Where Vertigo Stirs
An Interview with Reynaldo Jiménez
Conducted by Silvia Guerra and translated by Michael Martin Shea

Introduction

Reynaldo Jiménez is a poet, translator, editor, performer, multi-media artist, and author of over a dozen books of poetry and writings. Born in Peru in 1959, he moved to Argentina in 1963 and later became a central figure in the *rioplatense* literary scene, most notably as editor (along with Gabriela Giusti) of the influential journal and publishing house, *Tsé-Tsé.* In the course of its nearly twenty year history, *Tsé-Tsé* published books by Cecilia Vicuña, José Kozer, Wilson Bueno, and Roberto Echavarren, as well as the epinonimous journal, which collated writing, translation, and art from across the Americas. As editor, he also compiled and curated *El Libro de Unos Sonidos: 37 Poetas del Perú,* a resplendent anthology of Peruvian poetry, and has translated works by Brazilian writers, including Paulo Leminski (*Catatau*) and Haroldo de Campos (*Galaxias*). Among his many publications are the books *Ruido incidental/El té*, *600 puertas*, *Reflexión esponja*, *Sangrado, Plexo*, *Esteparia*, and *El cóncavo. Imágenes irreductibles y superrealismos sudamericanos.* In 1996 his work was included in the seminal anthology of Latin American Neo-baroque poetry, *Medusario: Muestra de Poesía Latinoamericana,* with the great Argentine poet Néstor Perlongher noting in his introduction that "the young Peruvian resident of Buenos Aires" has created a body of work that offers "a glimpse of an extravagant brilliance above the suspended nets of language." Jiménez has also been a part of musical performances, created video poems, and hosted informal talks and studies, often in his own home. Those who have had the privilege to meet Reynaldo, however, perhaps know him best by his warm and welcoming spirit, and by his openness to the myriad possibilities of language.

Silvia Guerra, the interviewer, a Contributing Editor to *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*, is one of the most prominent poets of Uruguay. This text will form part of a book of interviews with Latin American poets that Guerra has conducted over the past decade.

[Translator's Note: English-language speakers are, most likely, unfamiliar with Jiménez's work, given the limited number of translations available, and the breadth of his work makes it such that a comprehensive overview is, currently, relatively impossible. Nevertheless, interested readers can find a few samples here (from *600 Puertas*) and here (from *Sangrado, Esteparia,* and *Antemano*)--generous thanks to the translators, Carlos Richard Lara and Geoffrey McGuire.]

Silvia Guerra: How did you begin writing? What brought you poetry?

Reynaldo Jiménez: My first approximations had to do with music, with song lyrics, with the poetry books which were in my house, by way of Javier Sologuren[1], who was my uncle. Also, my parents had books by Vallejo and Eguren[2], anthologies of Peruvian poetry. And on my paternal grandfather's side, there were few books but very precious ones, like the poems of Baudelaire, and there were essays too, by Maeterlinck, Thoreau, things like that, which were in the houses of my grandparents and my mother. She also had a small library, where there were the works of Kafka and Herman Hesse. Afterwards, there were books which were around but that I never read; even though it wasn't a "life of books," books were present in my house, in daily life—they weren't something from another planet.

Silvia: And you learned to read at a young age.

Reynaldo: Yes, without realizing it. The first things I read were comic strips, actually. When I was very young I would read all types of comics, and afterwards I began to read poetry, which fit me well because I was pretty impatient and long texts overwhelmed me a bit. I also began with movies—the words in subtitled movies really caught my attention—and with song lyrics, because I was a big fan of The Beatles, for example. And there was also Spinetta[3]: Pescado Rabioso put out an album called *Artaud*, the one that has the photo of Artaud on the cover. It's a great album, and it continues to be for me an incredible example of fusion between poetry and music, something that is infrequently achieved. Perhaps it's similar to—although very distinct from—the range of a Violeta Parra[4] or a Atahualpa Yupanqui[5], in a different sonic environment: when you reach that word which is like a relief[6]. For me it also began with music magazines, which featured poetry at that time, not just music: it was a little more "hippie." That was how I discovered counterculture: the Beats, whose books were also in my house,

Gregory Corso, Ginsberg, William Carlos Williams—who wasn't a Beat but was a reference for the Beats. And those books, which had been purchased in New York (where we would live for a few years) appeared because my parents had met Ginsberg in Peru, in the house of Javier Sologuren, my father's cousin and our neighbor in Chaclacayo[7]. My mother also met Gregory Corso: she was working as a receptionist in the St. Vincent hospital on the night shift, in the Village, and one night Gregory Corso showed up, overdosing. Finally when he had recovered, my mother told him that people knew of him in Peru and Argentina, that there had been translations of him in Argentina—and the guy just couldn't believe it. To think that Gregory Corso, who learned to read in jail—he had been a juvenile delinquent who read Rimbaud in jail and learned to write that way—he couldn't have ever imagined that he would be known in South America. In short, there are a few anecdotes like those.

At the same time, I think that as a reader, you desire writing, that it's by way of reading that one forms the desire to set something down. It's a different desire from reading: wanting to write is not the same as wanting to read. It's the desire to see texts that don't exist, but that you intuit *could* exist, words that call to you.

Silvia: That idea, words that call to you.

Reynaldo: Totally. In the end the poems go out alone. This worried me a lot at first. When I was just barely an adult, I ran a type of workshop, at first with Violeta Lubarsky—who would later be my partner for a decade, but who was just a few years older than I was—and with the supervision of another writer, Santiago Kovadloff. At the time it helped me to go back over and revise something that is automatic and culturally biased—which seems as if it were the most spontaneous and intimate thing but ended up being the most cultured and limited. Later I participated, during the dictatorship, in aesthetic study groups, and I began to meet people who were writing, and we came together with others to read. It's something that's a little surprising today, how that circle could have existed.

Silvia: That's important, the idea of a reflection which you can somehow share.

Reynaldo: And to see the production, where there are all these people, and everyone supporting different readings and seeing different things. There's the certain innocence of sharing. The grace of sharing readings and food, the process of writing. When it doesn't become impious, because there have also been situations where the criticism was incredibly rough, even cruel and unjust—if it's cruel it's always unjust. All of that toughens you up.

Silvia: What role does Peru play for you?

Reynaldo: For me, the reference has always been Peruvian poetry—it was always the key reference.

Silvia: You went back to Peru to see your father and, from a very young age, were in contact with Peruvian poets, by way of Javier Sologuren?

Reynaldo: Exactly—there was Javier and also Leslie Lee[8], a painter who was also a poet, a very close friend of my father. He introduced me to Blanca Varela, who I began to work with a lot, and also to Alejandro Romualdo and Francisco Bendezú[9]. At that point I already had the idea of putting together an anthology, which I had been working on for years. The first version was published in 1988 with Ultimo Reino, *El Libro de Unos Sonidos, 14 Poetas del Perú.* On my father's side, those sort of things

always surrounded me. In this way I was supplied, things came to me—the truth is that I didn't have to go looking.

Silvia: And when you formed the group El Invitado Sorpresa, you were working with a confluence of music, poetry, and painting.

Reynaldo: Yes, with Violeta Lubarsky and Fernando Aldao—we were the founding nucleus, the ones who persevered with that project for years—I couldn't tell you precisely when, but I think it was between 1983 and 1987. There were ups and downs, constantly changing members, but the idea was to make a collective, as they say now. We called ourselves a "band of artists," we didn't talk about performance. In reality, a fantasy I had and which we shared with Fernando was to create a rock band, but instead of a singer there would be poems, which obviously had to do with what we were listening to. I had been familiar with Patti Smith for a long time, Dylan, Lou Reed, but also Laurie Anderson. When I heard *Big Science* by Laurie Anderson for the first time, it blew my mind. I was also surprised by the minimalism, to which I felt such an affinity. From there I began to listen to Steve Reich, who I hadn't paid any attention to before, although I knew who he was. That same night of revelations, in the house of my friend Gabriel Tycocki, I also listened to for the first time *La voce del padrone* by Franco Battiato, whose lyrics were for me very striking. I had already come to Brian Eno and Fripp, and Brazilian *tropicalismo*—and the Beat poets who worked with jazz musicians. I had all of that in my head.

There were the three of us—the lyrics were Violeta's and mine, and at the start it was all based in irony and humor, which later I began to get tired of. I wanted to arrive at something more lyrical, more ritual. Later there were painters who were contributing: Pietro Cugnasco, Daniel Herce, Gabriela Giusti. For one show, we used these folding screens that we made ourselves, on top of which we projected these images and improvised a shadow theater; for another show, we used these scenes that I had painted.

Silvia: And that search for the music and the word—how does it go? Are you searching for the word through music? The music of the words? How does sound operate for your work?

Reynaldo: I'm still searching for that meeting point. I come back to Violeta Parra or Spinetta, as the basis—for me, the "enviable" thing about those artists is that, the confluence of the two languages. It's that ancestral confluence, you know? And it's through the song—in that sense, I'm forever writing something that's looking to be closer to a song or an incantation than to talking or discussion.

Silvia: Maybe it's the sound more than the song.

Reynaldo: Exactly, like a mantra.

Silvia: When you read, sometimes you move with the rhythm of what you're reading, like some sort of dance.

Reynaldo: For me, there are two different things: one is the writing, the application of words to paper, and the other is the presentation by the voice. The voice is the meeting between the body and the spirit, between me and the other, the others of another, the I of them.

Paper seems necessary to me, but a poem can also project itself. Paper gives a certain sensation, it generates the illusion of a stronger permanence. Definitely, if it becomes portable and you have it with you, you can open it in the moment you need it. The value of the book—the holy book, the

reminiscence like an incandescence of that memory of the book, which generates a feeling—where you can dialogue with otherness, you can listen to what's written. But I think you can make use of other foundations. I continue to need the book, but I also like audio, which disappears, which you listen to and lose, you lose or which mixes with noises but which is in the air, which remains there, you lose it in your memory, apparently, but it's there—it's great, because it remains somewhere, I think—or that's the illusion, the wish.

What's interesting is to work without references. I began to find my own reference—you begin to make things that appear sloppy or informal, proto-things, proto-works, and then the feeling begins to develop that there is no "work," there is working.

Silvia: What you're looking for is for something to happen.

Reynaldo: For a magic to emerge, the word like a magical element, and in that sense, the sound like a vibrating material, and like an energy transmission as well, in the same way that happens in writing. There are times when words come out of me that I don't know where they came from: I have to go look for a dictionary, and sometimes I realize that I'm "using them incorrectly," but I use them anyway. That semantic mismatch. That uneven heat between the word and the sense that it injects into a sequence. How it fits itself into a phrase where it doesn't seem to fit, and yet seems likes its untranslatable self. It's very Mallarmé.

Silvia: That's where the poetic sense is, that's when the poem unfolds.

Reynaldo: You read it and you're not sure if it's what you planned. In any case, I think the brilliant artists are the ones whose work always allows you to project and connect.

Silvia: Figurative language is created, metaphor opens up, something new appears in the language—another language—a species that's more distant that what you thought, right?

Reynaldo: Language itself appears, which is not pre-formed. Obviously it has the tracks of all its usage, and all the unequal effects of the anonymous tracks, but something else springs forth, an outbreak of that intensity.

Silvia: How could it have arrived this way, with all the memories one can have, with all the reminiscences that language can provoke, with all that it can produce inside you?

Reynaldo: Including misunderstanding, contradiction, and ignorance. It's a decision. But one that becomes conscious a second after it has appeared. It's to play with automatism but to also consider the word element, the syllable element, the letter element, and the sonic and visual elements. I read poems as if they were sheet music—and when I read poets whose work doesn't operate in this sense, I have to make a shift, I realize that other things are happening and that there are other styles, there isn't only one. And this expands my own work in the end, that acceptance that there isn't one aesthetic or one path. One time I was asked, "What is the social function of poetry?" and it bothered me, because when I look at it from the macro-political sense, we're all champions. The challenge is in the *micro*. It's what Perlongher was saying about the "microsea of syllables"—it flows through, for example, *Catatau*[10] or *Galaxias*[11] or *Trilce*. There's something happening in those texts, there's a guy who's putting together an edition, and he's editing everything, like in a film. So visually there's a path which marks the time of the

reading, the physical time of the reading—it's very important whether the poem has one length or another, and in that duration there are also speeds or articulations, which implicate the reader.

Silvia: What you're saying about acoustics, about the vocal weight that each word can have, the weight of the sound, the sum of each letter, the thickness, it's as if there were lights, or an amount of light, shining behind each word.

Reynaldo: What doesn't interest me—though I can appreciate it in others—is solely phonetic poetry. Although I did some experiments in private, the things I publish, that I show, that I make public—always with the requisite insecurity—are like the tip of an iceberg or the end of a leaf. I work on a lot of things whose purpose is just to warm up my hands, and in those I test out "books" and mountains of textual experiences or pseudo-texts which I later erase, and from there a splinter of those experiences becomes the foundation of a new zone, which suddenly is a book. There are also inexplicable things, becomes some books set off or revolve around a tone or a constructive attitude, or a composite whatever, and others don't—they remain a patchwork, they're outlined as minibooks which then grow like some kind of stuffed album, made of different things. I see them this way, by form, but I hope they define themselves afterward—and in same process, a lot of things are lost along the way.

For example, *Sangrado* is a book that I wrote during the crisis in 2001, and that made me focus on this network of ideas that has to do with the collective soul, with tragedy, with thinking about the individual in that context, the question of singularity as an emptiness in that scene: not the figure that comes forward but the space that makes it possible, like a memory or a sensory harmony on the level of the image. It has to do with that and not with alluding directly to the situation. Because although it was written from a sort of horrible anguish, I didn't want to make something anxious or declamatory, nor assertive, nor informative, nor politically linear; rather, I wanted to show how the catastrophe emerged through images, which would carry it to another realm, convert it into a kaleidoscope, with all of the tragedy and all the contradiction. In a few of the poems there appears a beggar, which is a recurring image in the book. Every so often the beggar appears—and sometimes as the *sadhu,* the sacred beggar from India, the friar who renounces the world of social identity and sets off for identification with god, which is a god that could be many gods, feminine, masculine, and so on—and there it has to do with not clinging on to anything, with the incorporation of death in the act of life. And sometimes it's a simple vagrant, the homeless, the disposed outsider who yearns for the rotten in such a tidy society, a context where he signifies an interruption. What happens then? Like the crazy one of the family, the social pariah. And I'm not controlling this: it appears by itself, the beggar appears, he goes walking—and I see it. I was thinking of a real, concrete beggar when I wrote this, but not of "bringing him to life" because I didn't see it as a realist work.

Silvia: How do you view the lyric, or the lyrical journey?

Reynaldo: I feel like a lyric poet. I'd wanted to write like Javier Sologuren, but it didn't work for me. I wanted that transparency. There's a lyricism that is not Romantic lyricism, in the traditional sense of the inflation of the I, nor in the inflation of the patriotic Us, which is also a rather stupefying bosom of the same thing. Rather, I feel that there is a lyricism that lives in intonation, in a certain way of flowing with the word.

Silvia: For example, there's that highly lyric poem about the hummingbird ("Three and a Half Years in the Garden")

Reynaldo: That's a poem that came out all at once, and I left it like that. It's part of an unpublished book, *Funambular*[12]. The tightrope walker also fascinates me, like another version of the pariah, only one who is a converter of gravity, a transformer of gravity. More like a sadhu or a faquir (mystic). In that sense, I was thinking of Jean Genet, in the book *Para un funámbulo*[13], which is why my book starts with that quote from Genet where he asks the tightrope walker to dance in the moment for the god who made him, and to never be waiting on the public, because when the public realizes that you're one of them, you'll be lost. It's a vertigo-inducing job. It's an anti-phobia too. The search for self-recovery in that sense. I'm very susceptible to vertigo, life gives me a lot of vertigo. And so these modes of enjoying it include: okay, it's okay, I have tachycardia, my heart is racing, and only when I feel like I'm drowning do I enjoy it, and it's a distinct instant, like sinking to the bottom of a pool in order to come back to the surface.

All of this about the tightrope walker, about the one who abandons or who is abandoned, he who renounces, all of this has to do with death. The dance itself and the nostalgia for the ritual. And that's the point, the eye of vertigo, where vertigo stirs. It's not merely an affirmation of life but rather it shows like an opera the chiaroscuro of one's self. Luckily, you have the ability to generate these verbal emergencies. All of this that I'm saying is like the linear prose of something that occurs at a level that's not laid out as such, and of course now, after years, I can verbalize it like this. If you had asked me twenty years ago, I don't now what I would have said. I would have said external things, *outside* things—I'm not saying that now they're so profound, but I feel like I have internalized something. It was just recently that I was finally able to extend myself into essays as part of my poetry.

Silvia: Essays, theoretic approximations and poetry—is there no difference between these fields of writing in your case?

Reynaldo: If writing is not an experience of desire and pleasure, it doesn't do anything for me, in the sense that I'm not going to waste time writing a treatise; a few times I've been asked to do so and I never feel like it, it doesn't stimulate me, it doesn't invite me. I don't want to do it and it doesn't bring me happiness.

Silvia: All those theoretical reflections, do they come as an extension of your poetry, like searching inside the thing itself?

Reynaldo: It's compulsive. It's playing with various things or ideas. It's a question of collecting, but a collecting which abandons the things it collects. Collecting in the sense of if I make a book about whichever author, there also has to be this other one—to be able to play with little cartographies.

Silvia: That's how it was with the journal *tsé-tsé.*

Reynaldo: Yes, that's how it was with the journal. The truth is, I'd wanted it to be a group journal, a collective journal, because I think that's richer, but it ended up being an author-centered publication. I had the fantasy of creating a journal that would have fused, let's say, that species of magazine-book like the ones Westphalen made, author-centered magazines, but with something like what Octavio Paz's journal *Vuelta* laid out, which was a group of people—there was Paz, but also Elizondo, José de la Colina, Kazuya Sakai, etc.

Silvia: And how did you come upon the materials that you'd included in *tsé-tsé,* how did they present themselves to you?

Reynaldo: By way of total synchronicity. For example, one edition appeared by way of Roberto Cignoni,[14] who was one of the fundamental collaborators. For years *tsé-tsé* was a selection of friends from different movements and generations, with very diverse poetics, who were reading and meeting each other by way of the magazine—many of them did not know each other before that— like distinct points of a star, distinct parts of life that I was circulating or including, along with Gabriela Giusti, my great love. And she was a fundamental presence, because without her I wouldn't have been able to do anything. She wasn't just emotional support but a concrete presence in the work and sometimes even occupied herself with the more dreadful parts, like distribution. I would determine the visual content, but she would give her opinion with her piercing eye and she helped me with many decisions.

Silvia: Many times the cover art came from Gabriela Giusti.

Reynaldo: Of course, as a visual artist—and the two of us read everything. Also, we held in our house encounters between people who were not necessarily friends, or weren't initially, dedicating time and space for their own ideas—the collaboration was incredible. What we made together ended up being a magazine. Before, we had made—the two of us, along with Violeta Lubarsky—a few publications which we called *Labio,* in which we cobbled together what interested us and put together a little thing by hand, with an artisanal finish, making photocopies. It wasn't this idea of the *cartonero*[15] which prevails now, which seems to me a little impoverished by the disregard for the aesthetic possibilities of the *cartonero* material, where the text doesn't seem to matter much. It was an action, not a catalog of authors. For us the type of things we did were actions, which were our lives: it was an era in which we'd go to the street and see a certain person in line for the movies or in a bar or at a party and gift them a copy of *Labio* because *we knew* that it was for that person. *Labio* swiftly mutated into *tsé-tsé.* The first edition of *tsé-tsé* is a continuation of the last edition of *Labio,* which was above all about my preoccupation with the idea of the eye and the gaze, coming at the same time as when I was writing *Reflexion esponja.* The first edition is an amplification of the materials that were coming from there but which already demanded another size. *tsé-tsé* kept growing until it became this kind of 40 kilo telephone book.

Silvia: Was it from there that you increased your reading of the surrealists, with an eye towards what later would be *El Cóncavo,* your book about surrealism?

Reynaldo: Ah yes—what happened was that in *El Cóncavo,* the first half is about Aldo Pellegrini, although its not an essay about his poetics but an attempt to arrange him and converse with him in some way, and to rave, not necessarily to be faithful to any analytical patron, exactly. The rest of the texts are things I wrote for deadlines, for example "La alucinación que piensa" is something that I wrote for the magazine *Plebella* which had a dossier on Miguel Ángel Bustos. Another, "La insurreccion superrealista desde el Perú," is the speech that I had read in Xilitla, in the house of Edward James, at a conference about surrealism in Mexico; I chose to discuss Westphalen and Moro, and that's in the book. And later for example there's "Equis Etcetera," about Alberto Hidalgo. Another about Moro had been written originally—although for *El Cóncavo* it was heavily edited—for a collection in homage to Moro that Carlos Estela made with Jose Ignacio Padilla, which was called *Amour à Moro.* And later, as I told you, the texts about Francisco Bendezú and about Hidalgo were essayistic experiences, writing

projects—the one on Bendezú was published in a magazine called *Telúrica y Magnetica.* The one about Hidalgo bounced from publication to publication, and was eventually published for the first time in the book, probably because Hidalgo himself is a complication figure, and also because I wrote on one of his least well-known books, *Aquí está el Anticristo,* which came my way by a series of circumstances which I explain in the essay— it's a mix of narrative autobiography, and from there I begin to play with the overlapping figures of the Antichrist and the damned.

Silvia: I'm very interested in this idea of "from where" things come, "from where" you think of something… When you say from Peru, I would love for you to explain that, that from.

Reynaldo: Of course, from Peru. This idea—which now continues in *La dificil procura,* which would be like the extension of *El Cóncavo* and is still developing, so to speak—is that the notion we have of surrealism—enough of it! Between Max Ernst and Marcel Duchamp there's an abyss, or many abysses, there are many things that are different and which don't represent one aesthetic. They represent attitudes that can even be conflicting between themselves. That's one part, and then there's that question, taken from Osvaldo Lamborghini when he spoke of Rimbaud and tied him to Lautréamont as a precursor, of the guardian angels or the guardian demons of surrealism. "Precursors" who were invented by surrealism: it's not that they were thinking of "surrealism," they were doing it without naming it. That's why I prefer to say superrealismo or másrealismo. There are many surrealisms: Eleonora Carrington and César Moro, Francisco Madariaga or Joan Miró, or Benjamin Péret. There are practically no orthodox surrealists in Latin America, and also, and this is which is what I'm investigating in *La dificil proccura,* there's a reciprocal influence.

So I set myself to research that and saw that there's a thread. There's Matta, there's Lam, Moro, Westphalen, Pellegrini, there's Larrea, who came from Spain to Argentina, who comes from surrealism but turns on it—all these shifts, all this intrigue to where, returning to Osvaldo Lamborghini, he says that Rimbaud didn't go off to Africa but returned there. "Africa and Latin America, all the same for Rimbaud," he says. It's the same as what happened in music with the Brazilian tropicalists exiled in London, when Gilberto Gil began to meet those Brits who would get together on weekends to take acid, to make music and talk in a house in the British countryside. He tells them about the carnival in Bahia, and they begin to hallucinate and to think "in England we don't have a carnival, we should make a carnival," and that's how Glastonbury festival starts. In the imagination of Andre Breton and of many surrealists, there were images of Mexico which they'd read in the adventure novels of a French author, whose name I can't remember now, but which took place in Mexico. That's otherness, right?

And there's Rousseau the customs officer[16] who is a key figure in all of this, who swears to have been with the French emperor Maximiliano in Mexico, something everyone believes, including Apollinaire, who writes about it: "You recall, Rousseau, from when you were in Mexico, and the blonde emperor…" For his part, Apollinaire has a brother in Mexico who sends him reports, and with that material his brother sends him he assembles that poem "Lettre-Ocean," made with fragments from those letters from Mexico. Apollinaire is not a surrealist but he invents the word *surrealism*, and so, in the end, what is surrealism? There are many surrealisms.

Silvia: I sense in your essayistic approaches a lot of interest in that same thing that you were saying about Africa, to read the appropriate realities—always filled with crossings, of course—just as you were also saying of the Brazilians: that reading of an America filled with comings and

goings.

Reynaldo: Exactly. To work with the idea of the border-crossing, by way of the multiple Customs which ones is fighting. Mental Customs, Customs of prejudice, which are mortal for poetry. This is why it's incredible how they assemble international festivals based on prejudice, under the pre-fashioned idea that *this* is poetry.

I'm interested in everything that crosses—for example, Leonilson[17], a Brazilian painter from my generation, who I love because he was a painter and he made these objects, these miniatures, like a tiny bronze staircase, like a very open votive offering. Later, there were these little pillows he sewed, with distinct threads, embroidering words with colorful threads, or he would make illustrations for a newspaper, which were always human silhouettes formed with words that if you read aloud were poems, they functioned like poems, and these would appear in the daily paper, in the pages of the paper. These types of procedures have to be seen as part of that active Brazilian tradition which includes concretism, cannibalism, and tropicalism, and which crosses languages and behaviors. That cannibalistic thing which they rapidly took on as culture. In other places we're still fighting with the shadow of the *mestizo*.

Silvia: And all your work as a translator?

Reynaldo: I try to approach translation like a study, in order to fundamentally study those authors. With *Catatau* and *Galaxias* I translated with that idea in mind, and both were very distinct experiences. But I can't translate a lot, because it consumes so much of my energy. Translations are like donations, like pieces of the body that one leaves behind. It was the same with compiling the writings of Néstor Perlongher or the Peruvian anthology, these things that you do only once. And there aren't so many *Catatau*s or so many *Galaxias*, though obviously there are a few heavy tomes waiting to be translated. Anyway—for example, to translate *Galaxias* carried me to a place of more air or more breath that I had lost, because I began, in *Tatuajes*[18], with a similar breath. I don't mean poetic elevation, but rather that choice of expansion that I had found in Edgar Bayley, Enrique Molina, César Moro…

Silvia: That choice of expansion becomes explicit in the length of the phrases, which would come to be a certain phrasing, a prosodic value, no?

Reynaldo: Exactly, this idea of the prosodic value, which can also be found in the Beats, in what Ginsberg says to Dylan about air, the swaying of the breath, that which is an emission of breath and emission of phrase.

Silvia: And that emission of air is that which becomes poetry, becomes *that* poetry.

Reyanldo: Yes! And in that there was Walt Whitman! I also began to discover that there was an Emily Dickinson element, and that fascinates me too, that kind of reduction, like Mallarmé, which reaches the form and in equal measure reaches the formless, one thing weighing as much as the other—that experience is not just a form, but the presentation of something that transcends or surrounds the form, that envelopes it. You have to view the emission of breath as a search for the voice, which isn't the voice of one person or one identify, but a voice which is the memory of listening. It's the ricochet off of something that in a certain sense refuses you and places you in a space of adventure and innocence, like

seeing words for the first time. It's not an innocence as opposed to some guilt but an innocence in itself. The infant is the one without a voice, and in that, like you were saying, is the voice closest to the soul or most similar to the soul, like the structure of the soul, the creating or creative importation of the soul, which didn't previously exist. The soul isn't something that is given, it's something which is about to arrive and is almost there, which comes upon you and also goes away—you can lose it like you can lose time, you can kill it. There's some very tenacious work invoked with respect to the loss of the soul.

Silvia: What brings you to writing? What makes you begin to write a poem?

Reynaldo: A murmur comes to me. A sonic reverberation more intrinsic than physical at the start of that bittersweet fog. The intuitive awareness which would alert you reaffirms itself in a very concrete form of a "mental tickle," manifested in the tips of your fingers and in the stomach. Something between nervousness, a flowering excitation, or the infinite curiosity of a collector of phrases: to see how this pre-wordiness, which still is not the exact words, "sounds on the page."

That has to do with what would be more or less a poem. Because I can assure you that I'm always writing something, including scribbling with a pen or pencil or highlighter in whatever paper is available—and when the paper is used or old, even better—and that these strokes invoke ideographically, or through runes, what we'd call writing. And if I'm not trying to test out something, I'm translating, or else transcribing—in the long spells when I'm writing, which we can't imagine happens all the time—text-tiles[19] of authors who I'm reading or studying for different essay or anthology projects, or for certain courses or workshops which I half-arrhythmicly propose for small groups of interested people. And not only that, but also—and this happens continuously, without any interruption—I can't stop reading: whatever poster, graffiti, markings on a wall, clouds crossed with wires, the headline of a newspaper, whatever page happens to be open, billboards, prescription leaflets, whichever magazine is at hand. And—a great relief when I discover the anamorphisms—faces in the veins of the floorboards each day—these are things for reading, too, according to the light, at whatever hour, with whatever company.

So in that way the poetic periods deposit themselves, by stratums, in their respective archive-sources, where they appear linked by breath, like in small galaxies. With the surprise, for me at least, that in recent book-years[20] the subject manifests itself—or it doesn't work at all—at the beginning, and as far as it bursts in, I leave it to weigh or condense itself, to be worked out from inside by the potentialities it brings—and they go to work—or, as I would hear as a child, "all at once." The majority of that gets reabsorbed in the neural compost, as they say. But what happiness when the thing comes out singing. And at the same time, how disconcerting all over again: I would love to write transparent poems, knowable poems, capable of transmitting calmness and love to the readers' hearts—I'm being serious—but what comes out of me are these creatures, almost all of them deformed, visceral, or oriented out-of-focus, with half-altered associative velocities, which they have told me make them hermetic or complicated. Maybe so. But it's that spell of potential presences— potential, so never overbearing—that the words themselves call forth and fasten, freed from the smaller shadow of the market, which I mean in whatever sense you'd like to take it—including in relation to a auto-syntax. This is why I'm not sure that they are poems, what I do: it has the feeling of a stalking in phrases, with a lot of changing around of their automatic ancestor but in the paradoxical sense or self-confident sense of the non-automatic.

To write like a dismantler[21], renewing the possibility of mental games with sensory tics or semantic retentions. And the intervention of the un-thought, or other voices, continues to be a form of injecting

energy into the phrase, by way of harmonizing what distinguishes the poetic flows, the internal dialogue or the eternal monologue, into the chance of an instantaneous dilation which has a semantic and perceptual correlative. Another way of asserting it would be to say that I believe in the existence of inspiration in the same way that the lyric is reborn in that all the time, every so often in its avatar that is least expected or least foreseen by literary history. If there's anything that makes me feel like a poet it's that inquietude where at least the imperial brain with its exclusive protagonist— the mono-Logos[22] — becomes an antenna, and through it pass attentional filters[23].

Silvia: What would you say about the muse, or about inspiration?

Reynaldo: Inspiration exists, because what inspires us is exactly what we call poetic experience, this saying that has a tolerable amount of defensive technicality against the nodular outside which can sometimes promote it—even if it's nothing more than instances of some type of trance, in order to sort out what seems to you as the simultaneous and unfolding interpretations of yourself. The multivocal implies a cohabitation of strati, times, subjects, spoken dimensions, levels of attention. That inclusive slippage is what I search for. For example, the equivalent to the image "bag of cats" could be, in other regions, "pot of crickets," and in another, "vase of octopi." That type of trail of resonances is prior to any translation to sense, while still being, notably, supercharged with meaning, and this is the index of a seam I chase with devotion.

Notes:

[1] Javier Sologuren – Peruvian poet, writer, and editor of the poetry press Ediciones de la Rama Florida.

[2] José María Eguren – Peruvian poet, artist, and journalist.

[3] Luis Alberto Spinetta – Argentine singer and front-man of the band Pescado Rabioso.

[4] Violeta Parra – Chilean composer, songwriter, and visual artist.

[5] Atahualpa Yupanqui – Argentine folk singer and guitarist.

[6] Relief here refers to the art technique—the word which creates a tactile plane of sound and sense.

[7] Chaclacayo is a district in the province of Lima, about 17 miles from the center of the capital city.

[8] Leslie Lee Crosby – Peruvian painter and part of the Generation of '60.

[9] Bendezú, Romualdo, and Varela are all included in Jiménez's anthology of Peruvian poetry, *El Libro de Unos Sonidos: 37 Poetas De Peru* (tsé-tsé, 2005), along with Erugen and Sologuren.

[10] *Catatau* is a book-length poem by the Brazilian poet Paulo Leminski. Jiménez's translation of it was released in 2014 in Buenos Aires by Editorial Descierto.

[11] *Galaxias* is a book by the Brazilian poet Haroldo de Campos—one of the founders of Brazilian concretism. Jiménez's translation of it has been published in both Mexico and Uruguay.

[12] Funambular means "to walk a tight-rope"—a funambulist is a tightrope walker.

[13] Here, Jiménez refers to Genet's "Le Funambule."

[14] Roberto Cignoni – Argentine poet and editor, who co-directed the journal *XUL,* an influential magazine during the dictatorship.

[15] *Cartonero* refers to simple, handmade books bound in discarded cardboard, which are common in the

bookstores of Buenos Aires—US readers might refer to them as cheaply-made chapbooks.

[16] Henri Rousseau (1884-1910) – French painter.

[17] José Leonilson – Brazilian painter and mixed-media artist.

[18] *Tatuajes* was Jiménez's first book, published in 1980.

[19] Jiménez refers to these works not as texts but as *textiles*—it's an invention on his part to denote that what he's writing are neither poems nor essays, strictly speaking, but verbal continuums, invoking as well a sense of physicality, the texture of the thing. I emphasize the text in text-tile to make clear that he's not referring to fabric.

[20] This phrase should have the resonance of "light-years"—measuring time by books.

[21] The word "desarmadero" often refers to someone who works in a junkyard—so it carries that sense of deconstructing and working with discarded parts.

[22] The phrase here is a pun—"el mono logos"—on the words for monologue or soliloquy on the one hand, and the idea of a logical monkey, or a monkey of language, on the other.

[23] Jiménez uses the phrase "valvas atencionales," which directly translated would mean "attentional oysters" or "attentional shells"—but the oyster here is a metaphor for certain psychic filters, with the related idea that the *valva* is that which can produce the pearl of an idea.