

FRONT PORCH

Coral Bracho, from *La voluntad de ámbar*
Translated by Forrest Gander

The Breeze

The breeze touches its fingertips
to the tender undersides of the leaves. They glow
and gently tremble.

They are startled and lifted
with a breath, with another. They come awake.

Like the sensitive fingers of the blind
the leaves strum the wind;
they feel out and decipher its edges,
its surging outlines, its thickness.
They vibrate,
those fluid silent keys.

La brisa

La brisa toca con sus yemas
el suave envés de las hojas. Brillan
y giran levemente.
Las sobresalta y alza
con un suspiro, con otro. Las pone alerta.

Como los dedos sensitivos de un ciego
hurgan entre el viento las hojas;
buscan y descifran sus bordes,
sus relieves de oleaje, su espesor.
Cimbran
sus fluidas teclas silenciosas.

The Posture of the Trees

The posture of the trees,
as gesture,
is momental.

La actitud de los árboles

La actitud de los árboles,
su gesto
es momentáneo.

Coral Bracho is one of Mexico's most influential contemporary poets. Her early work simply altered the landscape of Mexican poetry (on par with Ashbery's work in the U.S.) New Directions will bring out a selected poems of her work in my translations in Spring 2008: *Firefly Under the Tongue: Selected Poems of Coral Bracho*.

Born in Mexico City in 1951, Bracho has published five books of poetry: *Peces de piel fugaz* (1977), *El ser que va a morir* (1981), *Tierra de entraña ardiente* (in collaboration with painter Irma Palacios, 1992), *La voluntad del ámbar* (1998), and *Ese espacio, ese jardín* (2003), which won the Xavier Villaurrutia Prize. Among other places, selections from her work appeared in *Mouth to Mouth: Poems by Twelve Contemporary Mexican Women* (Milkweed Editions, 1993) and *Reversible Monuments* (Copper Canyon, 2002).

Forrest Gander's books of poems, essays, and translations include *Eye Against Eye* and *A Faithful Existence: Reading, Memory, & Transcendence*. He is the translator of

No Shelter: Selected Poems of Pura Lopez Colome, Firefly Under the Tongue: Selected Poems of Coral Bracho, and (with Kent Johnson) two books of poetry by Jaime Saenz. He has received several awards including The Whiting Award for Writers and NEA fellowships in poetry.

Front Porch memories: Two strongest memories both involve Robert Mitchum: I see him in *Night of the Hunter* leaning from the porch steps with his tattooed fingers clenching the post. And in *Lusty Men*, a beautiful movie by Nicholas Ray, after getting busted up-riding a bull, Mitchum's character returns to his childhood home and crawls under the front porch to retrieve something he hid there as a child.