



EL CERO MÓVIL DE SU BOCA / THE MOBILE ZERO OF ITS MOUTH

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English Studies in Latin America
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El cero móvil de su boca / The Mobile Zero of Its Mouth

(These selected poems were first published by Katakana Editores in 2020)

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1 Gisela Heffes is a writer and professor of Latin American literature at Rice University (Houston), where she also teaches creative writing in Spanish. She has published the anthology *Judíos/Argentinos/Escritores* (1999), and two monographs—*Las ciudades imaginarias en la literatura latinoamericana* (2008) and *Políticas de la destrucción/Poéticas de la preservación. Apuntes para una lectura (eco)crítica del medio ambiente en América latina* (2013). She also has edited *Poéticas de los (dis)locamientos* (2012) and *Utopías urbanas. Geopolítica del deseo en América latina* (2013), and was the guest editor for the special issue of *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* on “Ecocrítica” (2014). Gisela Heffes is also the co-editor of *The Latin American Ecocultural Reader* (2020). As a fiction writer, she published the novels *Ischia* (2000), *Praga* (2001), *Ischia, Praga & Bruselas* (2005), the collection of short stories *Glossa urbana* (2012), a collection of poetic chronicles, *Aldea Lounge* (2014), the novella *Sophie La Belle* (a bilingual edition with images by the author, 2016), and the novel *Cocodrilos en la noche* (2020).

2 Grady C. Wray teaches Latin American literature and Spanish at the University of Oklahoma (Norman, USA). He published the first bilingual critical edition of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s *Devotional Exercises* (2005). Recently he has translated several projects of contemporary poetry (*2323 Stratford Ave.* by Marcelo Rioseco [2018]) and fiction (*Series 201* by Luisa Valenzuela [2017]; *Ischia* by Gisela Heffes [forthcoming]) from the Latin American Southern Cone.

A mi mamá

A mi papá

A Sarah y Nathaniel

A Ken

A todo lo que queda (aún)

To my mom

To my dad

To Sarah and Nathaniel

To Ken

To all that's (still) left

*Nunca sabré lo que intentaba decirme
el pez sin voz que sólo hablaba el idioma
omnipotente de nuestra madre la muerte*

JOSÉ EMILIO PACHECO

*I shall never know what it wished to tell,
that voiceless fish, speaking only
with the omnipotent tongue of our mother death.*

JOSÉ EMILIO PACHECO

(Translated by George McWhirter)¹

¹ The epigraph belongs to José Emilio Pacheco's poem "Ecuación de primer grado con una incógnita" / "A Linear Equation with This Single Unknown Quantity" found in *Los trabajos del mar / The Labors of the Sea* (1978-83). The original poem and its English translation are found in Pacheco's *Selected Poems*, edited by George McWhirter, translated by Thomas Hoeksema, George McWhirter, Alastair Reid, and Linda Scheer (New York: New Directions, 1987, pp. 168-9).

Extinciones

Me da pena pensar en lo que queda.

Lo que queda del verano.

Lo que queda del mundo.

Pienso mucho en lo que queda y en lo que no está.

Pienso en las ballenas.

En si existirán en el futuro.

Pienso en los niños que crecerán estudiando un mundo virtual.

Niños que conocerán los glaciares en las imágenes de internet.

Y aprenderán que los osos polares hurgaban en la basura.

Y que los salmones confundidos flotaban en corrientes

desatinadas.

Sabrán de las algas blancas.

Y del mercurio que yace en el fondo del océano.

Junto a toneladas de deshechos.

Niños que habitarán un mundo diferente.

Una tierra vaciada.

Pero el verano.

El verano es diferente.

Es un momento de pausa.

Ir a la playa o a la montaña.

Llevar a los niños.

Armar castillos de arena.

Y de regreso, el cansancio.

Dormirse, uno sobre el otro.

Los cachetes rosados de sol.

Ese sol que queremos pensar benevolente.

Porque nos trae recuerdos de la infancia.

Y sin embargo. 力

Extinctions

It makes me sad to think about what's left.
What's left of summer.
What's left of the world.
I think a lot about what's left and what isn't.
I think about whales.
If they'll exist in the future.
I think about children who'll grow up to study
a virtual world.
Children who'll only see glaciers as internet images.
Who'll learn that polar bears dug through trash.
And that confused salmon floated in nonsensical
currents.
They'll know about white algae.
And about mercury lying at the depths of the ocean.
Next to tons of waste.
Children who'll inhabit a different world.
An emptied earth.
But summer.
Summer is different.
It's a moment of pause.
To go to the beach or to the mountains.
Take the kids.
Build sandcastles.
And come back, exhausted.
Fall asleep on top of each other.
Rosy cheeks from the sun.
That sun we want to imagine as benevolent.
Because it reminds us of childhood.
And nevertheless. 力

Especies invasivas

No sé por qué me interesé en una planta invasiva.
En los yuyos: esas hierbas que se filtran por todas partes.
Empecé a prestarles atención de manera involuntaria.
En mis caminatas veraniegas por la ciudad.
Pude observarlas con atención.
Hierbas que en general se podan —se extirpan— crecen
 en los recovecos más inesperados.
En paredes grises y decrepitas.
Entre las baldosas rotas, o junto a charcos de lluvia.
Bajo las piedritas grises de los caminos.
Junto a las piletas.
En estos parajes impensados, asoman hojas inexactas,
 verdosas y feas.
Cabezas que pugnan por salir.
Y que en ocasiones se expanden.
Hay quienes las cortan.
Hay quienes intentan erradicarlas con herbicidas potentes.
Pero hay quienes las dejan vivir.
Y no las cortan ni arrancan.
Las dejan crecer.

Hilos verdes que se transforman en hojas de distintas formas.

Cuerpos que brotan incrédulos.

Comunidades que se establecen y fundan una colonia.

Hierbas silvestres, que incluso tienen flores.

Flores también silvestres.

En los barrios suburbanos están prohibidas.

Dejarlas vivir significa recibir una multa.

Es una violación a la estética manicura que se reproduce
en cada casa.

Como una reproducción ad infinitum.

Sin espacio para la espontaneidad.

O la originalidad.

Son hierbas invasivas.

Hay que aplastarlas, erradicarlas.

Nos vienen a atacar.

Alegorías que se reproducen como en una caja china.

Emblemas del miedo.

Fantasías de invasiones truncas.

¿De dónde viene tanta aprensión?

¿Tanta desconfianza?

Tanto desasosiego. 力

Invasive Species

I don't know why I got interested in an invasive plant.

In weeds: Those grasses that come up everywhere.

I started paying attention to them without really thinking
about it.

On my summer walks through the city.

I observed them closely.

Grasses that generally are pruned back –rooted out–
that grow in the most unexpected places.

On decrepit gray walls.

Between broken tiles, or next to puddles of rain.

Under the tiny gray gravel of walkways.

Next to pools.

In unthought-of spots, their inexact leaves come up,
green and ugly.

Heads that struggle to get out.

And that sometimes expand.

Some people cut them.

Some people try to eradicate them with powerful
herbicides.

But others let them live.

And don't cut them or yank them out.

They let them grow.

Green threads that transform into leaves with
distinct shapes.

Incredulous bodies that break through.

Communities that get established and found a colony.

Wild grasses, which even include flowers.

Flowers that are also wild.

In suburban neighborhoods they are prohibited.

Letting them live means getting a fine.

It's a violation of the manicured esthetic reproduced
at every house.

Like a reproduction ad infinitum.

With no place for spontaneity.

Or originality.

They are invasive grasses.

They have to be trampled, eradicated.

They are coming to attack us.

Allegories that reproduce like Chinese boxes.

Emblems of fear.

Fantasies of truncated invasions.

Where does such apprehension come from?

So much distrust?

So much unease. 力

Sonidos

Asomo mis ojos por la ventana.

Miro el gran ventanal.

Veo las flores moverse con el viento.

Escucho la brisa.

Es una brisa suave.

Veo la luz penetrar entre los árboles y los arbustos.

Una luz que traza líneas.

Cae el día.

Llega la noche.

El verano que se va. 力

Sounds

My eyes wander over to the window.

I look out the huge glass.

I see the flowers moving in the wind.

I listen to the breeze.

A breeze that's gentle.

I see the light penetrate the trees and the bushes.

A light that traces lines.

Day ends.

Night comes.

Summer goes. 力