

# **SLOW DISASTER**

a False Elegy

(obra)

(pensamiento), (palabra)... Y obra

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### Abstract

This article responds to an invitation to write about the role of the ecology in my practice as a poet, specifically as the author of the collection *Desastre lento*, which was first published in 2017 and, most recently, in 2023. In the lapse of these years, ecological criticism and poetics have gained strength in the fields of Literary Studies and Creative Writing. On this account, this article reflects on the poems of the book which have to do with the ecological questions such as environmental catastrophe, animality, and end of the world narratives. I analyze them through exercises of close reading and an interdisciplinary dialogue.

**Keywords:** poetry and ecology; environmental catastrophe; poetics; creative practices; animal studies; philosophy and literature

### Desastre lento: uma falsa elegia

#### Abstract

Este artigo de reflexão respondeu a um convite que queria escrever sobre o papel da ecologia na minha prática como poeta, especificamente como autor do poema *Desastre lento*, publicado pela primeira vez em 2017 e, mais recentemente, em 2023. O lapso desses anos, a crítica e as poéticas ecológicas cobraram força no terreno dos literários e na criação poética. Dessa forma, neste artigo refletimos sobre os poemas do livro que consideram mais do que as fibras da eco-poética, e comentam através dos exercícios de “close reading” e um diálogo interdisciplinar.

**Palavras-chave:** poesia e ecologia; desastre ambiental; poéticas; práticas criativas; animalidade; filosofia e literatura

### Desastre lento: una falsa elegía

#### Resumen

Este artículo de reflexión responde a una invitación que me fue hecha para escribir sobre el rol de lo ecológico en mi práctica como poeta, específicamente como autora del poemario *Desastre lento*, cuya primera edición fue publicada en 2017 y, la más reciente, en 2023. En el lapso de estos años, crítica y poéticas ecológicas han cobrado fuerza en el terreno de los estudios literarios y de la creación poética. De tal manera, en este artículo voy a reflexionar sobre los poemas del libro que considero más tocan las fibras de lo eco-poético a través de preguntas por la animalidad, la catástrofe ambiental y las narrativas del fin del mundo. Los comentaré a través de ejercicios de *close reading* con un enfoque interdisciplinar.

**Palabras clave:** poesía y ecología; catástrofe ambiental; poéticas; prácticas creativas; animalidad; filosofía y literatura



The writer Juliana Borrero invited me in November 2024 to talk about the role of ecology in my practice as a poet, specifically as the author of the collection of poems *Desastre lento* (Slow Disaster). The paper was to be presented at a seminar on ecocriticism organized by the Master in Literature of the Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia in Tunja, Boyacá. Based on this paper, I write this article reflecting on the relationship between ecology and poetic creation in the writing of *Slow Disaster*.

I wrote this book between 2014 and 2017, in a period that includes the years when I left Colombia to do my Doctorate in England, a Doctorate in Philosophy and Literature that had nothing to do with the ideas of nature, ecosystem, extinctions, multispecies life..., but it had everything to do with thinking the human from the vulnerability in which it places us or even offers us, as a gift, our condition of being finite.

Parallel to my doctorate, I wrote the poems that make up this collection of poems; poems that are populated by animals of the moor —such as the white-tailed deer, the spectacled bear, the frogs; questions about the environmental catastrophe, and also about the overestimation of the fear of the end of the world. I wrote poems without the objective of making an ecological or ecocritical poetry book. The truth is, when I wrote the book, I had been to the moor only once, and most of the animals in the book I don't even remember seeing there. That is why it is important to clarify that the ecocritical reading I propose to do now about the collection of poems is done from a distance, as a reader and scholar of literature rather than as a writer, because now I have the theoretical tools to recognize in my own poems ecological features that, when I wrote them, I did not know about.

In 2019 I ended up doing a postdoc on a moorland complex in Boyacá, the Guantiva-La Rusia moorland complex. When I did the field work, I felt that *Slow Disaster* came to life, that, among frailejones of different sizes and fleshy leaf chewed by spectacled bears, the poems returned to their habitat, and that it was a prophetic poetry book, because it spoke more of the mountains I would climb in the future than of experiences I had had when I wrote it. In fact, it could also seem to be a collection of poems written in the time of covid, as it questions the plastic and aesthetic fixation we have for the narratives of the end of the world.

In this article I will reflect on the poems of the book that I now consider most touch the fibers of the eco-poetic and I will comment on them, little by little in an interdisciplinary dialogue. Thinking poetry ecologically implies finding and creating connections between literature and other discourses and disciplines: biology, anthropology and philosophy, among others. If I were to think of theoretical interlocutors to accompany the reading of these poems, it would not only be the two French philosophers who helped me mainly to understand finitude as a point of connection between living beings while I was doing my Doctorate: Jean-Luc Nancy and Maurice Blanchot, but also the American philosopher Donna Haraway. In *La promesa de*

*los monstruos* (The Promise of Monsters), Haraway develops an idea that will be key to my reading, the “artefactualismo” (“artifactualism”) of nature: the fact that the idea we have of “nature” is a construction in the first place, and that it is constructed both in the form of fiction and of actual fact. That is why she claims that it is a *lugar común* (commonplace): a *topos* that we take for granted, a word that we do not question, that we do not decontextualize, and, on the other hand, a shared place that we have to take care of and look after (Haraway, 2019, pp.30-31).

The work of authors such as Angela Hume and Gisella Heffes on ecocriticism has also been important to my practice, perhaps not in mapping what I write, but in understanding how I read and interpret and how I teach reading ecological poetry in my classes. From them, for the purposes of this article, which is a distanced reading of my own poetics, it seems important to me to rescue the idea that, in ecopoetics, the nature represented does not have a symbolic or metaphorical function; although we are in the field of poetic language, when I say frog, I mean a frog; when I speak of the deer and disappearance, I mean a threatened existence, etcetera. We will see it little by little; the important thing is to clarify that ecopoetic invite us to read poetry in a more direct way than the way lyric is normally approached. Reading ecological poems requires seeing and hearing the beings and scenarios that the poem shows and makes sound, without looking for hidden or transcendental meanings. The existence of the named life takes precedence over what can be put at the service of the expression of human feeling.

I want to begin the review with the two epigraphs of the book, because the idea of death is the first thing that allowed me to experience in a physical way the bridge between the human and the non-human that permeates the book:

“Compartimos sólo un desastre lento”, Rosario Castellanos.

(“We share only a slow disaster”, Rosario Castellanos.)

“Sólo tenemos en común el vértigo del abismo”, Georges Bataille.

(“We have in common only the vertigo of the abyss”, Georges Bataille.)

In both quotations, the idea that what is common or what we share is death stands out. In the philosophy of Heidegger, Nancy and Blanchot, death is understood as that which makes us more like others and, at the same time,

absolutely singular and unrepeatable: death determines me in the sense that no one else can die in my place. At the same time, death renders our bodies vulnerable to illness, injury, violence, and places us in the world in all our strength and fragility. He also tells us: “*aprovecha cada segundo, cada caricia, toda la belleza, aunque a veces duela*” (“take advantage of every second, every caress, all beauty, even if it hurts sometimes”). The idea of death in Castellanos’ verse is put in terms of a “slow disaster”, which can be read in terms of the environment and the bodies that compose and decompose in the ecosystem —the way the world gets sick and its dire consequences are a slow disaster, so slow that sometimes we don’t even realize it, that for a long time we didn’t realize it until we opened our eyes to the brink of disappearance. The extinction of insects, for example, has been a slow disaster (with its minute accelerations). The vertigo of the abyss, in Bataille’s quote, speaks more of the way it feels to be aware of death or the end —a vertigo; it is perhaps a more intimate look at the landscape that Castellanos describes.

Read in an ecological key, both epigraphs make me think of the exercise that the writer and artist Verónica Gerber performs on the poems of José Juan Tablada in *Otro día: poemas sintéticos* (Another Day: Synthetic Poems). In this exercise, the poet re-write in 2019, a book of *haikus* published by Tablada in 1919 (*Un día: poemas sintéticos*) (One Day: Synthetic Poems) in which the author represents nature in a contemplative and calm way, faithful to the poetic genre of *haiku*. Thus, where the Mexican poet writes:

#### Las ranas

Engranes de matracas  
 Crepitan al correr del arroyo  
 En los molinos de las ranas.

(Tablada, 2008, p.28)

#### Frogs

Rattle gears  
 Crackle as the stream runs  
 In the mills of the frogs.

(Tablada, 2008, p.28)

Gerber responde:

#### Las ranas

Ahora hay que  
 buscarles cinco patas  
 y a veces tres.

(Gerber, 2019, p.27)

Gerber responds:

### The frogs

Now we have to  
find them five legs  
and sometimes three.

(Gerber, 2019, p.27)

The distance between the two poems does not make us feel that before the world was perfect and now, we are suddenly in a crisis in which the bodies of the species are mutating due to the use of toxic pesticides. What happens is that, through the repetition of the contrasts offered by the book's device, poem after poem, the reading leads us to feel that the disaster was slow, but that both texts are connected because the germ already inhabited even the poems of 1919, and the germ was not only the chemical, but also the idealization we have made of nature. Thus, their apparent calm becomes an uncomfortable truth, and both books sink into and have in common the vertigo of the abyss. The epigraph of Castellanos, also Mexican, I took it from a poem called *Falsa elegía* (false elegy):

*Compartimos sólo un desastre lento  
me veo morir en ti, en otro, en todo  
y todavía bostezo o me distraigo  
como ante el espectáculo aburrido.*

*Se destejen los días,  
las noches se consumen antes de darnos cuenta;  
así nos acabamos.*

*Nada es. Nada está.  
Entre el alzarse y el caer del párpado.*

*Pero si alguno va a nacer (su anuncio,  
la posibilidad de su inminencia  
y su peso de sílaba en el aire),  
trastorna lo existente,  
puede más que lo real  
y desaloja el cuerpo de los vivos.*

(Castellanos, 1972, p. 21)

We share only a slow disaster  
I see myself dying in you, in another, in  
everything  
and still I yawn or get distracted  
as before the dull spectacle.  
The days are unraveling,  
the nights are consumed before we realize it;

so we end.

Nothing is. Nothing is.  
Between the rising and the falling of the eyelid.

But if one is to be born (its announcement,  
the possibility of its imminence  
and its syllable weight in the air),  
it upsets the existing,  
it can do more than the real  
and dislodges the body of the living.

(Castellanos, 1972, p. 21).

An elegy is a poem of mourning that is written when someone or something dies. This elegy is false, as the title points out, because it ends in birth, in the announcement and possibility of life, which breaks into the slow, steady, shared movement of disaster. That is also where I wanted my book to end, because as Gayatri Spivak rightly says, nature is that commonplace *que no podemos no desear* (we cannot not desire) (Haraway, 2019, p. 30). That is why the last poem in my book is:

*CORREN hacia los espacios  
que van despejando las palabras.  
Con el tiempo, ahí volverá a crecer la hierba.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 67)

RUN towards the spaces  
that the words are clearing.  
In time, there the grass will grow again.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 67).

I am not sure who is running, the survivors, human and non-human, readers who made it to the last poem of the book; word and meaning have faced aridity, drought and a forsaken world poem after poem, but by questioning the language with which we represent these spaces, by making connections with other species in the process, something moves, changes and it is possible for the grass to grow again, to “disrupt the existing” with its “syllable weight in the air,” as Rosario Castellanos writes.

In the speech she gave when she received the Nobel Prize, *El narrador tierno* (The Tender Narrator), Olga Tokarczuk proposes that, in a world where storytelling is being dominated by individualistic and alienated points of view, there should be a fourth person, a “tender narrator” who could perceive “*los lazos que nos conectan, las similitudes y la similitud entre nosotros. Es una forma de mirar*

*que muestra el mundo como vivo, interconectado, cooperando y codependiente de sí mismo* “the ties that connect us, the similarities and sameness between us. It is a way of looking that shows the world as alive, interconnected, cooperating, and co-dependent on itself” (2018). The poetic voice of *Slow Disaster* often manifests itself as this fourth person. Tenderness, understood in this way, makes the following poem possible:

*EL OSO hiberna en una cueva.  
Las sombras  
de sus sueños  
se deslizan en los míos.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 40)

THE BEAR hibernates in a cave.  
The shadows  
of his dreams  
slip into mine.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 40).

I was interested in creating a connection with the bear’s inner world, diffusely, blurrily, but in an imaginary way in which we touch, in which my existence is linked to his, from unconsciousness and intuition. In a talk Anne Carson gave recently, she spoke of a concept that is *in-see* (*ver-en*), not seeing through, which implies going in but also going out, but seeing in the dog, in the fish, in the bear, lingering, seeing inside yourself.

One of the oldest poems I included in the book speaks directly to tenderness, let’s go that way:

*LOS CABALLOS no iban a vivir  
tanto tiempo.  
Pero encontraron ofrendas  
en el sueño de los muertos.  
Allí pastan, beben agua y, a veces,  
se acercan a las manos  
cubiertas de panela  
que brotan como flores dulces  
a su alrededor.  
Doblan el cuello y reciben la ternura  
que también debió extinguirse  
hace tiempo.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 12)

THE HORSES were not going to live  
that long.  
But they found offerings  
in the sleep of the dead.  
There they graze, drink water and, sometimes,  
they get close to the hands  
covered with panela  
that sprout like sweet flowers  
around them.  
They bend their necks and receive the tenderness  
that should also have been extinguished  
long ago.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 12).

This is a dreamlike, imaginary poem, in which the poetic voice is situated beyond the end of the world, an end of the world caused by a massive extinction... But beyond death, some liminal animals — the horses— feed on the tenderness in the dreams of the dead who insist on caring for life. Tenderness, in this imagined and desired world, which is beyond the violence and the environmental catastrophe that ended everything, is what endures, because it is also the point, the feeling, of contact. The poem is not a call for the world to end, but for tenderness to awaken among us.

I don’t know how it came about, but the poetic voice that I developed in this collection of poems is situated, fictionally, in the after, after the world ended, after several worlds ended. Something I discovered while writing it is that worlds end all the time.

*CRECÍ EN UNA MONTAÑA  
embrujada por indígenas  
que se lanzaban de peñascos.  
Sin tiempo de decir sus últimas palabras,  
sus últimos suspiros exhalaban mariposas.  
En la montaña nadie se pregunta  
hacia dónde vuelan estos insectos  
o cuánto tiempo duran,  
sabemos que no puede retenerse  
el suspiro de un suicida.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 56)

I GREW UP ON A MOUNTAIN  
haunted by indigenous people  
who threw themselves from crags.

Without time to say his last words,  
their last sighs exhaled butterflies.

In the mountain no one wonders  
where these insects fly to  
or how long they last,

we know it can't be held back  
the sigh of a suicide.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 56).

*ME PREGUNTASTE por el venado  
de cola blanca,  
por qué justamente ese.*

*Porque va desapareciendo,*

*la punta blanca de la cola  
solo es el comienzo,  
después se extiende por todo su cuerpo.*

*Las orejas son más resistentes  
y demoran en perderse  
en el rumor de la nieve.*

*En parte por la pasión  
de sacudirme la voz de encima,  
como un animal mojado;*

*y en parte por asemejarse al olvido.*

*Tuve que haberte hablado  
del parentesco  
entre los animales y la música;*

*decirte que hablo del venado  
como pongo una canción para desaparecer.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 48)

YOU ASKED ME about the deer,  
the white-tailed deer,  
why just that one.

Because it is disappearing,

the white tip of the tail  
is just the beginning,  
then it spreads all over its body.

The ears are more resistant  
and take a long time to get lost  
in the snow's rustle.

Partly because of the passion  
to shake off my voice  
like a wet animal;  
and partly by resembling oblivion.

I should have told you  
of the kinship  
between animals and music;

to tell you that I speak of the deer  
as I play a song to disappear.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 48).

### **El fantasma de Sitting Bull**

*En diálogo con un poema de L. M. Panero*

*Sueño con tambores  
y una densa  
niebla roja.*

*Sitting Bull ha vuelto  
y ya no hay grandes*

*praderas  
ni caballos, onagros  
o bisontes.*

*En sus manos marcadas  
se pronuncia  
el vestigio de unas riendas,  
en su pecho,  
el agujero de una bala.*

*Camina despacio  
a través de la nube roja,  
a cada paso  
deja un cráter  
pintado de estrellas  
en la tierra.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 58)

### **The ghost of Sitting Bull**

*In dialogue with a poem by L. M. Panero*

I dream of drums  
and a dense  
red fog.

Sitting Bull is back  
and there are no longer



meadows  
no horses, onagers  
or bison.  
In his marked hands  
it is pronounced  
the vestige of reins,  
on his chest,  
the hole of a bullet.  
He walks slowly  
through the red cloud,  
at each step  
leaves a crater  
painted with stars  
on the earth.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 58).

In these three poems there are three different worlds: that of the Muisca of Ubaté, who in 1541 threw themselves off a cliff in Sutatausa, formerly known as Suta, to escape conversion and the cruel methods used by the colonist missionaries to achieve it. I originally wrote this poem for a collective poetic anthology about butterflies; I did not plan it, the poem came out before I thought of it, it is an elegy, an elegy that seeks to conjure the memory of the indigenous people who died in that specific time and place through an image. I wrote a fiction that hopefully allows us to think of them whenever we see a butterfly — a real butterfly — flying around Ubaté, Cundinamarca. It is important to include this poem in my reading because one of the tasks of ecocriticism, as Gisella Heffes points out, is to denaturalize what we understand by nature. And, in particular, Latin American ecocriticism must attend to the fact that, in Eurocentric discourses,

*la mujer, el indígena, el no europeo y el pobre  
fueron relegados a cumplir un papel de 'figura  
objetivada' y correspondiente con la 'naturaleza'; el*

*hombre europeo (obviamente blanco), al contrario,  
fue asociado con la idea de racionalidad, subjeti-  
vado y portador de cultura. (Heffes, 2020)*

(women, the indigenous, the non-European and the poor were relegated to the role of 'objectified figure' and corresponding to 'nature'; the European man (obviously white), on the contrary, was associated with the idea of rationality, subjectivity and bearer of culture.) (Heffes, 2020).

The white-tailed deer poem is about an animal that is in danger of extinction. I had never seen nor one when I wrote the poem. Now I have been to the moor several times and have seen several on the roadside or among frailejones, always diffuse in the fog. Their appearance is always delicate, fragile, they seem prone to disappear.

In the Sitting Bull poem, the character appears in the same place as the poetic voice in this collection: after the end of a world, his own. The ghost of Sitting Bull, spiritual chief of the Lakota, returns to the Grand River settlement in South Dakota and finds a transformed setting where there is no longer what there was in his time: great prairies, onagers and bison. His spirituality infects the land, and in each dry crater, he leaves stars. An image for the desire of life.

In the three poems I name some things that are lost, that are being lost, but I try to conjure them so that we create a link with them, so that we feel, through the poetic word, the uniqueness of each of these worlds: "*Solo la literatura es capaz de permitirnos profundizar en la vida de otro ser, comprender sus razones, compartir sus emociones y experimentar su destino*" ("Only literature is able to allow us to delve into the life of another being, to understand its reasons, to share its emotions and to experience its destiny") (Torkarczuk, 2018). It is in this key that we can read the following poem:

*EL MUNDO va a acabarse antes que la poesía  
y habrá nombres  
para diferenciar el olvido de la fauna  
del olvido de la flora.  
La palabra esqueleto solo se referirá a los restos  
humanos  
porque habrá una forma particular  
de describir el conjunto de huesos  
de cada especie extinta.  
Habrá un nombre para designar la última  
chispa de fuego,  
un nombre primitivo como el del maíz,  
y otro para la transparencia del río  
que muchos se habrán lanzado a atrapar  
al confundirla con sus almas.  
Las crías nacidas ese día no se tendrán en cuenta,  
pero la palabra parto sustituirá a la palabra ironía  
que ya habrá sustituido a la palabra tristeza.  
Y habrá un léxico de adioses,  
porque se dirán de tantas formas  
que llenarán un libro entero, que es lo que  
quedará del amor,  
de la literatura.  
El mundo va a acabarse antes que la poesía  
y la poesía continuará afirmando su devoción  
a lo perdido.*

*(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 46)*

THE WORLD is going to end before poetry does  
and there will be names  
to differentiate the oblivion of the fauna  
from the oblivion of the flora.  
The word skeleton will refer only to human  
remains  
because there will be a particular way  
of describing the set of bones  
of each extinct species.

There will be a name to designate the last spark  
of fire,  
a primitive name like that of corn,  
and another for the transparency of the river  
that many will have thrown themselves to  
catch  
by mistaking it for their souls.  
The offspring born that day will be  
disregarded,  
but the word childbirth will replace the word  
irony that will have already replaced the word  
sadness.  
And there will be a lexicon of goodbyes,  
because they will be said in so many ways  
that they will fill an entire book, which is what  
will remain of love,  
of literature.  
The world will come to an end before poetry does  
and poetry will continue to affirm its devotion  
to the lost.

*(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 46)*

The importance of writing about everything that  
is lost and also what remains with the right word is one  
reason why I believe that poetry exists, everything has the  
right to be named and seen and heard in the most unique  
ways possible. Donna Haraway says that, when we talk  
about nature, we should think in terms of generation and  
not reproduction (*La promesa de los monstruos, p. 44*) (*The  
Promise of Monsters, p. 44*), because everything mutates  
and nothing repeats itself, each being carries an alteration  
with respect to the previous one:

*TEMÍAMOS VOLVER del paisaje difuminado,  
reincorporarnos a las formas  
sin salirnos de las líneas.  
El retorno a la concentración,*

*a los nombres que le quitan las cosas al silencio.  
Temíamos mirar un espejo  
y encontrar un espíritu contenido  
en la lógica del reflejo.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 46)

WE FEAR TO RETURN from the blurred  
landscape,  
to reincorporate ourselves into the forms  
without leaving the lines.  
The return to concentration,  
to the names that take things away from silence.  
We feared to look into a mirror  
and find a spirit contained  
in the logic of the reflection.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 46)

The poem speaks, first of all, of the freedom that diffraction gives us, of the freedoms of existing in a landscape where we are not constrained to pre-existing forms that concentrate existence and limit it. To be a misfit/able, Haraway writes, “*significa estar en una relación crítica, deconstructiva: una relacionalidad difractiva antes que reflexiva, como forma de establecer conexiones potentes que excedan la dominación... no estar originalmente fijado en la diferencia*” (2019, p. 47); (“means to be in a critical, deconstructive relationship: a diffractive rather than reflexive relationality, as a way of establishing potent connections that exceed domination...not to be originally fixed in difference”) (2019, p. 47). The poetic voice of my poetry book is a misfit, it does not seek itself in a reflection, it seeks multiplicity in diffraction and meets animals and nature as an artifact.

The silence that opens up through the poetic word—expressed in the poem in these two lines: “*el retorno a la concentración / a los nombres que le quitan las cosas al silencio*” (“the return to concentration / to the names that take things away from silence”)—is also important to point out the singularity of beings, because, in diffraction, they escape the possibility of identification and, therefore, our ability to recognize and name them. This difference or distance—which is not a gap to overcome, but to value—I explore in other poems in the book:

*POR LA NOCHE canté  
una canción de cuna indígena, me dolía  
la mandíbula  
porque hay que mover la boca*

*de otra forma.  
Los sonidos precolombinos  
vienen en distintos tonos como las sombras  
me dolían los ojos también.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 10)

IN THE EVENING I sang  
an indigenous lullaby, my jaw  
was aching  
because you have to move your mouth  
in a different way.  
Pre-Columbian sounds  
come in different tones like shadows  
my eyes hurt too.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 10)

*ESA NOCHE EL FUEGO y yo nos dimos  
espacio.  
Lo dejé ser y me dejó ser.  
No busqué sentido en las llamas  
ni una mitología entre la brasa.  
Me hice la sorda ante las duras interrogaciones.  
Nos hicimos los inalterables,  
los extraños.  
Esa noche él invocó a sus dioses  
y yo olvidé los míos.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 29)

THAT NIGHT THE FIRE and I gave each other  
space.  
I let it be and it let me be.  
I did not look for meaning in the flames  
nor a mythology among the embers.  
I turned a deaf ear to the harsh interrogations.  
We made ourselves the unchangeable ones,  
the strangers.  
That night he invoked his gods  
and I forgot mine.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 29)

Both poems talk about distances with beings with whom it is impossible for me to merge, to be one, of whom I cannot appropriate; I feel the distances with the body, but not for that reason I leave them aside, not for that reason I avoid the strangeness, the diffraction, the silence, the poetic mismatch in which tenderness, that is, the ties that connect us, create anyway a common place in which to dwell together: the poem, the song, the prayer.

In poetry I have found again and again, and especially in this book and from this book, animals enunciating themselves to be listened to, to look at them more closely.

*RANA estática*  
*la musa es la hierba*  
*croar es cantar.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 11)

static FROG  
the muse is the grass  
to croak is to sing.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 11)

This poem gave me a poetic totem: the frog. The frog came to this poem to tell me: “*no busques la poesía en lo celeste, en lo elevado, en el canto de las aves*” (“do not look for poetry in the celestial, in the lofty, in the song of birds”). Poetry is not always melodious, poetry is in the earth, in the grass, in the rare and extraordinary tones and sound colors of frogs, which are poems, like their rough skins and sticky legs. Moreover, when they have not undergone mutations, like the frog in Gerber’s poem, they are creatures that announce and affirm the humidity of a place, the life, the healthy; frogs exist and dwell where there are healthy environments, and they cleanse the worlds.

***Un haiku para Denise***

Ella dibuja  
al hermano colibrí:  
color errante.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 44)

***A haiku for Denise***

She draws  
the hummingbird brother:  
wandering color.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 44)

This poem was given to me by a hummingbird and a sister. A sister who drew behind my back while I followed the flight of a hummingbird with my eyes. It happened one morning in La Calera, Cundinamarca. The words twisted the facts to reveal a truth: the hummingbird is my brother, the hummingbird is a wandering color. Both the frog poem and this one are *haikus* in the sense in which José Juan Tabla wrote them, as a form more spiritual than aesthetic, or a Japanese spiritual aesthetic, in which the poetic voice stops to contemplate and name what it can see, in the landscape or in the mind’s eye. He does not transform it into a metaphor but represents it from the singularity and the miracle of its existence and the relationships in which it is immersed, they are tiny postcards of a relational present, they capture that instant in which the sister draws and a hummingbird flies by, in which a frog croaks in the grass. Within my book, I must admit that these poems are, in Haraway’s terms, more reflective than diffractive, as they capture the images of a few revelatory instants I experienced while observing or hearing nature, but they are not concerned with unpacking some preconceived ideas of what we call “nature” or by the environmental crisis. Within the field of ecopoetics, however, they would still be classified as ecological poems, since their axis are animals and there is a horizontal approach between the human and the non-human. The following poem follows this line:

NO SÉ CÓMO sean tus huellas  
en la nieve,  
pero quiero que sepas que hice cuanto pude  
para que nada las borrara.

Le pedí al venado de cola blanca  
que no corriera sobre ellas;  
a los jaguares,  
que las bordearan con sigilo.

Le supliqué a los tigrillos  
jugar en otra parte  
y al oso de anteojos  
mirar muy bien por dónde pasa.

Los árboles y el viento  
prometieron deshacer las hojas en el aire,  
aunque en el viento, lo sabes,  
no confío nada.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 31)

I DON'T KNOW HOW are your footprints  
in the snow,  
but I want you to know that I did everything I  
could  
so that nothing could erase them.

I asked the white-tailed deer  
not to run over them;  
the jaguars,  
to skirt them with stealth.

I begged the tigrillos  
to play elsewhere  
and the spectacled bear  
to watch carefully where it passes.

The trees and the wind  
promised to undo the leaves in the air,  
though in the wind, you know,  
I don't trust anything.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 31)

I wrote this poem for someone who was in the Nevado del Cocuy while I stayed in Bogotá. His absence made me search the internet for the uniqueness of that ecosystem, but especially in terms of animal life, in *Slow disaster* the plant world is not enunciated, it is not yet revealed to me, while in domestic life —outside the text— I am much more immersed and surrounded by the vegetable. Probably, if I had planned it, if I had said: “*voy a hacer un poemario ecológico*” (“I am going to write an ecological poetry book”), I would have calculated

much better the balance between the animal and the vegetable, but writing poems, for me, is totally out of that kind of schematic dynamics. That is why the following poem is almost an *ars poetica* of the book, the animals and their figures came to wake me up, to foreshadow what was coming.

EN LA PARTE MÁS SOLA de la imaginación,  
una voz presagia el tiempo de seres ardientes  
y le da forma al animalario de mi lengua. *A la luz hay que despertarla*, me dice, *como lo hace el venado de cola blanca: al saltar un tronco muerto, clava sus cuernos en el sol y pone el fuego otra vez en movimiento.* (Ganitsky, 2023, p. 39)

IN THE LONELIEST PART of the imagination,  
a voice foreshadows the time of fiery beings and  
gives shape to the animalarium of my tongue.  
The light must be awakened, it tells me, as the  
white-tailed deer does: leaping over a dead log,  
it sticks its antlers into the sun and sets the fire  
in motion again. (Ganitsky, 2023, p. 39)

*Slow Disaster* is constantly moving between those images that twin us with the singularities that surround us, and between more devastated scenarios that make us think and connect slow disaster, the end of the world and montage or artifactualism —from the ideas and preconceptions we have of the end of the world and of nature. This particular poem has the vital and resplendent force of the deer leaping towards the sun, but, at the same time, it is leaping a dead log, the only static ruin at the heart of this kinetic poem —but this ruin is not like the human ones (which last for centuries and become tourist sites), for the log will be consumed and transformed by the ecosystem.

#### MONTAJE II

*Los caballos en los sueños  
tienen hambre y sed.*

*Donde había hierba  
solo hay tierra árida,  
los pozos y las lagunas  
se secaron.*

*De vez en cuando pasa un lobo  
o un perro  
olfateando la nada.*

*Entran por un lado y salen por el otro,  
como en un escenario de teatro.*

*No me sorprendería*



*que fuera solo un perro  
o solo un lobo  
disfrazándose.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 33)

#### MONTAGE II

Horses in dreams  
are hungry and thirsty.  
Where there was grass  
there is only barren land,  
the wells and ponds  
dried up.  
From time to time a wolf  
or a dog  
sniffing the nothingness.  
They enter on one side and leave on the other,  
like on a theater stage.  
I wouldn't be surprised  
if it was just a dog  
or just a wolf  
disguising itself.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 33).

#### MONTAJE V

*Tampoco nos convencieron  
del desastre; todos  
los restos eran de plástico.  
Un montaje más  
del fin del mundo  
no engaña  
a las hijas del residuo.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 55)

#### MONTAGE V

Nor were we convinced  
of the disaster; all the  
the remains were made of plastic.

One more montage  
of the end of the world  
does not cheat  
to the daughters of the residue.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 55)

The book is crossed by five montages. They are poems that reflect on the plasticity of the discourse of the end of the world, on the plasticity of a poem or poetry book, on the artifactualism of the idea of nature. Thus, the poems that bear the title of montages are intended to make it clear that, just as our ideas of “nature” and the “end of the world” are discursive montages, the collection of poems is also a montage, and that I have made conscious, premeditated decisions about the meaning created by the set of poems I grouped together, the order in which I grouped them, and the words I grouped in each. The theme of each of these five poems has to do with a *mise-en-scène* or with something that appears to be one way and is another.

In Montage 2 I return to the horses that had appeared before, but now, at this point, they do not find the hands covered in cinnamon of the dead, they find nothing. The end of the world, the image of the dry and arid land, is also a *mise-en-scène*. The last wolf or the last dog is the actor in this theater. Through the role I gave this poem in the book, I wanted to question the narratives and aesthetics of the end of the world. Throughout the book there is an ambiguity and a question: since environmental catastrophe is a reality, how should we relate that imminence to the artificiality of its representations and to the aesthetic pleasure of the end? Should we better represent life? Life is desire, the end is fear. I believe that both can trap us, as spectators, and both must be thought of as inhabitants of a common place: the Earth.

In Montage 5 are very present some reflections I had had with an Argentine friend of mine who was doing her PhD in political geography while I was finishing mine. We were talking about how unnatural nature is. If we relate the natural to the pure or original, native plants are the most natural thing to a territory, but in many countries

of America the landscape was colonized: non-native and invasive plants grow from the land and, in many cases, weaken and unbalance the ecosystem. I thought, then, that if we understand the end of the world as the end of the natural, the natural had already ended a long time ago and many times, although it also resisted. Then I felt that I lived among waste and that my body was also composed of a residual and colonized ecology through the air I breathe and the food I eat. I thought of the microplastics, the agrochemicals, the mountains, the sun, the factories and the farmers who produce our food, the technologies on which we depend and through which we develop as human animals, I felt, with all the strength and fragility that comes with verse, that we are daughters of the residue. To go deeper into the residual in this poem and make *Slow Disaster* a kind of ecocritical poetic essay, I would have to include poems about the vegetable.

Throughout the book I try not to make moral judgments or impose a single perspective on the reader. Poetry, said the Romanian poet Paul Celan, is a space of exposure, not imposition. The only place that was ethically planned was how to end the book: whether with the possibility or impossibility of the future. To end it here:

*EL COMPROMISO de las rocas en el mar:  
ser grandes y silenciosas,  
albergar, en su centro, el pasado de las olas,  
en la superficie, el presente.  
Las rocas saben que las olas no tienen futuro,  
eso las hace fuertes.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 54)

THE COMMITMENT of the rocks in the sea:  
to be large and silent,

to harbor, in their center, the past of the waves,  
on the surface, the present.  
The rocks know that the waves have no future,  
that makes them strong.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 54)

Or here:

*DICEN que la última llama  
se encenderá  
en el océano.  
En el vientre de la ballena  
que hospeda los mitos olvidados,  
en su canto,*

*que conjura el retorno de los dioses.  
Pero yo he escondido  
unas cerillas  
para amparar las llamas  
de la tierra.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 64)

THEY SAY that the last flame  
will be lit  
in the ocean.  
In the belly of the whale  
that hosts the forgotten myths,  
in its song,  
that conjures the return of the gods.  
But I have hidden  
some matches  
to shelter the flames  
from the earth.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 64)

I opted for the latter:

*CORREN hacia los espacios  
que van despejando las palabras.  
Con el tiempo, ahí volverá a crecer la hierba.*

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 67)

RUN towards the spaces  
that the words are clearing.  
In time, there the grass will grow again.

(Ganitsky, 2023, p. 67)

The daughters of the residue run, with diffractive glances, through the foggy curtain of the Andean moor.

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