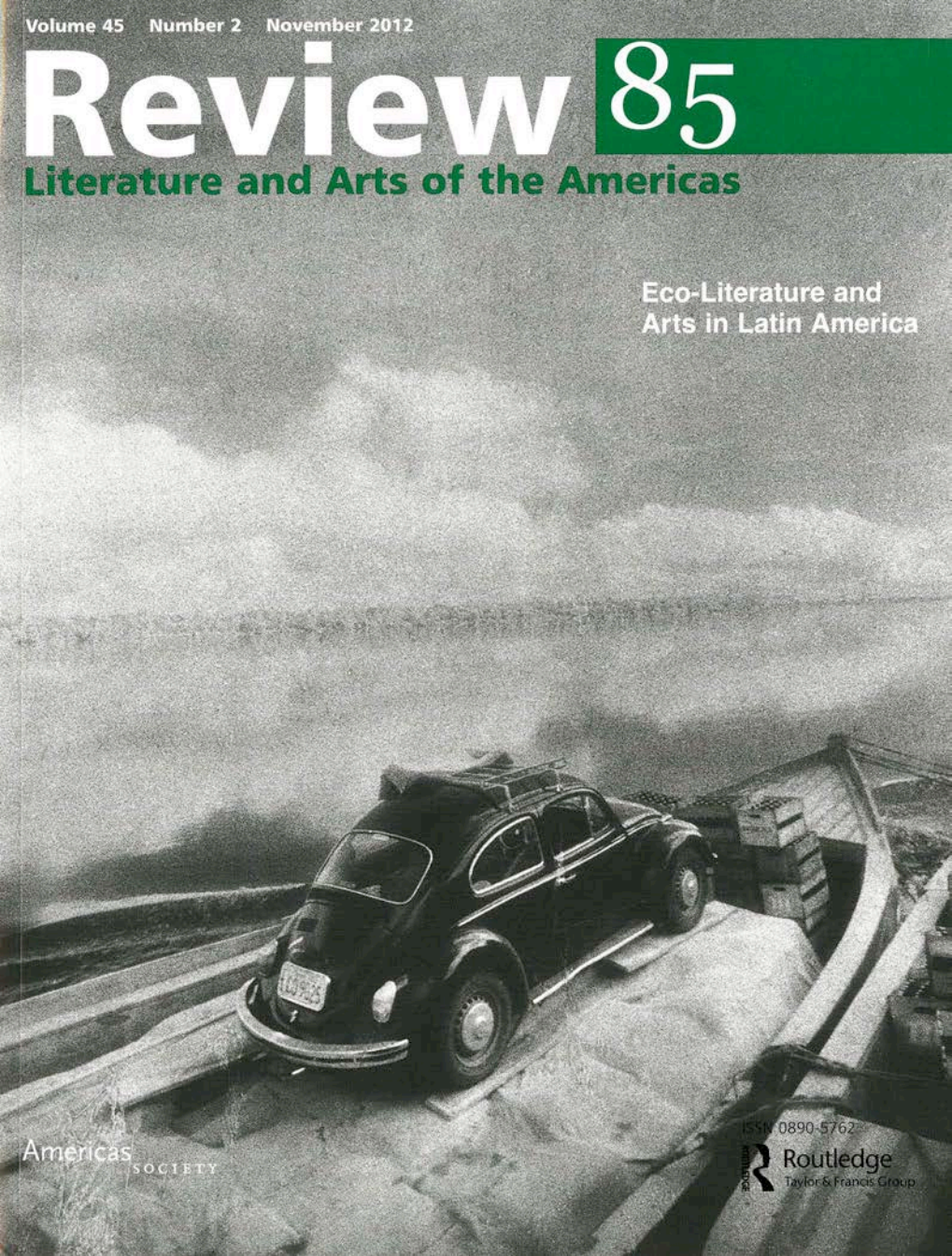


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Eco-Literature and  
Arts in Latin America



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# Review

## Literature and Arts of the Americas

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## Five Poems

*Juan Carlos Galeano*

Translated by James Kimbrell and Rebecca Morgan

*Juan Carlos Galeano was born in 1958 in the Amazon region of Colombia. He has published Amazonia y otros poemas (2003) as well as Yakumama (and Other Mythical Beings) (2011), and has translated work by several US poets (such as Charles Simic) into Spanish. His poetry, inspired by Amazonian cosmologies and the modern world, has been published in Casa de las Américas, The Atlantic Monthly, and Ploughshares. He lives in Tallahassee, Florida, where he teaches Latin American poetry and Amazonian cultures at Florida State University.*

*James Kimbrell is a North American poet and translator whose work has appeared in Poetry, The Nation, and The Kenyon Review; he teaches at Florida State University.*

*Rebecca Morgan's translations of Latin American and North American poetry have appeared in journals throughout the Americas; she also teaches at Florida State University.*

### Cometas

Por falta de papel para hacer las cometas, echábamos a volar nuestras ventanas.

Las ventanas con sus delantales blancos nos decían lo que miraban.

Pero los indios que veían volar nuestras ventanas  
no tenían ni casa ni ventanas para echar a volar siquiera una cometa.

Era natural que los indios quisieran hacer volar alguna cosa.

A cambio de pescado podrido, los gallinazos que volaban en círculos  
se dejaban amarrar un hilo al cuello y les servían de cometas a los indios.

Blow all his smoke and make the paths disappear.

He could also tell the animals his secrets for hunting men.

### **Leticia**

El sol y las nubes juegan cartas para ver quién se queda con el mediodía.

Las nubes ganadoras dejan caer peces y delfines en las calles de Leticia.  
(Si pierden, bajan con sus gafas oscuras a tomar el sol con los turistas).

Los peces trabajan de taxistas y al anochecer suben a dormir en las estrellas.

En los patios de las casas los delfines tocan sus guitarras y enamoran a las muchachas.

El corazón ardiente de una nube dice que no puede competir más con el sol.  
Se emborracha y se tira con sus ropas al río.

El sol trabaja todas las noches como tragacandelas del circo que viaja por el río  
y después se baña con los delfines y las muchachas.

### **Leticia**

The sun and clouds play cards to see who gets to take midday.

The winning clouds will drop fish and dolphins in the streets of Leticia.  
(If they lose, they will come down with their dark glasses to sunbathe with the tourists.)

Fish work as cab drivers and at dusk drive up to sleep in the stars.

In backyards dolphins strum their guitars, charming the girls.

A cloud's burning heart says she just can't compete with the sun anymore.  
She gets drunk and throws herself into the river with her clothes on.

The sun works as a fire eater at night in the river's traveling circus and  
later takes a dip with the dolphins and the girls.

## Kites

Because we lacked paper to make kites, we set our windows aflight.

The windows with their white aprons told us what they saw.

But the Indians who saw our windows flying had neither house nor window to fly, much less a kite.

It was natural for the Indians to want to fly something.

In exchange for rotten fish, the circling vultures let strings be tied around their  
necks  
and served as kites for the Indians.

## Curupira

Con un pie mirando adelante y el otro para atrás, el Curupira camina por la selva,  
cuidando los animales y haciéndoles trenzas a las palmeras jovencitas.

Los cazadores le regalan tabacos al Curupira para que les diga sus secretos.

El Curupira se fuma los tabacos y del humo  
se forman los caminos donde aparecen animales, árboles y frutas.

Pero los hombres no deben llevarse todos los animales, árboles y frutas.

El Curupira podría soplar el humo para que desaparezcan los animales, árboles y frutas.

Puede soplar todo su humo para que desaparezcan los caminos.

También podría decirles a los animales sus secretos para cazar a los hombres.

## Curupira

With one foot pointing ahead and the other pointing behind, the Curupira walks through the jungle and tends to the animals and braids the young palm trees' hair.

Hunters offer the Curupira cigars in exchange for his secrets.

The Curupira puffs the cigars; animals, trees, and fruits appear where his smoke forms paths.

But the men shouldn't make off with all the animals, trees, and fruits.

The Curupira could blow smoke so the animals, trees, and fruits disappear.