

# Problems of Translation: Problems of Language · *June Jordan*

*dedicated to Myriam Diaz Diocaretz*

I

I turn to my Rand McNally Atlas.  
Europe appears right after the Map of the World.  
All of Italy can be seen page 9.  
Half of Chile page 29.  
I take out my ruler.  
In global perspective Italy  
amounts to less than half an inch.  
Chile measures more than an inch and a quarter  
of an inch.  
Approximately  
Chile is as long as China  
is wide:  
Back to the Atlas:  
Chunk of China page 17.  
All of France page 5: as we say in New York:  
Who do France and Italy know  
at Rand McNally?

II

I see the four mountains in Chile higher  
than any mountain of North America.  
I see Ojos del Salado the highest.  
I see Chile unequivocal as crystal thread.  
I see the Atacama Desert dry in Chile more than the rest  
of the world is dry.  
I see Chile dissolving into water.  
I do not see what keeps the blue land of Chile  
out of blue water.  
I do not see the hand of Pablo Neruda on the blue land.

III

As the plane flies flat to the trees  
Below Brazil  
Below Bolivia  
Below five thousand miles below  
my Brooklyn windows  
and beside the shifted Pacific waters  
welled away from the Atlantic at Cape Horn  
La Isla Negra that is not an island La  
Isla Negra  
that is not black  
is stone and stone of Chile  
feeding clouds to color  
scale and undertake terrestrial forms  
of everything unspeakable

IV

In your country how  
do you say copper  
for my country?

V

Blood rising under the Andes and above  
the Andes blood  
spilling down the rock  
corrupted by the amorality  
of so much space  
that leaves such little trace of blood  
rising to the irritated skin the face  
of the confession far  
from home:

I confess I did not resist interrogation.  
I confess that by the next day I was no longer sure  
of my identity.  
I confess I knew the hunger.  
I confess I saw the guns.  
I confess I was afraid.  
I confess I did not die.

VI

What you Americans call a boycott  
of the junta?  
Who will that feed?

VII

Not just the message but the sound.

VIII

Early morning now and I remember  
*corriente a la madrugada* from a different  
English poem  
I remember from the difficulties of the talk  
an argument  
athwart the wine the dinner and the dancing  
meant to welcome you you  
did not understand the commonplace expression  
of my heart:

*the truth is in the life*  
*la verdad en la vida*

Early morning:  
Do you say *la mañanita*?  
But then we lose  
the idea of the sky uncurling to the light:

*Early morning* and I do not think we lose:  
the rose we left behind  
broken to a glass of water on the table  
at the restaurant stands  
even sweeter  
*por la mañanita*