

POEMS by Pedro Serrano
Translated from the Spanish by Katherine Silver

Port

The city tastes of the sea,
rings saltpeter bells,
sways its long arms of willow,
licks the frightened bones of its planes,
and flees in a tangled web of defection.
It frantically moves its feet in the sky,
dances in the wind and the water,
and taps its heels to the beat of the rain, click, click.
It runs in a frenzy from alley to alley,
flees as if it were fog itself,
and sinks with a clamor and din.
And there below the human soul, its smoke, its chimney,
its heaps of kilns and contentions,
its thousands of steps cleaving to each day.
A vast sea of fireflies,
the port,
its men and women.

Branches along Amhurst Road

Aligned like shanks, the trunks:
renegade corals in the forest of fog,
raised splinters and an uproar,
a strained and frozen web.
Black branches against the cloudless sky,
all depths drained,
a profusion of scribbles and grapnels,
scratches on January's gray page.
Against the harsh wall of open sky
—a wall of blue plaster and endless cobalt—
grows a bramble of branches.
When bared to the air, they crumble:
flakes of dust and peach fuzz,
motionless genuflection toward earth.
Frozen roots in the air.
Branches like a net,
like flames.
Like arms of wind, raised,
the sky's crucifixion, a grapnel.

Queen's Park

One garden is another garden and the flowers wear out
the gaze that drags loosely along the dirt path
—roses and geraniums peeking out,
rhododendrons and pragmatic azaleas.
One garden is another garden if the soul dissolved again,
if the sugars of one summer lived on in the next.
One garden is another garden and none persists,
none erects its own contents
or repercussions that aren't redundant,
messy tangles if neglected,
dull ranks if tended too strictly.
The shade's place to play,
the blue corner of albums and encyclopedias,
a splendid moor pursued step by step
with the care of one who avoids confusion, error,
who every day inserts more distress in the idea,
a desolate and almost vague smothering.
One garden is another garden full of flowers, empty,
spent and betrayed by its never repetition.

Three poems from Nuts, by Pedro Serrano, translated by Katherine Silver, April 2014

BIO:

Pedro Serrano (Montreal, 1957). He has a Degree in Spanish by UNAM, an MPhil in English Studies by the University of London (King's College) and a PhD in Literature by UNAM, where he teaches Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetry and Translation. He has published five books of poems, *El miedo* (1986), *Ignorancia* (1994), *Tres poemas* (2000), *Turba* (2005) *Desplazamientos* (2006) and *Nueces* (2009). Together with Carlos López Beltrán he edited and translated *La generación del cordero* (The Lamb generation) a bilingual anthology of Contemporary British Poetry, and an anthology of the Irish poet Matthew Sweeney. He translated also William Shakespeare's *King John* and Edward Hirsch's *Aligeren la oscuridad* (Lay Back the Darkness). His *Canciones lunáticas* (music by Hilda Paredes) were performed recently by the Arditti Quartet at the Wigmore Hall in London and at the Opéra Bastille in Paris. His poems have appeared in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *Verse*, *Sirena*, *The Rialto*, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, *Nimrod Internacional Journal*, *Boulevard Magenta* and *Bomb*. He has been also included in the anthologies *Reversible Monuments* (Copper Canyon, 2002) *Connecting Lines* (Sarabande Books, 2006), *Mexican Poetry Today 20/20 Voices* (Shearsman Books, 2010), *Being Human. More Real Poems for Unreal Time* (Bloodaxe, 2011) and *Literature. An Introduction to Fiction, poetry, drama and Writing*, edited by X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. *La construcción del poeta moderno. T. S. Eliot y Octavio Paz* appeared in Mexico in 2011. He is the editor of *Periódico de Poesía*, a poetry journal on line (www.periodicodepoesia.unam.mx). He was granted the Guggenheim fellowship in 2007. His book *Peatlands*, translated by Anna Crowe and introduced by W.N. Herbert, has just been published by Arc.

BIO:

Katherine Silver is an award-winning translator of literature from Spanish and is the co-director of the Banff International Literary Translation Centre (BILTC) in Alberta, Canada. Her most recent translations include works by Martín Adán, Daniel Sada, Horacio Castellanos Moya, César Aira, Rafael Bernal, Jorge Luis Borges, and Marcos Giralt Torrente.