

Written for a Meeting Place
escrito para un lugar de reunion



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Toronto, 1983

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Special thanks to the translators.

Revistas, libros, cuadernos y hasta hojas de literatura parecen proliferar por todas partes, al menos en las librerías y las bibliotecas. Los escritores se quejan de la falta de lectores para una producción que no encaja en el rótulo del «entertainment». Los lectores reducidos cada vez más por la figuración icónica y el espectáculo puro, se encogen de hombros y sueñan con computadores estelares. En un mundo donde las tareas humanas se fragmentan cada vez más, el amor, la buena vida y el mito dorado de la electrónica, parecen separarse para siempre. El escritor aislado entre la editorial y el público, autoreferente, o endiosado por un fugaz «best-seller» pero no «best-written», fluctua de gurú de la tribu a mantecato de su jungla. A las viejas preguntas de ¿qué se escribe? ¿por qué se escribe? y ¿para quién se escribe? sólo se puede responder que lo hacemos porque nos da la gana, pero aún en esa «gana» queremos comunicarnos. Ergo, en un universo sobrecargado de mensajes inútiles y transparentes, la poesía sigue dispuesta a afrontar el riesgo de hablarle a uno que otro ser humano. Por estas tradiciones y estas visiones nos sentimos aún unidos y entusiasmados.

Toronto, 1983.

ROCKS

Rocks make your fingers very dirty.
Rocks are rough or smooth.
Rocks are very hard.
Some get thrown,
Some get turned into statues.
Some get built into homes.

1979

ROCAS*

Las rocas ensucian mucho los dedos.
Las rocas son ásperas o suaves.
Las rocas son muy duras.
Unas pueden lanzarse
mientras con otras se hacen estatuas.
Con algunas se construyen los hogares.

* *Translations by Naín Nómez*

CLOUDS

Soft and fluffly
in the sky.
It's a cat, it's a dog,
but whatever it is,
it's a cloud.

Wouldn't you like to touch a cloud?

1979

BUGS

Bugs are buggers.

But wait: bugs help us.
Bees make honey
and ants help plants.
But, what about the fly?

Bugs are real pests.

1980

NUBES

Suave y esponjosa
en el cielo.

Es un gato, es un perro,
pero cualquier cosa que parezca,
es una nube.

¿No te gustaría tocar una nube?

BICHOS

Los bichos son molestos.

Pero espera: los bichos nos ayudan.

Las abejas hacen miel

y las hormigas benefician a las plantas.

Pero ¿qué pasa con las moscas?

Los bichos son una verdadera peste.

FLYING

Soaring through the wind
high high in the air.
Flying very fast
and touching the clouds.
Then we go down down down.

So who are we?

We are birds.

1980

THE NEXT VICTIM

I stopped to watch a dragonfly
chasing a mosquito so swiftly.
He had almost a disguise
of what he was
going to do.
The dragonfly swooped
down as the predator
became prey to meet
its doom.

1982

VOLANDO

Remontándose en el viento
alto alto en el aire.
volando rápidamente
y tocando las nubes.
Después vamos hacia abajo hacia abajo abajo.

Entonces ¿quiénes somos?
somos pájaros.

LA PROXIMA VICTIMA

Me detuve a mirar una libélula
que cazaba un mosquito tan velozmente.
Casi había encubierto
lo que iba a hacer.
La libélula se lo llevó
mientras el predator
se convirtió en la víctima
para cumplir su destino.

THE END

Toronto was a barren place.
Not a building was standing in site except a church
that was accross the street.
From the cracks of the bomb shelter you could see dead people
on the road.
One of them could be your mother or father
but you wouldn't dare go and see.
The man sitting beside me couldn't stand it any longer.
He went out.
I called to him. I heard a gun shot. it was too late.

So, from then on,
we just sat there watching ourselves
getting skinnier and skinnier...

1982

EL FINAL

Toronto era como una tierra yerma.
Ningún otro edificio permanecía en su sitio
sino una iglesia al cruzar la calle.
Desde las grietas de los refugios anti-bombas
veías la gente muerta
en los caminos.
Uno de ellos podría ser tu madre o tu padre,
pero no te atrevías a moverte y ver.

El hombre sentado a mi lado no pudo soportarlo más.
Salió.
Lo llamé. Escuché un disparo. Era demasiado tarde.

Por eso desde entonces,
solamente permanecemos sentados, mirándonos,
mientras adelgazamos y adelgazamos...

RUSH HOUR

Getting into a dirty bus
I hear a baby crying.
I cross a busy street
and get shoved out of a crowded subway.

It's still six o'clock.

1983

THE FUTURE

I wonder what it would be like in the future?
I wonder what a dog would do to a cat?
I wonder where we would live?
I wonder if a boy would ask:
«I wonder what it would be like in the future?»

1983

HORA DE TRAFICO

Subiéndome a un sucio bus
escucho llorar a una criatura.
Cruzo una calle bulliciosa
y me lanzan fuera del metro
atestado de gente.

Todavía son las seis de la mañana.

EL FUTURO

Me pregunto ¿cómo será el futuro?

Me pregunto ¿qué le hará el perro al gato?

Me pregunto ¿dónde podremos vivir?

Me pregunto si un niño podrá preguntar:

«Me pregunto ¿cómo será el futuro?»

Having my very own robot.

Illustrated and Written by
Sebastian A. Nomez

I

«BOOM!» Darn, I flunked again.

My name is Tom. I live in Ottawa, Ontario.

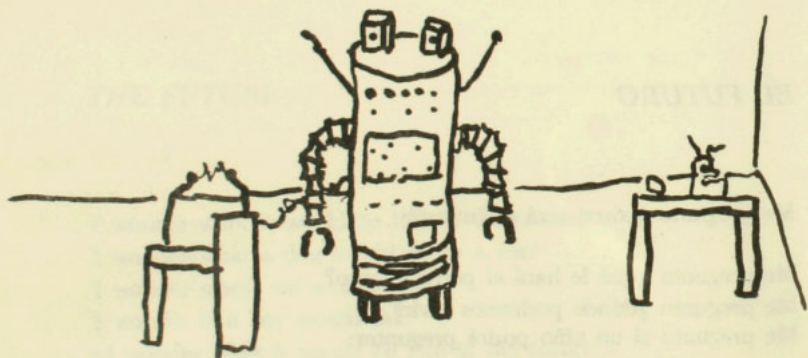
«Tom! Tom! Tooom!»

«Yes, mother», I said.

«What's that noise?» she said.

«Oh, nothing.»

I was working on a robot that I was trying to make out of scraps. It's sort of cylinder-shaped and it has two arms and wheels instead of feet.



The robot was O.K. I was trying to invent a kind of fuel for it because gas costs too much.

I was all black from the explosion.

I work in the garage.

It was my Dad's birthday and we had a party for him.

That night my mother came to tuck me in. I burped.

«I think you had a little too much coca cola,» my mother said.

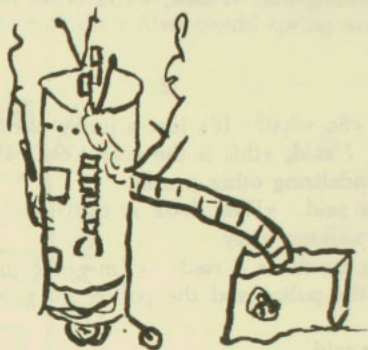
«Yeah.»

She turned out the light.

I thought: That's it! Cola! I set my alarm to five o'clock.

The next morning the alarm rang. I washed up and dressed. I went to the kitchen and got some coke. I mixed it in with a green liquid that I had made with weeds and things. It started bubbling.

I was very tired. I put the liquid in the tube and put the top on and waited for about thirty seconds. Smoke started coming out.

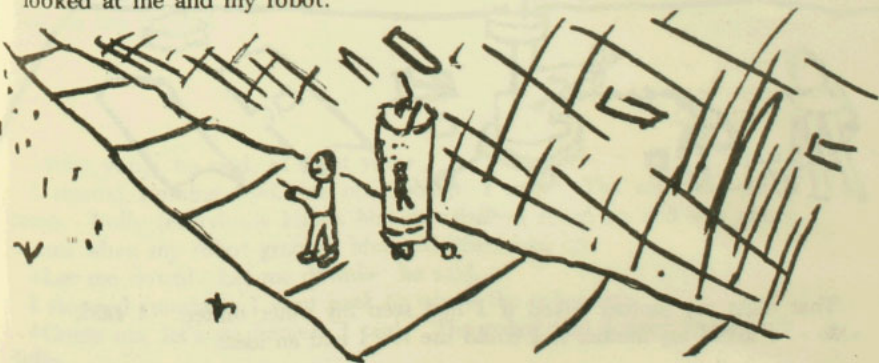


I had put the liquid in the wrong place! I got my sucker (my invention — it's like a vacuum cleaner) and sucked up the liquid and put it in the right tube.

I waited for two seconds. The lights started flickering. In two more seconds the lights stayed.

I said, «Walk to your right,» and he did.

After I had shown my parents I walked down the street. Everybody looked at me and my robot.



John, the toughest bully in the neighbourhood, came and asked what my robot was. I told him and he started kicking it. I told him to stop and he said, «Why?!» I said, «Because I worked hard on it. Then he said, «Well, look at this,» and he started pressing lots of buttons. Smoke started coming out. I said, «You broke him!»

2

The kid said, «So what? It's just a junky old robot.

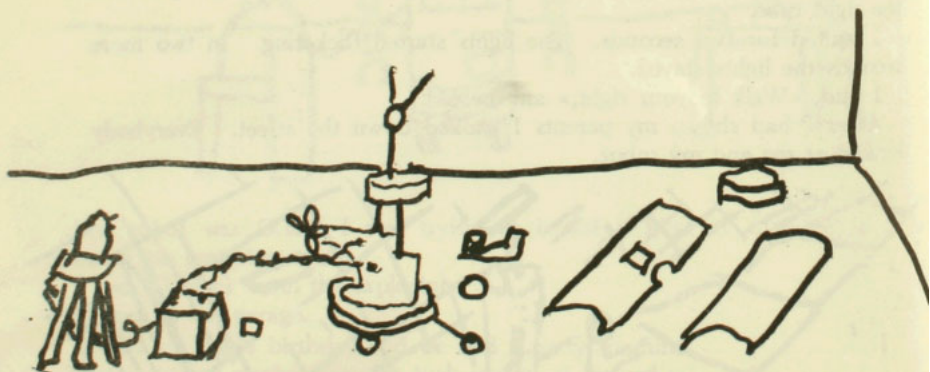
«Look, kid,» I said, «this is the year 1994. People are not supposed to go around vandalizing other people.»

«Oh yeah?» he said. «Well, look at this,» and broke off an arm. Then he started walking away.

«You're in big trouble,» I said. «I'm going to tell Dad and my Dad is going to tell the police and the police are going to tell the president and the»

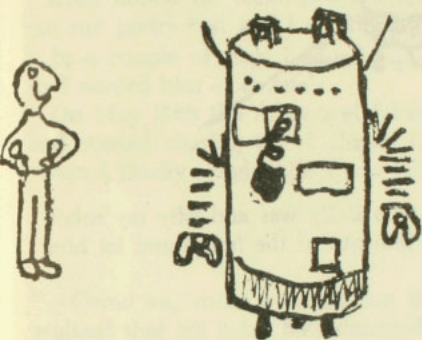
«Shut up!» he said.

When I got home I started taking it apart.



That night my mother asked if I had seen my other mitten. I said, «No.» I asked my mother if I could use it. I had an idea.

I took an old spring that I had in my closet. I got the mitten and stuffed it really well. I took the spring and stuck one end to the mitten and the other end to the robot. I put the robot together but I left a hole where the mitten was and then put a door where the hole was. When somebody opened the door the mitten would spring out.



The next day I was walking down the street hoping to meet the kid. I met him all right.

«Oh, you again,» he said.

«I'll bet you aren't strong enough to open that little door,» I said. He opened it. «POW!» The mitten socked him right on the nose. He fell on the ground.

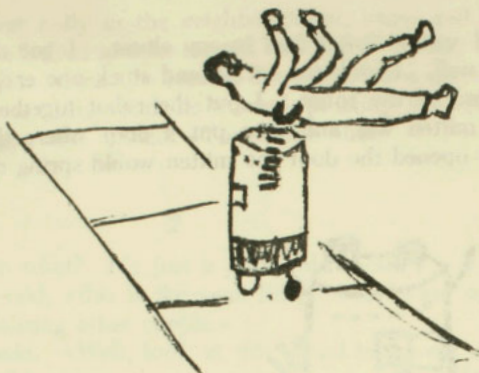
«Why you,» he said, «I'll get you.»

I started running. «Come on, robot,» I said. The robot wouldn't come. Bully (everybody knows him as «Bully») stood up and was about to run when my robot grabbed him and lifted him up.

«Let me down! Let me down!» he said.

I stopped running. I went back to where the robot was.

«Come on, let's go home,» I said. The robot and I went home with Bully.



When we got home my father asked who Bully was and why my robot had him. I told him. He said, «Take him out of the house and let him go, for goodness' sake.»

Bully said, «Thank you, Mr.»

My Dad said, «You're welcome.» I hate my Dad.

I said, «Robot, come with me to put Bully back.» We went outside to put Bully back. When we got out my robot dropped him



I said, «I hate you.»

Then my robot said, «I hate you.»

I went back to my house. When I got there I went to my room and started making improvements on my robot. I had three hours until dinner.

When I had finished the robot had a built-in vehicle (room for two people) and a built-in tent (in case I go camping. Everybody is going camping).

After dinner the robot saw a squirrel and started chasing it. Luckily I can run pretty fast and I could catch him.

In a couple of days I found out that he loved to chase little animals, so I named him «Lanamal».

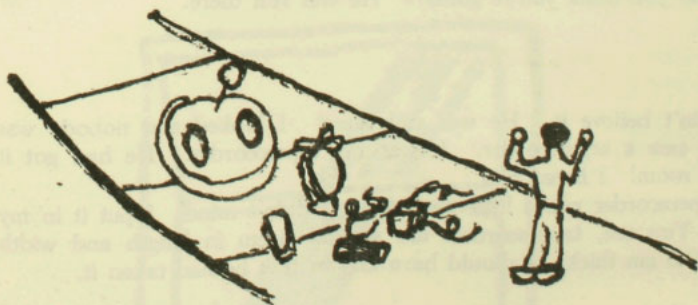
On May 20th the robot and I went on a hike. Lanamal saw a rabbit and started chasing it. I chased him around a third of a kilometre. When I finally caught him I saw John. He started running towards us.

«Come on, robot,» I said but the robot wouldn't come. Suddenly I realized that his lights weren't on. He had lost his fuel.

John was coming closer and closer. He would beat me up. I tried to get away but John got me. Just when he was getting ready to punch me I had an idea.

I said, «Look up there!» He looked, (I saw this trick on T.V.) and I got away.

The next morning when I went to the place where he had almost beat me up, I saw my beautiful robot all smashed up. I had to get my Dad to help me get all the pieces back to my house.



On my way to the garage I met John.

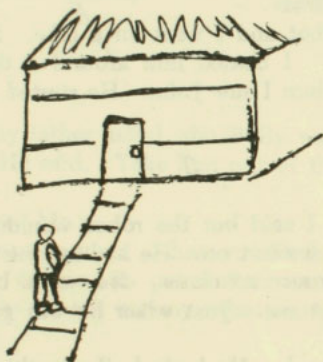
7

John said, «When do you think you're going?»

I said, «I think I'm going to the garage to fix my robot.»

«Well, you'll have to get past me,» he said.

I couldn't tell my parents because they would say, «It's none of our business and plus you have to make more friends.» So I had to go back.



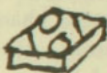
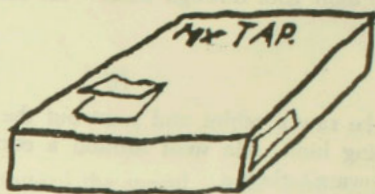
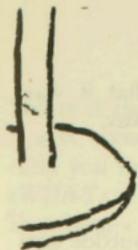
About two hours later I tried again and he was still there.

That night I went out to try again. I tip-toed just in case he was still there. I got into the garage. Suddenly I heard somebody saying, «Where do you think you're going?» He was still there.

8

I couldn't believe it. He was still there! I looked and nobody was there. I saw a taperecorder. It was my taperecorder. He had got it from my room! I hated him.

The taperecorder was a little dented but I didn't mind. I put it in my pocket. You see, taperecorders are around 2 cm in length and width and just 0.5 cm thick. I should have known that he had taken it.



It was about 2 o'clock in the morning.

«Tom, Tooom!» It was my mother. I went back to the house and told her what had happened.

«Go right to bed,» she said, «I'm very cross with you.»

I was hungry. I went to the kitchen. My mother was even angrier now. She told me to go back up to bed.

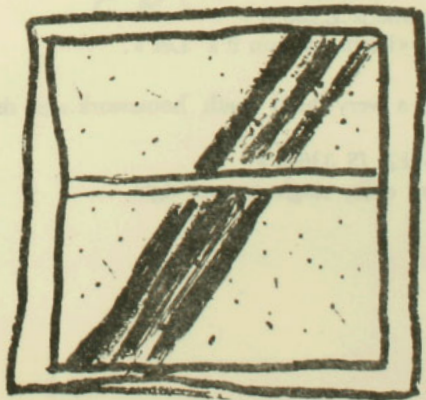
In the morning I was really tired so I slept the rest of the morning.

9

When I woke up, it was about one in the afternoon. I went camping with Lanamal, but it started raining and we had to go back.

I took a little rust off Lanamal because he was a little rusty. I oiled him a bit too.

The sun was out but it was still raining. There was a beautiful rainbow.



Lanamal asked what it was and I told him. I told him that it was formed when light goes through water. He understood right away.

10

Suddenly he saw a rabbit and went out the door. I went outside and started chasing him. He went around a corner. I looked around the corner. He wasn't there.

I looked all day and couldn't find him. He was gone!

One week later, he was still missing.

I started making another robot. He would be called «Lex». When he was finished he looked very good, but I missed Lanamal.



I put some of the coke fuel in Lex's fuel container and his lights started turning on. He was already programmed because I had made him from an old computer.

He said, «Hello, my name is L.B.3.X.»

«No, it isn't,» I said. «From now on it's 'Lex'».

MY NAME IS LEX».

The next day I had a very hard math homework. I asked Lex, «What's 3698 times 9?»

He said, «*THE ANSWER IS 33682.*»

The next morning I got every single answer right.

11

The next day I was walking down the street with Lex when I heard a very soft «beep.»

«Did you hear that?»

«WHAT?»

«That beep.»

«YES»

«Let's go see what it is.»

We went around the corner toward the sound. And what did we see?

...Lanamall!

Now I had two robots. What would I do with two robots?

Later that day I took a walk and left the robots at home tidying my room.

As I was going to the park two big guys came behind me and took my hand.



«Come with us.»

The kid blindfolded me. When I opened my eyes I was at the «Lion's» clubhouse.

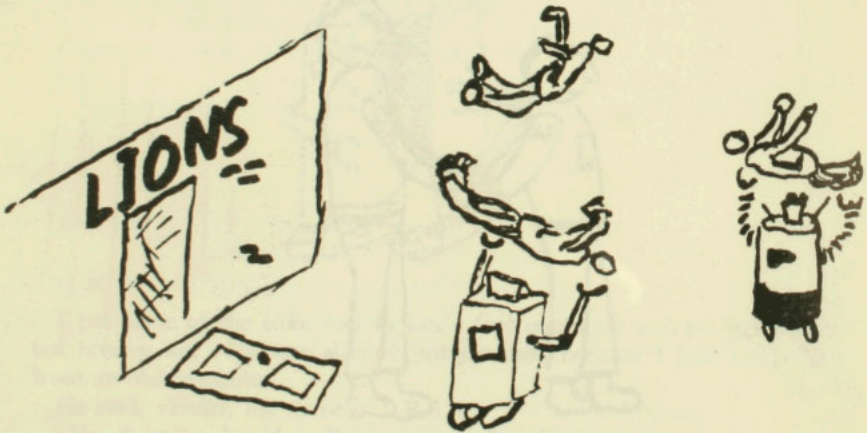
I saw one guy whisper something in someone else's ear. They took me out the back door. When we were outside they asked, «What do you know about our secret?»

«I don't know about any secret of yours!»

«Look, kid, we know you know about our secret, and if you don't tell us we'll beat you up.» Suddenly I slipped out of his grasp and ran away.

The next day I was walking down the street. This time I had my mini walky-talky. Suddenly something fell on my head.

When I woke up I was in the Lion's clubhouse. I took my walky-talky and called my robots. In about ten seconds Lex smashed right through the door. Lanamal followed. They started throwing all the Lions everywhere.



We went out through the clubhouse. When I got home I started oiling and polishing my robots.

Suddenly the bell rang. I went down. My dad got the door. It was a man. I was half way down the stairs when I overheard the man.

«Hello, I'm from the Computer Robot Co. Do you have a computer robot?»

«Yes, my son has two.»

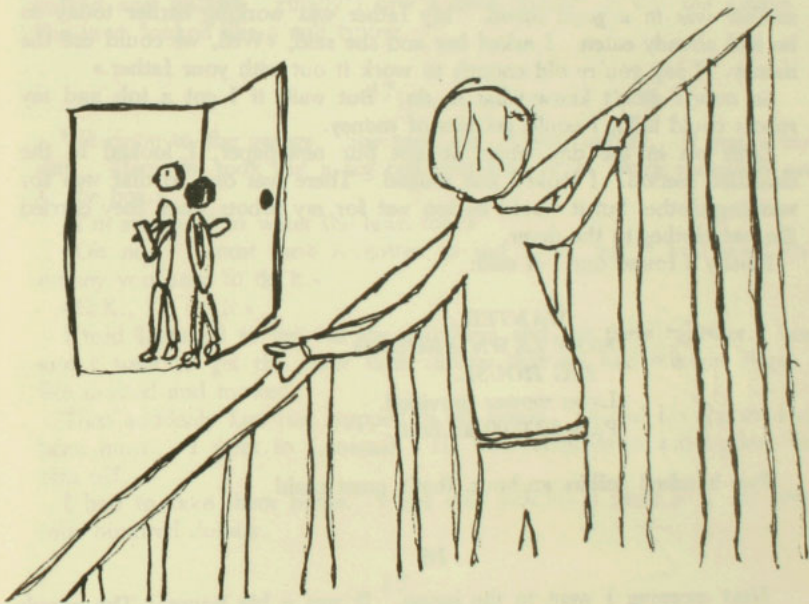
«Well, I can give you 75 million dollars for each.»

«Well, I don't know. I'll have to think about it.»

O.K. I'll be here tomorrow, O.K.?»

«O.K.»

And then he shut the door.



14

I went down to see my dad.

«Are you going to sell my robots?»

«Well, I don't know. But we could use some money.»

«But Dad, I like my robots. They're like best friends to me.»

«I know, but we need the money and you can always make another one, can't you?»

«Not like Lanamal and Lex!»

I couldn't convince my father but I had an idea. Maybe I could convince my mother to convince my father. You see, my mother is very easy to convince and she's always in her best mood in the morning.

But I'm not sure if I can convince my mother.

I spent all night trying to figure out how to convince my mother. Finally I decided just to ask like I normally ask for something. After a while I fell asleep.

15

The next morning at breakfast luckily on this particular day my mother was in a good mood. My father was working earlier today so he had already eaten. I asked her and she said, «Well, we could use the money. I say you're old enough to work it out with your father.»

So now I didn't know what to do. But wait, if I got a job and my robots could help, I could get lots of money.

Later on in the day when we got our newspaper, I looked in the classified section. I looked and looked. There was one ad that was for washing clothes but it would be too wet for my robots when they carried the wet clothes to the dryer.

Finally I found one. It said:

WANTED
MOW LAWN AROUND
BIG HOUSE.

Lawn mower provided.

Pays \$200.00 an hour.

Two hundred dollars an hour, that's great cash!

16

Next morning I went to the house. It was a big house. The people must have been rich to own a house like that. I went up to the door and rang the doorbell.

A little girl answered. She looked like the spoiled brat kind. She opened the screen door and said, «What do you want?»

«I've come for the job in the newspaper. What's your name?»

«Well, what's your name?»

«My name is Tom.»

«So who cares?»

«Can you get your mother?» I asked.

«Yes I can but I'm not going to!»

Then I heard, «Jennifer.»

She said, «What!»

«Who is at the door?»

«A big kid. He says his name is Tom.»

Then her mother came to the door. She asked, «May I help you?»

«I came for the job.»

«Oh, come in.»

We went through the house out to the backyard. We walked and walked and walked. Finally I saw a little house. It was the garage. The lawn looked like a golf course.

17

We came to the garage. She took out a lawn mower. It was a hot day. Then she took out a big box and said, «The water sprinklers are in the box.»

«I'm supposed to water the lawn too?»

«Oh no. I must have forgotten to put it in, but if you want the money you have to do it.»

«O.K., I'll do it.»

I told Lanamal to get out the sprinklers and put them together. Lex and I went to get the other lawn mower that we had brought along. We mowed and mowed.

Then suddenly Lex just stopped in his tracks. One of his circuits had been burnt. I went to Lanamal. He had fallen down and broken his arm off.

I had to take them home. I got only half of it done so I got only four hundred dollars.

18

My father is a really stubborn person and really hard to convince. I had only one week to see if the man from the company didn't change his mind about taking Lanamal and Lex away.

On Thursday afternoon, the day that we were supposed to take the robots to the junkyard, when we came back from recess my teacher sat down right on a whoopee cushion. Everybody started laughing. She made us all stay in.

After school I went straight to the junkyard. I got there just in time to see my robots getting crushed.

DEL POETA COMO SER HUMANO

De oráculo sagrado a empleado
público; de eléctrico cantor bajo las tiendas
de campaña, de nestor, a druida venido a menos;
de ardiente silencioso, devorador de tules,
cortésano de palabras y ritos, a despistado social,
acuarela de turistas, coloquio de usureros;
de oficio fatigoso pero digno, a profesor de tinieblas;
de escarbador de cielos de angel de prometeo de fiesta y agua,
a esta estatura mediana de sueldos,
a este engrillado de premios,
a este venderse al mejor postor.

¿En dónde estamos?

El poeta ya no cree en su misión.
El poeta se rebela contra el relámpago de la inspiración.
El poeta reniega de si mismo.

El poeta se siente cansado con la libre competencia
y entabla diálogos de sordos.

Le han quitado sus pájaros errantes,
sus mordisqueados pezones de alabastro,
sus lirios polvorientos.

Las ratas le han roído los mármoles
y sus ríos ignotos se han cubierto de smog.

Además, el poeta debe abrir la boca
sin llorar, ni reír, sin moverse de este mundo;
sin hacer estallar las palabras,
moviéndose pesadamente por la tierra
como el resto de los mortales;
no hacer de moscardón, no emputecerse
con los reyes del mundo ni con los delatores,
moverse más allá de los límites está prohibido
desde ayer y para siempre.

ABOUT THE POET AS A HUMAN BEING

From sacred oracle to civil
servant; from electric singer
under the campaign tents, from Nestor
to a druid come to decay;
from a silent burning devourer of tulle,
courtesan of words and rites, to a straggler,
tourists' watercolour, usurers' conversation;
from an occupation tiring but worthy, to professor of darkness;
from scraper of the heavens from angel from prometheus
of feasts and water,
to this middling stature of wage earner,
to this shakling by prizes,
to this selling of oneself to the highest bidder.

Where are we?

The poet no longer believes in his mission.
The poet rebels against the lightning flash of inspiration.
The poet disowns himself.

The poet is tired of the open market
and of beginning dialogues with the deaf.

They have taken away his wandering birds,
his nibbled breasts of alabaster, his dust-covered lillies.
The rats have gnawed at the marble pillars
and his unknown rivers have been covered by smog.

Besides, the poet must open the mouth
without weeping or laughing, without ever moving himself
from this world;
without making his words explode into rage,
moving heavily over the earth
like other mortals;
without making himself a gadfly or losing his temper
with the kings of the world nor with the informers,
to move beyond these limits is forbidden
since yesterday and forever.

Digamos por último
no importa si se ha muerto,
ocupará los micrófonos, agitará las doncellas,
se redescubrirán sus peores versos;
dejará de hacer daño con sus palabrotas de mal gusto.
El poeta de la adusta efigie
ahora iluminado.

¿En dónde estábamos?

Ah si, en que la poesía no es el centro del mundo.

Los poetas se agachan, toman posiciones y apuntan.

Detrás de ellos
una nube de libros
es empujada
por el viento de la Historia.
Las imagenes
empiezan a vivir.

Let us say, finally,
that it doesn't matter if he has died;
he will use the microphones, he will agitate the maidens,
his least accomplished verses will be rediscovered;
he will stop making trouble with his coarse expressions
in bad taste. The poet of the severe likeness
now illuminated.

Where were we?

Oh yes, that poetry is not the centre of the world.

Poets crouch and take positions.

Behind them
a cloud of books
is pushed by the wind of History.

The images begin to live.

(Translated by Arlene Moscovitch)

CUANDO ACABE ESTA GUERRA

Cuando acabe esta guerra
juramos que nos darán ganas de correr y de volar
la obscuridad, de sacar este perro en las solapas
que no nos deja respirar,
de tirarnos de rodillas escupiendo tierra santa
y acemilas de estrellas entre los párpados,
de mojarnos las sienes para que la fiebre
no nos dilate el mundo, de iniciar el diálogo
y sin apretar los dientes,
sólo dejando que la vida se descuelgue como una hoja
de nuestros pies cansados.

Cuando acabe esta guerra
nos beberemos la sangre de todas las heridas,
el hilo el laberinto de estos países
tan cerrados como la boda de catalina, el pliegue
de ilusiones que tuvimos a los veinte años,
las cadencias isotéricas de heráclito, el fuego
de tus labios, los clichés literarios;
cuando acabe esta guerra
me cruzaré de manos y pies
en medio de la buhardilla atónita de huesos,
te pondré las espaldas alartijadas de leyendas,
romperé mi pipa mordida por tus besos
contra la llovizna y me declararé de nuevo
ciudadano de ese país inexacto.

Cuando acabe esta guerra
me dedicaré a todos los oficios archivados
en mis placeres:
recogedor de musgos, calafatero, ladrón de prostitutas,
buhonero y saqueador de iglesias de provincia,
poeta de primera categoría en la alcheringa,
micrósafo, arlequín de cortesanas impúberes,
bestiario artesanal, buda y cagliostro,
recolector de la historia final del universo,
apátrida tonante, curaguilla y amante,

amante y más amante
de este sol silencioso solemne
sátrapa y sátiro.

Cuando acabe esta guerra
(¿cuándo acabe?)
empezaremos a preguntar
si de verdad habitamos cantones de cemento
si como caballeros naturales estuvimos
durante largo tiempo, de verdad, habitando en lo instantáneo;
si para qué pusimos tantas balas y nos clausuramos
el deseo con la metafísica, si para qué en fin
con esa ingenuidad que nos hizo famosos,
nos declaramos tan videntes, tan dueños de la mística,
tan estrictamente rítmicos, fanfárricos,
alucinados,

con estos mismos adjetivos
empezaremos de verdad
a preguntar y a preguntar
si cuando acabe esta guerra, cuando acabe,
la pregunta aún tiene sentido.

NO ME REFIERO AL TIEMPO

No me refiero al tiempo que pasa sin mirarnos
mientras hundes la mano en los cabellos
o corres de un tren subterráneo, de una escalera
a la penumbra, al sueño, al precipicio.

No me refiero a esta fatiga, a este ritmo viciado
de tener una vida, de querer volver a las semanas
envueltas en sus horas de trabajo, en tu afilado
estar en lo de siempre. No me quedo, no hablo, prefiero
no decir que estoy acostumbrado a robarme la vida,
arrancar las imágenes de la red y tirarlas de nuevo,
a subir y bajar por las calles con la cara delgada,
pendiente de la muerte.

No digo de estas agrias somnolencias. Busco,
adivino la tierra, subo por las membranas
de las rocas acidándose en mi boca, cubro
los rastros de estas larvas creciendo y extasiándose:

la luna inundada de fiesta, el cargamento de relámpagos,
la lumbre entre nosotros, este puerto,
estas llamas, esta verdad;

el origen de todo.

I'M NOT REFERRING TO THE TIME

I'm not referring to the time that goes by without looking at ourselves
while you drown your hand in your hair
or run from an underground train, a staircase
towards the darkness, the dream, the precipice.

I'm not referring to this fatigue, to this vicious rhythm
of holding a life, of wanting to return to those weeks
surrounded by working hours, in your sharp being
in that of the always. I do not linger nor talk, I prefer
not to say that I'm accustomed to robbing myself of life,
wrench the images from the net and cast them once more,
going up and down through the streets with a haggard face,
pending death.

I don't mean these bitter insomnias. I search,
divine the earth, climb up the membranes
of the cliffs turning acid in my mouth, I cover
the traces of these larvae growing and becoming ecstatic:

the moon inundated with festivity, the burden of lightning,
the fire between us, this port,
these flames

the source of everything.

(Translated by Filomena Carvalho)

ALGUIEN HACE DEMASIADAS PREGUNTAS QUE NO PUEDO CONTESTAR

Nos preguntaron
cómo caracterizamos nuestro mundo.

Hablamos de estos ritos, estas promesas,
estas pupilas de aire enrarecido.
De que el cólera y la peste bubónica
estaban como los viejos dioses
a punto de desaparecer.

Nos preguntaron más
de cómo nos sentíamos,
de la vida en común bajo los techos planos
en las noches de luna y de tormenta,
con otros habitantes, comiendo,
desgranando su vida por la fábrica,
el café, la escuela.

Dijimos de los niños felices, de la técnica
sobre las alfombras, de los modelos
para viajar más cómodos, de la risa
y la rabia, los boletos de avión,
de los parques.

Nos miraron en forma complaciente
para que siguiéramos hablando
de la prehistoria,
bajo el sol de la tarde
computadoras y bicicletas
desgajadas y brillantes.

Nos dijeron por último,
que entonces, que por qué, que cuándo,
que en qué momento, dónde,
mientras nosotros en silencio
seguíamos la dirección del viento entre las piedras,
la ceniza, la lluvia amarillenta,
la sombra de las huellas en la arena.

SOMEBODY IS ASKING TOO MANY QUESTIONS I CANNOT ANSWER

They asked us
how we would describe our world.

We spoke of these rites, these promises,
these eyes with a rarefied air.
Of the fact that cholera and the bubonic plague
were, like the ancient gods,
on the point of disappearing.

They asked us more,
about how we felt,
about life together under the flat roofs
in nights of moon and torment,
with other inhabitants eating,
picking their lives apart grain by grain
in the factory and the café, at school.

We told of the happy children, of techniques
on carpets, of models designed
for comfortable travel, of laughing
and wrath, airplane tickets,
parks.

They looked at us indulgently
allowed us to continue talking
of prehistory
under the afternoon sun,
of computers and bicycles
in brilliant sections.

Finally they said
well then: where, when,
wherefore and why,
as we in silence
followed the path of the wind among the stones,
the ash, the yellowish rain,
the shadow of tracks in the sand.

(Translated by Christina Shantz)

LA REALIDAD NO ES UN MITO

Aquí no pasa casi nada.

Hace cinco mil años que Zeus truena en la poesía occidental.

El Tao Te King un poco menos.

Las bibliotecas de arcilla de los sumerios ayudaron a desnudar las estrellas.

A establecer las redes de los cinco sentidos en el confín del mundo.

Por otro lado, nuestro señor de Tula la serpiente emplumada crea y destruye en sus soles de piedra el nacimiento del amor y de la muerte.

Aprendimos a cabalgar en los planetas.

El ojo se hizo sabio el oído indecible.

Icaro y Fausto descienden de sus laboratorios.

Abortan hijos por la tierra, tecnocráticos, harapientos, gruñendo.

Aquí ha pasado casi nada

nos dicen. Vivían en cavernas.

Arrancaron del aire las palabras.

Trajeron de la noche estas pieles de acero.

Estas siluetas tormentosas que monologan como manadas ciegas detrás del exterminio.

Supieron que todo crece al borde

de unas dunas. Que todo fue, el ser,

el combatir, la heroica juventud de los sargazos.

Que el hombre y la mujer como muro y arena disiparon sus reinos, su locura.

Aquí no pasó nada.

La materia mordida por el fuego desaparece.

REALITY IS NOT A MYTH

Here almost nothing happens.

Five thousand years ago Zeus thundered in Western poetry.

Somewhat later, Tao Te King.

The Sumerians' libraries of clay

helped to undress the stars.

To establish the webs of the five senses

within the confines of the world.

On the other hand, our Lord of Tula

the plumed serpent in its suns of stone

creates and destroys

the birth of love and death.

We learned to ride on the planets.

The eye became knowing, the ear unspeakable.

Icarus and Faust descend from their laboratories.

They abort children over the earth,

technotronic, ragged

groaning children.

Here almost nothing has happened,

we are told. They lived in caves.

They tore the words from the air.

They brought these furs of steel from the night.

These tormented shadows that harangue in monologues

like blind herds after extermination.

They discovered that all growth occurred on the edge

of some dunes. That all was being,

combating, the heroic youth of the Sargassos.

That man and woman like wall and sand

dissipated their kingdoms, their madness.

Here nothing happened.

Matter disappears with the bite of fire.

(Translated by Christina Shantz)

CAMINOS

Casi todos los caminos pasan por tu casa.

El del norte atraviesa la tumba del gato de Cheshire
y acumula cortezas de cipreses en tu puerta.

El del sur es una autopista donde los automóviles
hacen abstracción de sí mismos
y se desgranán silenciosos.

El del oeste es un callejón sin salida
que me gusta recorrer en los momentos culminantes.

En el este hay un telón con una valla pintada
y la palabra fin.

Pero además están los caminos que suben
hasta el tercer piso y los que bajan
a calentarte el dedo meñique en las noches.

Hay otros caminos.

Los innumerables caminos para hacerte el amor.
Los que pasan por tu boca con una pluma de pavo real
y una aguja de cristal mas otras costumbres
eróticas.

Los que suben por tu pelo, se despeñan
y se pierden o sencillamente desaparecen
en la oscuridad.

Los caminos de las efemérides nacionales
y los próceres inflados por las palabras.
Los caminos melodramáticos de eduardo gatti, carlos gardel
y pablo milanés. Los caminos
milenarios de la biblia y laot sé.
El lastimoso camino de los gobernantes.
El camino de catamarca y el no-camino de antonio machado.
El camino equivocado de algunos amigos
creyentes en la verdad verdadera.

ROADS

Almost all roads pass through your house.

The northern one crosses the Cheshire cat's tomb
and accumulates cypresses' barks at your door.

The southern one is a highway where automobiles
make abstractions of themselves
and silently scatter.

The western one is a road without exit
that I like to travel in culminating moments.

In the east there is a curtain with a road-sign
and the word the end.

However there are the roads that climb
up to the third floor and those that come down
to warm up your baby-finger during the nights.

And there are other roads.

The innumerable roads to make love to you.
Those that pass through your mouth with a peacock's feather
and a crystal needle and other erotic customs.

Those that climb up your hair, precipitate
and become lost or simply disappear
in the darkness.

The roads of national anniversaries
and grandees inflated by words.

The melodramatic roads of eduardo gatti, carlos gardel
and pablo milanés. The millennial roads
of the bible and laot sé.

The contemptible road of the governors.

The road of catamarca and the no-road of antonio machado.
the deceiving road of friends
believers in the true truth.

El estrecho camino de las termópilas
y el ancho camino de victor jara y la antigua roma.
El del exilio, ruta forzada de los malos tiempos.
El caminito del indio y el del bolero caminemos.
Los caminos de todos los poemas escritos
sobre caminos y cami-andantes.
Las caminatas que nos pegábamos bajo el solazo de santiago
rumbo al pedagógico o por la alameda de talca
cuando eramos adolescentes.
También este camino en que estoy metido
y que no voy a saber hasta donde llega
por lo menos hasta un tiempo más.

El camino de tu corazón a veces difícil de encontrar.

El inexorable camino del tiempo, el ciego y curvo
de los espacios, el dudoso de la luz y la energía.
El nostálgico del pasado y el tal vez
mas triste del futuro.
De los caminos, el más crítico y tenso en estos días
de abismos, de naufragios.
Los caminos de las 3 de la madrugada
y de las 7 de la tarde. Caminante, siempre hay caminos.
Casi todos conducen a tu casa, a tu reino de blusas y cajones,
de pieles acezantes, de espaciosos y abultados divanes,
de protestas envueltas en papel celofán,
de salvaciones individuales.

Todos los caminos pasan por tu casa,
aquelarre de milagros,
y como un buen bardo de causas innoμβrales
creo que los recorreré en su totalidad
y hasta las últimas consecuencias.

The narrow road of the termopilas
and the wide road of victor jara and of ancient rome.
That of the exile, forced route of bad times.
The narrow road of the indian and that of the bolero we walk.
The roads of all written poems
on top of roads and road-walkers.
The long walks which we became attached to under the scorching
sun of santiago
on the way to the pedagogic or through talca avenue
when we were adolescents.
Also this road where I stand
and which I have no way of knowing where it ends
at least for a while longer.

The road of your heart sometimes difficult to find.

The relentless road of time, the blind and crooked road
of spaces, the doubtful of light and energy.
The nostalgic one of the past and even sadder maybe
of the future.
Of the roads, the most critical and tense in these days
of abysses, of shipwrecks.
the roads of three in the morning and those
of seven in the afternoon.
Walker, you always have a path.
Almost all lead to your house,
to your reign of blouses and drawers,
of gasping skins, of spacious and bulky divans,
of protests surrounded in cellophane paper, of individual salvations.

All the roads pass through your house, sabbath of miracles,
and like a good bard of unnameable causes
I think that I'll walk through them in their totality
until the last consequences.

(Translated by Filomena Carvalho)

EL DÍA EN QUE EL MUNDO SE TERMINE

El día en que el mundo se termine
el sol cruzará el cielo siete veces
a las dos de la mañana
y el harbour castle empezará a cubrirse
de una espesa baba metafísica

El día en que el mundo se termine
rodeada de tigres y fulgores
empezarás a disputar de madrugada
y nadie vendrá a recoger la basura de los pasillos

En su primera edición los periódicos
anunciarán las catástrofes de costumbre
la vecina saludará sin darse cuenta
el árbol de la esquina abrirá nuevos brotes
los oficinistas entrarán en los edificios
mirando el cielo con un ardor desconocido
llegarás atrasada a la estación del metro
y los niños se quedarán escondidos
hasta el tinal con una sonrisa misteriosa

El día en que el mundo se termine
volverás transitada de entusiasmo
para hablarme de los silencios que quiero olvidar
también querrás hacer el amor
y buscar el tiempo perdido
lo que desecharé por sus ribetes románticos
Miraremos de nuevo cuidadosamente los objetos
el brillo de los espejos y la porcelana afiebrada
cocinaremos una sopa de gansos salvajes
luego saldremos al patio para bailar
la danza de la lluvia y con el tarot en la mano
agregaré algunas metáforas a mis poemas más prosaicos
antes de que se haga tarde
ese único día
el día en el que el mundo se termine

El día en que el mundo se termine
los burócratas del pentágono
tomarán lunch con nicotina
latas de sopas campbell y cerveza embalsamada
Una nube de avispas escribirá en el cielo
y con letras góticas la palabra fin
Comenzará a dolerme el pie derecho
Mi madre rezará sus plegarias en un país lejano
y mandará sus angustias en una carta

Los enemigos del génesis galoparán en el relámpago

Las escuadras de luciérnagas te robarán la luz
oh creadora del fuego y la sonrisa
El viento y la ceniza te harán llorar de rodillas
y un grito de estatua aullará largamente
en los laberintos de la ciudad solitaria
El día en que el mundo se termine

Hacia la tarde
cuando las carreteras se atascaban en las salidas
y los adolescentes corrían a sus hogares buscando el aire familiar
a la hora del sol mordiendo la otra mitad del hemisferio
y las prisas desabridas de los transeúntes
sediento de café y grillos
a la hora de las búsquedas inusitadas, de las migraciones
tortuosas hacia los orígenes, de los juegos rituales
y las atmósferas íntimas
ya todo estará consumado, escrito,
ya todo será sólo un fulgor
de océanos cayéndose, reventando en el fin de las historias
un cúmulo de sombras creciendo
entre la luz oscura de la noche más larga
más ciega — y tu dulzura estéril —
ya inútil

EL DIA EN QUE EL MUNDO SE TERMINE
el día en que el mundo
el día

e

e

FERVOR DE REGESANTE

Había pasado el tiempo

Las estrellas susurraban en mi oído y el timón
se movía sin compás hacia el fondo del mar pacífico como siempre
La hebra de la memoria corría como minuterio encima de las solapas
y las azafatas acarreaban el mal y el bien desde el fondo del avión

Una luna fugaz estremecía la conciencia
cargada de presagios Y tú todavía como un fresco damasquino
El rito de los paisajes La rueda de los caminos
donde siempre esperas más Agárrote de frente historia
o de costado No nos pongamos cursis
los poetas también mueren en sus camas

ante mis ojos (y los tuyos) el paraíso y nueva estremadura
tal vez habría que decir: se descorrió el velo de la aurora
y la ciudad apareció resplandeciente

pero para qué mentirnos

si la realidad supera la tradición

Una ciudad triste como todas con nublado y smog

eso si el aeropuerto es digno de contarse

entre las sátiras más divertidas Una escalofriante lista de maletas
con sus respectivos guardadores Una red de miradas desconfiadas

Un sigilo tedioso en medio del furor de las voces Además

Ud. empieza a pagar como en cualquier puto corrompido país
(no cualquiera en fin)

Volviendo a la lírica He dicho historia Tú me comprendes

No te rías Tus borbotones me contagian Adorábamos la ciudad
de estatuillas y parques amarillentos

¿Qué pasa con los rincones? Hablando de exportaciones

sólo nos va quedando la estación mapocho y la calle londres

Pero no nos metamos en la megalomanía de los gobernantes

Ud. no entenderá esta obscuridad de mi corazón Las cosas

son y no son en este mundo Luciérnagas y murciélagos esa es la vida

No hay otro modo de explicar lo inexplicable

No hay otro modo le digo

¿me escucha?

Hilacha tras hilacha los recuerdos País de maravillas
sueño del vino viajero Crepúsculo
de los navegantes y de los aprendices del relámpago
de los aciagos perdedores Tú también recuerdas
una ola golpeando tu silueta de ondina
Aullante galaxia salobre

Hace ya mucho tiempo esta espada esta soga
empezó a fragmentarse Se desprendió de las persianas
Se desmoronó con las primeras nieves de noviembre
hizo un hueco callado en las cortinas
entró por tus ventanas abiertas
Uno está aquí en verdad y a veces está allí
en ningún sitio exacto o en todos a la vez
Lo que sea La derrota El pantano
El jolgorio de ver de nuevo los crucifijos de cristal
La sombra de la lumbre en las paredes
las estaciones quejándose en sus goznes
El ejercicio de la videncia en medio de la alameda
con su máscara de hambre El ojo que no ve pero cantando
se mueve entre la sangre y el fuego
Las multitudes arrastrando no se qué y el sucio sol
sin ocasión de envejecer como ellas
Boqueando por oxígeno
Exigiendo la tensa maravilla el despertado asombro de crecer
como el agua y vivir en medio de la vida

Me dices en esa trampa seguimos todavía Descubro
que tus mejillas han perdido la doncelléz
Ni loco que fuera Ni por error Estás allí Basta
con el abismo Un país cansado no se suicida
Gira retrocede o avanza
Se hace espacio natural Amamanta sus cordilleras y sus mares
con sus fracasos Y sus huesos de piedra permanecen
¿Permanecen? Corazón corazón Vago sonámbulo en este oficio ciego
hamburguesa en burgerín importa en manhattan importers
escribe versos en inglés en el daily newspaper
ya que sólo in gold we trust
hablo de cosas que existen etcétera

Así es este ir y venir de encantamiento a desencanto
Si te quedas hermosa ahí estamos Por último salgamos del miedo
Guiñemosle los dos ojos a la muerte y agreguemos los párpados
rearmemos esta locura como dijo el zurita
Hagamos moverse las montañas
Ensalemos los regimientos Desertemos los uniformes
Vaciamos las llanuras en la plaza de armas de santiago
Esfumemos los discursos de septiembre Desliguemos
los operativos y corramos las cuadernas de los barcos
hacia la edad media Cubramos de sombra la cabeza
del director supremo de una vez y para siempre
Redimamos las madrugadas de todos los campos de chile
porque dios no es la última palabra

Recordemos
que la mudanza sea de marfil
y las sentencias vuelen en oleaje

para que el viaje no haya sido en vano.

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