

The Poems of Sidney West

JUAN GELMAN (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1930) is one of the most read and influential poets in the Spanish language. He has published more than twenty books of poetry since 1956 and has been translated into fourteen languages. A political activist and critical journalist since his youth, Gelman has not only been a literary paradigm but also a moral one, within and outside of Argentina. Among his most recent awards are the National Poetry Prize (Argentina, 1997), the Juan Rulfo Prize in Latin American and Caribbean Literature (Mexico, 2000), the Pablo Neruda Prize (Chile, 2005), the Queen Sofia Prize in Ibero-American Poetry (Spain, 2005), and the Cervantes Prize (the most important award given to a Hispanic writer, Spain, 2007).



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The Poems of Sidney West
Los poemas de Sidney West

JUAN GELMAN

English versions by
KATHERINE HEDEEN
& VÍCTOR RODRÍGUEZ NÚÑEZ



CAMBRIDGE

PUBLISHED BY SALT PUBLISHING
14a High Street, Fulbourn, Cambridge CB21 5DH United Kingdom

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English translations and introduction
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First Edition: Editorial Galerna, Buenos Aires, 1969

Salt Publishing 2008

Printed and bound in the United States by Lightning Source Inc

Typeset in Swift 9.5 / 13

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ISBN 978 1 84471 464 3 paperback

Salt Publishing Ltd gratefully acknowledges
the financial assistance of Arts Council England



1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

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Acknowledgements

The translators wish to gratefully acknowledge the National Endowment for the Arts (USA) for its support of this project and the poet Juan Gelman for his unwavering encouragement and collaboration.

Juan Gelman : Translation as Fidelity

This edition offers at last the splendid poems of Sidney West to English readers, supposedly their original addressees. West is among the best imaginary poets not only of Whitman's native land, allegedly his as well, but of all possible lands. His texts, although rich with exceptional life experience, will satisfy those who still believe in "the death of the author." No less satisfied, in spite of his anti-romanticism, will be those captivated by "committed writing." And in another paradox that West himself would have loved, if he had existed, what's offered here constitutes a translation of a translation. In other words, an English version based on the prior version into Spanish apparently completed in 1969 by the notable Argentine poet Juan Gelman (Buenos Aires, 1930). He and only he, until the contrary is proven, should be considered the authentic, industrious author of the author of these poems, and the poems themselves.

Juan Gelman is the most significant, contemporary Argentine intellectual figure and one of the most read and influential poets in the Spanish language. Son of a family of Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine, he grew up like any other *porteño*, among soccer and tango, in the populous neighborhood of Villa Crespo. He was initiated into reading by his brother Boris, who would often recite Pushkin's verses to him in Russian. He also received from Boris the works of Hugo, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and other modern and contemporary classics. At 11, he published his first poem in the magazine *Rojo y negro*, and in the 1950s formed part of the group of rebel writers, *El Pan Duro*. He was discovered by Raúl González Túñón, among the most relevant voices of the southern country's poetic avant-garde, who saw in the young man's verses "a rich and vivacious lyricism and a principally social content [. . .] that does not elude the richness of fantasy."¹

Juan Gelman has published, from his initial *Violín y otras cuestiones* (1956) to his most recent *Mundar* (2008), more than twenty books of poetry.² These works, as Mario Benedetti asserted early on, constitute “the most coherent, and also the most daring, participatory repertoire (in spite of its inevitable wells of solitude), and ultimately the one most suited to its environment, that Argentine poetry has today.”³ We would add Hispanic poetry in general, as the profusion of re-editions of his books and numerous anthologies proves.⁴ Gelman’s poetry has achieved international recognition, with translations into more than ten languages, including English.⁵ Among his most recent awards are the National Poetry Prize (Argentina, 1997), the Juan Rulfo Prize in Latin American and Caribbean Literature (Mexico, 2000), the Pablo Neruda Prize (Chile, 2005), the Queen Sofia Prize in Ibero-American Poetry (Spain, 2005), and the Cervantes Prize (Spain, 2007). No one should be surprised to see him the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature one day.

In this retelling, it would be as well to note that Juan Gelman has not only been a literary paradigm but also a moral one, within and outside of Argentina. Political activist and critical journalist since his youth, he was forced into an exile of thirteen years because of the military dictatorship that ravaged his country from 1976 to 1983, and the weak governments that immediately followed. In 1976 the ultra-right kidnapped his children, Nora Eva, 19, and Marcelo Ariel, 20, along with his son’s wife, María Claudia Iruretagoyena, 19, who was 7 months pregnant. Nora Eva would later return, unlike his son and daughter-in-law, who were killed; their child born in a concentration camp. The vehement search for the truth about the fate of these family members, which culminated in finding his granddaughter in Uruguay in 2000, has made the poet a symbol of the struggle for respect for human rights.

Like other poets from his time and space, Juan Gelman creates his work starting from a critique of the so-called post-avant-garde poetry, which surges in the Hispanic world in the 1940s and breaks with the powerful avante-garde. A poet who denies the labors of the Mexican Octavio Paz, the Cuban José Lezama Lima, the Argentine Alberto Girri, among others, to reaffirm it in his own way. As Benedetti has pointed out, “what changed was the language (increasingly stripped down) and the communicative element (increasingly

more open). Yet there were not great modifications in its experimental zeal, and much less in its persistent intention to arrive at the point." The emphasis was, undoubtedly, "on *communicating*, on getting to the reader, on including him."⁶ It was a poetry that went against the current, transgressed the established social and cultural order, challenged the individualism intrinsic to modernity and the neo-colonial condition. A poetry that renounced authoritarian monologue, the usurpation of the other's voice, and accepted without fanaticism the values and language of the people on the streets. A critical and auto-critical poetry that ultimately defied oppressive social realities as much as redeeming revolutionary ideals.⁷

For Saúl Yurkievich, poets like Juan Gelman—and the Ecuadorian Jorge Enrique Adoum, the Cuban Fayad Jamís, the Mexican Juan Bañuelos, the Venezuelan Juan Calzadilla, the Salvadoran Roque Dalton, among others—want "to ally a progressive ideology with a formal breadth." At the same time "formalists" and "realists," they propose to insert their writing "in contemporary reality [. . .] as a process of material production, and not as a [. . .] transcendental trampoline, an aphrodisiac or hallucinogen." Thus, "[w]ithout dogmas, asymmetries or censure," they want "to say the totality of what can be said without alienating the specific requirements of the poetic sign, knowing it to be above all verbal instance subject to its own processes," which they strive to exploit and develop. They practice "a polyvalent, polyphonic, plurivocal poetic" that seeks "to unite political and artistic advances."⁸ With *The Poems of Sidney West*, Spanish American revolutionary poetry has become a dialogic discourse. The use of narrativity permits the creation of a web of voices, greater participatory democracy in artistic representation.

The Poems of Sidney West belongs to both Juan Gelman's cycle of "translations" and his narrative poems. The shift toward narrativity has been, according to Pedro Lastra, one of the characteristics of Spanish American poetry produced between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1970s. Other characteristics that Lastra draws attention to in this poetry, which could also be called "neo-avant-garde," are "the appearance of the character, mask or double in poetic space;" "intertextuality as recourse;" and "reflection on literature within literature."⁹ Opting for "intertextuality as recourse" is related to the rise of the narrative in a stricter sense, the poorly

named “boom of the Latin American novel,” lead by García Márquez and other authors, and it is a topic that remains to be studied.¹⁰ Then again, narrativity does not lead to the development of epic poetry. On the contrary, surpassing once more a traditional Western opposition, the result is a discourse that continues to serve lyricism.

The contents of *The Poems of Sidney West* pose a radical question: must human beings in modern society—and moreover, in a peripheral enclave like Argentina—die in order to recuperate their human condition? Yet such denial, according to the dialectic-materialist world view that Juan Gelman’s work is based on, proves ultimately to be a negation of the negation. Symbolically, death is at first the refutation of the social condition of these thirty-five oppressed and repressed characters. Yet with this death does not come transcendence, access to a world outside of action and knowledge, or the existential return to nothing, where humans lose all agency. Something happens after the passing of these characters, their absence causes unforeseen consequences, generates certain kinds of presence. From an individual perspective, transformation equals death, yet this does not mean, at a social and natural level, the end, but another beginning. The transformation of these characters is not only inevitable; it is moreover a socially positive, fecund, beneficial process.

The Poems of Sidney West opens with a verse that, without a shadow of a doubt, refers to the kingdom of the marvelous: “it began to rain cows.” This unusual phenomenon, like many others that occur throughout the book, is not registered or accepted as natural by Western logoi, what is generally referred to as science. By opting for magic as part of popular culture, for the marvelous not as invention but part of reality, the poetic subject challenges imperialist reason. In order to decolonize representation—and the very referent, a society marked by a colonial past and a neo-colonial present—a singular approach to magic realism is produced. The term is pertinent for it underscores that “the rational, linear world of Western realist fiction is placed against alter/native narrative modes that expose the hidden and naturalized cultural formation on which Western narratives are based.”¹¹

The Poems of Sidney West offers us only one clue about when these accounts take place, yet it is significant: chester carmichael “dead in the fall of 1962.” The space is even more precise and determined,

always within the real or imagined United States. This territorial emplacement, beyond Argentina's borders, constitutes a frank questioning by Juan Gelman of the nationalism and populism on the rise during the era. According to this decolonizing political gesture, what is being challenged is not only individualist romanticism but also the collectivist realism promoted by Stalinism and deferred to with its variants by Latin American coreligionists. Ultimately, both this romanticism and realism are based on a voluntarist and thus idealist conception of social movement, which produces a distorted representation of reality. What is sought here is the destruction of the self, a redefinition of the poetic I that, like these stories' characters, experiences a metamorphosis, de/composes to achieve the com/position of the subordinated other.

From the margins of modernity, without renouncing his condition as enemy poet—Dalton believed that “whatever his quality, his stature, his finesse, his creative capacity, his success, the poet can only be to the bourgeoisie: servant, clown or enemy”¹²—Juan Gelman has created a work that is made up of an impressive corpus in quantity and quality. A work that reaffirms the capability of poetry to apprehend, in its historicity, a contradictory character and diversity, natural and social phenomena. As Julio Cortázar warned in 1981, the reality of these poems “is exactly and literally the reality of horror, the death and hope of modern-day Argentina.”¹³ The foundation of this poetic is to conceive writing, without lessening its essential condition of creative practice, as an instrument not only to interpret but to transform the world. And what is offered is a model of a poet conscious of his relationship to nature and society, who truly unites art and life, revolutionary ideology and aesthetic revolution.

The use of translation as a tool for poetic creation that distinguishes Juan Gelman's work, reaches its apex with *The Poems of Sidney West*. María del Carmen Sillato has stressed how this device, along with heteronomy and intertextuality, is “an expression of alterity by recognizing the other-author, the other-text, and the other-language as co-participants in the elaboration of a textual universe.”¹⁴ As for us, we only have left to mention that these translations of Gelman's translation have been carried out under the most rigorous accuracy. It is this, upon conveying the poetic subject's message, which makes

beautiful expression possible. There is much in these texts that is truly untranslatable, just as surely there was in the imaginary American's originals. Something must have gotten lost in the translation, and something must have remained, for the whole maintains its power, humanity, lucidity. In sum, we hope this translation is not treason but, on the contrary, an act of fidelity.

KATHERINE HEDEEN and VÍCTOR RODRÍGUEZ NÚÑEZ
Gambier, March 8, 2005–May 24, 2006

Notes

- 1 Cited in Jorge Boccanera, *Confiar en el misterio: Viaje por la poesía de Juan Gelman* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1994) 25.
- 2 Among others, *El juego en que andamos* (1959), *Velorio del solo* (1961), *Gotán* (1962), *Cólera buey* (1965), *Fábulas* (1971), *Hechos y relaciones* (1980), *Si dulcemente* (1980), *Citas y comentarios* (1982), *Hacia el sur* (1982), *Exilio* (in collaboration with Osvaldo Bayer, 1984), *La junta luz* (1985), *Com/posiciones* (1986), *Interrupciones II* (1986), *Interrupciones I* (1988), *Anunciaciones* (1988), *Carta a mi madre* (1989), *Salarios del impío* (1993), *Dibaxu* (1994), and *Incompletamente* (1997).
- 3 Mario Benedetti, *Los poetas comunicantes*, 2nd. ed. (Mexico: Marcha Editores, 1981) 187.
- 4 These are Gelman's principal anthologies: *Poesía* (Havana, 1968), *Obra poética* (Buenos Aires, 1975), *Poesía* (Havana, 1985), *La abierta oscuridad* (Mexico, 1993), *Antología poética* (Montevideo, 1994), *De palabra* (Madrid, 1994), *Antología poética: 1956–1994* (Buenos Aires, 1994), *En el hoy y mañana y ayer: Antología personal* (Mexico, 2000), and *Pesar todo: Antología* (Mexico, 2001).
- 5 Juan Gelman, *Unthinkable Tenderness: Selected Poems*, ed. and trans. Joan Lindgren, intro. Eduardo Galeano (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997).
- 6 Benedetti 15–16.
- 7 According to Mike Gonzalez y David Treece, “‘conversational poetry’—though the concept of a democratic poetry seems preferable—locates the collective at the heart of poetic language. This means recuperating the traditions of popular culture, the patterns and rhythms of speech, the alternative history told in the oral myth, and molding the redemptive revolutionary vision out of the material of everyday life. The process is not reductive, but expansive.” *The Gathering of Voices: The Twentieth-Century Poetry of Latin American* (London: Verso, 1992) 305.

- ⁸ Saúl Yurkievich, *La confabulación con la palabra* (Madrid: Taurus, 1978) 153.
- ⁹ Pedro Lastra, “Notas sobre la poesía hispanoamericana actual”, *Inti* 18–19 (1983–84): ix–xvii.
- ¹⁰ An excellent collection of critical essays on Gelman is Lilián Uribe, ed., *Como temblor del aire: La poesía de Juan Gelman* (Montevideo: Vintén, 1995).
- ¹¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 133.
- ¹² Roque Dalton continued: “The clown is an ‘independent’ servant who manages nothing better than the limits of his own ‘liberty’ and who one day will confront the people with the argument that the bourgeoisie ‘really has sensitivity’. He who is really a servant can wear the uniform of lackey or minister or cultural representative abroad, including silk pajamas for entering the bed of the most distinguished lady. The enemy poet is above all else the enemy poet. He who claims his wages not in flattery or dollars but in persecutions, prisons, bullets. And not only does he lack a uniform or tails or suit, but every day he ends up with fewer things until the only thing he has is a pair of patched shirts but clean as unparallelled poetry.” *Poemas clandestinos/Clandestine Poems*, ed. Barbara Paschke and Eric Weaver, trad. Jack Hirschmen, intro. Margaret Randall (Willimantic: Curbstone P, 1986) 2.
- ¹³ Julio Cortázar, “Contra las telarañas de la costumbre”, *De palabra*, by Juan Gelman (Madrid: Visor, 1994) 5–8.
- ¹⁴ María del Carmen Sillato, *Juan Gelman: Las estrategias de la otredad: Heteronimia, intertextualidad, traducción* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 1996) 17.

La traducción, ¿ es traición?
La poesía, ¿ es traducción?

— Po I-Po

Translation, is it treason?
Poetry, is it translation?

— Po I-Po

lamento por la muerte de parsifal hoolig

empezó a llover vacas
y en vista de la situación reinante en el país
los estudiantes de agronomía sembraron desconcierto
los profesores de ingeniería proclamaron su virginidad
los bedeles de la filosofía aceptaron las grampas de la razón
 intelectual
los maestros de matemáticas verificaron llorando el dos más dos
los alumnos de lenguaje inventaron buenas malas palabras

esto ocurrió mientras al mismo tiempo
un oleaje de nostalgia invadía las camas del país
y las parejas entre sí se miraban como desconocidos
y el crepúsculo era servido en el almuerzo por padres y madres
y el dolor o la pena iba vistiéndose lentamente a los chiquitines
y a unos se les caía el pecho y la espalda a otros y nada a
 los demás
y a Dios lo encontraron muerto varias veces
y los viejos volaban por el aire agarrados a sus testículos resecos
y las viejas lanzaban exclamaciones y sentían puntadas en
 la memoria o el olvido según
y varios perros asentían y brindaban con armenio coñac
y a un hombre lo encontraron muerto varias veces

junto a un viernes de carnaval arrancado del carnaval
bajo una invasión de insultos otoñales
o sobre elefantes azules parados en la mejilla de Mr. Hollow
o alrededor de alondras en dulce desafío vocal con el verano
encontraron muerto a ese hombre
con las manos abiertamente grises
las caderas desordenadas por los sucesos de Chicago
un resto de viento en la garganta
25 centavos de dólar en el bolsillo y su águila quieta
con las plumas mojadas por la lluvia infernal

lament for the death of parsifal hoolig

it began to rain cows
and in light of the prevailing situation in the country
the agronomy students sowed disorder
the engineering professors proclaimed their virginity
the philosophy janitors oiled the staples of intellectual reason
the math teachers verified crying the two plus two
the language learners invented good bad words

while this was happening
a wave of nostalgia invaded the country's beds
and the couples look at each other as strangers
and twilight was served for lunch by mothers and fathers
and the pain or the hurt slowly dressed the little ones
and the chests fell off some and the backs off others and to the
rest nothing fell off at all
and they found God dead several times
and old men flew through the air holding tightly to their dried
testicles
and old women hurled exclamations and felt painful stitches
in their memory or oblivion
and various dogs approved and toasted with Armenian cognac
and they found a man dead several times

near a carnival Friday ripped from the carnival
under an invasion of autumnal insults
or over blue elephants standing on Mr. Hollow's cheek
or close by the larks in sweet vocal challenge with summer
they found that man dead
with his hands openly gray
his hips disordered by the events in Chicago
remains of wind in his throat
25 cents in his pocket and its still eagle
with feathers wet from infernal rain

¡ah queridos!

¡esa lluvia llovió años y años sobre el pavimento de Hereby Street
sin borrar la más mínima huella de lo acontecido!

¡sin mojar ninguna de las humillaciones ni uno solo de los miedos
de ese hombre con las caderas revueltas tiradas en la calle
tarde para que sus terrores puedan mezclarse con el agua y
 pudrirse y terminar!

así murió parsifal hoolig

cerró los ojos silenciosos

conservó la costumbre de no protestar

fue un difunto valiente

y aunque no tuvo necrológica en el *New York Times* ni el *Chicago*

Tribune se ocupó de él

no se quejó cuando lo recogieron en un camión del servicio
 municipal

a él y a su aspecto melancólico

y si alguno supone que esto es triste

si alguno va a pararse a decir que esto es triste

sepa que esto es exactamente lo que pasó

que ninguna otra cosa pasó sino esto

bajo este cielo o bóveda celeste

oh dear ones!
that rain fell years and years on the pavement of Hereby Street
without ever erasing the slightest trace of what had happened!
without dampening one of the humiliations not even one of the fears
of that man with hips scrambled tossed in the street
late so his terrors can mix with water and rot and end!

and so died parsifal hoolig
he closed his silent eyes
kept the custom of not protesting
was a brave dead man
and while his obituary did not appear in the *New York Times* and the
Chicago Tribune paid no attention to him
he did not complain when they picked him up in a truck from the city
him and his melancholy look

and if someone supposes this is sad
if someone is going to stand up and say it is sad
know this is exactly what happened
nothing else happened but this
under this sky or vault of heaven

lamento por el arbolito de philip

philip se sacó la camisa servil
llena de tardes de oficina y sonrisas al jefe
y asesinatos de su niño románticamente hablando
su niño operado cortado transplantado injertado
de bucólicas primaveras y Ginger Street volando alto verdadera
en la tarde de agosto cruel o gris

se quedó en pecho philip y cuando
se quedó en pecho hizo el recuento feliz de cuando:
le sacó la lengua al maestro (a espaldas del maestro)
le hizo la higa a la patria potestad (a espaldas de la patria potestad)
formó cuernitos con la mano contra toda invasión maternal (a
espaldas de toda invasión maternal)

se burló del ejército la iglesia (a espaldas del ejército la iglesia)
en general de cuando
ejerció su rebelde corazón (dentro de lo posible)
fortificó sus entretelas acostumbradas al vuelo (siempre que el tiempo
lo permita)
engañó a su mujer (con permiso)

philip era glorioso esas noches de whisky y hasta vino
exóticamente consumido con referencias a la costa del sol
una palabra encantadora lo detenía semanas y semanas a su alrededor
sol por ejemplo
o sol digamos
o la palabra sol
como si philip buscara lejos de la sociedad industrial
fuentes de luz fuentes de sombras fuentes

qué coraje hablar del sol

lament for philip's tiny tree

philip removed his servile shirt
filled with afternoons in the office and smiles to the boss
and assassinations of his child romantically speaking
his child operated cut transplanted grafted
of bucolic springs and Ginger Street flying high true
in the cruel or gray August afternoon

philip remained shirtless and when
he remained shirtless he happily recounted when:
he stuck his tongue out at the teacher (behind teacher's back)
gave the finger to paternal authority (behind paternal authority's back)
cuckolded all kind of maternal invasion (behind maternal invasion's back)

mocked the army the church (behind army's church's back)
in general of when
he exercised his rebellious heart (as much as he could)
fortified his interlinings accustomed to flight (always as time allowed)
cheated on his wife (with her permission)

philip was glorious those nights filled with whiskey and even wine
exotically consumed with references to the costa del sol
an enchanted word close by would detain him for weeks and weeks
sun for example
or sun let's say
or the word sun
as if philip searched for far from industrial society
fountains of light fountains of shadow fountains

what courage to speak of the sun

como suele ocurrir philip murió
una tarde lenta amarilla buena callada en los tejados
no hablaremos de cómo lo lloró su mujer (a sus espaldas)
o el ejército la iglesia (a sus espaldas)
o el mundo en particular y en general súbitamente de espaldas:
su viuda le plantó un arbolito sobre la tumba en Cincinnati
que creció bendecido por los jugos del cielo
y también se curvó

y si alguien piensa que lo triste es la vida de philip
fijese en el arbolito le ruego
fijese en el arbolito por favor

hay varias formas de ser mejor dicho
muchas formas de ser:
llamarse Hughes
hablar arameo mojarlo con té
estallar contra la tristeza del mundo
pero a ustedes les pido que se fijen
en el curvado arbolito
tiernamente inclinado sobre philip
su pecho en pena en piel como se dice

ni un pajarito nunca
cantó o lloró sobre ese árbol
verde y todo inclinado
inclinado

as it often happens philip died
a slow yellowing good quiet afternoon on the roofs
we will not speak of how his wife cried (behind his back)
or the army or the church (behind his back)
or the world in particular and in general suddenly
with its back turned:
his widow planted a tiny tree near his tomb in Cincinnati
that grew blessed by the sky's juices
and also curved

and if anyone thinks of how sad philip's life was
I beg them think of the tiny tree
think of the tiny tree please

there are various ways to be better said
many ways of being
to call oneself Hughes
speak Aramaic wet it with tea
explode against the sadness in the world
but I ask each of you to look closely at
the curved tiny tree
tenderly leaning over philip
his chest in pain in skin as they say

not even once a small bird
has sung or cried in that tree
green and leaning
leaning

lamento por gallagher bentham

cuando gallagher bentham murió
se produjo un curioso fenómeno:
a las vecinas les creció el odio como si hubiera aumentado la
papa
feroces y rapaces comenzaron a insultar su memoria
como si el deber obligación o tarea de gallagher bentham
fuera ser inmortal

siendo que él se preocupaba cuidadosamente
de vivir imperfecto a fin de no irritar a los dioses
jamás se cuidó de ser bueno sin ganas
pecó y gozó como los mil diablos
que sin duda lo habitaban de noche
y lo obligaban a escribir versos sacrílegos
en perjuicio de su alma

así
creció famoso por su desparpajo y sus caricias
“ahí va gallagher bentham el desgraciado malparido” decían
las vecinas a sus hijos
y lo mostraban con el dedo
pero de noche soñaban con él
de noche una extraña nube o mano o seda
se les metía en la garganta soñando con él

¡ah gallagher bentham gran padre!
pueblos enteros habría fundado nada más con sus hijos
de haberlos querido tener
de no haber sido por los versos
que no piden de comer y es de lo poco que tienen a favor

de modo que murió nomás y la gente
desconcertada por la falta de ejemplo del mal ejemplo
o con la sensación de haber perdido algo de su libertad

lament for gallagher bentham

when gallagher bentham died
it produced a curious phenomena:
the neighbor women's hate for him grew as if the price of potatoes
 had risen
ferocious and rapacious they began to insult his memory
as if the duty obligation or assignment of gallagher bentham
was to be immortal

being he worried carefully
of living imperfectly as to not irritate the gods
never once concerned himself with being good without wanting to be
he sinned and enjoyed it as a thousand devils
who undoubtedly inhabited him each night
and obliged him to write sacrilegious verse
to damage his soul

so
he became famous for his nerve and his caresses
"there goes gallagher bentham that wretched son of a bitch" said
the neighbor women to their children
and they pointed at him
but at night they dreamt of him
at night a strange cloud or hand or silk
entered their throats dreaming of him

oh gallagher bentham great father!
entire towns he would have founded with nothing more than his
 children
had he wanted to have them
had if not been for the verses
who do not ask to eat and it is the little in their favor

and so it happened he just up and died and the people
disconcerted by the lack of example of bad example
or with the sensation they had lost something of their liberty

designó representantes que entrevistaron a gallagher bentham
y por más preguntas que le hicieron
sólo escucharon el ruido de abejas en su cuerpo
como si estuviera haciendo miel
o más versos en otra cosa siempre

es difícil saber por qué el vecindario de Spoker Hill llegó a
odiarlo así
lo descuartizaron una mañana de otoño para alegría de los
chicos
no hubo más nubes en garganta de mujer
ni desquites feroces en la cama con marido extrañado
o hasta sueños de las más delicadas que llenaban la noche
y hacían girar al viento y llover

todos los arbolitos de Spoker Hill se secaron
menos el tábano real que volaba y volaba
alrededor de gallagher bentham o sus últimas mieles

designated representatives who interviewed gallagher bentham
and no matter the number of questions they asked
they heard only the sound of bees in his body
as if honey were being made
or more verses he always into something else

it is difficult to know why the Spoker Hill neighborhood came to
hate him so
one autumn morning they chopped him up to the happiness of the
children
there were no more clouds in wives' throats
no ferocious retaliations in bed with astonished husbands
not even dreams of the most delicate kind that filled the night
and made it rain and the wind stir

all the tiny trees of Spoker Hill dried up
all except the royal horsefly who buzzed round and round
gallagher bentham or his last sweetnesses

lamento por la tórtola de butch butchanam

el pobre butch butchanam pasó sus años últimos
cuidando a una tórtola ciega y sin querer ver a nadie
en solidaridad con el pájaro al que amaba y cuidaba
y a veces aleteaba en su hombro dejando caer
un dulce sonido a naranjos azules girando por el cielo
a demonios de pie sobre un ratón
a monos de piedra sorprendidos en el acto de hacer

“oh tórtola” decía butch butchanam “amas la ceguera
y yo convertí mi corazón en ceguera
para que vuelas alrededor de él y te quedes”
pero lo que debe desaparecer
todo lo que se masca come chupa bebe o saborea
venía con el crepúsculo y tristeza para butch
tristeza para butch

el cual:

soñaba con el desierto sembrado de calaveras de vaca
los castillos de arena instantánea o polvo rápidamente quieto en
tierra
los oleajes (como de serpiente) del tiempo en Melody Spring
y los antepasados que ya no conocían el dolor ni el dolor de la muerte
y hablaban un idioma lento amarillo feliz
como un lazo de oro en el cuello

noches y noches soñó butch butchanam
hasta que supo que iba a morir
enfiló su cama hacia el sur y se acostó de espaldas al cielo
y dejó escrito en la tórtola que lo enterraran de espaldas al cielo
y aquí yace de espaldas al cielo mirando todo lo que baja y sube
en Melody pueblo de miserables que:

lament for butch butchanam's turtle-dove

poor butch butchanam spent his last years
caring for a blind turtle-dove and refused to see anyone
in solidarity with the bird he loved and cared for
and sometimes it would flutter wings upon his shoulder letting fall
a sweet sound as blue orange trees spinning through the sky
as demons standing on a mouse
as stone monkeys surprised in the act of making

“oh turtle-dove” butch butchanam would say “you love blindness
and I have changed my heart to blindness
so you will fly close by and stay”
but what ought to disappear
everything one chews eats sucks drinks or tastes
would come with the twilight and sadness for butch
sadness for butch

who:
dreamt of the desert scattered with cow skulls
instantaneous sand castles or rapidly still dust over earth
waves (as those of a serpent) of time in Melody Spring
and ancestors who now knew no pain nor the pain of death
and spoke a language slow yellow happy
as a golden noose around one's neck

night after night butch butchanam dreamt
until he knew he was to die
he pointed his bed towards the south and lied down with his back to
the sky
and left written on the turtle-dove to bury him with his back to the
sky
and here he lies with his back to the sky watching all that goes down
and up
in Melody wretched town that: