

Cultural Daily

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Bill Mohr: Two Poems (in English & in Spanish translated by Robin Myers)

Bill Mohr · Wednesday, July 10th, 2019

PORTRAIT IN McVICKER'S GARDEN

My face cannot be finished. Two days
 I've stared and slouched near cusps
 of dahlias, foxgloves creamed with red,
 my chest and shoulders swelling
 in a dark shirt, jeans trenched
 between white petals as each slides
 an edge under another's wavering
 fan of points — "It's not working,"
 he says, lifting the canvas off.
 As I kneel on a narrow stone path,
 the wetness of mud seeps through
 my pants, sipping up my thighs.
 A big hat darkens my chin. Yellow
 peonies uncoil. A leaf isn't smooth,
 but puckers from edge to spinal thread.
 Light scours the repetition
 until color roughens: lilac squats,
 orange puffs, yellow crouches
 in creased gourds, thick husks
 of amber, shrill asperities,
 stretched greys, pink's ziggurats,
 lips parted for your garden's kiss.

RETRATO EN EL JARDÍN DE McVICKER

Mi rostro no puede ser terminado. Dos días
 he mirado fijamente, encorvado junto a coronas
 de dalias, deladeras cremadas de rojo,
 mi pecho y mis hombros se hinchan
 en una camisa oscura, el pantalón atrincherado
 entre pétalos blancos mientras cada uno desliza

un borde bajo el tembloroso abanico
 de puntos del otro... “No está funcionando”,
 dice, desmontando el lienzo.
 Mientras me arrodillo sobre un estrecho sendero de piedra,
 la humedad del barro rezuma
 por mi pantalón, sorbiendo mis muslos.
 Un sombrero grande oscurece mi mentón. Las peonías
 amarillas se despliegan. Una hoja no es tersa,
 sino que se plisa desde el borde hasta la nervadura.
 La luz rasguña la repetición
 hasta que el color se enrudece: el lila se acuclilla,
 el naranja se infla, el amarillo se agazapa
 en calabacinos plisados, espesa cáscara
 de ámbar, asperezas estridentes,
 grises estirados, zigurats del rosa,
 labios despegados para el beso de tu jardín.

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THE RESTORATION

You cannot grieve for that which snags no name.
 Without that wounded underbelly, memory
 cannot commune. Soon the name your friends
 and lovers savor as the firm edge of wistful voice
 will vanish. *God love you*, say the sermons and *Psalms*
 But he doesn't know my name, or yours.
 Any of our names. The grief that he remembers
 is how no universe can be immortal,
 not even the one he tried to name,
 a word that meant, the miracle of nothingness.

LA RESTAURACIÓN

No se puede estar de luto por lo que no ataja ningún nombre.
 Sin ese vientre herido, la memoria
 no puede comulgar. Pronto el nombre que tus amantes
 y amigos saborean como el borde firme de la anhelante voz
 se esfumará. *Dios te ama*, dicen ls sermones y los *Salmos*
 pero Él no sabe mi nombre, ni el tuyo.
 Ni el de nadie. El luto que Él recuerda
 es que ningún universo puede ser inmortal,
 ni siquiera ese al que trató de dar un nombre,
 una palabra que expresó, el milagro de la nada.

(Feature photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)



Translator's bio:

Robin Myers is an American poet who lives and works as a translator in Mexico City. Her own editions of poetry include *Amalgama (Conflations)* Antelope Editions. Together with poet and translator Jose Rico she worked on the translations that appeared in Bill Mohr's *Pruebas Ocultas*, a bilingual edition published in Mexico in 2015.

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