



Lip Wolf

Laura Solorzano

Jen Hofer, translator

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“I’m entering time, taking the time of the terrain, entering the tempest of the broken tumbler in its strip of sundowns and I enter, torpid turf of pasture, stubborn stair with its child’s opening that accelerates feet,” the first sentence of “(entrance)” encapsulates the chemistry of *Lip Wolf*; Solórzano’s is an insular sound-driven poetry full of deeply embedded and arresting images and imperative language which bewilders and rewards in the same breath.

Solórzano has written three books of poetry, most recently *Boca perdida* in 2005. She was trained as a psychologist, and is a visual artist as well as a writing teacher. The poems are clearly mined from the poet’s personal life. The concrete and the abstract fuse in colliding associative sequences. A domestic sediment filters into the language, with gestures towards child-bearing, home-making, and the tensions in close relationships. However, the poems are neither anecdotal nor confessional, but rather a transliteration of experience, an effort to accurately say what it is to live.

The forty-nine pieces are titled by numbers, asterisks, or by words in parentheses, furthering the interiority. The collection is so cohesive there isn’t even a table of contents, as if it were all just one poem, one long exhalation. The particularly incisive and useful introduction by Dolores Dorantes on Solórzano’s position within Mexican poetry and the forces at work in the collection, as well as Hofer’s discussion on the difficulties and strategies for this translation, are key to gaining a foothold in the poems.

Hofer has written and edited several books of poetry, including *Sin puertas visibles: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry by Mexican Women*, which was a finalist for the 2004 PEN Award for poetry in translation. Her athletic translation fully engages the original but acknowledges that in a work where so much of the meaning and impact is tied up in sound and double entendre, merely parroting the lines in English would be dishonest. In “(trivial text)” she translates “Me voy metiendo al mundo” as “I go on winching my way inside the world.” Maintaining the alliteration of the original, the delight is in the leap of “winching.” Though not a

literal translation, it is faithful to the mechanics and spirit of the oeuvre in general.

Unconcerned with conventional contemporary poetry, this work stands apart with its obsessive and intoxicating project, burrowing into the reader's mind. It seems to access language at the elemental, the words reaching back toward an original level of meaning. It is difficult poetry which demanded much of its writer and translator. It will not suffer a lazy reader, but the cunning and diligent will be well repaid by what is held in the wolf's mouth.