TÍTULO  LEGNA RODRÍGUEZ IGLESIAS

TITLE  TRANSLATED BY KATHERINE M. HEDEEN

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"a scent of hate for everything brilliant everything beautiful in the universe and it was more of a stench than a scent and it was everything."

**titulo / title** is a book of poems by the Cuban poet, prose writer, and playwright Legna Rodríguez Iglesias (Camagüey, 1984). It is being published here, for the first time, in both Spanish and in English translation.

Rodríguez Iglesias belongs to the so-called Generation Zero in Cuba, those born after 1970 and who publish after 2000. Their poetry is marked by the dismal social situation that has plagued Cuba since the start of the nineties. The fall of European socialism meant the island lost 85 percent of its trade, sparking the deepest economic crisis in its history. Daily life became hell. Generation Zero grew up under these circumstances, with little opportunities or future. And its poetry embodies the crisis in countless ways, directly or indirectly.

title does so by affirming a poetics of ugliness—the quotidian ugliness of poverty. There is barking and biting and despair and hunger and stench and shit and piss and pain and phlegm. There is longing and fucking. The body and all its functions are at the forefront; the illness, malaise, and deception of the body. Material need signals spiritual need. There is separation. There is alienation. A chronicling of the movement and estrangement caused by immigration. A vague sense of unease, of madness permeating. And there is love, too, and affection and poetry and intellectual discourse.

None of it is exceptional, it’s just reality. These poems don’t want to stand out. They aren’t supposed to. Even the titles tell us so. Numbers repeated over and over again. Verses repeated over and over again. And the ease with which the reader gets lost in them. No punctuation. Constant enjambment. Word play. Discourses clashing. One that highlights the strangeness of the banal contrasts with one that mimics the official, whether used in more conventional poetics or government publications.

These poems do not fall back on exotifying stereotypes. They are not written for North American-reader-poverty-tourists who want to preserve “simpler” times and/or benefit from the successes of neo-colonialist politics and/or (secretly) capitalize on the erotics imposed on the tropics by those neo-colonialist forces. Instead, they offer a critical perspective of all sides. They do not automatically oppose or affirm. They are critical without calling for the return of capitalism to Cuba, without glorifying the capitalism of Miami. There is a brilliant grayness to this poetry that rejects how Cubans are supposed to write their reality, on either side of the Gulf.

I translate the complexities and I feel asphyxia, chaos, panic. I lose my way in between verses. I catch myself holding my breath. Hyperaware of our disquiet, the poetry’s and mine.
my soul's full of metaphors attained from generation after generation
my soul's full of more or less fascinating similes that attest to the kindness in me
my soul possesses a great hyperbaton encysted on the right side measuring various millimeters
and likewise encysted on the left a palpable excessive onomatopoeia
my soul has a hyperbole associated with the need for feminine and masculine affect
this morning i decided to do charity work for my soul and i pulled a bag out of the dumpster
full of beautiful used books on the agronomic veterinarian and mathematical sciences
the oxymoron and the paradox logical figures in my soul increased their throbbing
nothing compares to this happiness that to not bore you i experience
when i see my soul from the outside full of these symptoms that keep me young
figures of dialogue and pathetic dialectical fictional figures
all-in-one like those packages of small bars of scented soap
that so please families with more than six members
so the United States government offers some *assistance*
to certain people who come to the United States whether it's by land by air or by sea
and mostly out of actual necessity
it consists of a *welcome* some *money* some *food* and some *mediquéi*
this government's attitude with respect to such assistance seems really nice to me
what i can't get out of my head is the strange word *mediquéi*
a construction in my opinion made up of one unique morpheme and one unique lexeme
about which any specialized scholarly linguist would exclaim *bravo!*
so these alert newcomers who for so long
had a troubled diffident relationship with society
start to communicate in a definitively special language
in a short time they seem so happy they don't even need to open their mouths
for any man from a country paying tribute to his country
by means of a scientific discovery a military
conflict or a poem of allegiance should be an honor
for any animal or plant from a country living in the forests
of that country or in the mountains or in the plains of that country and receiving
the bounties of nature should be an honor
for any sea that bathes a country bathing it tirelessly
hitting up against its coasts over and over should be an honor
for any dead man from a country reincarnating as its president
or one of the members of his country’s cabinet
should be the consequence of spiritual anguish
for a dignified or almost dignified country with one inhabitant
one animal one plant one sea and one dead man is enough