atomized but turned toward each other, far from the vegetative languor of Pedreira’s cursed islandness.

Here, I focus on two short, innovative small-press poetry books whose thematic emphasis is on outlying Puerto Rican islands: Joanne Kyger’s Desecheo Notebook (1971) and Nicole Cecilia Delgado’s Amor (2013). Both books, lacking page numbers, are invested in experimental and gendered projects of remapping, complicating the visual and verbal layering of the author’s islandness. The first book, Desecheo Notebook, is a parenthesis on the archipelagoic island of Desecheo, with the notion that these islands are not the usual “islands” of the Caribbean or the United States, but rather islands of identity, culture, and history.

In his essay “La Isla” (1973), Antonio S. Pedreira reflects on the “rico,” or rich, in Puerto Rico. The tourist gaze that sees only an “island of enchantment” framed through the rhapsodic exuberance of that “rich” port, Pedreira juxtaposes “nuestra existencia agraria” (“our Puerto Rican agrarian existence”) (1973, 98) with the botanical metaphor of the “vegetative languor” (98) of the Puerto Rican temperament.

Key to Pedreira’s argument is his invocation of the “pobres isletes” (poor islets) surrounding the main island of Puerto Rico, with names such as “Caja de Muertos” (Coffin Island) and Desecheo (a corruption of “Cicchero” or “Sicero,” Its Indigenous Taino name enlarged with the Spanish word “desecho,” meaning waste or garbage). Recovering these “poor islets” as spaces of death and waste is a way for Pedreira to provide a “visión de fondo de nuestra realidad” (“an honest expression of our reality”) beyond the “optimismo metáforico” (“metaphorical optimism”) that metonymically renamed the island of San Juan Bautista for its rich port (98), with San Juan becoming its capital. This renaming was an act of ideological misreading that echoes in the “enchantment” that Puerto Rico markets to tourists to this day.

While remembered for its meditation on Puerto Rican islandness and/as isolation (“aislamiento” evolving “isla”), Insularismo’s mapping of existential geography dismisses the outlying islands, or “isletes,” within the Puerto Rican archipelago in the name of a centripetal movement from the coast inward that excludes the open sea but begins to manifest itself vigorously away from the coast (the “tiene fuerza centripeta: excluye mar afuera, pero empieza a manifestarse vigorosamente costa adentro,” 98). By contrast, Antonio Benitez-Rojo (1996) imagines the repeating island, whose (post)colonial spatial logics echo across the Caribbean, through the metaphor of the tropism (1996, 4), as in plants turning toward the sun. The turning toward hinted at in the biological metaphor of the tropism grounds, for Benitez-Rojo, the possibility of a non-mimetic archipelagic poetics of repetition, akin to Édouard Glissant’s in its insistence on a rhytmatic difference, of islands no longer

Joanne Kyger’s dream notebook

In an interview with Paul Watsky, Joanne Kyger (1934–2017) recalls traveling to Desecheo in 1971, invited by Peter Warshall, a Harvard Primate Research student, along with three other students, to study the rhesus monkeys that had been left there of place in and beyond the Caribbean.

Notes from minor outlying islands

Uratoano Noel
few decades earlier in order to build up a troupe of monkeys for use as laboratory animals to test the Salk vaccine.

While Warshall and his team were seeking to understand how the monkeys "had adapted and survived on essentially a desert island, an island with no water and very little rain," Kyger was pursuing her own "course of study," armed with a copy of Jung's Memories, Dreams, Reflections in an effort to "investigate the self" (Watsky 2013, n.p.).

Kyger adds that there was only one other woman on the trip, so that Descheeo Notebook's Jungian "course of study" occurs not just "near the end of the so-called psychedelic revolution" but also against the backdrop of a writing life that, as Linda Russo (2013) notes, constantly negotiated survival and group membership in the masculine/homosocial space of postwar New American Poetry countercultures, Kyger's invocation of Descheeo's role in US laboratory experiments and vaccine testing (part of a long tradition of scientific/medical colonialism in Puerto Rico) links her course of study and the group's study of the thesous monkeys as competing yet overlapping explorations of isole survival.

Later in the Watsky interview, Kyger describes how a chance meeting with poet Robert Creeley in Bolinas, California, informed the dream reportage of Descheeo Notebook. Kyger complained to Creeley about a bout of writer's block, with Creeley replying "You can't try" and Kyger concluding: "You can't push it," later adding, "It turns out reporting dreams made up much of the content of the writing I did on the island" (96). The idea of this notebook not as a description of a trip to Descheeo, but as a reporting of dreams summoned forth by this inhospitable isole, allows for a valuation of Descheeo as "non-site." With its depiction of deserted/desert-like island landscapes, its Jungian dreamscapes, and its problematizing of the page and the gendered self as defined by a plenitude in emptiness, Descheeo Notebook invites a reading informed by Robert Smithson's concept of non-site, one that values the "empty" space of the isole, the outlying island, as an imaginary for revisionist forms of community—even as Kyger's book in other ways reproduces the colonizing Pedreñan tourist gaze mentioned earlier.

Lytle Shaw has analyzed how Bolinas—the legendary hippie-era poets' colony in Northern California where Kyger lived in the early 1970s and that is referenced throughout Descheeo Notebook—functions as a non-site in the work of Kyger, Creeley, and other poets who relocated there from the bustling poetry communities of New York and San Francisco. As Shaw puts it, these poets saw in Bolinas an escape from the city and into nature but also the possibility, partly as a negation of urban life, "to resist the lure of the local and practice instead an immersion in a kind of expanded present tense" (2013, 121). Here, I want to claim the materiality and irreducibility of Kyger's notebook (its personal allusions, coded languages, and references to her Bolinas peers, especially) as a search for an outlying island that neither turns inward (toward Puerto Rico's main island) nor outward (toward the larger Caribbean). Here, Shaw's distinction between place and site matters, especially the way in which place "falsely grounds and organizes the fluid and dispersed" (6) while site-specific poetics such as Kyger's "always coincide with other claims about discursive and historiographic sites" (259).

This distinction is evident in the poem on the back cover of Descheeo Notebook. While it begins by describing Descheeo as a place "off West Coast Puerto Rico / 1 1/2 miles long 1 mile wide" (1971, n.p.) it goes on to evoke its standing as "the end point of / an upheaval that happened / in the Caribbean." Kyger here is, in their purest senses, neither a nature/eco-poet seeking to document and preserve a place whose value is always a priori nor a hippie/travel poet seeking out an open plural politics through a sited writing. In her writing, Descheeo reveals its dialectical status as non-site that leads back to the "closed limits" of her "inner coordinates" (Smithson 1996, 364). In this context, the book's prefatory map is significant: It is a "Plan of the Aguada Nueva de Puerto Rico" from a General Topography of North America and the West Indies (1768) by Thomas Jefferys, cartographer to King George III. Published just before the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783), this map embodies a logic of empire, especially as it lumped together North America and the West Indies as colonial spaces. Descheeo's location at the northwest corner of the map echoes not only Smithson's liminal framing but also his dialectical underscoring of site as the non-site center, which in this map is the middle of the ocean, off the Mona Passage—an area historically associated with pirate activity, seismic events, and dangerous crossings.

While there is little acknowledgement of that history in Kyger's book, we can read the "upheaval" against that history. Descheeo is a mappable island (Columbus

![Figure 14.1](image-url) "Plan of the Aguada Nueva de Puerto Rico" from A General Topography of North America and the West Indies (1768) by Thomas Jefferys, as it appears in Kyger's Descheeo Notebook.
The overcomings of the self so praised by the colonized alternative poetry communities hinge on a privilege unattainable to the colonized poet. Buddhism in this text is figured as a transcendence of desire, a removal of the self from the colonial violence that serves to maintain the status quo of power within the society. This text reflects the broader trend in postcolonial literature towards a rejection of the Western narrative of progress and civilization, and a search for an alternative narrative that acknowledges the complexity and richness of non-Western cultures.

Further:

work, spirit, guides.

New York

[Keizer 1971]

Like the rest of the colonized, the poet lives in a constant state of anxiety, aware of the随时现成 of captivation but also of the随时现成 of capture. The poet's journey becomes a quest for freedom, a search for a space where the poet can be free from the constraints of the colonial society.

Further:

They cannot exist anymore.

Friday's nature

can't stand annual

keep anyone

The poet's journey is also a journey of self-discovery, a search for a sense of identity in a world that has been imposed upon them by the colonizers. The poet's voice is a voice of resistance, a voice that speaks against the power dynamics that have been established by the colonizers.

Further:

Thursday.

the quality of calm

like the stepping back of

3 or 4 people at one time

A letter to Bobbie Coady

Bobbie Coady

A letter to Bobbie Coady

the quality of calm

like the stepping back of

3 or 4 people at one time

A letter to Bobbie Coady

Bobbie Coady

A letter to Bobbie Coady
Nicole Cecilia Delgado’s anomalous *isolote*

*Amoná* (2013) by Nicole Cecilia Delgado is a poem set on the nature reserve, Mona, an outlying Puerto Rican island that shares the Mona Passage with its smaller neighbors, Monito and Deschecho. When it appeared in 2013, the book appeared to be an anomaly: first, it was a homemade edicion, personally distributed to friends and colleagues; second, it was more akin to the innovative, socially engaged poetry in Puerto Rico that is still largely rooted in and around San Juan and that typically emphasizes an urban setting and/or sensibility. Delgado’s work emerged in the heyday of *poesía urbano* or urban poetry in Puerto Rico—the early-to-mid-2000s, when poets such as José Raúl “Gallego” González, Guillermo Rebollo Gil, and Hermes Ayala were crossing over with danger (if largely homosocial) translocal poetics informed by the urban vernacular traditions of salsa, hip hop, and Nuyorican poetry (Noel 2011), and by contemporary breakthroughs in slam/de poetry and reggaeton. Working across the “broken Souths” that Michael Dowdy (2013) maps in the shadow of neoliberalism and globalization, these poets affirm a class- and race-conscious vision aligned with the “from below” perspective the late Juan Flores (2009) finds in so many Nuyorican/Diasporic cultural productions. While Delgado’s work is largely in solidarity with these urban/vernacular poetics, her trajectory and evolution are very different.

Delgado began publishing in the early 2000s when she was a student at the University of Puerto Rico’s Mayagüez campus, on the west coast of Puerto Rico, near Mona and Deschecho—and far from the urban poetics then booming in San Juan. She collaborated with reading series and publications in the area, co-founding and editing the journal *Zurdo*. She moved upon graduating to New York, soon becoming associated with the poetry scene in and around the Nuyorican Poets Café and specifically with the young Colombian poet galvanized around the late poet and activist Ricardo León Peña Villa. *Editorial Palabra Viva* (Medellín/New York) published Delgado’s 2004 debut, *Inventario secreto de recetas para volver las gresías con clíndores de colores*. It was at this time that she learned how to make small books under the East Harlem-based Puerto Rican poet and book artist Tanya Torres.

Although a youthful book, *Inventario* anticipates Delgado’s isolote poetics in poems such as “las islas.” Here, the speaker proclaims “Yo soy de las islas” (“I’m from the islands”) (2004, 65, emphasis original). The italics mark an archipelagic difference, since Puerto Ricans tend to use the singular “la isla” to refer to the entire archipelago, echoing Pedreira’s violent masurial logic. Since Delgado is writing *from* New York, we can also read the plural here as encompassing the islands of New York City and their diasporic histories. Two lines down, the speaker attempts to distinguish her plural islands from “el insularismo pedregoso y fatalista” (“the rocky and fatalistic insularism”) of her ancestors, embodying the tensions of *isolote* poetics even as the risk uncritically reinscribing Pedreira.

Delgado would later enroll in and quickly abandon graduate school in upstate New York, ironically echoing Pedreira, who briefly lived in New York while studying medicine at Columbia University. She eventually settled in Mexico, where she was involved with feminist, Indigenous, and community-based poetry collectives and where she discovered the alternative *cartonera* publishing movement. This comprised no-frills and largely hand-to-mouth decentralized collectives publishing chapbooks with recycled cardboard covers and often featuring colorful stenciling or drawing. The *cartonera* movement began in Argentina in the early 2000s as a creative response to (US-backed) debt and austerity crisis. Upon her return to a now debt- and austerity-ravaged Puerto Rico, Delgado and poet Xavier Valérrcel established the first *cartonera* in the Caribbean, Ataraya Cartonera (2009–2015). More recently, Delgado founded the Risograph publisher La Impresora, which she currently runs with Amanda Hernández. Conceived as an “imprenta-escuela” (print press, part school), La Impresora now also sponsors the Feria de Libros Independientes y Alternativos (FLIA), Puerto Rico’s independent and alternative book fair, which Delgado founded in 2012. Through these projects, Delgado provides free youth writing and alternative publishing workshops across Puerto Rico, while publishing innovative writing from across Latin American and the Caribbean, including diasporic/Latinx communities in the United States. La Impresora has become a crucial initiative in the months since Hurricane María, working toward off-the-grid publishing and modeling independent publishing as a decolonial hesemipnic practice. Delgado’s work has inspired and informed recent initiatives such as Anomalous Press’s 2018 “Puerto Rico en Mi corazón,” a bilingual broadside series for hurricane relief in Puerto Rico bringing together poets from the archipelago and the diaspora.

Delgado’s *Amoná* (2013) is a miniature (3 x 2.3 inches) foldout book about a camping trip to Mona, whose Taíno name gives the book its title. Like *Deschecho Notebook*, *Amoná* revises masculinist poetic/political genealogies, in this case rewriting the monumental trees of the poem “Arboles” (1955) by the iconic Puerto Rican poet and nationalist, Clemente Soto Vélez (1905–1993) that serves as a mid-point epigraph. The mid-point is key given both the foldout book format and the location of Mona: The island is at the intersection of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea; it is also halfway between Puerto Rico’s main island and Hispaniola (“Amoná” is purported to mean “what is in the middle” in Taíno). In “Arboles,” as it is cited in *Amoná*, Soto Vélez celebrates “la canción” (“the song”) of the trees as the transformation of “la persona universal” (“the universal person”), and Delgado reclaims Soto Vélez as part of a poetics of resistance to ecocolonialism informed by activism related to the US military occupation of the outlying island of Vieques.

One of Delgado’s first La Impresora publications was her 2016 artist book, *subtropical dry*. The publication documents a camping trip to Vieques in similarly eco/geopoetic terms. At the same time, it explores the limits of the page. In this case the book is blue-green and approximately 4 x 4 inches. It is largely empty, has unnumbered pages, and is covered in a case featuring a topographic map of Vieques. These spare, blue-green pages reclaim “el agua entre las islas” (“the water between islands”) as their archipelagic “territorio” (2016, n.p.). When I hosted Delgado at New York University a few weeks after Hurricane María, she observed, only partly in jest, that she has become something of a “camping poet,” and she connected.
this and her artist book practice to her desire to think about space—including the space of writing—in new, different ways, and especially in the context of neoliberal austerity and environmental colonialism.

Much of Amoné is familiarly ecopoetic meditations on plastic bottles in the ocean, drawings of trees on the book cover, the Talno-folklorized title. Yet, Delgado understands Mona in terms of its colonial geography. She reflects on its old lighthouse (purportedly designed by Gustave Eiffel of Parisian fame) and on the tensions between the privileged exteriority of place and her own inner search. As with Kyger, the speaker’s quest for silence and inner peace is conflated at every step, in this case by her fellow campers, storms, saltwater, inner voices, and the overload of the information age. All these invasions are scored in unnumbered pages of spare poetic prose: “Imagino el papel de los periódicos, los píxeles de una computadora, el diálogo de algún órgano” (“I imagine the newspapers’ paper, a computer’s pixels, some oracle’s dialogue,” 2013, n.p.) Even as Delgado concludes by claiming Mona, recovering “la playa y la cueva que también fueron nuestra casa” (“the beach and the cave that were also our house”) an inversion of Pedreira’s insularist move, her book shares in Kyger’s recovery of the “wild” inner coordinates of nonsite. This is particularly clear when Delgado imagines utopia through the insights pun “delirar en la Cueva de Lirio” (“to rave in Iris Cave,” perhaps Mona’s most famous cave, although Delgado’s antipoetic wordplay plucks its flower).

Initially, Amoné is framed by Soto Vélez’s trees and by the phallic photographic triptych of the old lighthouse, framed by tall, thin trees against a cloudy sky (see Figure 14.2). Yet Delgado leads us away from the phallic/masculinist politics of the national/nationalist revolutionary poet into the gendered recesses of the cave/cave, and to an anti-epilogue that imagines the speaker snorkeling naked and encountering the flora and fauna of Mona (e.g., soursop, the endangered Mona ground iguana). For Soto Vélez, the semiotic power of trees has to do with their privileged spatiality, with a music that can traverse “sobre su meridiano” (“across its meridian”), akin to the Romantic loveliness of the Atalaya de los Dioses (“Watchtower of the Gods”), the avant-garde poetry group he cofounded in 1923. By contrast, Delgado’s book ends modestly, with a photograph of a couple hiking through waist-high overgrowth, with no trees surrounding them. The phallic Romantic/nationalist poetics of privileged vision of the island/nation gives way to an isole poetics grounded in a difficult embodiment that is shaped by the accidents of Mona’s landscape (dry, subterranean); this poetics paradoxically centers the irreducible isole at the midpoint (“Amoné”) of an archipelagic Caribbean. Like Kyger’s Desecho, Delgado’s Mona is gendered but spare; it is not lush and vegetative in ways that we associate with reproduction. In asking us to imagine a more egalitarian gendered community without procreation, both poets point out a feminist ecopoetics shaped by colonial histories—one that cannot be reduced to Earth as Mother.

Geocrimulation has largely focused on fiction, with Westphal’s (2007) glossing of real and fictional spaces providing a framework for scholars such as Tally (2011). Even the burgeoning field of geopoetics has stressed the narrative dimensions of poetry, as in Eshun and Madge’s embodied “storytelling” (2016). Inasmuch as geopoetics reflects the still largely Anglo-European, male, and heteronormative orientation of geography, it risks an instrumental recontextualizing of space, foreclosing intersectional and locally rooted approaches. We see this clearly in the culturally specific “isole.” Kyger and Delgado help us understand new modes of spatial critique and belonging; they experiment with notebooks or poetic prose while complicating narrative/visual geopoetics through an insistence on the materiality and visibility of writing and the book.

Both Desecho Notebook and Amoné complicate circulation. The former remains out of print, though it is included in Kyger’s 2002 selected works, As Ever. Amoné only ever circulated minimally, and it is not represented in Delgado’s selected works, Apenas un cántico: poemas 2007–2017. Both reimagine political space beyond urban, homosocial poetry movements. Both associate feminist poetics with a nonsite politics of the inner journey, with a processual and intertextual writing that challenges mappable space at the limits of the page, often experimenting with empty space and minimal text, so that the page embodies the desert/deserted yet sedimented space of the isole. Both move us away from a narrative geopoetics to one that makes meaning in and from crags—to one that creates sense in the detritus, silences, and violations of colonial logics as these fall out of fact and become undone (des-hecho).
Islaote poems

(parous transcription of poems improvised while walking along Randalls Island on a windy day)

1. www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wqSoRzj3Aw

I'm back on Randalls Island across from the Bronx Kill creek focal watershed that separated island from mainland or should I say mainland from archipelago behind me is Manhattan an island in front of me is Queens part of another island a long one airplanes overhead invisible perhaps through the trees but audible a roar through rustling leaves that signals littoral Atlantic fractures feature broken voices bloody echoes of our black Atlantic our slave Atlantic our indigenous but this is also an isole more than a topography a choreography bodies of empire in movement and repose isole which translates as islet no pilot for this islet no visionary poetics we're done with that we're doing our own thing our own song like ducks in the kill animals de oceano nativo el mas precario isole is lost but not a lost especially its second meaning that craggy place uprooted clamnation accidents of the Americas airfare welfare who pays the fare nothing fair about it this hemisphere I say we deal with it this isole is not allowed it just is lottery of meaning Josue Emilio Paheco in Vancouver scratch that even if they were aware that my second Caribbean Atlantic accidents of voice we use smartphones connect us microcosmaphones shouting down the voice inside trains behind me planes before voice behind factories slide into ccocode seeing how well viewed anthropo scene just need to think back to the isole craggy craggy place where meanings end and fish die some soon by birds pretty soon the barn will die it's about damn time que se hundan burgos and tugboat float on to the Atlantic it's this way and that way it's no way back to the isole no eco location accepting echo location la colocacion del cuerpo junto a lo visible lo limpio como el limo el desdoblamiento del pensamiento emptied out dig deep into the isole more crag song of voice a geology not related to other yes archipelagos matter geopolitically think of New York Manhattan Staten Long North and South Brother never Welfare and still that way Rikers shut it down Rikers that it down put down the phone shut down the institutions of the voice work through the crag take note how close they are Rikers Island and LaGuardia airport the privileged mobility of certain destinations what we do in academia including academic poetry in fetishize spatiality turn them into specialties specialization is its own nation the species the only one I'm trying to be less species more insipid like the crag the isole putting the spit back into my speeches splotches of oil from refineries like that one no time for fineries time in

2. www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4DeR91Z774&te=207s

we are a dorsal fin in waters full of rare earth runoff endorphins made from melted smartphone parts memories of quartz in a quarry that never was dorsal fins or just el fin del tiempo porecile fin al poema sin endosarlo this won't be one of those poems that endorses sunsets for poetic effect let images follow courses post-colonial remorse on the networking sites between our eyes our islets neural nations we are the only kind that ever was no fatherslands including poetry paves some of whom I admired this isn't Whitman friends I'm homosexual but not like that I'm not from one of these states no states at all never were but I'm not Pedregal's pedrogay that is a word eider pedregadial like latidurad how ironic when words that are supposed to mark a condition we want to diagnose in order to decolonize and tear down narratively all end in -ad latitudine same dad as aurouder aurouder I'm recording this to video to save it for posterity no selfie stick use my forepaw instead get is focus in that was really bad like the isole air in any case this poem ain't for pa rest in peace nor ma how's Florida? how's the cat? no pa no ma no ma no pa no mapa unmappable because it has no parents it's not apparent sin parentesco sin caracteristica arent disappearing and reappearing neural flash of island that's the isole my only sea is in my epilepsy propulsion of my amputation toward meaning yes that's the Manhattan skyline behind me flutter of the trees low resolution but enough poems about skylines enough urban poems I wrote enough of those my sky in the islet my skylater I got no skills that pay the bills no skill to try rhymes in isole eyes let I let I let dej que me pase dejo que todo pase let it run its course Boricua style we'll smile it would be nice to throw a party maybe it will bring the tourists back post Maria my mother's name and grandmother's but neither goes by that other names for austerity what is austerity is our futurity it can't be that's one reason I improvise against austerity against authority let flow become meaning happenstance rants if I'm cut off from my family who live on other isoles the little family I have let this song this improvisation be equal to the worth families muster to themselves wondering how's it make out or make it through what it all means isole brings me back to land something our Caribbean crews have not quite figured out what its territoriality in a small place Kincaid what does sovereignty Yarimar Bonilla means when your diaspora is way larger than your home islands a whole bunch of isoles each one tethered to each other that's why I'm open to archipelagos Martinez San Miguel Gilman the island can't contain us even though I clarify when asked by Soy Boricua de la isla Puerto Rican from the island no such thing then many islands many conquests many tongues many Caribes once is deceived if one thinks there is just one Caraiba caravas of migrants here too many indigenous histories here too hegemonic whiteness antiblackness squel tradition executive mestizo euphemism dunro but something's changing I see it as clear as I see the sun the hurricane changed us no fuck us I can't speak for anyone else the bar with we intentions Sellers it became my song the sound that runs through my lungs becoming the sovereignty of the isole I embody new age as that night sound the nation won't save us the manicured islands won't either and I say us as in the French on won't save one we're our strength or our struggle and the way out is the shores coastal littoral walk our us oral flow on and off the page denied a language enslaved reinvented reallocated a shouted secret every craggy place even those like Deshiko that I've never been too real off limits but I imagine through my fellow poets poets ellas leading the way as they always have not just every crag but also statues and monuments and laws and jurisdictions that define el isole not just physical or geographic or psychic or biotic space
affective space but also conceptual space the limits of this imprecise untranslatable idlet energy place small island but for that very reason we must enter it on its own terms risk getting lost understand your own relation to the space navigate distractions imperial navigation metaphor intentional including streets and airplanes overhead back this Randall Island city island island city urban archipelago that was once separate from Ward Island get filled in last century now one island two names Ward Randall what kind of name for a Boricua poet is Ward Randall but then what kind of a Boricua poet is Urayoñ Noel walking along a baseball diamond kind of cut a path toward home there is no home you’re out always out you know who knew that Julia de Burgos poet feminist decolonial poet slash nationalist that’s a tricky one lived and organized in New York many parts of the Bronx often considered Latina wrote of a farewell island a welfare island across languages self-translating which at least we know is the only nation que como sabemos es la única nación no se traduce se tropieza in the same way the indigenous Taíno Siqueo becomes Desedeo wasteland empty space yes translation works both ways conquistadores translated Taíno to Spanish and left us with the bill killed something these words can’t fill translation from above and from below Julia translated by a government spying on her and her subversive nationalist politics see Harris Feinrod not that my idole is that kind of subversion just a version but also an attempt at geo poetic inversion of the logic of islandness and its opening up to archipelagos and hemispheres all the familiar moves of Caribbean Studies and hemispheric studies what if I’m just here this idole not something to fetishize essentialize mourn or celebrate slot that becomes me that of memory to be

Notes

1 All translations are mine.

2 There are no page numbers in either Desechos Notebook or Amor, so none have been provided here. The text of Desechos Notebook is reproduced in its entirety (albeit in a radically compressed poem, without the page breaks and map) in Kyger’s 2002 collection As Ever: Selected Poems.

References


