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By María Baranda in Spanish

El jardín de los encantamientos (1990),

Fábula de los perdidos (1990)

Ficción de cielo (1995)

Los memoriosos (1995)

Moradas imposibles (1998)

Nadie, los ojos (1999)

Atlántica y el rústico (2002)

Dylan y las ballenas (2003)

Ávida mundo (2005)

Ficticia (2006)

Ávido mundo (2008) (Selected Poems)

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Anuario de poesía mexicana 2008 (with Tedi López-Mills)

Ficticia

MARÍA BARANDA

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I

Everything begins with the moon and a desolate sky,
a place of frail words to open
the native prose of dreams. Calm
country poplars, Indian laurels
rise up, anxious on this island of memory.
There go the men who sail into port
when the word burns like a suburb
of truth, a mark on the page
that formed the earth. They approach too quickly.
They have lost the light and now break open a sea curd
in which time crackles.
They want to erase their names, to plant scams
in slow spirals of foam.
They recite a verse in an exiled country
like a clear net around infinite oceans.
There is blood between the rocks.
You listen to them. You wait for their silence.
You know they constitute an era.
Who will defend them from themselves?
Who will endure their eternal burden,

their first night of wind?
They'll remain in books forever.
Syllables of gratitude, sentences where the remnants
of their century glimmer.
They are a sliver of light within the atlas of time.
You pray for them.
You open a coconut and you drink from it.
Bells ring where birds chirp,
where fish throb with the calmness
of a heart that's on its own.
Once again the dream flows beneath your palm-thatched hut.
Who delights in you? Who says such prayers for you?
You imagine a period as your cry's spell.
You say that spring waits
in each of your own flood's hollows.
And in your smile. You know it's all a mistake.
A small part where you dissolve
into nature. You resist fear
with a tender secret.
There is a child in your bed. Keep quiet.

II

You believe there are hummocks of ice outside.
You dream of the Hilton's air conditioning,
of the brief appearance of a luxurious dish
that someone brings to your room while you
listen to the sea in the drain.

You need nobody.

You prefer to stroll along your boulevard
of skyscrapers and palm trees.

A broken transmitter's sound
hangs in the air.

It's a crab.

On this side of the coast you hope to see women
moving toward you

in a moment of calm or of ebb and flow.

You listen to the commotion of invisible docks.

The flesh of sailors that peels off like bark.

Someone wipes a trace of sweat from your cheek.

A halo of voices floods the secret creatures.

You're tired of their sounds.

They are your heart's deceptions,

your hands' lines
begging for a morsel of truth and nothing more.
You resist the desire to be one with time.
You know that at least some justice must rain
down upon your neighborhood of sand.
Wholeness is a bellflower open
to the insect's offices,
the trough of truth and mercy
where nobody can refuse
a spent life's waste.
Pity, you say, pity for such recklessness.
And you're overjoyed.

III

Rats devour your tongue.
Now you cry out for sorrow.
That terrible feeling trapped
in your grandmother's plastic curtains.
You root around in her ruins. There's nothing.
She died some time ago
with a girl's syphilis.
Her rocking chair is still
on the porch of that home in Texas.
At the gate there's a blue handkerchief
to guard against suspicion.
Nobody even gives it a second look. Sepia photos
of a cheap butcher shop
in the mist's gullet.
Endless words. Glassware.
And you want to guard the alphabets
of those who defend
your illegitimate name
inside a war's crags and rocks.
You try vertigo and levitation so that

the world revolves in its own emptiness.
Genuflections. Keepers of splendor
written with ink that multiplies
every vigil's quiet rumor. Such is its destiny.
Exile is a blank sheet of Bible paper
where the world traces its apocryphal limits,
its cries of truth and madness.
Peace, peace for the deer and leopard,
peace for that giver of life.
Every echo is part of the rubble
that we all collect.
Pieces of paradise. Any island
is the bat's playground,
its region of identity, dominion
where salt's pardon takes shelter.
Crossroads and detours.
Signs announce the defeated in Latin.
Cables that remind you of streets
lost in a vague geography.
There are no hours. Mankind's tick tock is emptied
by pronouncements of unhappiness. There is no pain.

IV

You dream you're a Hindu in an intolerable jungle.
You see birds falling at daybreak.
And you proclaim them.
You say they are all your daughters.
You are the son of a shy beauty,
the one who undresses at night
in front of the fig tree's captive cutting edge.
You confuse your age with heaven's limits.
You think the sea is only one more battle
from victory over the rain and its insistence.
Something makes you think of Ocosingo
and the indigenous in their white robes.
You cannot sing in another language.
The tribes of Virgil's dreams
are for you a boundary,
the unbroken dominion of permanence.
You see them pass in line like cardboard soldiers,
butterflies from high desert that unravel
the lightning. Moons from other skies.
A fish tells you about the depiction of a lonesome death.

Someone without their own portion of dawn.
You cover their nakedness.
Such is happiness: to think that outside
there is always the vertigo of some face
that waits for us.
You have seen the sun dally in a grain of sand.
You have heard the soft voice of a girl
undress for you like a calm dog
resting between pages of Homer.
Endless passages where someone makes a story
from a metal fragment and a swatch of fog
in the dry prairie of a few fire lines.
Refined calcium traces in your golden kitchen.
Visits from salt and its proverbs
like a single wound so that you
can make an apocryphal thought of your island.

When you were a child trees yielded in your path.
Night was a lantern in a palace of lilies.
You wanted to possess the cloak of every secret,
the days' briefest light
and the sword of truth as a silhouette.
You could have been an ideal Lancelot,
or maybe a Robin Hood
in the empire of tears.
You walk these dried out roads
that called for the sun to make a corpse of you,
a blind child of God
who grows accustomed to navigating
beneath a thorny sky.
You come to a halt in Van Gogh's shadow.
You rust.
You shout for some peace
from that ocean of burning purpose.
You throw yourself into it. Like that verse from Vallejo
that Elisio Diego kept in his head.
It was a pelican.

A song that was left in the furious
and definitive waters of children.
And you also ask who.
Who appears between you and mystery.
The poet's lost throne.
Your privilege is to search for lures
in the printed lines of life.