

Goes Without Saying

The Languages of Nicaragua

1.

In the cloud forests live two old men,
the last speakers of a tongue
that remembers those who made
the footprints at Acahualinca.
They have words for every orchid,
and all the unrecorded ferns and fungi,
the moss, the crops, the weather, treefuls
of birds like flying gemstones,
the mist and smells of home.
They have had a falling out.
Now they don't speak.

2.

In Villa Libertad four hundred
deaf children fail to connect
with their teachers' Spanish.
Lip-reading and finger-spelling
cannot name their world. Instead,
in street and school-yard they combine
Their family signs to greet, play, comment,
shape their day. In their fluent hands,
mimicas acquire nuance, grammar, syntax.
In the Idioma de senas de Nicaragua
they speak for themselves.