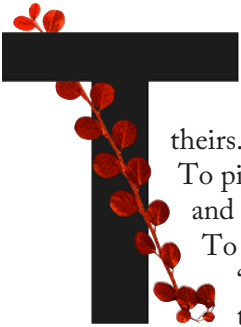


Invisible Landscape

I



To move slowly through my grandmother's whole garden,
where every plant knows my name and I know theirs.

To pinch the Basil, Rosemary and Mint
and then smell the pleasing perfumed breath of their reply.

To count the number of children born each week to the
'Mother of Thousands',¹
the plant that cured my cough during the rainy season's cool days.

To climb among the branches of Guava or Mango *mechudo* trees,
where the birds shared the ripe fruits with me.

Bats love to dine on Guavas
and often I decided not to eat all the fruit
so that we could share.

In the morning, I was happy to confirm
that the Guavas I left were no longer there.

The Mango tree was an entire neighbourhood.
That's where the adorable Pacific Parakeets lived
along with the distrustful Groove-Billed Anis
as well as the industrious Spot-Breasted Orioles with their sun-colored plumage.

1 (*Kalanchoe daigremontiana*)

And, well, that's where I lived, too,
(the one human who had cousins and uncles who hunted Iguanas,
Doves, Armadillos and Deer).

As evening was beginning to fall, it was time to say goodbye,
and silence returned to the Mango tree.
From a distance, I could see when it welcomed the strident Great-tailed
Grackles.
And as it grew darker, all kinds of owls arrived.
It was time to sleep.

Kneeling beside my bed,
I'd join my little hands together in prayer to my guardian angel,
hoping no owl would screech its harbingers of death.

Even though death is none other than all of us.

II

Part of the farm near the house was planted with sugar Cane
for twisting confections called *alfeñiques*, blocks of brown sugar, the
sweet juice of *guarapo* and molasses.
I learned how to peel the Cane stalks with a machete and to measure
their ripeness
by the purple color of the bark.
I chewed and drank that sweet, sticky liquid until my jaw ached.
And I did this at the same pace as the cattle chewed theirs.
The cows' milk was more abundant
and so were my stomach pains
as my guts were cleaned right out.

Next to the sugar Cane grew a multitude of Reeds
that my grandfather used to make flutes with a single hole.
The hollow wand released its new voice that intertwined with my breath.
I'd climb one of the stones at the edge of the farm
and from there resounded every flute,
each with its own unique music.

The wind touched their tufts and made them laugh.
I'd fill them with air and listen to them sing.

III

The population of wild Tree Marigolds² grew alongside all the planted fields.

And *Piñuelas*³ lined the roads.

Each year, the tall, thick-stemmed Marigolds transmitted enthusiasm with the swaying of their bright orange flowers.
And with their stylized bodies, people made rooftops and bins to store corn.

Piñuelas supplied the table with their exotic and edible red flower.
If it was still young, it was cooked in tasty stews.
and if ripe, we'd make a delicious dessert called *Motas de atol*.

I can taste my childhood next to these wild pineapples that no longer exist.
And I have set my daily life by means of these towering Marigold blooms jubilantly reborn in fields,
daring a never-ending human greed
to go ahead, just try and turn them into a new invisible landscape.

Translated by Steven F. White

Paisaje Invisible

I

Recorrer el jardín de mi abuelita, donde cada planta sabe mi nombre y yo el suyo.
Pellizcar a la Albahaca, al Romero y a la Menta,

2 (*Tithonia diversifolia*)

3 (*Bromelia karatas*)

y recibir su aliento placentero y perfumado como respuesta.
Contar cada semana los hijitos que le nacían a la “Hoja del aire”,
ahí estaba la cura de mi tos en los días lluviosos y frescos del invierno.
Subir entre las ramas de la Guayaba o del Mango mechudo
donde los pájaros compartían los frutos maduros conmigo.
Los Murciélagos aman cenar Guayabas
y muchas veces renuncié a comerme algunas
para dejárselas a ellos.
Por la mañana, me agradaba confirmar
que ya no estaban.

El árbol de Mango era todo un vecindario.
Por un lado, estaban los adorables Chocoyos.
En el otro los desconfiados Pijules
y por otra parte, los laboriosos Chichitotes de plumaje dorado.
Y pues, bueno, también estaba yo,
(la humana que tenía primos y tíos que cazaban Garrobos,
Palomas de castilla, Cusucos y Venados).

Cuando empezaba a caer la tarde era el momento de despedirnos,
y el silencio regresaba al árbol de Mango.
A lo lejos, yo podía percibir cuándo recibía a los estridentes Zanates.
Y ya en la oscuridad, arribaban las lechuzas y los búhos.
Era la hora de dormir.

De rodillas al lado de mi cama,
juntaba mis manitas pidiendo a mi ángel de la guarda
que ninguna lechuza lanzara sus presagios de muerte.

Y la muerte seguimos siendo nosotros.

II

Una parte de la chacara cerca de la casa estaba sembrada de Caña de
azúcar
que nos regalaba alfeñiques, atados de dulce, guarapo y melaza.
Aprendí a pelar con un machete las varas de caña y a medir su madurez

por el color púrpura de su corteza.
 Masticaba y tragaba su pegajosa agua dulce hasta que se me cansaba la mandíbula.
 Lo hacía al mismo ritmo que el ganado mascaba la suya.
 A las vacas les aumentaba la leche
 y a mí los dolores de estómago
 al limpiarme las tripas.

Junto a la Caña de azúcar crecía una multitud de Carrizos
 con los que mi abuelito fabricaba flautas de un agujero.
 La varita hueca dejaba salir su nueva voz que se entrelazaba con mi aliento.
 Yo me subía en una de las piedras a la orilla de la chácara
 y desde ahí sonaba y sonaba cada flauta
 su propia música.

El viento tocaba sus penachos y las hacía reír.
 Yo las colmaba de aire y las escuchaba cantar.

III

La población de Jalacates estaba a lo largo de todas las huertas
 y las Piñuelas bordeaban los caminos.

Cada año los Jalacates transmitían entusiasmo
 con el bamboleo de sus anaranjadas y brillantes flores.
 Y con sus estilizados cuerpos la gente fabricaba trojas y techos.

Las Piñuelas abastecían la mesa con su exótica y comible flor roja.
 Si estaba recién nacida, se cocinaba en sabrosos guisos
 y si estaba madura, tendríamos un delicioso postre de *Motas de atol*.

Puedo saborear mi corta edad junto a las piñuelas que ya no existen.
 Y he fijado mi día a día a la par de las flores de Jalacate
 que jubilosas renacen en los campos
 desafiando la incesante avaricia humana
 que las convierta en un nuevo
 paisaje invisible.

Esthela Calderón, born in León, Nicaragua, is a poet and visual artist. Her books include the pioneering book of ethnobotanical poetry *Soplo de corriente vital* (2008), *Coyol quebrado* (2012), the bilingual anthology of her selected poetry *The Bones of My Grandfather* (2018), and *Colmena de papel / Paper Beehive* (Poetry and painting, 2022). Her poetry has been anthologised in *The Mind of Plants: Narratives of Vegetal Intelligence*, *Ayahuasca Reader: Encounters with the Amazon's Sacred Vine*, *El consumo de lo que somos: muestra de poesía ecológica hispánica contemporánea*, as well as *Ghost Fishing: An Eco-Justice Poetry Anthology*, *The Latin American Eco-Cultural Reader*, *Naturaleza poética* and *La poesía de los árboles*. Her work as a visual artist was featured in individual exhibitions at the art gallery of the Municipal Building of St. Lawrence County in Potsdam, New York: 'Inside the Ancestral Current' (2017) and 'Pollen' (2019). Her group exhibitions include SUNY Potsdam (2017) and the Brush Gallery at St. Lawrence University: 'Here and Now: Three Artist' (2019) and 'Listening to Water' (2023).

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