

# TAXI DRIVER MARIANO ZARO

He tells me that his wife is pregnant,  
he just learned about it.

He is the taxi driver,  
I am the passenger.

This happens at 5:00 in the morning,  
in a taxi, on my way to the Madrid airport.

The taxi driver is young, handsome,  
probably as handsome as he will ever be.  
He is going home after this ride, he says.  
He cannot wait.

Everything has a higher purpose now,  
I suppose;  
the way he stops at traffic lights,  
the way he rolls up the window.

He drives through the city—  
Cibeles, Recoletos, Castellana—  
and the city turns and collects cells, tissue,  
cartilage, bones, lungs for this child.  
Madrid is the big spinning wheel  
of embryos and invagination.

*It happened so fast, he says.*  
*We did not know it was going to be so fast.*

I want to ask him if he knew when it happened.  
Exactly when the conception happened.  
If he felt anything different,  
a stronger pulse, almost painful,  
in that region between anus and  
scrotum, in that equinox of flesh.

...

I don't ask him anything,  
I don't think those are appropriate questions.  
So I say the things you say in these cases:  
*Congratulations, all the best to you and your wife.*  
I watch him driving his smooth drive,  
the one I will never drive.

When we arrive to the airport  
he helps me with my luggage and I thank him.  
I pay, give him a tip. Suddenly he hugs me.  
*Have a good trip, he says.*

I can't tell if he knows what I am thinking,  
what I want from him.

Mariano Zaro is the author of three poetry books: *Where From/Desde Donde* (Bay Books, Santa Monica), *Poems of Erosion/Poemas de la erosión* and *The House of Mae Rim/La casa de Mae Rim* (both with Carayan Press, San Francisco). His poems have been included in the anthologies *Al Aire Nuevo* (San Luis Potosí, Mexico), *New Baroque* (Los Angeles), *LA Melange* (Los Angeles), *River's Voice* (Los Angeles), *The Seattle Muse* (Seattle) and *Luces y Sombras* (Tafalla, Spain). As a fiction writer, his short stories have appeared in several literary journals in Spain and the United States: *Menos 15*, *El signo del gorrión*, *Caracola*, *The Louisville Review*, *Poeticdiversity*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Pinyon*, *Magnapoets* and *The Portland Review*. In 2004 he received the *Roanoke Review* Short Fiction Prize. He has translated American poets Philomene Long, Alicia Vogl Sáenz, Sarah Maclay, Michelle Mitchell-Foust and Tony Barnstone. He earned a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Granada (Spain) and a Master's in Literature from the University of Zaragoza (Spain). He conducts poetry workshops and he currently teaches Spanish at Rio Hondo College (Whittier, CA).

