

MEETING CHICAGO IN SPAIN

Grisel Y. Acosta

parecía español
wrinkled, paper tissue leather
skin, cigarette hunch over evening cerveza

we, a group of artists sat
crowded his outdoor café red plastic table
“perdón, perdón, excusas, por favor”

he shook his balding head y dijo
“¿qué me importa?”
that’s when I heard the brick sausage and Lakeside iron voice

“¿de dónde eres?” le pregunté... “vivo en Collbató” he said
avoiding my real question, “parece que hablas inglés”
“depends how much you pay me”

“I’m from Chicago”
chunks of Soldier Field winter whiskey shots
dropping from the “a” and “o” and I said, “Ohhhhh, so am I!”

we bonded over techniques of strangulation
reserved just for Rahm Emmanuel, man of clay and poison
talked Logan Square and Little Village and Pilsen, and our wistful hearts

pero hablaba el inglés con flavor of Crema Catalán sweetness
hand gestures of the rambling el crossed body over dusty mountain rocks
he never climbed, sat con café, taught English to the Spanish

era the melancholy combination of Irish corner bar on Pulaski Avenue and
disheveled guitarist and dog at Montserrat bus stop, waiting
while tourists take and infuse photos with fantasy and delusion

his South Side Español sonata did not ground me
tente en el aire castas acridungeons coursed through flesh stratum, my
hometown hymns are remote, a distorted echo over dewy peaks

I miss being from somewhere clear
like Chicago, city that can season primeval rock with implacable grace