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De *Cartografías sentimentales/Affective cartographies* de Luisa Futoransky¹

Philippa Page, translator

Argentine poet, Luisa Futoransky, has a long-standing fascination with the urban in her poetry. The following poems are a taster of her forthcoming bilingual anthology, *Cartografías sentimentales/Affective cartographies*, which brings together her poems about cities. The poems composing this new anthology together create an affective map that spans both decades and continents, each city ultimately co-existing in this mnemonic and sentimental cartography in the present. Some of the poems in this sample are the fruit of a fleeting encounter with the cities in question. Others lay bare a much more intimate relationship to the surroundings: namely Paris, Luisa Futoransky's current home, and Buenos Aires, the poet's home city, which often bears an unspoken -almost spectral- presence in her work. Here, she unmask the urban and takes us into the viscera of cities that take on a personality of their own.

Insomnia on the rue de Charenton

familiar sounds tendered by anonymous inhabitants

the newsboy at 3:35

the milkman at 4:15

the baker at 5:40

the neighbor relieving herself

 a lover departing

 rag-pickers rummaging through the trashcans

ob! Paris la nuit

Insomnio en la Rue de Charenton

los ruidos amigos que me tienden habitantes desconocidos

el repartidor de diarios a las 3,35

el repartidor de lácteos a las 4,15

el repartidor de pan a las 5,40

la vecina que orina

 el amante que parte

 los cirujas que revisan los tachos de basura

ob! paris la nuit

South bank selfie

After many years living in the back yard
of cities that scintillate
let me begin
by telling you about one:

my city is not foundationally evasive but became that way over time;
dodging reality out of some sort of defensive bad habit,
ready to avoid she dribbles as if with a football,
she lies in *truco*,² lies for all she's worth
until even she believes herself
she rewrites history
and repatriates remains
all that is left to entertain herself

for this and other great weaknesses my city
dresses up in a cape of pure paradox
invisible to those outside
what I mean is she believes hook line and sinker in one thing and its opposite

sometimes my city is diagnosed with schizophrenia
and autism to an extreme degree
add to this a foolproof sense of pride
and a cocky disdain
and the veristic portrait hardly bears temptation

in short a city of little *check*
and a lot of *mate*

and I who know not how to swim
flail
I flail to keep my head above water
but what of my feet

Selfie Costanera Sur

Tras largo vivir en el patio trasero
de ciudades rutilantes
empiezo
contando una:

mi ciudad no es fundacionalmente huidiza pero se fue haciendo así;
por una suerte de vicio defensivo esquiva la realidad,
puesta a esquivar gambetea como en el fútbol,
miente en el truco miente a más no poder
hasta que ella misma se la cree
modifica la historia
y no le queda otra que entretenerse
repatriando restos,

mi ciudad por estas y otras grandes debilidades
viste una capa de pura paradoja
invisible para los de afuera
es decir cree a pie juntillas en una cosa y su contrario

a veces diagnostican a mi ciudad esquizofrenia
y autismo en severas proporciones
si a eso le sumás soberbia y un menosprecio
el cuadro verista es poco tentador

ciudad en suma, de poco jaque
y mucho mate

y yo que sin saber nadar
manoteo
manoteo por sacar la cabeza fuera del agua
y los pies qué

Luminaries

to Jason Weiss

instead of christmas lights
the *menorahs* of brighton show off with airs and graces
banks and convenience stores along the main avenue
a mottled steppe
of poor taste
markets and smoked fish stalls, stores offering leather, vegetables
caviar and manicures.

advertisements for sword swallows, mermaids
human pyramids of coney island
rollercoaster, or russian mountain rather,
and other summer daredevilry

hunched over plastic laminate clusters of mafiosos
reminiscence is a step enclosed within the step itself
arteries gasping their last in the neva
the only river in mother russia i can recall

the cruel world is a frosted replica
whiffs of white liquor
so pure they clear mortal vermin
how much remains
hardly a simile of this shattered heart
honey, *oy vey!* honey
what's with the whimper

Luminarias

a Jason Weiss

en vez de las iluminaciones navideñas
las *menorahs* de brighton, compadorean
en la gran avenida, los bancos y tugurios
un malgusto estepario
abigarrado
mercaditos y puestos de pescado ahumado, negocios de pieles
verduras, caviar y manicura.

anuncios de tragasables, sirenas
pirámides humanas de coney island
montaña rusa, como debe ser
y otros peligrosos atrevimientos veraniegos

por encima de la fórmica y los racimos de mafiosos
la reminiscencia es un paso enquistado dentro del propio paso
arterias que quedaron boqueando en el neva
único río que recuerdo de la patria rusa

el duromundo es una réplica empañada por la escarcha
las vaharadas de licor tan blanco
tan puro desbrozan de alimañas mortales
cuanto queda
apenas un símil del quebrantado corazón
nena, *oy vei!* nena
este gemido qué

With the Fingers

what can be expected of an old man? That he books an appointment with specialists
merely for them to confirm his irremediable deterioration as if he really needed to be told

that he's killing time

that his desires like him are retiring without joy from a life of
wandering and rest
his loved ones, the city, take revenge for his dirty old tricks and petulance

stairs multiply in front of him

soapy pavements

with nothing more than the swiftest of blows

a hammering of the wind breaks his dentures

in the sink in the hotel

and just to finish them off the night elves hurl them out of the window

and the neighbourhood complains about the sudden hullabaloo

dam these old codgers

some say they smell as bad as tramps

or prison walls

because the smell of a class of adolescents in summertime

turns one's stomach

but in a different way

the old man lives in a vast country of people congested

by repentance and conditional times

a country of Peter Pan

of filthy, dethroned little princes

that the stinginess with which they open their cheque books does not air

country of excrescences, tremors, coughs

carpeted with nightmares

upon my return to the academy

I, Lazarus, impart

as tradition obliges

precious crusts, edicts of affection

the rainbow can be eaten with one's fingers

the dew abates bad breath

carrying precious stones in his pockets hinders flight

letting go of them in the sky alleviates him

deciphering alphabets in the shapes of the clouds dusts off the privation

skating on thin ice
until it finally shatters
into a bright explosion of particles
for what other reason are things
people
socks
houses
elephants
made
but to be broken
just like that
all of a sudden
and knowingly

Con los dedos

qué se espera de un viejo? que pida turno con especialistas
que le confirmarán por si falta le hacía el deterioro irremediable
que mate el tiempo que sus deseos como él se jubilen sin júbilo de la vida del paso y el
[respiro
sus allegados, la ciudad, se vengan de sus antiguas perrerías y petulancia
le multiplican escaleras
veredas jabonosas
apenas con un alfiler
un martillito de viento le quiebran la dentadura postiza
en el lavabo del hotel
y para rematarla los duendes de la noche la tiran por la ventana
y el vecindario se queja por ruidos molestos
intempestivos
joder con los viejos
hay quien dice que huelen tan mal como los linyeras
o los muros de las prisiones
porque el olor de una clase de adolescentes en verano
voltea marea

distinto

el viejo vive en un inmenso país de gente resfriada
por el arrepentimiento y los tiempos condicionales
un país de peter pan
de principitos destronados y cochambrosos
que la parsimonia con que abren sus chequeras no ventila

país de excrecencias, temblores, toses
alfombrado de pesadillas
yo lázaro transmito
al volver de la academia
tradicción obliga
preciosos mendrugos, edictos de cariño

el arcoiris se come con los dedos
el rocío aminora el mal aliento
las piedras preciosas en los bolsillos dificultan el vuelo
soltarlas en el firmamento lo aligeran

descifrar alfabetos en la forma de las nubes desempolva la penuria
tirar del cántaro
hasta que por fin se rompa
en una luminosa astilladura de partículas
para qué otra cosa están hechos acaso los cántaros
la gente
las medias
las casas
los elefantes
sino para romperse
así
de repente
y a sabiendas

Paris, the imposture

stingy, negligent, costive
coveted
the most effortlessly graceful
looking down her nose, magnificent at a distance
paris the concealer
cloistered in her own delusion of grandeur
cantankerous
paris buried in catacombs, paris for the initiated
paris empress and guillotine

i, who never overcame your myriad ramparts, snares, labyrinths
so effective in befuddling the foreigner,
know not whether i really loved, or indeed still love, you

París, la impostura

Tacaña, negligente, estreñida,
envidiada,
la más grácil sin esfuerzo,
ninguneadora, bella de lejos,
parís encubridora
recluida en su propio delirio de grandeza
atrabiliaria
parís oculta en catacumbas parís para iniciados
parís emperatriz y guillotina

yo, que nunca salvé tus innúmeras murallas, trampas, laberintos
tan eficaces para perder al extranjero
no sé si te quise o quiero, todavía.

Notas

¹Luisa Futoransky is an Argentine writer and journalist. She has published extensively across a range of genres, but is most renowned for her poetry. Her work spans over five decades, the most recent collections being *Ortigas* (Leviatán, 2011) and *Pintura rupestre* (Leviatán, 2014). Among her many awards, she was named a Chevalier in the French *Ordre des arts et lettres* in 1990. In April 2015, she was given the prize at the Festival Internacional de Poesía in Buenos Aires. Her work has been translated into French, English, Italian, Hebrew, Portuguese, Japanese and German.

Philippa Page is Assistant Professor in Spanish and Film at Newcastle University in U.K, where she lectures on contemporary Latin American culture, international film and translation studies. Her research focuses on contemporary literature and film in the Southern Cone.

²*Truco* is a typically Argentine card game, which strategically relies very much on being able to dupe opponents as to the worth of the cards in hand.