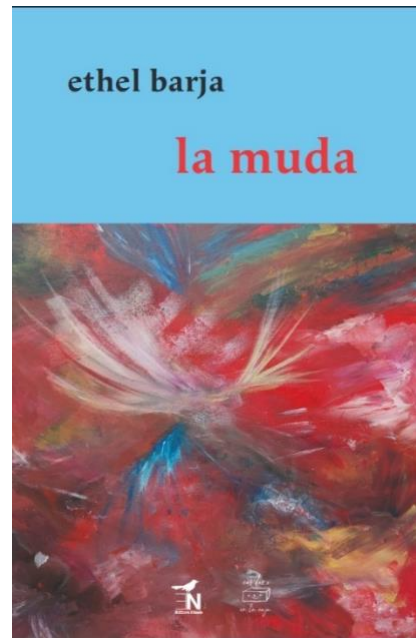
MCA: Absolutely. We do not always know what we are searching for when we create. I agree with you that poetry is a way of seeing and perceiving reality. It is a way of connecting. And it takes a lot of daring to find different means to forge these connections. To live in the search. I understand the need to create what you are learning and missing.

EBC: Absolutely, and that is in dialogue with my conception of poetry as hope. Poetry is thinking about the non-existing that comes to life throughout the process of writing.

José Lezama Lima says it more beautifully. He says something along the lines of: "The situation of the hand inside the night gives me a time, the time when this can happen." Meaning that poetry is actually a very hopeful and utopic endeavor that is there because there is this not-yet, this force of writing.

Poetry comes out of necessity. This sounds very mystical, but it's not. It comes out of will. It takes practice. You need to train yourself to open a different way of understanding the world and create your own language to interpret the world.

MCA: In your latest book, *La muda* (2023), you also forge very interesting ways of creating these connections across time and space. You write about missing and murdered women throughout Latin America, but you refuse a kind of transparency about their interiority. It is very difficult to write about these women and bring them to life without doing that. To write about bodies and memories interrupted and stolen, in spite of the desire to bring them back and romanticize them and their interrupted futures. It is such a different book, but you still make similar stylistic choices as you do in your previous work. Could you tell us more about writing this book?



EBC: Yes. Many of the assertions that define poetry for me, could have been done in any other moment in time. Which means the recurrence of the idea of an eternal reflection about reality, but it is not.

Poetry is always a current event. Because you have to engage with what is claiming your interpretation in the moment, and you have to know what that is. For me, it was the feminicides; it was violence towards women that I came

across progressively. Coming from Latin America I knew about violence and harassment.

I started writing *La muda* in 2017. Four years later, in 2021, I came across the podcast, *Olvidadas: Las muertas de Juárez* (2021), by Rossana Fuentes Berain and Sandra Romandía. I heard about the cases of murdered and disappeared women at the Mexican-American border. The topic had come up before for me in Roberto Bolaño's *2666*. Reading the novel was different from the podcast.

I think listening to the podcast really affected me. I was familiar with the case of a twenty-two-year-old woman, Eyvi Ágreda, who was burned alive on a public bus in Perú in 2018. In March of this year, Katherine Gómez was also burned alive in the street in Perú. She was 18 years old.

I wanted to address that in a language of poetry, because I think that we have to exhaust every means to address what is happening with the violence towards women in different cultures, societies, and countries. There is no way I could be indifferent to what I feel is a very real threatening recurrence.

I think this is particularly the most feminist book that I have written so far. I think that feminism traverses my work, but this is the most feminist one. It is also a book about transformation, like *Gravitaciones*, but *La muda* specifically addresses the several ways women are constrained and the many ways we find our languages.

La muda's last part, "María Revolución," received an honorable mention in the LGBTQ+ poetry contest "Escritura Revuelta" organized by the University of Houston. I created the character of María Revolución on purpose. I hope that the reader will read the whole book as her story.

To me the violence toward women in Latin America now is connected to a hyper-control and surveillance over women's bodies that is always contested and undermined in several rebellious ways by female identities. Even though violence is there, it won't stop women and the several kinds of identities they want to create for themselves. Everyone should be able to decide what they want to do with their bodies and lives.

MCA: *La muda* is also about connecting to something that is very close to you but at a distance. How does your experience of diaspora show up for you in your last publication?



“Parque infantil”

EBC: I believe that migration is highly connected with transformative futures. You leave because you want something different. You have no way out, and you have to figure out what to do. It is an affirmation of hope.

I think that my experience as a migrant in the US is helping me to zoom out and acquire a perspective about the global migration crisis. Is it because everyone is hopeful? Of course not. In part, it is because people are forced to hope, because there are structural reasons that expel people from their regions. That is a concern and a possibility. A concern because you have to reshape your whole inner and material infrastructure, and you are stripped of your culture.

You are forced to adapt and connect. And of course, there is transculturalism, and multilingualism, and other ways you expand your subjectivity and your creative tools because now you know other languages and cultures. While this is happening, you are stripped of the possibility to deeply root in your culture.

As an Andean woman in a transnational setting, I am denied what it is to be an Andean woman in Perú and really have that experience. So, you have to deny one part of your identity to open to others. That opening allows a lot of mobility and agency to artistic writers.

But also, why are we forced to leave our countries? Because there are global conditions of economy and violence that expel people from their countries. I think that as a migrant, I am responsible to talk about that, as I did in *Travesía invertebrada* (2019). I wrote about diaspora. It is a diary of 28 days and it follows the spread of a disease. People are going away because of the sickness. This curiously resonates with what happened in Peru during the pandemic, when

people were going back to the rural areas from Lima, because it was safer. We need other languages to think about these kinds of phenomena.

MCA: Speaking of hope, what's your next project? What are you working on now?

EBC: I am working on the translations of *Hope is Tanning on a Nudist Beach* into Spanish and *La muda* into English. I am excited to revisit both manuscripts in a two-way language game. Thank you, Cecilia, for your perceptive reading of my work and this delightful conversation. I am also grateful to the editors of the *Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies* for inviting the interview.

M. Cecilia Azar (*ella/she*) is a PhD student in the Theater Arts and Performance Studies Department at Brown University, where she studies and writes about queer and travesti/trans diasporas in the Americas. Drawing from theories of diaspora and decolonization, critical race theory, and black and transnational feminism, her work thinks about how queer and travesti/trans-displaced individuals and communities engage with space and produce knowledge. She holds an MA in English and Literature from California State University, Los Angeles and an MA in Gender Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park.

This Espacio Creación / Creation Space presentation was reviewed by members of the Editorial Board of the *Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies* (MARLAS) and recommended for publication. Poetry © Ethel Barja Cuyutupa.

Gravitaciones (audiolibro)

https://soundcloud.com/user-49659418/sets/gravitaciones-2013?si=1ba0d4ffc812484db3efcdf76ac37dfe&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing



Poesía movimiento (poemas audiovisuales)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLseC1Tchxk4-Rqs06h2wlvReDsooIDzEG>



Poetry by Ethel Barja Cuyutupa

núcleo

ocupar la tierra es desocuparla
removieron las estrellas polares
traficaron con sus nombres
no solo abrieron la zanja y dejaron fermentar la piedra
vino antes el rito
echaron fuera el polvo
marcaron con sangre los caminos

transcurridas las cuarenta noches
llega la voz de Gea en un hilo de carne
asentarse no es colmar el suelo que horadaron nuestros padres
no es palpar el cimienta sin sentir su quemadura
asentarse es no asentarse
es tomar de cuajo el temblor del hueso oculto bajo la superficie
asentarse es agitar el arco firme y la fractura
es abrir los surcos en las avenidas
demoler los muros uno a uno
retorcerse como las capas de la tierra
sostener el arriba henchido como el cauce de los ríos
abrirlo palmo a palmo y hacerlo g

i

r

r a

hasta que boca abajo y sudoroso
vea su dorso diluido
lleve sus pasos hacia el este recién segado
y vea sin sorpresa el territorio que bulle

(*Gravitaciones*, 2013)

Había una vez venía suave en tu voz aquellas madrugadas; y *había* era una estrella de mar aturdida en medio de la calle que buscaba un rojo precipicio o hacía espacio para sí. La veíamos apenas y pensábamos en su vientre enorme. Cuando el frío afilado despertaba nuestros dientes, remontabas *HABÍA*, con más ánimo y más saliva. Debíamos concentrarnos en algo detrás de nuestras espaldas. Tal vez cuando abrimos los viejos baúles y metimos las cuatro prendas; sí, ese momento antes de cerrar la puerta, pero *había* seguía cavando en nuestras frentes con sus brazos chispeantes. *Había* tan solitaria solo deseaba hacerse espacio para enterrarse y dejarnos libres al presente. *Debe tener frío*, pensábamos. *Había, no temas es solo una vez*. Una vez que trajera ese antes de guardar las sábanas en los baúles y se hacía tarde. Sacudías tu voz como para agitarnos la nuca, *HABÍA UNA VEZ*, y no podíamos concentrarnos; *una vez*, repetíamos para coserla al *había*; pero *había* escarbaba también en esta vereda. Cerramos las puertas detrás más de *una vez* y *no había*.

(*Insomnio vocal*, 2016)

NO *HABÍA* se recostaba en la estepa como para escuchar un latido mientras zurcía sus ropas. Alzaba su voz como la última actriz de esa pampa y recitaba sus líneas a las hierbas que arrancaban sus cuellos del suelo. *No había* respiraba como una liebre desorientada, adivinaba el arriba y el abajo con la furia creciente en su pecho. Maldecía nuestro paso sostenido, nuestra inacabada sombra. *No había* despreciaba nuestros ojos expectantes, nuestra lengua alerta. Nosotros avanzábamos en su territorio ahuecado. *No había* era los relojes detenidos y nosotros la negra enredadera escalando su miedo. *No había* lavaba su rostro a todas horas deseosa de arrancarse la piel segunda y nosotros arañábamos un zumbido en su lengua. *No había* quería su cuarto propio y a veces miraba con ternura. *No había* solo deseaba un espejo, y no se lo dimos. Tuvimos miedo de que se tragara a sí misma en negación prolongada, en su canto negro. *No había* corre por siempre y dice incansable no estar; y nosotros vamos tras ella minuto a minuto ebrios de su *No*.

(*Insomnio vocal*, 2016)

¿UNA VEZ es un ave o un familiar
enfermo del abismo? Una vez... es como
le cuentas a ellos sobre dos ejércitos
vestidos de chocolate. ESA VEZ se
incrusta inevitable entre tus labios, un
paso al lado de la ira. Ir a. ¿A dónde
fueron esa vez? Cuando el no entiendo o
el tu ira no es mi ira (pasión del alma o
pretexto serpenteando bajo la ropa).
Cruce la frente UNA, mandas, cuando es
múltiple el adentro. Esa vez come y bebe
de mi mesa. ESA hambre tuya no es

mía.

(*Insomnio vocal*, 2016)

Día 13

Ceguera en haz,
las heridas multiplicándose.
No hay selva en penumbras,
ni puertas secretas, Dante;
sólo ríos interiores
ahogados en rumor y contacto.
No hay *Beatrices*,
ni numerados círculos
de camino a la expiación,
no hay dorados botines al norte,
nuevos continentes,
ni aire templado como en Sevilla,
sólo remanentes y remolinos.
El recuerdo del agua,
cuásar del grito.

Se suspende el peso
de los músculos en guardia.

Aquí,

allí

larva que crece en el oleaje violento.

Nosotros somos esta cadena arenosa
en la garganta del mundo.
¡Oh, travesía invertebrada!
en el roce espiral de la boca salvaje.

*(Travesía invertebrada / Rambling Journey,
seguido de / followed by, Wandeo, 2019)*

Día 27

A veces viajar
es acariciar un avezado plumaje
y la altura de su vuelo
antes de tiempo.
Desear geografías prohibidas,
tocar líneas imaginarias
dentro y fuera de la culpa;
y de cuando en cuando
ver un cuerpo niño en la orilla,
en la bisagra perversa
de la esperanza y el miedo.

*(Travesía invertebrada / Rambling Journey,
seguido de / followed by, Wandeo, 2019)*

wandeo

*Another moment I would have
to come up with a name, a word
another world*

—Wong May

se han dispuesto los pies contradictorios
a marchar furiosos
entre las luces chispeantes
en la atmósfera enarcada
vestidos de ceniza
vienen a rasgar el arriba y el abajo
guía para el abatido obturador
asir completamente la grieta
ir tras los cinceles
y abrir los nombres en las frentes
parpadeos indefinidos
sin postales de cartón
arquitecturas interiores
incendian todo mutismo
en la vigilia de arterias enmarañadas
Times Square ¿es un cuadrado de tiempo?
o un escudero taimado con el puñal encendido
packing time squarely
neat and cruel in the eye?
-the lost I in a tic-tac quarrel-
pies contradictorios riegan diurnos
sobre el asfalto caliente
la yema del violáceo
error
la distorsión del territorio
hendidura en la visión
condición de la mirada
nítida entre un bocado y otro
tú y yo en la fuente de un Narciso de neón
en los lados opuestos de la superficie
inútilmente pulida cada noche
florece la trenza brillante
la bujía en la lengua que despierta
la estampida de bisontes
be-something?

in multiple directions another and the same

squared time
two times time?
maybe four before,
an era now

que no es ira, sino era
paso del hoy al ayer en el paladar
el era de ahora que gira

here and there in the leap
two times time

time's insomnia

vestigios rehechos en las pupilas
la ceguera que otea
en cada vuelta de madeja
abre sus brazos
a los pasos que no cesan...

Nueva York, mayo de 2015

*(Travesía invertebrada / Rambling Journey,
seguido de / followed by, Wandeo, 2019)*

despierto
en esta presencia continua
en la pista alegre y lisa
con los muñones en flor
crujo incisiva
inexorable
me recojo
en un mosaico
que se desenrosca
y se vuelve a armar
estas marcas son ciertas
acarícialas
en el fondo sabrás verme
soy este pico de energía
inocente por rebelde
rebelde por inocente
como en la unción
algo queda rezagado
pero insiste

se apelmaza
y en una visión baldía
rezuma

(*La muda*, 2023)

ayer escarbé con paciencia
no quiero encontrarte
en el cascajo
tu risa en el aire
con todos tus huesos
intocados
sí

cayeron
luego de ti
otras
como esos pájaros
que caen en el invierno
con los picos rotos
y ya no alcanzan
las hojas frescas
de su trino

carne sin nombre
se consume
sus venas se vacían
y el juego sigue

se diluye el ánfora y gotea
el ojo cálido del cielo

¿hacia dónde señala
la historia vertical
del árbol
donde te ataron?

¿hacia dónde apunta
la metódica rigidez
de lo inerte?

¿quién me dirá

lo que indica
el oasis
de tu cuerpo?

háblame
ven
como antes
a despejar la noche
como quien despeja
el aire para mi vuelo

(La muda, 2023)

*Me agito. Desde muy pronto se busca algo. Se pide
siempre algo, se grita. No se tiene lo que se quiere.*
–Ernst Bloch

I

la esperanza se hace de mí, como yo de ella
como si las antorchas aún ardieran
como si las plumas de algún tipo de animal
pudieran crecer cuando se alza mi vuelo

de repente me decidí a ver
cuál era el acertijo
y me asaltó un sonido inesperado
hoy es un día de caza

la esperanza emerge
claro
contigua al bien y a la gracia
mientras tomo mi aspirina
y penetro esta insoportable claridad
la visión excesiva
de un acercamiento radical al hueso
áspero y pálido
como el último testigo

la esperanza pesa
como la pérdida organizada
lista para la distribución

ceniza y completud entretrejiéndose

los restos nunca están solos
ascienden por la mañana
en cada párpado y lo habitan por años
hasta que nos despiertan
o se filtran en nuestro bocado
remo de todas maneras
en las aguas primordiales
y espero que nadie se atreva
a cruzar dos veces el mismo río

sé de las cosas
y las cosas saben de mí
pero nunca antes sentí este pulso
aquí en la ola del nulo día
donde la razón estalla

II

las camas para broncearse no son más seguras que el sol
dicen
y estoy sudando
sin querer interminablemente
en otro momento hubiera llegado con algún tipo de brisa
con una voz suave
con ritmo de cuna post humano
como si viniera directo del origen

esta promesa
es un cuerpo de sonido en movimiento constante
continua velocidad y temblor
abrazándose

if you cannot make it new
make it tan

una utopía cotidiana
es una enredadera enferma
que riegas cada día
buscando ardor y gloria

el núcleo de la zona anhelada
te disparará pronto
pero habrá
signos ignorados por todas partes

experiencias comunes
de asfixia en cualquier cama de bronceo
mientras el sol se consume de celos
pero una cama de bronceo no te dará
horizontes
ni bikinis
cuídate
volverse adicto
al bronceo es un riesgo real

III

Lo que esperas es una niña perdida saltando sobre un charco de agua, o la provocadora caída para explorar la gravedad, o un travieso intento por desviar los vientos para exponer tu cara a un olor extranjero, a la madera fresca y a la música de esos grillos inquietos que cifran mensajes futuros a la distancia.

El núcleo de la realidad es una bestia anhelante. Su pelaje de ausencia cubre el firmamento por la noche, cuando te internas en el disfrute de la mirada dormida, cuando solo puedes confiar en tu tacto, el sonido, y la temblorosa presencia de la materia respirando en tu nuca, y tú solo quieres atrapar algo, cualquier cosa. Los objetos no se quedan quietos, anidan una suerte de movimiento hacia la superficie infinita, hacia su rostro real, hacia su incandescente geografía, hacia el sendero de sus aguas subterráneas.

Las criaturas mínimas esperan un mínimo paraíso con agua potable y un microondas. Visten colores brillantes para combatir el caos. Hacen sus propias leyes de resistencia, como las ranas ansiosas por la continuación de la especie. Ellas sienten la amenaza y van a su guarida. Huelen la corrección política y lamen sus heridas en las sombras.

Nada se mueve sin propósito, pero el propósito es una habitación vacía, donde esconderse, donde anhelar una habitación al fin colmada que te mantenga en ruta, y aquí estás otra vez en el persistente hiato del propósito, pero el propósito es una máquina de hambre, es un reloj que desafía tu presencia, negando el ensamblaje de tus piezas, y en este lado de la puerta crujiente maquinas cómo derrotar el propósito con la pose desnuda de tu cuerpo oscuro, con los temblores

y alianzas de tu piel. ¡Mira qué poderosa! Por generaciones, tus ancestras han creado el espacio y el tiempo para que tus dientes y tus codos ocupen su fibra y no habitaciones de poder ajeno.

*(La esperanza se broncea en una playa nudista, forthcoming, originally in English in *Hope is Tanning on a Nudist Beach*, 2022)*