

## Translation: “Un átomo a otro”

Jessica Aliaga Lavrijsen  
University of Zaragoza  
jeskeal@hotmail.com

Brian McCabe (b. 1951) is a renowned Scottish writer. He has published five poetry collections: *Goodbye Schooltie* (1972), *Spring’s Witch* (1984), *One Atom to Another* (1987), *Body Parts* (1999) and *Zero* (2009); several collected stories: *The Lipstick Circus* (1985), *In a Dark Room with a Stranger* (1995), *A Date with my Wife* (2001) and *Selected Stories* (2003); and a novel: *The Other McCoy* (1990). He has also published several articles of literary criticism and, currently, he is the editor of the literary journal “*The Edinburgh Review*”.

His work has been acclaimed and he has received six awards from *The Scottish Arts Council*, two poetry awards and *The Canongate Prize*. Some of his tales have been read on *BBC Radio 3*, *BBC Radio Scotland*, and *BBC Radio 4*; others have been adapted for television, theatre and even film.

His impact on the literary activity of Edinburgh is intense, since he has been teaching creative writing at British universities for several years and he frequently participates in public readings and other literary events.

“Un átomo a otro”.

No puedo creerlo.  
¿Cuántos milenios hace?  
No me digas que no me reconoces  
Pero si estuvimos juntos en la misma  
molécula  
—en la sopa.

“One Atom to Another”

I don’t believe it.  
How many millennia is it?  
Don’t tell me you don’t recognise me?  
But we were in the same molecule together  
—in the soup.

Átomo, no has envejecido ni un día.  
 ¿Te acuerdas de aquella vez en la que nos  
 emborrachamos juntos  
 de aminoácidos? Y después formamos  
 nuestra primera proteína —Madre mía,  
 en aquellos tiempos sí que vivíamos  
 peligrosamente.  
 Sí, tuvimos nuestros roces.  
 Al final rompimos lazos.  
 Después oí que te habías trasladado —  
 que trabajabas para alguna compañía  
 nueva  
 llamada A.D.N.  
 Yo me quedé en mi elemento.  
 No viajo mucho, pero soy feliz.  
 Casi me echan el lazo pero  
 se deshizo —uno de los Carbonos.  
 ¿Te acuerdas de los Carbonos?  
 Siempre supe que serías alguien.  
 Estuve detrás de ti todo el tiempo  
 desde que te arrastraste de ese mar  
 hasta que te convertiste en lo que eres hoy.  
 ¿Qué tal van las cosas por la industria de la  
 vida?  
 Oí lo de tu colapso.  
 Hiroshima. Nagasaki.  
 Te presionaron vale vale  
 no tienes por qué darme explicaciones.  
 Me encantaría oír tus planes, pero  
 tienes que salir disparado ya. Bien.  
 Ha sido genial toparme contigo de nuevo.  
 No suelo tropezarme con celebridades.  
 Deberíamos juntarnos más a menudo.  
 No en serio.

¡Tanto tiempo!

Atom you don't look a day older.  
 Remember that time we got drunk together  
 on amino acids? And then we  
 Formed the first protein —O mother,  
 in those days we lived dangerously.  
 O I know we got on each other's particles.  
 We fell out eventually.  
 Later I heard you'd moved —  
 working for some new company  
 called D.N.A.  
 Me, I stayed in my element.  
 Don't get around much, but I'm happy.  
 Almost got hitched, but it  
 fell apart —to one of the Carbons.  
 Remember the Carbons?  
 I always knew you'd be somebody.  
 I was right behind you all the way  
 when you crawled up out of the sea  
 and evolved in what you are today.  
 How is it in the life industry?  
 Heard about your breakdown.  
 Hiroshima. Nagasaki.  
 You were put under pressure okay okay  
 you don't have to explain yourself to me.  
 I'd love to hear your plans, but then  
 you've got to shoot off now. So.  
 Great to bump into you again.  
 Not often I collide with a celebrity.  
 We should get together more often.  
 No seriously.

So long.

McCabe, Brian. 1987. *One Atom to Another*. Edinburgh: Polygon, p. 75-76