

SANDÍA

Dorotea Reyna

Shock of cold sweetness

coral galaxies

aeons of green—

Abuelo has taken a rusty
blade to it. The slices are thick
like ships, he generously
salts them

The tiny black seeds
are something you negotiate—
like ants or too many siblings.
You slide them around in your
mouth then out they fly—

O taste of heaven
O loneliness and terror
of childhood relieved by
too-much-joy and bells

LAS ABUELITAS

Dorotea Reyna

Como enredaderas que no se dejan caer
de estas cercas podridas, las glorias de la mañana:
gargantas color de rosa, estrellas de azul.

Han derribado este lugar abandonado
y floreciendo, lo han conquistado.

POEM FOR AN ARCHITECT

Dorotea Reyna

The world
hurls itself up at us:
sun, stone, cloud
in fragments dazzling as a riddle.

Forms pure, and less pure.
The elements caught
or escaped in various measure.

The lens changes, that's all.

* * *

It is timelessness
you seek, that feeling of space
that breaks through the stones
of certain ages.

But you are not grand
about it, you see it in a sunny
Mexican wall as well as anything Greek.
It does not hurt you to name it.

* *

The scale is small,
 you say, *but the heart is right.*
 A series of three interlocking patios
 like chambers of the heart:
 yellow for sun, blue for water, red for earth.
 A tower like an inverse paper cup.

Our argument over the Guadalupe.
 We agree she is a water goddess
 and that the tiles should serve as a reflection.
 This is the argument at the heart
 of every word we say, every work.

You don't even know
the culture you reject—
it's who you are . . .

* *

“Let me make a city
so that a child would grow
into his possibilities”
 “or her” you add for my ear.

Take the *mirador*:
 a narrow hallway where the women
 may look out to their theater,
 the streets. It keeps

the world out, and them in.
Both magic cave and prison.

Flitting against the windows,
the girls are pale as prisms
in the dark. Or perhaps they are
mere larvae feeding on each other.
Sticky wings, sticky tongues.

At last age will advance women
to the stoop: like dry cicadas
through withered skin.
Shrill and bitter.

* *

Imagine *your body* as a city
which never changes!

Imagine citadels built around you.
Form and content, text and page.

The brick which longed to be an arch.
Natural arrangements.

* *

I dream they melted
our skin

for paper, for stamps.
The people heard her scream
as she was taken
into the dark mountain, but
her very body argued against her.

A window is a window,
a door a door

A door has no choice.

* *

Let me find my city...

I dream the water meets the sky
in a tender embrace,
this is our harbor.

Let me find my city,
and we will be found.

Through the clouds,
a faint suggestion: a spire.

Let me find that city
which will help me grow...

* *

As I waited for you that day,
I peered through your window:
a large drafting table with thin sheets
of blue-veined drawings
waiting to be born.

Your walls covered with images
of a Franciscan retreat in Mexico:
the one on the hill of the Mother.

Pens, pencils, straight edges:
the riddle was complex.
It asked only to be taken seriously.

* *

We leap
like divers into
the sea: gravity
pulls us deep
into her
womb.

Parabola
of culture:
each curve
a partial
understanding.

CANICAS

Dorotea Reyna

1.

Tap tap tap. Ticking sounds. Grinding scratch. Bamboo sticks on your dinner plate. Boiled eyeballs. Abacus. Grandfather clock.

Canicas. Hold them in your mouth. Roll them around. Push them against each other. *Tu ya cállate*. Too many hard words and they don't make sense. Disconnected, alien.

2.

The soldiers march in uniform to their deaths: red, blue, brown. Brush your fingers along the scars. The solid ones apologize for being so plain. The cat's eyes whirl in flames, secretly practicing their underwater ballet.

3.

She liked to rub them around in her palm, hidden in her pocket. They seemed more real to her than she was. Lying at the bottom of her life, whole and solid.

4.

The central conflict in this story is that she cannot play marbles. Either she does not possess the dexterity, or she was never taught. A girl is born, then another girl, then a son. The recognition scene repeats. Then her attempts at destruction, her attempts to rise. This central failure not only shapes her life, but it also serves as the metaphor and point of view for all her various failings: relationships, pregnancies, poems.

5.

Two places she did not exist: the marble ring, and the pool hall. Her brother and his friends at play—tight as little doves, hunched over on one knee or on the balls of their feet, spider webs like haloes in their hair. She admires the short burst from their fingers, the concentrated violence. She desires for herself the cunning of angles. Her own attempts, unwitnessed, dribble from her thumbs.

At noon the pool hall hums. Wisps of smoke, lazy as manta rays, drift through the air. And from the walls, bare-breasted sirens mutely keep watch. The pool balls trace their velvet paths: gliding quickly or slowly, always inexorably. Each time they strike it is with the cold, forced logic of opponents. Minutes elapse, hours. She waits outside in the sun, but her father does not see her. Again, she cups the screen.

6.

Three houses inscribe a triangle:

The first house she cannot remember, or only at skewed angles: the shot from the kitchen to the living room, then out to the cold, red porch. The shot from the bathroom into the children's room. The easy slide from her parents' bedroom. The drop into a corner, or behind the dresser, or inside the closet. Only as a series of angles can this house reimagine itself.

At the second house, everything lies still. Off the glaring street, past a screen door like a mask. A small stooping house falling in on itself: her bed to the left, his to the right. A plastic sofa, a radio, a television. Then a low step onto a cement floor, her kitchen. Gray as a blind eye, a saucepan worn thin. Count the objects for safety: chairs, table, sink, stove.

The third house is the house of greens: iridescent shine of the rooster she fears and hates; subdued cedar needles; blurred haze of her cousin's eyes. Even the sky burns green here—over the pig pens, the roof's sagging lip. She finds an old woman's hands gentle on her face, an old man's toothless smile. Those magic names even now she cannot say.

7.

The metaphor of the butterfly is implicit—the assumptions of the battered soul.

8.

Not marble as in statues, huge and glaring, but marble as in little round toys. Her poems. Seeing things from the outside, wondering how they'll impress others. Eyes rolling off the surface, over the world's edge. Not the big things, the little things.

9.

Tick tick tick. Turbulent systems. Molecules in motion. Like water boiling, you never know where the next bubbles will surface and pop.

10.

There are always three bodies in motion: her mother, her father, herself. Herself, her sister, her brother. Two men and a child. A woman, herself, and him. Maybe it was only a split second out of time: when he gently pulled a brush out of her friend's rich, twisting hair and she was forced to watch.

11.

Canicas. Inches under the dirt. Buried by children's hands.