

*Coolabah*, Vol.4, 2010, ISSN 1988-5946 Observatori: Centre d'Estudis  
Australians, Australian Studies Centre, Universitat de Barcelona

## **Poetry by Lachlan Brown in Translation**

**As a result of Lachlan Brown's visit to the Centre d'Estudis Australians – Australian Studies Centre - at the Universitat de Barcelona Bill Phillips translated some of his work into Catalan, Laura López into Spanish and Victoria Dimitrova into Bulgarian. As always the poetry is presented in bi-lingual format. The translators, guest editor Carles Serra and the Centre would like to thank Lachlan for his generosity to us all.**

**Copyright ©2010 Lachlan Brown. Translation: Bill Phillips, Victoria Vladimirova Dimitrova and Laura López Peña This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged.**

### **Disbelief**

Listen, you sceptics! Take heed before you  
crush the world with the cruel hammer of reason!  
There is a young child in Paris who has  
remembered the city streets by heart.  
Every evening he recites them in his father's sushi-bar,  
holding only a small directory that is seldom opened.  
Like a warlord he sends waves of delivery boys  
onto narrow laneways, taking routes that  
many have since declared to be impossible.  
I have seen this child, kneeling upon a chair,  
his small hands arranging a table, his lips  
murmuring directions that must be followed.  
He sits amidst steaming bowls of white rice, and  
his father's quick knife slices through night and air.

### **Lachlan Brown**

#### **Incredulitat**

Escolteu-me, escèptics! Vigileu abans  
d'aixafar el món amb el martell cruel de la raó!  
Hi ha un nen petit de París que sap  
els carrers de la ciutat de memòria.  
Cada tarda els recita al bar de sushi del seu pare,  
a les mans només una guia petita que gairebé no obre mai.  
Com un senyor de la guerra envia onades de nens repartidors  
als carrerons, fent servir rutes que  
molts han declarat, després, impossibles.  
He vist aquest nen, agenollat en una cadira,  
les seves manetes parant taula, els llavis  
xiuxiuejant instruccions que cal seguir.  
S'asseu entre tasses vaporoses d'arròs blanc mentre  
el ganivet ràpid del seu pare retalla la nit i l'aire.

#### **Catalan version Translated by Bill Phillips**

#### **Incredulidad**

¡Escuchad, escépticos! ¡Prestad atención antes de  
que aplastéis el mundo con el cruel martillo de la razón!  
Hay un niño en París que  
conoce de memoria las calles de la ciudad.  
Cada noche las recita en el sushi-bar de su padre,  
mientras sostiene un diminuto directorio que raramente abre.  
Como un general, el chico envía a mareas de repartidores  
por estrechas callejuelas tomando rutas que

muchos creen intransitables.

Yo he visto a este niño, arrodillado sobre una silla,  
sus pequeñas manos preparando una mesa, sus labios  
murmurando direcciones que deben seguirse.

Él se sienta en medio de humeantes platos de arroz blanco, y  
el veloz cuchillo de su padre corta la noche y el aire.

### **Spanish version Translated by Laura López Peña**

#### **Five stories**

i. a woman was irritated on a crowded metro.  
but she did not fully express her emotions.

ii. workmen placed a scaffold over a laneway,  
so that metal rested alongside brown stone.  
I walked beneath and imagined the world collapsing.

iii. there was a child who had grown too large  
for his pram. he wept into his father's chest.  
perhaps he was spoilt. perhaps he had lost something  
he could not ever recover.

iv. a famous man visited a hospital. a group of  
journalists and photographers followed him,  
claiming his steps with their black cameras.  
he walked and smiled and joked. His wisp of  
white hair shone in the afternoon sun.  
this man was not famous to me.

v. we climbed a hill on the edge of the city.  
rooves tumbled into one another. the ocean  
made the distance seem very calm. turning,  
we discovered that we were not on the edge  
of the city.

#### **Cinco historias**

i. una mujer viajaba irritada en un metro lleno de gente.  
pero no expresaba plenamente cómo se sentía.

ii. ciertos trabajadores colocaron un andamio en un callejón,  
de manera que el metal quedaba apoyado sobre la piedra marrón.  
yo caminaba por debajo e imaginaba que el mundo se derrumbaba.

iii. había una vez un niño que había crecido demasiado  
para su cochecito. él lloraba en el pecho de su padre.  
quizás era un niño mimado. quizás había perdido algo  
que ya no podría recuperar nunca más.

iv: un hombre famoso visitaba un hospital. un grupo de  
periodistas y de fotógrafos le seguían,  
capturando cada paso con sus cámaras negras.  
él caminaba y sonreía y bromeaba. el sol de la  
tarde iluminaba su mechón de pelo blanco.  
este hombre para mí no era famoso.

v: subimos a una colina situada en las afueras de la ciudad.  
los tejados tropezaban los unos con los otros. el océano  
conseguía que la distancia pareciese muy tranquila. al girarnos,  
descubrimos que no estábamos en las afueras  
de la ciudad.

**Translated by Laura López Peña**

### **Response**

Take care, or you will discover  
That you live for nothing at all,  
or else for small victories alone.  
So often we collect these and  
hold them against the world,  
until they become a seawall and  
all things must break upon their  
concrete edges. I urge you, yet again,  
as the light skims this quiet ocean,  
to let go of all these tiny towers, even  
now they are crumbling in your hands.  
I am answering a difficult question,  
What must I do within this darkness?  
An empty cart passes, rattling the night

### **Отговор**

Внимавай, или ще откриеш,  
че живееш напразно,  
или за малки победи само.  
Толкова често ние ги събираме  
и ги държим срещу света,  
докато не се превърнат в морска стена  
и всичко което се случва се чути пред нея.  
Умолявам Ви още веднъж,  
както светлината проблясва в този океан,  
да забравите тези малки кули,  
дори сега да се рушат във вашите ръце.  
Отговарям на сложен въпрос,  
Какво трябва да правя в тази тъмнина?  
Празна каляска минава, озвучаваща ношта.

**Translated by** Victoria Vladimirova Dimitrova

