

# REVERSIBLE MONUMENTS

Contemporary Mexican Poetry

EDITED BY

MÓNICA DE LA TORRE

AND MICHAEL WIEGERS



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A Kage-an Book

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#### A NOTE ABOUT THE TRANSLATORS

In most cases the translations have been done by a single translator per poet, but in those cases where poems by a single poet have been translated by various translators, we have listed those translators at the beginning of the section, and followed their particular translations with their initials.

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## **Reversible Monuments**



## Preface

In 1998 the Mexican Cultural Institute of New York and the Academy of American Poets sponsored an exchange of poets between the United States and Mexico. A series of readings in both countries, featuring six poets from each, was an immense success insofar as it allowed for poets to begin a dialogue that continues to this day, but the event highlighted the lack of Mexican poetry available in translation. Since Octavio Paz's and Samuel Beckett's 1959 compilation, *An Anthology of Mexican Poetry*, there have been relatively few translations of Mexican poets. With this knowledge the two aforementioned institutions proposed a small anthology of poems by the poets involved in the exchange, but the temptation to broaden the scope of the project was too great. The landscape of contemporary Mexican poetry is too rich and complex to be captured in a smaller anthology. Just as these exchanges in 1998 laid the foundation for *Reversible Monuments*, we expect that this anthology will in turn lead to future projects: full-length books by these and other Mexican poets, future anthologies gathering the work of those we have, by necessity rather than desire, left out.

Most of the poets included in the anthology were born after or shortly before 1950. (One exception, Gerardo Deniz, has been included in this volume because he started publishing in the '70s and thus was closer to a younger generation of poets who also began publishing their works during that decade.) Needless to say, to get a complete panorama of Mexico's twentieth century poetry an anthology of the work written by those born before 1950 would be essential. This volume would have to feature poets who are still active to this day and who keep enriching the poetry written in Mexico today: Alí Chumacero, Homero Aridjis, José Emilio Pacheco, Gabriel Zaid, Eduardo Lizalde, and Ulalume

González de León. Fortunately some of these poets have published collections of their poetry in this country.

As we envisioned the anthology we knew we wanted to afford space beyond one or two poems per poet. Rather than a topical anthology that might be unified by theme, this is an anthology of individual voices. They are unified only by their nationality and commitment to poetry. We felt that in order for readers to hear the poets' individual voices longer selections were necessary. This intention was further complicated by the realization that a great number of the poets have, at some point in their careers, written longer poems or poems written in sequence. We have tried to avoid excerpting from longer poems and sequences, presenting these longer selections in their entirety when possible.

We also felt that we needed to keep our focus on the post-Paz generation of poets, and thus limited ourselves roughly to those poets born in the latter half of the twentieth century. In making our selections we have been guided by what has interested us; we have not been authoritative nor exhaustive. Nor does it feature only poetry new to American readers, although most of the translations were commissioned specifically for this book. The writing of a large number of younger poets is promising, but our criterion was to consider those who by the year 2000 had published at least two books of poems.

We have aimed to provide readers with longer selections of representative works by established poets—such as Coral Bracho, David Huerta, Elsa Cross, José Luis Rivas, and Francisco Hernández—while introducing readers to some of Mexico's strongest younger poets who have never been published in the United States. Among this group are Alfonso D'Aquino, Claudia Hernández de Valle-Arizpe, Jorge Fernández Granados, and Tedi López Mills. Despite the concerted efforts of a number of individuals and institutions, the availability of books in print featuring poetry written in Mexico's broad range of indigenous languages is still limited. Thanks to Carlos Montemayor's generous advice we were able to discover the Mazatec poetry of Juan Gregorio Regino, Búffalo Conde's Tzeltal renderings of literary works such as "The Song of Songs," and the poems in Zapotec of Víctor Terán.

The title of the book comes from a "Topopoema" by Octavio Paz. It is a concrete poem in the shape of a rhombus that has different images that reflect on each other vertically as well as horizontally. The poem can be read in many different directions, in the same way one can read poems in translation. The poem is circular, has neither a beginning nor an end. We like to think in these terms about translations, which are never final, and about generations of poets who owe as much to the

poets who came before them as to the ones ahead of them who in turn will keep their poetry current. We also had in mind the geographical disposition of Mexico and the United States, and the way the two countries' poetic traditions have influenced each other.

In addition we thankfully acknowledge the work of other editors who have gathered Mexican poetry. Our choices have been informed by other anthologies—in and out of print—that have appeared during the last two decades, including *Light from a Nearby Window*, edited by Juvenal Acosta; *Mouth to Mouth: Poems by Twelve Contemporary Mexican Women*, edited by Forrest Gander; and the literary journal *Triquarterly's* edition of prose and poetry, *New Writing from Mexico*.

Finally, but most importantly, we would like to thank the Mexican Cultural Institute of New York, The Academy of American Poets, the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture, the Lannan Foundation, and CONACULTA. Without their enthusiasm for this larger exchange of poetry, this anthology would not have been possible. In particular we thank William Wadsworth, former Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets, and Juan García de Oteyza, former Executive Director of the Mexican Cultural Institute, for endorsing the aforementioned poetry exchange and the publication of this book. Special thanks to Eliot Weinberger for his much appreciated advice and support, as well as to María Baranda and Tedi López Mills for their suggestions and assistance. Lastly, we thank all the translators who through their talent and generous labor made these poems available to English-language readers.

*Mónica de la Torre & Michael Wieggers*



## Introduction

### I

Every northern country has its escape route to the south, where artists and writers, bohemians and hedonists flee their society's cold weather and cold sex, rationalism and bourgeois mores for a semi-mythical other place where one imagines that almost anything is possible. For Americans that place has been Mexico, and though Mexico has never become a national obsession – as, say, Italy for the Victorians – it has however, since William Cullen Bryant first went in 1872, been an Oz-next-door for many of the American poets who were not permanently planted in Europe.

Begin to think about it, and the list of American poets – not to mention the British or the French – who wrote in, on, or about Mexico is astonishing: Williams, Stevens, Crane, Langston Hughes, Bynner, Aiken, Zukofsky, Olson, Oppen, Rexroth, Rukeyser, Lowell, MacLeish, Ginsberg, Jarrell, Levertov, Ashbery, Hayden, Creeley, Kerouac, Rothenberg, Ferlinghetti, Lamantia, McClure, Jay Wright, Eshleman, Tarn, Corso, Blackburn, Brigham, Bronk... it goes on and on.

Mexico was not merely a cheap place for poets to live in magnificent scenery – after all, they could have gone to the Caribbean. Rather it was (and is), unlike the U.S., a place where the history of the Americas, and the cycles of history itself, were visible on every corner: the rise and ruin of the pre-Columbian states, the cultural genocide of the Spanish conquest, the succession of local despots, the thrilling peasant revolt of the Mexican Revolution. And more: Mexico, before Cortés, with its rare contacts with the outside world, was a kind of Australia of cultural evolution: a strange case of what isolated people could become, with its mass human sacrifices, obsession with time and the stars, once-unreadable glyphs, and pantheons of gods with names and attributes more surreal

poetry: Paz, translated by Rukeyser, Williams, Blackburn, Tomlinson, Levertov, Strand, and Bishop; Sabines translated by Merwin and Philip Levine; Pacheco translated by Dorn and Levine; Aridjis translated by Rexroth, Rothenberg, Merwin, and Tarn; Villaurrutia and Pellicer translated by Justice, and so on. It was also the era of the bilingual *El Corno Emplumado* (1962–69), edited from Mexico City by Margaret Randall and Sergio Mondragón. One of the liveliest poetry magazines in either country, full of translations, letters, polemics, and debates, it has never been duplicated as a printed clubhouse for Mexican and American poets.

In 1970, Dutton published *New Poetry of Mexico*, edited by Mark Strand. Although a somewhat drastic condensation of the groundbreaking *Poesía en movimiento* [which unhappily translates as *Poetry in Motion*, Mexico never having suffered through the song] edited by Paz, Pacheco, Chumacero, and Aridjis, it has remained the last comprehensive survey in English of modern Mexican poetry. In the last thirty years, I know of only six anthologies, all more limited in scope, and all published by small or smaller presses: *Poetry of Transition*, edited by Linda Scheer and Miguel Florez Ramirez (Translation Press, 1984); *An Eye Through the Wall*, edited by Enrique Lamadrid and Marie del Valle (Tooth of Time, 1986); *En Breve: Minimalism in Mexican Poetry*, edited by Enrique Lamadrid (Tooth of Time, 1988); *The Fertile Rhythms: Contemporary Women Poets of Mexico*, edited by Thomas Hoeksema (Latin American Literary Review, 1989); *Mouth to Mouth* [12 Women Poets] edited by Forrest Gander (Milkweed, 1993); and *Light from a Nearby Window*, edited by Juvenal Acosta (City Lights, 1993). These appeared in a period when translation ceased to be a common practice among American poets, and none of them, unfortunately, was able to assemble the kind of roster of well-known poet-translators that Strand had employed.

This anthology picks up where the Strand anthology left off, with the generation born after World War II. It is unique among Mexican anthologies (and nearly all other anthologies) in that it gives each poet ample space to be heard; the poets do not blur together into an amorphous “Mexicanism.” Its catholicity of taste, avoidance of nepotism, and recognition of the fact that not all Mexican poetry is written in Spanish make it far superior to any anthology I know, covering similar ground, that has been published in Mexico itself. An insider’s knowledge has been combined with an outsider’s perspective.

Of the thirty-one poets here, two have had poetry books published in the U.S., and another two have had prose books, but it is safe to say that

all are almost entirely unknown in this country. This is the first general news from Mexico in thirty years, and the news is that Mexico has a new and large generation of poets — practically an excess of poets worth reading, and all of them heading in different directions.

## II

Any anthology or critical survey of a national literature, where the particular nation shares its language with others, inevitably ponders the question of whether that national literature exists. The situation is even more extreme in Latin America, where boundaries are largely the accidents of history, and most complex of all in Mexico, a plurality of peoples, languages, and terrains fixed at its northern and southern limits by porous and essentially meaningless borders.

Octavio Paz opened the *Poesía en movimiento* anthology with these words:

The expression *Mexican poetry* is ambiguous: Is it poetry written by Mexicans or poetry that in some way reveals the spirit, reality, or the character of Mexico? The poets here write in the Spanish of Mexicans of the 20th century, but the Mexicanness of their poems is as dubious as the idea of a national genius itself.

Paz writes: “There is no Argentine, Mexican, or Venezuelan poetry; there is a Spanish American poetry or, more exactly, a Spanish American tradition and style,” which, he always insisted, should be read in the context of international modernism, rather than as a local phenomenon.

The poets in this anthology are Mexican in that they were born, or have spent their adult lives, in Mexico. Some are clearly connected to various moments in Mexico’s long poetic tradition, with its peaks in the Aztec and colonial periods, its long dark valley in the 18th and 19th centuries, and third peak in the 20th; some more rightly belong among American or European or other Latin American poets. Some include local matters and referents in their poems; some do not. (Borges wrote that a certain Argentine poet was at his most quintessentially Argentine when he wrote of nightingales singing on a tiled roof, even though there are no nightingales or tiled roofs in Argentina.) Some incorporate Mexican idioms; most write in a more general Spanish American literary language. In short, Mexican poetry, as it is written today, cannot be conveniently characterized: like American poetry, it is made up of a large number of soloists who do not form a choir.

widely, from Larkin to Trakl, Walcott to Niedecker, Frank O'Hara to St.-John Perse.

Many of the poets here provided translations for a Mexican anthology of contemporary U.S. poetry that I edited in 1992 (a book that – it could only happen in Mexico – ended up on the bestseller list, reaching number two, just behind García Márquez). This is the first generation that, as a generation, has been able to avoid reflexive anti-*yanqui* sentiments and see that American poetry has always been written in spite of, and not in tangent with, the monoculture and the imperialist state. Their discovery of American poetry has had as profound an impact as the American discovery of Mexican and Latin American poetry in the 1960s.

The poetry of a nation or language or culture is always transformed when the poets are translating, bringing the news from abroad, refreshing the gene pool. For the last ten years, the flow of poems has mainly been from north to south. This book represents the first significant surge, in a long time, in the opposite direction, and it occurs in the larger context of the beginning of a historical period where the boundaries are blurring, where Mexico is becoming more American and America more Mexican.

Here then are Mexicos, and the first of the individual dialogues that will proliferate among poets in their roles as writers, translators, and readers.

*Eliot Weinberger*

AUGUST 2001



# MARÍA BARANDA

MEXICO CITY, 1962 · María Baranda is author of six books of poems, including *El jardín de los encantamientos*, *Fábula de los perdidos*, *Los memoriosos*, *Moradas imposibles*, which received the 1998 Villa de Madrid Prize in Spain, and *Nadie, los ojos*. She lives in Cuernavaca with her husband, fiction and short-story writer Francisco Hinojosa, and her two daughters.

*María Baranda translated by Mónica de la Torre*

## Epístola del náufrago

Tiempo hubo para la audiencia de los peces,  
y los Escribas de la ley y la doctrina,  
en la cadencia oculta de la noche calma,  
dieron el nombramiento a los dioses de las aguas  
buscando la alianza de los carámbanos,  
la suave acometida de los rezos.

Y tiempo hubo también  
en que todos los seres  
de ciudades y villas,  
de los largos tramos de tierra fresca,  
hechizaron la lumbre, el agua  
y el cálido linaje de los vientos.

Allí, los hombres de barro  
pintaron el estremecimiento de los suelos,  
los atrios del desierto,  
los pórticos del alba,  
la calle de los perros.

Levantaron los muros de antiguas montañas  
con la lejanía tatuada sobre el pecho,  
como una voz sin dueño ni leyenda  
o como el silencio que llevan los hombres de lejos.

## Epistle of the Shipwreck

There was time for the audience of the fish,  
and the Scribes of law and doctrine,  
in the hidden cadence of the calm night,  
appointed the gods of the waters  
seeking alliance with the icicles,  
the soft assault of prayers.

And there was also a time  
in which all the beings  
from cities and villages,  
from the long stretches of fresh earth,  
enchanted the fire, the water,  
and the warm lineage of winds.

There, men of clay  
painted the shuddering of the ground,  
the courts of the desert,  
the thresholds of daybreak,  
the road of the dogs.

They built the walls of ancient mountains  
with distance tattooed on their chests,  
like a voice with no master or legend,  
or like the silence carried by men from far away.

Allí, gritaron las flores, las rosas  
que sólo aman el rojo filo de esa noche.  
Y para ellas, los hombres del tiempo,  
escucharon el anuncio de los pájaros del norte,  
el bello canto de sus muertos:

La tierra dormitaba  
del otro lado de este mundo.  
Bajo la ensoñación del cielo, amplia  
era la superficie de la tierra,  
con su cetro de sombra y de blancura  
y sus lugares de piedra y arena.  
La tierra hecha presente  
tomaba forma humana  
con el sabor de la demencia:

Yo soy el hijo, el padre, la madre,  
el sufrimiento y la fuerza.  
Soy el rugir del faro  
y de la fábrica, el lento  
acontecer del tiempo.  
Soy el aroma del mar sereno,  
la tempestad,  
la fiesta de los viejos.  
Sobre mí, fundo los días  
del abejorro y de la abeja,  
las bodas del hombre y de la bestia,  
la idea de los demonios de ojos vivos  
que danzan y conversan ligeros  
y nos legan tan sólo el eco.

La tierra, en voz más baja,  
arrullaba las yerbas de su piel.  
La tierra vieja. La tierra fresca.  
Era inútil cerrar los ojos,  
dejar el testimonio en las plazas:

“De mar a mar entre los dos la guerra.”  
El grito del marino,  
el cuerpo de la espada.  
Y allá,

There the flowers shrieked, the roses  
that loved only the red verge of that night.  
And for them, the men of time  
listened to the message brought by the birds of the North  
and the beautiful song of its dead:

The earth was sleeping  
on the other side of this world.  
Under the dreams of the sky, broad  
was the surface of the earth,  
with its scepter of shadows and whiteness  
and its sites of sand and rocks.  
With the flavor of madness,  
the material earth  
took on human form:

I am the son, the father, the mother,  
the suffering and strength.  
I am the roar of the lighthouse,  
the factory, the slow  
passing of time.  
I am the scent of the quiet sea,  
the storm,  
the feast of the elders.  
Upon me I found the days  
of drones and bumblebees,  
the weddings of man and of beasts,  
the idea of demons with lively eyes  
that dance and chat lighthearted  
and leave us only an echo.

The earth, in a lower voice,  
lulled the pasture of its skin.  
The aged earth. The fresh earth.  
It was pointless to close one's eyes,  
to bear witness at the squares:

“From sea to sea, between the two, war.”  
The cry of a sailor,  
the body of a sword.  
Beyond,

# ALFONSO D'AQUINO

MEXICO CITY, 1959 • Alfonso D'Aquino is author of six books, including *Naranja verde*, *Tanagra*, *Briznas*, and *Vibora breve*. In 1981 he was awarded the Carlos Pellicer Poetry Prize.

*Alfonso D'Aquino translated by Rebecca Seiferle*

## Hotel

Tienes  
los mismos  
rasgos que  
mi sombra

Tus manos  
ahora las  
llevo en  
los bolsillos  
llenos  
de mi sombra

Tus pies me  
llevan hasta  
acá hasta  
la luz

Igual  
a empezar a morder la puerta de allá enfrente,  
a llegar hasta tocar las gasas  
bajo la hermosa piel de mi vecino,  
sí, sus gasas que fueran piel. A levantarme  
de las risas las encías, o acaso  
a Dios mismo cosido al revés de la falda (*—ja!  
la luz roja del anuncio tan inmóvil...*)  
y escupir hasta lo último bajo los huesos  
adheridos  
a estos fierros tan del amor y la saliva — igual.  
Igual pero no: veo sombrillas abiertas desde  
aquí,  
frutas y raíces enlodadas en la mesa,  
y oigo cómo el de enfrente no me oye  
aunque estoy en la punta de su lengua,  
ese instante o pasillo, ése  
en el que dar un paso atrás es descubrir el mar.



S u a v e t ú n u n c a e s t e s o m o s l l u v i a  
 s í s i n b a i l e r u i d o s d o s e s p e j o  
 c a m b i o s s o l a s c o n t r a c o r t a d a s d e l a  
 l a t u v e s t i d o v i d r i o s q u e s e l l u v i a  
 m ú s i c a d e v e r d e s o t r a s v a n s e c a n d o s  
 d e t u y d e e n c i m a d e l a s u ñ a s  
 b a i l e l u c e s d e l a s u ñ a s

S of t  
 y e s  
 c h a n g e l e s s  
 t h e  
 m u s i c  
 o f  
 y o u r  
 d a n c e  
 e

y o u  
 n e v e r  
 d a n c e  
 a l o n e  
 w i t h  
 y o u r  
 d r e s s  
 o f  
 g r e e n s  
 a n d  
 o f  
 l i g h t s

t h i s  
 d a n c e  
 n o i s y  
 a g a i n s t  
 g l a s s  
 o t h e r  
 n a i l s  
 o n  
 t o p  
 o f  
 n a i l s

w e  
 a r e  
 t w o  
 c u t  
 r o s e s  
 t h a t  
 a r e  
 g o i n g  
 d r y

r a i n  
 m i r r o r  
 o f  
 t h e  
 r a i n

# FABIO MORÁBITO

ALEXANDRIA, 1955 • Fabio Morábito was born in Egypt to Italian parents and spent his childhood in Milan. Since 1969 he has lived in Mexico, where he is a philology researcher at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. All his works are written in Spanish. He is author of the poetry volumes *Lotes baldíos*, which received the Carlos Pellicer Prize in 1985, and *De lunes todo el año*, which was awarded the Aguascalientes National Poetry Prize in 1991. Among his prose books are *Caja de herramientas*, *La lenta furia*, and *Los pastores sin ovejas*. He has also written two children's books. His most recent publications are *El buscador de sombra*, a poetry chapbook, and *La vida ordenada*, a collection of stories. *Toolbox*, Geoff Hargreaves's English translation of *Caja de herramientas*, was published by Bloomsbury in 1999.

*Fabio Morábito translated by Geoff Hargreaves*

## La esponja

Si en un plano colocamos un cierto número de pasillos y galerías que se cruzan y se comunican, obtenemos un laberinto. Si a este laberinto le conectamos por todas partes, arriba, abajo, y a los lados, otros laberintos, es decir otros planos de pasillos y galerías, obtenemos una esponja. La esponja es la apoteosis del laberinto; lo que en el laberinto es todavía lineal y estilizado en la esponja se ha vuelto irrefrenable y caótico. En la esponja la materia *galopa hacia afuera*, repelente a cualquier centro. Es dispersión pura. Imaginemos una manada de animales que huyen del ataque de un felino y, dentro de esa manada, a un grupo de individuos situados bastante lejos de la fiera pero no por ello menos aterrorizados. Ese trozo de manada marginal pero no periférico, cargado de terror pero relativamente a salvo, es una esponja, mezcla de delirio e invulnerabilidad.

Es esa mezcla lo que nos hace sentir que la esponja es una herramienta menos dueña de sí misma, la más exterior, la que no guarda nada y la más nirvánica. Sus miles de cavidades y galerías son como la disgregación que en cualquier estallido precede la pulverización final; su asombrosa falta de peso es ya un principio de caída y ausencia. Frente a eso, la ligereza de una pluma de ave tiene escaso mérito; está demasiado conectada con su pequeñez; es una ligereza que se constata pero que no sorprende. La de la esponja, en cambio, es una ligereza heroica.

## Sponge

If we place across a level surface a certain number of passageways and galleries which crisscross and communicate, we end up with a labyrinth. If we then connect up to this labyrinth, from all directions—upward, downward, sideways—still more labyrinths, that's to say, other levels of passageways and galleries, we end up with a sponge. A sponge is the apotheosis of the labyrinth, but what is linear and stylized in a labyrinth becomes, in a sponge, uncontrolled and chaotic. The material in a sponge gallops outward, rejecting any notion of a center. It is pure dispersion. Let's imagine a herd of animals fleeing from the assault of a feline predator, and inside this herd, a group of individuals situated at a fair distance from the predator but no less terrified because of that. This section of the herd, marginal but not peripheral, fraught with terror but relatively safe, is a sponge, a blend of delirium and invulnerability.

It is this blend that makes us feel that, of all our tools, the sponge is the least in control of itself, the most outward-looking, totally prodigal, wholly bent on nirvana. Its thousands of cavities and galleries are like the disintegration that precedes the final pulverization in all explosions. Its astonishing lack of weight is already a first step toward collapse and absence. In contrast, the lightness of a bird's feather has little merit; it is too closely bound to its smallness; it is a lightness that manifests itself without surprises. But a sponge's lightness, on the other hand, is something heroic.



# Spanish Versions of Indigenous-Language Poems

## BÚFFALO CONDE

### Flor de oro

Fuente de huertos de mi amado,  
noria de aguas sagradas para mi honor,  
que corren del campo donde descansa el búfalo:  
venga mi amado Legendario.

“Ya vine a mi campo, oh amada, compañera mía;  
mi agua y mi jugo he bebido, esposa mía:  
tomad abundante jugo, amada mía.”  
Es la voz de mi esposo que llama.

### Tiempo de bailar los árboles

Ponme como un sello sobre tu corazón, como una marca sobre tu brazo.  
Las muchas aguas no podrán apagar el amor,  
ni lo ahogarán los ríos ni los pozos  
sobre las montañas de los aromas de mi ropa.

Desde que fui en sus ojos como la que lleva alegría,  
yo soy muro y mis pechos bonitas puertas;  
por los sustos de la noche de mi alma,  
tus cabellos como parvadas de palomas negras.

## Regala la mentira

¿Qué es tu dueño más que otro dueño,  
oh la más bella de todas las Vírgenes de mi Pueblo?  
Mi dueño es moreno, condenado a escribir versos,  
su cabello como azabache color de cuervo.

Sus cabellos muy suaves, negros como cuervo;  
sus ojos como búfalo junto a los ríos de las aguas;  
sus labios, como azucena que destila miel aromática;  
su cuerpo, como torre de oro.

JUAN GREGORIO REGINO

## Cantares

### I

Cuatrocientos zontles de distancia.  
Cuatrocientas leguas al infinito,  
luz, obscuridad, imágenes.  
Hasta allí llega la voz del sabio,  
el cantor sobador de dolores.  
Entre las imágenes divinas.  
Entre las imágenes terrenales.  
Se escucha su voz suave,  
su cantar divino,  
su plegaria piadosa.  
El cruza la senda de la vida,  
llega hasta el *ndabua isien*. \*  
Allá platica,  
allá discute,  
allá aboga  
con los dioses que rigen el destino del mundo.  
La brisa lo arrulla,  
el rayo dormido lo acecha,  
retumba su voz piadosa  
en el centro del universo.

### II

Señor de los cerros, dice.  
Señor de las cuevas, dice.

*\* nido de imágenes, lugar sagrado donde existe la perfección*

Duendes del arroyo, dice.  
Padre de la tempestad, dice.

Diosa de la fertilidad, dice.  
Madre de los huérfanos, dice.  
Mujer arrastradora, dice.  
Dueña del fuego, dice.

Plumas de guacamaya, dice,  
carrizos de aguardiente, dice,  
flores perfumadas, dice,  
polvo de tabaco, dice.

Lluvias del oriente, dice.  
Cerro del mundo, dice,  
Tierra fértil, dice.  
Puentes colgantes, dice.

Puertas del cielo, dice.  
Fuerzas superiores, dice.  
Poniente y oriente, dice.  
Lugar de imágenes, dice.

### III

Así es como está tendido el día.  
Así es como está tendida la imagen,  
siete leguas de distancia,  
siete zontles al infinito.  
Hasta aquí se escucha mi voz.  
Hasta aquí se tiende mi espíritu,  
casa de seres principales.  
Soy yo quien hace su presencia,  
el sabio, el guía, el adivinador.  
Porque yo tengo el permiso.  
Porque yo tengo la licencia  
de entrar al lugar sagrado  
donde yacen los libros sabios.  
Benditos sean ustedes  
por vivir en la casa limpia.  
Gracias por la luz que alumbra.  
Gracias por la noche que llega.  
Hasta aquí llegan mis pasos.  
Hasta aquí llega mi presencia.



## About the Translators

ESTHER ALLEN has translated a number of books from Spanish and French, including Octavio Paz's *Hieroglyphs of Desire* and Blaise Cendrars's *Modernities and Other Writings*. She has recently completed a study of nineteenth century travel writing between the Americas and edited, annotated, and translated *José Martí: Selected Writings* (Penguin Classics, 2002).

INDRAN AMIRTHANAYAGAM was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He has published poetry and translations in English, Spanish, and French. His collections include *The Elephants of Reckoning* (winner, 1994 Paterson Poetry Prize) and *Ceylon R.I.P.* Amirthanayagam's translations of the poetry of Manuel Ulacia will be published in 2002 by Green Integer. Amirthanayagam is a member of the United States Foreign Service, serving in Chennai (Madras).

SUSAN BRIANTE was born in New Jersey and studied at Northwestern University and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She has served as the English language editor for the magazine *Artes de México* and in 1995 she was awarded the Beca del Fideicomiso Award from the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture. She currently teaches at Florida International University.

CHRISTIAN VIVEROS-FAUNÉ is an art critic and codirector of Roebling Hall, a gallery in Williamsburg (Brooklyn). Mr. Viveros-Fauné is the art critic for *New York Press* and a regular contributor *The New Yorker*. He is currently working on "Maximum Volume," a large-scale exhibition of Brooklyn, to open at Barcelona's Virreina Palace in winter, 2002.

MÓNICA DE LA TORRE edited and translated a volume of selected poems by Gerardo Deniz published by Lost Roads and Ditoria in 2000. With artist Terence Gower she is coauthor of *Appendices, Illustrations & Notes* (Smart Art Press, 1999). She was brought up in Mexico City and moved to New York in 1993, when she received a Fulbright grant to study for an MFA in poetry at Columbia University. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in comparative literature at the same university. Her writings about art, poems, and translations have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous journals, including *American Poetry Review*, *ArtNews*, *BOMB*, *Boston Review*, *Cabinet*, *Fence*, *The Germ*, *Mandorla*, *Pierogi Press*, *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts*, and *Verse*.

ELIOT WEINBERGER's essays are collected in *Works on Paper*, *Outside Stories*, and *Karmic Traces*, all published by New Directions. He is the author of a study of Chinese poetry translation, *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, and the editor of the anthology *American Poetry Since 1950: Innovators & Outsiders*. His many translations of the work of Octavio Paz include the *Collected Poems 1957-1987*, *In Light of India*, *Sunstone*, and *An Erotic Beyond: Sade*. Among his other translations are Vicente Huidobro's *Altazor*, Xavier Villaurrutia's *Nostalgia for Death*, Jorge Luis Borges' *Seven Nights*, and *Unlock* by Bei Dao. His edition of Jorge Luis Borges' *Selected Non-Fictions* received the National Book Critics Circle Award for criticism. In 1992, he was given the first PEN/Kolovakos Award for his work in promoting Hispanic literature in the United States and, in 2000 he became the first American literary writer to be awarded the Order of the Aztec Eagle by the government of Mexico.

MARK WEISS has earned degrees from Johns Hopkins University, Columbia University, and Yeshiva University and has taught literature, writing, film making, and psychology at the University of California, San Diego; Hunter College of the City of New York; Columbia University; the University of Arizona; and the State University of New York, Old Westbury. He is the publisher of Junction Press. He is currently editing, with Harry Polkinhorn, *Across the Line / Al otro lado: The Poetry of Baja California*, and *The Revolution in Cuban Poetry, 1944 to the Present*, both bilingual anthologies. He is also editing and translating book-length selections of two Cuban poets, José Kozer and Raúl Hernández Novás. His poetry collections include *Intimate Wilderness*, *Fieldnotes*, and *Figures*.

MICHAEL WIEGERS has worked for the past decade in independent literary publishing as an editor. His reviews, translations, and criticism

have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Rain Taxi*, *The City Pages*, *The St. Paul Pioneer Press*, and *Portlandia*, among other publications. He has edited two forthcoming anthologies, *The Poet's Child* (2002) and *This Art* (2003). He is the Managing Editor at Copper Canyon Press and lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

ASA ZATZ, a native New Yorker, was transplanted to Mexico where he became a translator out of necessity. He worked there for thirty-three years, translating a wide variety of work, but never touching poetry, a genre for which he had such respect that he could not imagine touching it with the intent to translate. He wrote an admonitory essay for students in his translation workshop entitled, "Never Translate Poetry Unless You Absolutely Have To." Zatz refused a colleague's request that he translate a small book by a Mexican poet, whereupon his colleague sent him a copy of the book anyway. (The selections in this anthology are taken from that book.) By the first page, Zatz was hooked. Among the authors he has translated are: Cardosas y Aragón, Carpentier, Fuentes, García Márquez, Galeano, José Luis González, Eloy Martínez, Sábato Sarmiento, Vargas Llosa, Valenzuela, and Valle-Inclán.



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