



# *English Studies in Latin America*

## **Poetica for My Brother José-Ignacio Conversation Personal Genesis**

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**“Poetica for My Brother José-Ignacio”  
“Conversation”  
“Personal Genesis”**

Rodrigo Rojas<sup>1</sup>

**Poetica for my brother José-Ignacio.**

You may write using simple words  
like someone who clings to a blade of grass  
calling each thing by its name,  
aloud, while threads of sunlight  
respond with string instruments  
to a cicada’s unending letter.  
You may unravel a song from each word,  
but can you witness the fruit rotting,  
the drought, the burning of grass  
and still make it seem melodious?  
Can you recapture something for yourself,  
a word like death, can you put it in a musical score?  
can you dissolve the vowels in the word vowel;  
can you go backwards and reach the egg before it hatches,  
before the tongue releases that egg in the stream of language  
or the salmon spawns blurring the water;  
can you recapture that egg of meaning  
before it’s lost in the current  
or it thrives like the egg laid in a wound?

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<sup>1</sup> Rodrigo Rojas is in charge of the undergraduate program in Creative Writing at Universidad Diego Portales, Chile, where he teaches an introductory seminar on Shakespeare and a translation workshop. He is the author of three poetry books and an essay on translation. The poems published here belong to an unpublished manuscript titled “Dictionary of the Tongue”

## Conversation

*"There is no God,  
and conversation is a dying art."*  
Raymond Carver

The moment an orphan choir  
of wolf cubs whispers almost biting  
your ear lobes: "Eating will exist,  
mating will exist and death  
will always exist. You will rot,  
and birds will continue chirping."  
Know, that in spite of eloquence,  
not a single noun, not even a school  
of fish in the depths of diction could define it.  
Death is an open conversation.  
It has the same defined place as a comet  
among whining wolves, hissing  
past the pack every 70 years, every 70 seconds.  
It's not a mood or a coordinate in the galaxy.  
It could be a season in the garden, or a day for a moth.  
Its meaning is sound, shape, vacuum, wasted  
conversation, it falls like a verb  
conjugated by silence.  
I dead. You dead. We dead.  
Hush. A black and oily bird has caught a fish.  
Death is a conversation from the gills to the open air.

## Personal Genesis

“Quiero hacer contigo  
lo que la primavera hace con los cerezos”<sup>2</sup>  
Pablo Neruda.

In the beginning  
there was a white blossom,  
then it became a transitive verb,  
with transitive petals that attracted  
the bees and crickets of the tongue.  
Later new sounds developed, forests  
were drawn back, cities sprouted  
the wind picked up from the streets  
forgotten newspapers with tiny letters  
that a boy called Neftalí collected in a line.  
Later, when he became Pablo,  
he brought back to life a white blossom,  
and not just any flower,  
but the bloom of a cherry tree.  
That’s when insects, with yellow  
translucent wings  
and the sharp thunderclaps  
of language, pollinated again  
the cold forests of my childhood.

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<sup>2</sup> “I want to do with you  
what spring does to the cherry trees” (“Poem 14”)