

## Classroom Sanctuary

Pencils die each day a little more  
At the hands of my students  
My classroom is a cemetery of trees  
Desks are dead trees whose stories lie untold  
Cut short during a raid on a northern forest

Plundering through area and perimeter  
Glafira, Leticia, Arturo  
Poachers of white clean paper  
Or are they beneficiaries of martyrs  
Whose blood they use every day to write their  
Parents' dreams and hopes

*Venimos por ti m'ija. Siempre le digo maestra, echale ganas*

They do  
Echandle ganas  
All they know  
Goes on the skins of sacrificed trees

My classroom is really a church  
A sanctuary  
Where trees give up their lives so that Edwin twelve  
Whose brother stopped crying at three  
Father starts drinking at the axis of four  
Mother works for five squared  
Can learn to find peace exponentially  
Because Edwin did slip through the bilingual cracks  
Of a system that canceled his native language  
And forgot to give him a new one  
So now subtractive bilingual

In what language does he laugh  
Cry  
Share  
When he can write in none

Maria Torres  
Deaf in one ear until she was eight

*Echale ganas hijita*

There is a desperation in their voice  
That cannot be translated

Maybe now she'll learn to read

*I can understand English Ms. Maranon*

I know Maria  
Trees hold you up in their dreams  
You are the star  
Breathing  
Speaking  
Walking in English  
You become the roots they no longer grow  
Dendrites breakin' new ground in your brain

Yes my classroom is a sanctuary  
Where memory resides and grows

Ymasumac Marañon 2003