

The Calculus of Imaginaries

Poems by
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NY
Q Books™

The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.
Beacon, New York

NYQ Books™ is an imprint of The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.

The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.

P. O. Box 470

Beacon, NY 12508

www.nyq.org

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Second Edition

The First Edition of this book was published by Nightshade Press.

Set in New Baskerville

Layout and Design by Raymond P. Hammond

Cover Photograph by Susan Luckstone Jaffer

Author Photo by Trudy Gerlach

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020938818

ISBN: 978-1-63045-076-2

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Eyes

The dogs are barking.
I see them stretching their chains
in a straight line noses
sighting eyes to some point
in the fields. I see nothing
but they bark
 they strain
against the trees till the bark
chips off to the ground. Five minutes
of this and raised lips
close on teeth eyes
lose focus the links grow slack
and they turn toward their
houses and the shade.

Ribs cave
beneath fur the wood grunts
as they collapse
and in one gesture
 rest
their jaws on their front
paws—
a rush of breath
 and dust flies
one inch before them
settles just outside.

In the fields the wind
bends pale grasses and releases them.

El Niño 1997

No se puede vivir sin amar were the words on the house

—Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano*

Out of the almost endlessly parched
earth of northern Chile

yellows

reds

blues.

Wildflowers not seen for decades
arise. *Arriba!* in the Atacama.

Sin flores no se puede amar.

Sin amor no se puede vivir.

A homeless man must be
drunk again. *No es posible* he mutters and
as if he were right

reports

of rodents rampaging of rat crap floating in zephyrs
resonate over the air waves

as if the lungs of local residents

were screaming mantras were shrieking "*Hanta!*

Hanta! Hanta! Hantavirus

you are killing us" *Sin muerte*

no se puede vivir. In Acapulco

the little children haunt the streets

out of thirst. *Agua*

agua por favor.

Sin agua no se puede vivir.

El niño strange child

your warm breath dries up the riviera

The Clock

Light flickers in the stream's bed
softly
 light that further downstream
grows on the water blinding.

This light in the tunnel by the tracks
glints from rock midway in darkness.

Certain days we crouch near the edge. The stillness
of small fish balancing near the pond's surface
is limitless: their eyes never blink their bodies
angled in a random cluster are minutes that do not turn
in the green water in the afternoon light.

Bounce

Three mornings he sits
on a bench in the courthouse square
rubber ball bouncing
from concrete to his hand
mustache flashing
above pursed lips.

Pock. Pock. Pock.

The small sphere strikes this large one.
In shorts sneakers and a baseball cap
belly bulging below the T-shirt
he never speaks
and never misses.

What love we ask
could he ever have? And later
we gasp for breath and want no more
than his power to look again and again
at what comes back
and to hold it.

pounds open-handed his heart.
You want to hear it.
The beating
is only your own.

And the words you once spoke before a priest
return in English as if they were
untranslatable
 as if they were the Latin
your father once spoke kneeling
before you knew him:

Mea culpa
 mea culpa
mea maxima culpa.

Rotation

Quiet as the vultures
wheeling in the high winds
dark wings still against the light—

clock
of the moment the gliding
the invisible
eyes the beautiful tilt

of feathers circling
last breaths below—

an eternity of air

taken in
let go.