

while listening to the rhythm of their hearts that beat underground¹

We make our way among the massive forest plants.
To and from movements of ants that bear leaves, trunks,
red earth until the scrub that provided us with cover is uprooted.
We read every trace of nature in order to learn
whether the small gestures we love still remain.

body by body,
hearts cleansed,
we advance among the fields
 ica toyolo yectli
 tinehnemih pan cuatitlamitl
attentive eyes discerning churned mud,
hands and legs unearthing hope.

body by body,
we explore furrows in search of their prints.
Wave-like movements of ants that convey aromas,
the smile and taste of the final kiss.

We want to know whether they sleep wrapped in moss,
whether they feel cold or hunger, not unlike at the start of life,
for we await them still with warm embraces and favored treats.

body by body,
we dig in silence
while listening to the rhythm of their hearts
that beat underground
 ininyolo tlatzozona tlalihtic.

Translation: Tanya Hungtinton

¹ Video-poem published in 2016: <https://vimeo.com/499224899>

The backbone in memory²

Broken bones slumber on the highway

Omimeh tlapantoqueh huan cochih pan ohtli

the beheaded

the sorrowful

tlen mocuezoah

those who can no longer weep

tlen ayoccanah huelih chocah

scatter their dust over the damp soil

quihzceloah inincuechchopan pan tlalli xolontoc

holes bored into the facades of houses

their walls bleed

the smell of lead blankets the parks

and in the gardens one by one

the clusters of their skin are sown

sweet bougainvilleas never to be reborn

the flow of water is spectral red heraldic red

atlahco quiapiya atl chichiltic

as crimson as the rust of memory

claret the dread of a wizened cherry

² Video-poem published in 2016: <https://losinadaptados.wixsite.com/inicio/single-post/2016/09/15/los-inadaptados-20-judith-santopietro>

Their bones also shake

in a death rattle of substratum

mineral vapors caress

like this the salty pain of a backbone

along a spine of dreams:

huitztli tlen temiquiztli

the scarlet fatherland burns

notlahui tlatla

Translation: Tanya Hungtinton

The Altar

c r o s s

d e s e r t

e s c a p e

I am one and a thousand women reborn of lead

The cry their eyes shed

in their last look towards the road

I am all this deaf night as I turn the corner

and feel my footsteps drumming.

Later

rusted iron in my hands

the heavy hours

I have eaten the bread

and it is like chewing on your entrails;

I moisten your body

with my morning coffee

to warm up memories;

I wrap your flesh in leaves

and confined

you rest among the gentle embers

of the incense holder

quartered like a bird against the glass,

with the taste of fields of ash

between your lips.

Translation: Norma E. Cantú

El Delivery

An immigrant runs along the roof of the car
the train crosses the Metlac bridge at onethousandfivehundredtwenty masl
an immigrant does acrobatics
as if the tip of the world were moving forward
in sync with the mountains
all quiet on the great northamerican passage

Perhaps later on there will be
checkpoints the screeching of the rails
but for now he is recording on his cell the clouded forest
and the black orchids rushing by in a succession of images

A sound reaches him from a scaffolding
in the distance he sees half-tethered to its bars
the garífunas dancing babies on their breasts
later they will inhabit the deserts of Texas
or the humid pastures of Bronx summers

Though now an immigrant is defying gravity
rapturous to reach the North
his body will toughen to endure the storms
distributing food and christmas gifts
while other folks take refuge in their central heating
he will be called a delivery boy
and his services will be flaunted in red letters
at the entrance to every restaurant
he will become *el delivery* as he balances on his bicycle
and the train presses on

an immigrant defies gravity
leaps over the desert and then the sea from the tip of the bridge
babbling a distant land
that even he cannot remember

Translation: Mary Ann Newman

ants gently sweep the paths on which they will walk*

some nights tiny lights fly up from the earth
the sacred plants ignite
while ants tenderly sweep the paths on which they will walk

although now little fireflies live in the grass

there too are my hands, bleeding and splintered with thorns.

Translation: Kim Jensen

medicine woman*

a woman dreams again and again in an impenetrable jungle
her visions are crystal claps of thunder
from the alum stone that dissolves the evil in the comal

In medicinal dreams the sacred plants reveal

the body is plagued with invisible animals

Translation: Kim Jensen

Rainy Season*

Sitting among flowers
in this dark place where tiny lights fly up every night
I think of the rain that brings the sacred plants to life
I dream of them, and of my mother:
her absent embrace
and the warm smoke that invites me to dissolve into its body.
Just a few more days of these lonely struggles
in which a sweet and melodious poetry dwells
the sound of birdsong barely reddens the cosmos:
it is the hour when light drains from the land.

Translation: Kim Jensen

* Originally written in Nahuatl/Mexikano. Translated into Spanish by author.

Tiawanaku
Poemas de la Madre Coqa

Mother Coqa ecstasy and lye

leaf that nourishes us with such divine lineage

your blood gallops through the nervations

leaf that reads the future of a people

drenched in moon and lightning

Mother on the north-south border

powder for snorting

beneath the flashing light at Bar Route 36

kuka cocaine rock line white Goddess

your names reverberate

in an equinoctial procession

pijchar insalivate the leaves with baking soda

in the chewing grind up the alkaloids

light up then the lye

mill the cactus quinoa corn cob until you see ashes

annihilated Mother in the corners

offerings and deluge over the encampments

that bring back the missing with portraits and posters

Mother Coqa

Massacre of All Saints

the smell of the blood of camelids

water wars

the smell of the blood of the forgotten

the aromatic petroleum wars
effervescence of the mouth
foam that's inhaled like sand from the salt flats
 rail blow white horse
that you excavate your epidermis
you exacerbate the anguish in the slave's head
no more asphyxiation in the mines
Mother Coqa
the words shape you differently
 coke snow devil's dandruff
molecules bubbling on your lips
 bump baking soda rock
sniff pijchar acullicar chacchar
used-up leaf that numbs the umbilical cord
show us your sap
mother of green alkaloids
glorious coca paste.

Translation: Ilana Luna

Pijcheo

The haze over your lips Khana Willka
you offer me a bag stuffed with coqa petals
and the lye amplifies their flavor for the pijcheo

and ashes over your eyes too
with greenish teeth you cut the leafstalks
you give me cleaned alkaloids
I try not to whimper in the corridors of the terminal
even though the elevation sickness has persisted since the border

once we're in the Black Pearl bedroom facing the station
I regurgitate dreams of blades thrown from the brush
a military persecution in the altered connections of my mind

there are weapons that never fire
some children that hide in the cane fields

there are twisted stalks that bury their corpses

the coqa relieves the effects of the soroche
nausea practically sudden death from walking
anguish from the galloping in your chest

adrenaline flows through this dream
also my botanical curiosity to recognize
each filament of the plants and the art of domesticating them
inquisitive to know
to whom these detached nails in the swamp belong

to whom the epidermis consumed by red ants
with what refined technique they were disappeared

the juice on your lips Khana Willka
returns me to the geography of the hotel
we chew the vegetable cud until it contains us
it plunges us into the same place as the no-names.

Translation: Ilana Luna

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

German Clinic

La Paz, Bolivia, July 30, 2013.

Emergency clinic Deep geography in July The 29-year- old patient _____ is admitted to the German Clinic numb she subjects herself to twelve hours of lab tests Conserved: cell tissue lump in her esophagus recovery from projectile vomiting

Medical release without incident a bland diet is recommended sunny strolls in Abaroa park avoiding nightmares and neurosis The next day relapse due to anxiety An ultrasound and even a CAT scan show an aurora screams abdominal pain unrelenting vomiting angioma on the left parietal Thirty-six hours of exploring the organism: blood biochemistry urinalysis hepatic panel lipid panel photosynthesis of the hundreds of leaves that she ingested to cling to the edge of the world Admitted due to the shock of a liver scare returning pale from galloping deep in convulsive times A topographic scan of the body shows that the coqa causes tachycardia: inject 10 mg Amiodarone for spontaneous flare-up and treacherous abyss put to sleep with intraarterial Flunarizine from a Chilean pharmaceutical The patient is a migraine grinding that ends in teeth worn out by sleep arrhythmia auditory hallucinations in the air Preserved: subcutaneous muscular tissue exposed to forty-eight hours of medical tests In spite of everything brain osseous parts depression within normal range.

Translation: Ilana Luna

In the Land of the Gas Wars

Daily I bask in the sun in Plaza Abaroa *The Narciso Lima-Achá Papers* by Jaime Sáenz spread
across the quotidian lawn I go to the French café and sketch faded galaxies over Edmundo Paz
Soldán's *Burnt Palace* I describe with fear between the pages of Liliana Colanzi's *Our Dead
World* how the eye of God emerges from the clouds each afternoon My habitual early morning
bath knocks me out until midday: the smell of peeled mandarin and fried rice I cool off this body
confident that one day it will drip hot water but in this land of the Gas Wars there is an abundance
of electric showers They say that once upon a time chairs flew from buildings and rubber bullets
blinded people They say you could hear the agony of the unborn in the bellies of their mothers
see through their bones smell their open wounds They say that to pronounce gas sounded more like
the Latin *chaos* like the word *bellum* They say that there were dead and disappeared by the
dozens in Chasquipampa El Alto Ovejuyo and Warisata
Smooth and mute like the stones of Tiawanaku under this showerhead I'm overcome by a terror of
dying electrocuted.

Translation: Ilana Luna