

I dedicate this book to Janis Joplin,
even though I wrote these poems
listening to *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis.



The Pearl

October 4, 1970

Alcohol and Hollywood.

The futuristic stilt house, its windows too large.

The headlights of cars slam into them,
and the blurry faces of passengers
run away fast, followed by trails of their skin,
always somewhere else.

The procession of the rush
and the heroin's symphony
with a thousand movements.

The shrink's diamond ring on her finger,
her mom's artificial teeth with no one to talk to.
"Jesus!" The music in the ears,
purgatory vomiting on the red dress
and the crapper of the Landmark Motor Hotel.

The mirror, Pearl in there, appearing and disappearing.

Drifts, shards of glass, the soul moving left and right.

Then, she sticks out her tongue. "Fuck you!"

The bottle, that taste of dust and crushed ice
in her mouth, which never goes down.

The hands on the windows, the sign
and its frame of light bulbs, down in the street.

Purgatory is full as usual.

Bessie Smith's Packard hitting the truck,
her arm torn off,
the ambulance,
a tramp who's pissing himself.

Always the same scene in her head
when the ghost comes,
that golden bitch with its big tits,
beautiful as she will never be.
Now it's in the mirror, laughing.
But come on, this isn't a real crapper,
it's full of people in there, of borderless memories.
Black out, emergency lights, the ghost lifts its dress
and shows Janis its panties stained with blood.
Thirteen years. Port Arthur.
The thorny coat of adolescence,
the smell of the river and summer,
a bra that's too big.
The ghost is bringing Janis backward,
where it hurts. "Fuck you!"

The blood that drives the wrong way,
closed eyes, which see farther,
the shapes of the last line, there.
An infinite Texas,
a Nirvana of motionless beaks of oil wells
in a land of intermittent shadows.
Black out, emergency lights.
The carpet on her face and life dripping on the shells of sleeping mites.
No one else knows a thing.