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Self

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Self

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

by

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Abstract

This is a translation of Dr. Erika Almenara's complete published collection of poetry. The original publications span a period of over twelve years of work, with books published in 2006, 2008, and 2018. The first book of poetry in this series of translations, *Reino Cerrado* (*Closed Kingdom*), explores the profound contemplations of life and how to turn those thoughts into words and put them on paper. We see images of nature, hear faint religious overtones, and feel the distress of a woman searching for a healthy relationship, and having little luck. *Para evitar los rastros* (*To Avoid All Traces*), the second publication in this series, speaks of new found friendships, the difficulty of writing about past experiences, and the desire to trap one's feelings in the confines of a poem. The last book of the series, *Perhaps* (this title is originally in English, and I keep it the same in my translation), illustrates the double-edged sword of childhood trauma – the pain caused by the trauma and the pain caused by remembering. But, as we see through this collection, writing is one method of overcoming that sorrow.

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Introduction

Imagine a young girl comfortable in her family's privileged lifestyle, though at the same time confused and scared because of ongoing abuse, and in love with her best friend who is unable to return the feeling. Erika Mariana Almenara was this young girl, and to process all of these emotions, from happiness to fear and love, she began writing at an early age. Her poetry developed as a way of coping with these often difficult experiences. Almenara says she had to be silent about many of the sensations she felt, so she would write to confront her feelings and express what she couldn't say out loud. Those poems became her emotional outlet, her therapy, and her path to restoration and self-discovery. She collected many of these poems into three volumes of work, and those collections are what I have translated here.

Almenara was born on May 7, 1978, into a wealthy family in Lima, Peru. Her uncles were in the military, and Erika learned to ride horses on the grounds of a military school. During summer vacations her family took frequent trips to the beach, where she formed a close bond with the sea that calmed her wandering spirit and healed her broken soul. Walking through the sand along the shore, listening to the call of the waves, Erika felt true freedom.

Unfortunately, this freedom did not carry over to other parts of her life. She was the victim of incest perpetrated by her father, a fact she was not afraid or embarrassed to share with me as I consulted her about her poetry. Her mother was not her ally during Erika's formative years, and this led to a cycle of confusion, anger, and self-blame. This trauma and the feelings it engendered would become a wellspring of inspiration for her future writing.

Erika did have two sources of emotional refuge growing up – a very special godmother and a beautiful, loving best friend. Naming a longtime friend, Chesi, as godmother to Erika proved to be the best decision her mother could have made for her. Along with creating a sense

of balance in Almenara's life and an example of unconditional love, Chesi provided her with warmth and the stable mother-daughter relationship Almenara so needed. Her best friend, Juliana, whom she met at age seven, provided that intimate companionship that many girls crave. Almenara's best memories from childhood involve Juliana, as she provided Almenara with a glimpse of a good family life. Juliana would become another source of inspiration when Erika fell in love with her. Erika knew this more intimate desire would not be requited, and she kept silent about her feelings to save her friendship. Like the trauma, this silence and the unreciprocated sexual attraction gave Almenara much fodder for her poetry.

Despite this complicated dichotomy of privilege and abuse, happiness and turmoil, friendship and unrequited love, Erika grew up to be very successful in academia. In the year 2000, she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Translation and Interpreting from Feminine University of the Sacred Heart in Lima, Peru. After graduating she wanted to remain in the world of literature and arts, and a friend convinced her to move to the United States because the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee could offer her a literature degree. In 2009, she graduated with a Master of Arts in Spanish and Portuguese. But she wasn't finished yet. In 2015 she earned her Ph.D. from the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan, along with a Certificate in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies.

Dr. Almenara's research, teaching, and writing cover an array of subjects. She currently focuses her research on Peruvian, Chilean, and Latin American Studies, 20th and 21st century Latin American literature, critical theory, cultural studies, women's, gender and sexuality studies, queer of color studies, and women of color feminisms. Her teaching interests include contemporary Andean, and Southern Cone cultural production with a particular emphasis on

subaltern, gender, and sexualities critical theories, and creative writing. Dr. Almenara has published three collections of poetry (those I translated in this thesis); she has a scholarly book forthcoming entitled *The Language of the In-Between: Transvestism, Post-hegemony, and Writing in Contemporary Chile and Peru*; and she has published many articles in academic journals both in the United States and abroad. Clearly, her tumultuous upbringing has not held her back from success. Indeed, her past experiences have fueled her writing and her interest in advocating for marginalized populations.

This advocacy is one reason I have so enjoyed working with Dr. Almenara and her beautiful poetry. Although her poetry is mostly about her personal experiences, her readers can find something that reflects their own lives. This makes it valuable to readers, but it is also very powerful because, through an act of imagination, readers can empathize with and understand subjects that might be unfamiliar. Mirroring the function of translation to bridge a linguistic gap between our world and one different from ours, this translation of Almenara's poetry bridges a cultural gap because of the subject matter.

I have titled my thesis "Self" because all of Almenara's poetry in this collection revolves around her in some way but is not self-aggrandizing. On the contrary, her poetry talks of self-loathing, self-hurting, self-understanding, self-affirmation, self-advocacy, self-acceptance, and, most importantly, self-worth and self-love. Almenara explained the titles of her book to me, which I share here. Her first book, *Reino Cerrado*, deals with "love and healing and closing the dark kingdom" of her father. *Para evitar los rastros* focuses on "poetry and the book itself as a way of forgetting the path or the way to get to someone." *Perhaps* "has to do with the luck of certainty in life in general. Everything is about possibility." Because of the subject matter, some of her poems are difficult to read. In fact, they made me uncomfortable when I translated them.

Incest and trauma and their consequences are not subjects easily dealt with. But these uneasy poems are emotional streams of heartfelt love and passion flowing into a sea of poetic discovery and delight.

Three major themes run throughout this collection: trauma and survival; love, forbidden and true; writing and poetry. Each one of these themes represents a journey for Almenara. When writing of her abuse, she describes the daily challenges of making sense of her victimization. Her abuse was not violent; it was perpetrated in the name of love. This made it very hard for Almenara to trust any other person's offering of love. But as we see in poem IX of Part I of *Perhaps*, she proclaims, "I am no longer seven / I am thirty-nine / I don't tremble at the encounter / the battle," letting the world know she has overcome the anguish of her childhood wounds. As an adult she carries the memories and scars of abuse, but instead of weakening her, they strengthen her.

Love has been a very complicated emotion for Almenara, not only because of her distrust of others, but also because of her attraction to women, which was frowned upon most of her life. She speaks of loving and losing and finding again. In poem XVI of Part 1 of *Closed Kingdom*, we read of the familiar habit of taking a lover's hand "on the coast of the sea, / when the waves put us to sleep with their friendly song," but now each lover walks toward the opposite "extreme." And, in Part 3 of *Perhaps*, Almenara speaks to her lover in poem II recounting how "in one kiss / you end the nightmare." We follow the poet on her journey through the discovery of deeply felt love and passion, the loss of close relationships, and finally the commitment to true love.

To combat her feelings of isolation and confusion, Almenara turned to writing as a source of relief and expression. Throughout this collection she reminds us that poetry is her outlet and

her comfort. Poem X in Part 1 of *Closed Kingdom* tells of the poet's relationship with writing. "I've been waiting three days," she says; "only a pencil accompanies me. / The pencil dances between my fingers / like the full Moon dances on a cloud." Almenara even speaks directly to poetry in the third poem of Part 3 of *Perhaps*, telling it that she is hurting and afraid. Poetry has become her companion, and through their conversations, poetry accompanies Almenara on her difficult journey through pain and healing.

My goal in translating Dr. Almenara's powerful poetry into English is to make her personal yet universal experiences accessible to a broader audience. I have tried to preserve her intense poetic style by keeping the lines succinct and eloquent, and I have attempted to convey the extreme emotions from her writing in a way that translates to all cultural backgrounds. I hope the reader will appreciate the grief, discomfort, heartache, tenderness, freedom, and joy that I recognize in her beautiful work.

Notes on Translation

Erika Almenara's poems are quite short and succinct. Some lines consist of only one word, and some poems consist of only three or four lines. There are a few longer poems, but they are the exceptions. When I began translating, I thought these short poems would be easy to work with – not many words, so not many words for me to write down. I learned quickly that I had underestimated Almenara's skill as a wordsmith. Or, maybe I had overestimated my aptitude as a translator.

The poems certainly intrigued me. They are like no other poems I have read. Almenara uses an economy of words that gets straight to the core of the subject matter and directly to the point of her message. That point can either pierce your heart or fly over your head and miss the bullseye completely. I found it a bit daunting to choose just the right words and turn the English phrases in just the right way to maintain that succinctness and loveliness of her poems and still hit the target of the reader's understanding.

Take for example, the first poem, "Annunciation," in her second book, *To Avoid All Traces*. The word *despegué* appears two times in the second stanza, and then again in the third stanza. The original line reads: *Desde ese instante no me despegué de ti. Estuvieras o no, no me despegué de ti*. Here the poetic voice describes a time when she realized she never wanted to leave the side of her lover. The phrase *no me despegué de ti* literally means "I did not unstick myself from you." Or, instead of *unstick*, we could also say *unglue*. But, no matter what, it sounds infinitely better in Spanish than it sounds in English. *Despegar* (the infinitive form of the verb) does not only mean the physical sense of unsticking. We could also say it means leaving one's side (figuratively, as in losing moral support), releasing someone from our thoughts, or losing contact from a close friend when physical distance keeps us apart.

Because of the second sentence in that line, *[e]stuvieras o no, no me despegué de ti*, we know the voice is speaking figuratively. That first phrase says, “whether you were there or not.” So now the difficulty is figuring out how to say “unstick” in a way that makes sense and also keeps the diction as elevated as the original’s. I thought of “departed” and “left,” but those felt too physical. I finally landed on “strayed” because, while that could be physical, we also use it in figurative terms. “My mind never strayed,” is one example. So my final translation of this stanza sounds like this: “From that instant I didn’t stray from you. If you were there or not, I never strayed from you.”

Some of Almenara’s poems use a clever play on words that is problematic to reproduce in another language. The first poem in the third collection *Perhaps*, is told from the voice of a young girl who describes the abuse perpetrated by her father. She begins by talking about her mother and the first two lines look like this: *Ma / ma-me-mi-mo-mu*. She takes the name of “Ma” and plays with the vowel sounds of the Spanish language in a way a child might practice saying them in school. It’s very simple – each syllable is made of just two letters, “m” and the vowel. When I tried to reproduce this in English, it was not so simple. It could look like this: “ma-me-mi-mo-mu.” Some of those do work, for instance, “me.” But what about “ma?” For some, this looks like a southern name for “Mother.” It doesn’t sound like the long vowel sound of the letter “a.” Then there’s “mi.” It could also be pronounced “me,” or “my,” or “mih” if the reader got really confused. Therefore, for the whole series of sounds, I decided to go with a phonetic spelling that I feel (hope) most readers will understand as the play on the vowel sounds. My translation of these same two lines go like this: “Mommy / may-me-my-mo-mu.”

Many words in Spanish (as with any language) can be difficult to translate into English because there can be multiple meanings and connotations. Because Almenara’s short and

grammatically direct poems leave no room for error, I had to work very conscientiously to get just the right word. This was most true with two poems in *Perhaps*. In Part 1, the eleventh poem (which has no title or number) begins with this line: “Hay dos panteras negras descarnando ocasos en el regazo de un borde.” The words *regazo* and *borde* can both have several meanings. *Regazo* can mean lap, arms, bosom, or breast. *Borde* can mean edge, border, rim, brink, verge, boor, churl, or lout. Any one of these might make sense in this line, depending on how a reader or translator wants to interpret it. According to Almenara, she uses *borde* in the sense of a physical border that divides two lands. This created a bit of a quandary for me, then, with *regazo*. I decided on bosom because I imagine the land where a border exists could be a plain or a mountain range, a river or the edge of the sea. This bosom, no matter its topography, would surround and absorb a sunset, just as a soft grandmother embraces and envelops her grandchildren in her bosom. The panthers devouring the sunsets complicates this image, but if we see the black animals as the dark clouds encroaching on the land, taking over the beauty of the sunset, and clouding the hope and the happiness of the poet, we can picture the bosom of the border enveloping this entire scene.

The very last word of the entire collection, *kohala*, was a severe sticking point for me. Not only was it difficult for me to understand the meaning of this word in the context of the poem, it also seemed a strange way to end a collection. But, when I asked Almenara about it, she explained it in a way that made perfect sense. The poet speaks to her lover, imagining their future together and all the moments she hopes they will share. In the last stanza she says, “perhaps, / quizá / one of these nights / I will again be / your ballerina / your koala.” The reason Almenara chose this animal as her image is that koala bears seem to be always hugging the branches of a tree. This is as close as the little bear can get to its shelter, and the poet wants to

have this same closeness with her lover. Because this metaphor isn't readily apparent with just the word *koala*, I took the liberty of rendering the line as "your cuddly koala," to give it that sense of closeness and tenderness.

In translating this collection, I tried to bring the reader closer to Dr. Almenara's lifetime of experiences. There might be ways to render lines or entire poems differently than I have written them here, but my sincere hope is to have done justice to the raw beauty of Erika Almenara's work.

Erika Almenara
Reino Cerrado
c.2006

Parte Uno

I.

Otra vez te pierdes en el bosque cuando acaba la noche. Corres y los vientos fúnebres golpean tu rostro. Corres y registras en tu mente palabras no dichas, palabras arrojadas mientras tu escucha solo calla.

II.

El manantial abierto,
los ecos en palabras ya luego son gritos,
la ola,
la estrella,
los ojos que miran
las cuentas,
la actividad de tus manos
en la sombra de tu propio lado.
Has decidido abrir los ojos donde la luz se encuentra.

Emily Aguayo
Closed Kingdom
c.2020

Part One

I.

Again you get lost in the forest at night's end. You run and
mournful winds hit your face. You run and search your mind for
words unsaid, words hurled out while your listening only remains
quiet.

II.

The open wellspring
the echoes in words turn into screams,
the wave,
the star,
the eyes that look at
the monthly bills,
the activity of your hands
in the shadow of your own side.
You've decided to open your eyes where you can see the light.

III.

Aves de extraño plumaje planean sobre ti,
marean tu vientre,
sacuden tu piso.
Te haces madre sin saberlo;
tu vientre son ellas:
las aves,
ciego rotor de un viento creado por su aleteo.

IV.

Intentas cazar olas que te vencen infinitas veces. Olas que te confunden con la arena y te suspenden en agua salada y piedras. Frente de un mar, como el de las Costas Normandas, contemplas su caminar de elegante zorra; mientras te muestra sus dientes de espuma blanca. Comienzas a zambullirte.

V.

Celebro las lágrimas de esta mañana, elegida.
¿Por qué el amor compartido?
Si tienes el lápiz
¿Adónde la compañía?
¿Adónde, si ya solo tienes ausencia?

III.

Birds of strange plumage soar over you,
Making your belly queasy,
Shake your ground.
You become a mother without knowing it;
They are your belly:
the birds,
blind rotor of a wind created by their flapping.

IV.

You try to catch waves that endlessly defeat you. Waves that confound you with the sand and suspend you in salt water and rocks. In front of a sea, like the one off the Normandy Coast, you contemplate its elegant fox movement. It shows its white foam teeth. You begin to submerge yourself.

V.

Chosen, I celebrate this morning's tears.
Why shared love?
If you have a pencil
Where do you put the companionship?
Where, if only absence remains?

VI.

Dentro del saco hay un hoyo llamado olvido, por ahí se marchan los gestos de una noche profética, de una noche incorruptible. Se escapan tu olor, tu reflejo en la pupila y mis palabras habladas en otras lenguas.

VII.

Te has convertido en la urgencia de abrir un círculo en un cielo de vidrio. Introduces y extraes repetidas veces la mano. Esperas la sangre. Te envuelves en ella.

VIII.

Allí estuvo la boca ajena, concibiendo verdades que alguna vez fueron. Alguien observaba desde el otro lado. Alguien que solo veía gesticular aquella boca pues nada de lo que dijo, se oyó.

IX.

Una vez más tus palabras se disfrazan. Te han falseado citando frases prestadas. Ha sido otra la boca que las ha pronunciado. Estamos ya libres de todo mal.

VI.

Inside the sack is a hole called oblivion. Through it fall expressions of a prophetic and incorruptible night. Your fragrance, your reflection in my eye and my words spoken in other tongues – these all escape.

VII.

You have become urgency, opening a circle in a sky of glass. You insert and extract your hand over and over. You await the blood. You cloak yourself in it.

VIII.

Elsewhere was the stranger's mouth, conceiving truths that one time existed. Someone observed from the other side. Someone who only saw that mouth move but heard nothing of what it said.

IX.

Once again your words disguise themselves. They have counterfeited you by quoting borrowed phrases. Another mouth has uttered them. We are now free of all evil.

X.

Llevo tres días esperando,
solo un lápiz me acompaña.

El lápiz baila entre mis dedos
como baila la Luna llena sobre la nube

Me traiciona al día cuarto,
el lápiz pierde la punta,
dejo de escribir
y repito tus palabras.

XI.

Hablaste para volver a hablar,
para volver a decir
para volver a decir nada.

Tus ojos, la ventana romántica,
tu boca, la ventana clásica.

Has roto la bulla sin construir melodía
¿A qué le llamas canto?

La esfera suspendida
cae,
no se rompe pero aúlla.

XII.

Voy a soplar el sonido que rebota entre las paredes,
arrancaré el pedazo de un verso a medias,
de un verso en pausa.

Afortunadamente,
no desclavaré trozos de piel.

Nunca la conociste,
te quedaste en
la palabra.

X.

I've been waiting three days,
only a pencil keeps me company.

The pencil dances between my fingers
like the full Moon dances on a cloud

On the fourth day it betrays me,
the pencil loses its point,
I stop writing
and repeat your words.

XI.

You spoke to resume speaking,
to resume saying,
to resume saying nothing.

Your eyes, the romantic window,
your mouth, the classic window.

You have broken the din without composing a melody
What do you call a song?

The suspended sphere
falls,
it doesn't break but howls.

XII.

I'm going to blow away the sound that bounces off the walls,
I'll rip off the piece of a half-verse,
a suspended verse.

Fortunately,
I won't tear off bits of skin.

You never knew it,
you remained in
the word.

XIII.

El gallo ha cantado
y no me has negado.

El gallo ha cantado y
no he sido pan ni tú, vino.

Morimos juntos en la cruz
y así
y quizá por ello,
no me aceptas en tu reino.

XIV.

Atrás.
Desde atrás,
tomo impulso
y salto
hacia tus piropos,
hacia tus pies pequeños de bailarina en andén,
de sendero recorrido,
y me convierto así,
en *persona non grata*.

XV.

Larga la noche,
largos tus ojos
ondulantes y ligeros detenidos tras mi muerte.

Agazapada vienes
te disfrazas de colibrí
y con tu pico ahuecas mi corazón.

Larga la noche
y largo tu pecho
endureciendo ecos vacíos.

Tu fantasma me motiva,
inquilina de tu vientre soy.
Perdida
en tu noche,
me derramo
y digo tu nombre.

XIII.

The cock has crowed
and you haven't denied me.

The cock has crowed and
I haven't been bread nor you, wine.

We died together on the cross
and like that
and perhaps because of it,
you don't accept me in your kingdom.

XIV.

Behind.
From behind,
on impulse
I leap
toward your come-hithers,
toward your small ballerina feet on the path
of a worn-down trail,
and I transform just like that,
into *persona non grata*.

XV.

Long is the night,
Long-gazing eyes
wavy and blithe lingering after my death.

Crouching you approach
disguised as a hummingbird
and with your beak you scrape out my heart.

Long is the night
and long-loving is your breast
hardening empty echoes.

Your ghost impels me,
the uninvited guest of your belly.
Lost
in your night,
I spill out
and I say your name.

XVI.

Estuvimos a la orilla del mar,
cuando las olas nos adormecían con su canto amable,
cuando tomarme la mano
era habitual.

Ahora,
yo camino hacia un extremo
tú hacia el otro
¿Qué puedo hacer yo?
¿Acaso voltear el rostro para saber si aún me miras?

Seguiré el llanto de las gaviotas
me iré tras ellas,
emularé un grito
y me convertiré en pez.

XVII.

Adentro hay una nada que devora
no hay espejos
ni manos,
no hay pasillos.

Adentro hay un silencio gris
exaltado por la voz que toca,
un silencio gris
que respira mi propio aire,
adentro se ha roto un diamante joven.

XVI.

We were on the edge of the sea,
when the waves put us to sleep with their friendly song,
when taking your hand
was habitual.

Now,
I walk toward one extreme
you toward the other
What can I do?
Perhaps turn my head to see if you're still looking at me?

I'll follow the call of the seagulls
I'll go behind them,
I'll emulate their cry
and I'll turn into a fish.

XVII.

Inside there is a nothing that devours
there are no mirrors
no hands,
no hallways.

Inside is a gray silence
exalted by the voice that touches, interrupts
a gray silence
that breathes my own air,
inside a young diamond has broken.

Parte dos

I.

Saco la cuenta,
giro,
busco
y nada,
ni siquiera la Luna.

II.

Otra vez,
contando puntos negros sobre la pared,
otra vez,
las manos aferradas a la ropa
los ruidos no gratos obligándome a brincar.

En medio de la noche,
un solo nombre,
que no es el mío.

III.

Aves de extraño plumaje planean sobre ti,
marean tu vientre,
sacuden tu piso.
Te haces madre sin saberlo;
tu vientre son ellas:
las aves,
ciego rotor de un viento creado por su aleteo.

Part Two

I.

I do the math,
I turn,
I search,
and nothing,
not even the Moon.

II.

Again,
counting black points on the wall,
again,
hands clinging to clothes
unpleasant noises forcing me to jump.

In the middle of the night,
a single name,
that isn't mine.

III.

Birds of strange plumage soar over you,
Making your belly queasy,
Shaking your ground.
You become a mother without knowing it;
They are your belly:
the birds,
blind rotor of a wind created by their flapping.

IV.

¿Adónde van mis mudas palabras
de frases entre líneas
cuando estuve lejos?

V.

A Patricia

Yo me quedo en la de ayer,
en la que habló desde el mantel,
la que no temió y dijo.

Yo me quedo en la que soñó despierta,
y, acercándose, quiso ver;
la que, desde una silla,
cantó verdades.

VI.

Alguien abre la puerta.
Ella escapa,
toma mi cuerpo
y soy otra.

Dejo el anillo,
arrojo el vestido
y vivo solo para contemplar
el estallido de su sombra
tan ajena de mí.

IV.

Where do my mute words go,
of phrases between lines
when I was far away?

V.

To Patricia

I keep thinking about the girl from yesterday,
the one who spoke from the tablecloth,
the fearless one who told.

I keep thinking about the girl who dreamt with eyes open,
and, getting closer, wanted to see;
the one who, from a chair,
sang the truth.

VI.

Someone opens the door.
She escapes,
takes my body
and I am another.

I leave the ring,
I throw off the dress
and I live only to ponder
the bursting of her shadow
so foreign to me.

VII.

La ebriedad de la noche me alcanza,
ya soy ella
y aún, sin Luna,
canto.

VIII.

Me paralizó
Y enfrente lo conocido.

Callo,
no fijo mi reflejo en el mar
pienso en la experiencia;
repaso su costo,
peino mi pelo.

No espero,
libero el papel.

IX.

Un nuevo golpe arremete,
soy solo el cuerpo
ya no hay más voces que la mía;
sin embargo,
adentro hay una guerra,
una guerra que se gesta desde la palabra no dicha.

¿Cómo debo entender tus ojos?
¿Tu cabello cano es en realidad cano?
Dime hija de quién soy,
cuerpo de quién soy.

VII.

The night's intoxication reaches me,
I am she
and yet, without the Moon,
I sing.

VIII.

I stop
I confront the understanding.

I quiet,
I don't focus on my reflection in the sea
I think about the experience;
I re-examine its cost,
I comb my hair.

I don't wait,
I take out the paper.

IX.

A new blow strikes.
I am only a body
no more voices except mine;
even so,
inside is a war,
a war brewing over the unsaid word.

How should I understand your eyes?
Your gray hair, is it really gray?
Tell me whose daughter I am,
whose body I am.

Erika Almenara
Para evitar los rastros
c.2008

Parte uno

La nostalgia y sus cauces

Anunciación

Una puerta negra y en medio un triángulo. Un sueño compacto de comienzos inocentes. Ahí estabas, sosegada y distinta. ¿Es a mí, pregunté? Y cuando tus dedos resolvieron el destino del aire, supe que era a mí a quien contemplabas.

Desde ese instante no me despegué de ti. Estuvieras o no, no me despegué de ti.

Tus viajes, los feriados, nuestro insomnio, nada importaba pues aquella noche tú y yo formamos un yugo. Formamos un yugo y no me despegué de ti ya nunca.

Emily Aguayo
To Avoid All Paths
c.2020

Part One

Nostalgia and Its Causes

Annunciation

A black door and in the middle a triangle. A compact dream of innocent beginnings. There you were, peaceful and different. Is it me? I asked. And when your fingers resolved the air's destiny, I knew I was the one on your mind.

From that instant I didn't stray from you. If you were there or not, I didn't stray from you.

Your journeys, the holidays, our insomnia, nothing mattered but that night you and I formed a bond. We formed a bond and I never strayed from you.

Migraciones

Se acabaron los nos vemos mañana,
no sé yo hasta cuándo
adiós,
gata ingenua
que
ya no ronronea
pues
se hace llamar alma vieja,
adiós
por ahora,
a tu caminar en celo
a mi ojo en tu Parnaso,
preciso abandono hacia el blanco papel.

Ceremonia

No conforme con tus ojos
busqué la explosión
hacia fuera

para evitar los rastros
inventé
menos despedidas
sembré
una renovación
y desdibujé del asfalto,
nuestros nombres
para siempre juntos.

Migrations

The see-you-tomorrow's have ended,
until when I don't know
goodbye
noble cat
that
no longer purrs
but
demands to be called old soul,
goodbye
for now,
to your walk in heat
to my view in your Parnassus,
precise abandon toward the blank paper.

Ceremony

Not satisfied with your eyes
I searched for the explosion
elsewhere

to avoid all paths back to you
I invented
fewer farewells
I planted
a renovation
and blurred the asphalt,
our names
together forever.

Propaganda

Entonces me puse de pie
abrí la libreta
y
anoté Poesía tres veces
pensé
¿dónde quedo yo,
las noches que soñé contigo,
que me toqué para ti?
¿adónde van mis frases entre líneas cuando estuve
lejos,
dónde quedo yo
que
siempre traigo prisa?

Lámina

Observo faroles
el color celeste
los ampara
contemplo su circularidad
que
minutos después
son tus senos
los que no puedo acariciar
porque a mí todavía me falta
y tú
ya tienes demasiado

Propaganda

Then I stood up
opened the notebook
and
wrote Poetry three times
I thought
where do I belong,
the nights I dreamed about you,
when I touched myself for you?
where do my words between the lines go from when I was
far away,
where do I belong
I who
am always in a hurry?

Veneer

I see lanterns
a celestial color
surrounds them
I contemplate their circularity
and
minutes later
they're your breasts
that I cannot caress
because I am still lacking
and you
already have more than enough.

Alusión

Tras los despistes de mi mente
regresas,
te miro en silencio
aunque mi mente no calla
al estirar tu mano,
el puño de un antiguo ruego
nos derrumba.

Concesiones

Solamente hoy voy a pensar en ti,
sólo hoy
me dejaré vencer,
atraparé ese sueño,
grito
que mi pecho acoge.

Señuelo

En verde te preferí
cuando
por tus campos
me dejabas pastorear la realidad.

Allusion

While my mind wanders
you return,
I look at you in silence
although my mind doesn't settle,
when I stretch out your hand
the fist of an ancient plea
shatters us.

Concessions

Only today I will think of you,
only today
I will let myself win,
I will trap that dream,
I cry out
that my chest accepts.

Lure

I preferred you in green
when
through your fields
you allowed me to shepherd reality.

Reparación

Te habla,
no
a
la
que
has
dejado
en
pausa
te habla
la de la tinta
la que
desnuda
frente al espejo
se cubre con retazos
que
a través de aguja e hilo
ha zurcido.

Reparation

They speak to you,

not

to

the

one

you

have

left

suspended

They speak to you

the one with the ink

she who

naked

facing the mirror

covers herself with remnants

that

with needle and thread

she has mended.

No Names

Para Andrés Aluma.

No buscabas palabras entonces
solo acercabas el cuerpo
el deseo no era pregunta

pensábamos en happy endings
en contar todos los puntos

entonces, nuestras bocas brutas
se devoraban como historia
ahí, donde todas las respuestas existieron.

Verde

Hay un peso
que
desde mis dedos
saborea el pasado

el peso,
luna fuera del agua
lanzador de anzuelos
comprador de silencios,
coqueteando
aquí y allá

el peso,
cosmos adyacente a mi voluntad
la pordiosera de la estación
que se agita tras los vaivenes de la danza
esta danza que es siempre vida.

Sin Nombre

For Andrés Aluma.

You didn't search for words
you only drew your body near
desire wasn't a question

we thought about happy endings
considering all the angles

then, our primal mouths
devoured each other like history
there, where all answers existed.

Green

A weight
from
my fingers
tastes the past

the weight,
moon above the water
launching hooks
purchasing silences
flirting
here and there

the weight,
cosmos adjacent to my will
beggar at the station
who rocks to the dance's sway
this dance called life.

Designación

Para Maritza Figueroa

Sus ojos
despertaron flores
hizo círculos en el agua
paralizó la pesadilla,
dijo mi nombre.

Cristales

Errante, entre los pliegos descubres a la dama que arma el poema, la orilla de ese río que ya no fluye. Acercarte quisieras, más sabes, que el cabello que enrosca, que los dedos que dobla, orientados están.

Agasajo

Es el árbol que cumple años y se festeja.
Vicente Huidobro

A estas alturas de tu vida
detente y mira
el reflejo en el mar
repasa el costo
la aventura
y siéntate
que
vamos a hablar
conocida mía
sobre el manantial
su Ebro
ese que otorgas
enardecida.

Designation

For Maritza Figueroa

Those eyes
bloomed flowers
rippled the water
paralyzed the nightmare
said my name.

Crystals

Roaming, among the sheets of paper you discover the lady who protects the poem, the bank of that river that no longer flows. You'd like to get close, but well you know, that curled hair, those curved fingers, they're already poised.

Warm Welcome

It's the tree that grows old and celebrates.
Vicente Huidobro

At this point in your life
stop and gaze
at the reflection in the ocean
examine the cost
the adventure
and sit
for
we are going to talk
my confidant
about the wellspring
its River Ebro
which you give over
so passionately.

Paridad

Un poema se arrincona
vence los vientos
golpea mi rostro
enajena la madrugada
y respira mi susto.

Identificación en Cajamarca

*Y ella,
dice que la muerte es miedo,
es amor.*

Federico García Lorca

Tu regazo
llanura impertinente
y a destiempo
breve espesura que supera
el agua contra el agua
ajante sonrisa
y fama de esta noche.

Acaso en travesía

La sombra breve
de tus cabellos
encanasta la almohada,
horca
que mi cuello aguarda.

Equality

A poem huddles in a corner
vanquishes the winds
strikes my face
entrances the dawn
breathes my fright.

Identification in Cajamarca

Your bosom
impertinent plain
and at the wrong time
brief heaviness that exceeds
water against water
unequivocal smile
and glory of this night.

*And she,
says death is fear,
is love.*

Federico García Lorca

Perhaps on a Journey

The brief shadow
of your hairs
streaks across the pillow
gallows
that my neck awaits.

Caché

*No hay ternura comparable
a la de acariciar algo que duerme.*
Oliveiro Girondo

Un artículo divide mi noche
la pausa
y cohíbe,
es leve afán
que esconde la letra
de la que tanto huye
mi entendimiento.

Aspiración Dual

Lo inútil:
esperar tu mirada en descenso contrario
lo irremediable:
pretender cobijar la mano desde ese otro
costado.

Sin Develar

Danza ajena
no complaciente
en los rincones de este alboroto
donde se anida tu nombre

danza que después es
tinta agnóstica
papel que no respira
verso que nunca llega.

Cachet

*There is no tenderness comparable
to caressing something that sleeps.*

Oliveiro Gironde

An article divides my night
pauses it
and unsettles,
it's a slight eagerness
that hides the letter
from which so much escapes
my understanding.

Dual Aspiration

The useless:
awaiting your look in opposite descent
the irreparable:
trying to grasp the hand from that other
side.

Without Unveiling

Far away dance
unaccommodating
in the corners of this commotion
where your name nests

dance that afterward is
agnostic ink
paper that doesn't breathe
verse that never appears.

Exhibiciones

*Que el verso sea como una llave.
Que abra mil puertas.
Vicente Huidobro*

Así traes al poema
maltratado en plástico,
mi propio deseo
dentro de una maleta polvorienta
de donde cuelga tu nombre.

Apatía virtual

El verso se acomoda
hacia una dirección
que no es la mía

el verso
cubre su pedazo
para que yo no la mire.

Autorretrato

Mirada circular,
esa sabiduría
la duerme tu nombre
colgando está
sobre mi lado derecho
el sabor a la nada:
un pie menos.

Exhibitions

*May the verse be like a key.
May it open a thousand doors.*
Vicente Huidobro

You bring the poem
mistreated in plastic,
my own desire
inside a dusty suitcase
where your name hangs.

Virtual Apathy

The verse turns
its back to me
and settles in

the verse
covers itself
so I won't see it.

Self Portrait

Circular scrutiny
wisdom
your name puts to sleep
is hanging
over my right side
tasting of nothing:
one less foot.

Parte dos

A la otra orilla

Tribulaciones

Lamiendo los pliegues de una palabra gastada
descuido el tamaño de mis uñas
el olor de mi piel
por la labor ante la que no me rindo

Pesquisa Adulta

¿Qué infama las llagas de la muchacha?
¿qué palpar contra su costra?
¿dónde la pus,
la aflicción?

Osadía

*Qué haré con el miedo
Qué haré con el miedo
Señor
El aire me castiga el ser.
Alejandra Pizarnik*

Una mujer se paraliza
frente a lo desconocido
calla
observa el reflejo
revisa la experiencia,
su costo
peina su pelo
y no espera.

Part Two

On the Other Shore

Tribulations

Licking the wounds of a wasted word
I neglect my jagged fingernails
the smell of my skin
I won't surrender to this work.

Adult Interrogation

What insults the wounds of the girl?
what throbs against her scab?
site of the pus,
the sorrow?

Daring

*What will I do with the fear
What will I do with the fear
Sir
The air punishes my entire being.
Alejandra Pizarnik*

A woman stiffens
facing the unknown
quiets
studies the reflection
reassesses the experience,
its cost
combs her hair
and waits no more.

Visita

Duerme a deshoras la sin sombra, descansa impávida a pesar de los quejidos, nuestra danza. Murmullos de antiguos demonios la nombran y desde el verso, recorre cerros de barro. Viene a buscarme desde los ojos, los de la espada.

Mansedumbre nocturna

Prefiere la muchacha
enconcharse sobre una cama
sin gritar el nombre,
mirarse al espejo
sin palpar su rostro,
aceptar que la tinta
se la llevan las estrellas.

Poema líquido

Pequeña
me-ro-de-a
sin decidirse a salir,
la condenso
aprieto
y engrueso,

nunca
cae.

Entumecimiento rectangular

¿Dónde?
los ojos ven rotos
¿desclavar?
no puede
¿la máxima prohibición?
la jaula
esa otra orilla.

Visit

She who has no shadow sleeps the day away, she rests intrepid despite the moans,
our dance. Murmurs of old demons call to her and from the verse, they traverse
the mounds of mud. They search for me with steely sharp eyes.

Docile Nocturne

The girl prefers
to lie alone on a bed
without screaming the name,
to look at herself in the mirror
without touching her face,
to accept that the ink
is carried off by the stars.

Liquid Poem

Small
it-sur-rounds-me
without deciding to leave,
I condense it
I squeeze
I expand,
it never
falls.

Rectangular Numbness

Where?
worn out eyes barely see
pull out the nails?
she can't
the ultimate prohibition?
the cage
that other shore.

Catarsis postergada

Hacerte cargo
nuevamente
de la piel fosforescente
y heridas,
colibrí
zambullirte en pentimentos
sin voltear atrás.

Plegaria

Serpentear entre sus lados
humedecerlos con tu
lengua de sapo

dando azotes
te ha elegido
y mientras te duele
disfrutas.

Irresoluta

*Como en un libro abierto
leo de tus pupilas en el fondo.
¿A qué fingir el labio
risas que se desmienten con los ojos?
Bécquer*

El tiempo se acaba y ya no eres,
montaste el teatro
saliste a escena,
desde el tablado
lanzaste astrolabios.

Postponed Catharsis

Put yourself in charge
again
of the phosphorescent skin
and wounds,
hummingbird
plunge into penance
without turning back.

Plea

Snake around its sides
moisten them with your toad tongue
transform yourself

lashing
it has chosen you
and while it hurts
you enjoy it.

Irresolute

*As in an open book
I read from your pupils in the depths.
Why feign with the lip
laughter that denies with the eyes?*
Bécquer

The time has ended and you are gone,
you got up on stage
played out the scene,
from the platform
you launched astrolabes.

Reyerta propia

*Haciendo el cuerpo del poema
con mi cuerpo.*
Alejandra Pizarnik

La calma aguarda tras la mañana
el sol ilumina el rostro
donde se estrellan aureolas de humo
que crea desde su boca
las piernas cruzadas
y el vientre húmedo:
aureolas que se estrellan en la nada.

Astrolabios

La luna,
nostalgia
y sueño rojo
palabra universal
breve paso
hacia el pasado:
tu nombre enclaustrado en los hilos
de este retrato.

Unción

Un perfume que se ha quedado esperando
en la otra orilla,
un aroma
fruto de esta tentación
que ni la tala de árboles
ni la destrucción de la capa de ozono
despiden.

Her Own Feud

*Making the body of the poem
with my body.*
Alejandra Pizarnik

Calm awaits after morning
sunlight illuminates the face
where halos of smoke crash
created by her own mouth
the crossed legs
and the clammy stomach:
halos that crash into nothing.

Astrolabes

The moon,
nostalgia
and red dream
universal Word
quick step
toward the past:
your name entwined in the contours
of this portrait.

Uction

A perfume that has stayed waiting
on the other shore,
an aroma
fruit of this temptation
that neither the felling of trees
nor the destruction of the ozone layer
emit.

Refejo

Levanto la voz y
elevo un canto
de llagas incendiadas
en papel.

Despedidas

Mares de madera
y lágrimas cansadas
hacen nuestro horizonte
mientras tanto,
vaivenes operan en silencio
sobre una página no compartida,
es el canto pasajero
que apresura su partida.

Arquetipos

A la otra orilla
se encuentra la risa
que
jamás será emulada
parco silencio
desde donde
la llaga arde.

Reflection

I lift my voice
raise a song
of sores burning
on paper.

Farewells

Oceans of wood
and tired tears
form our horizon,
meanwhile
waves operate in silence
on an unshared page
it's the fleeting song
that rushes its departure.

Archetypes

On the other shore
is the laugh
that
will never be emulated
scarce silence
from where
the wound burns.

Intervalos

Que mi cuerpo sea breve
y no palpite
tras los designios de esta mente
en rebelión
enclaustrada en el quizá,
tiempo verbal
nunca imperativo.

Réquiem

Presentimientos
callaban la noche
desde aquella otra orilla,
terminado el banquete
en macha tumba
el mundo se convierte.

Agujero

Sin pedestal de oro sobre el cuál posarte
atiendo las crepitaciones de un poema desnudo,
rezo
sobre su lomo maltratado
La oración del ateo.

Intervals

May my body be brief
and beat not
across the designs of this mind
in rebellion
cloistered in the perhaps,
verbal tense
never imperative.

Requiem

Forebodings
quelled the night
from that other shore,
the banquet over
a stillness descends
the world transforms.

Hole

With no golden pedestal to place you on
tending to the crackles of a poem
I undress,
I pray
over its mistreated spine
The Atheist's Prayer.

Separación

He cruzado,
no debo ir más hacia el nombre
la nostalgia y sus cauces
nos agotaron en pensamientos,
mi mano
nunca te alcanzó.

Sudáfrica

Para Karen y Fabricio

Regreso hacia el puerto desde el cual marchamos
ignominias pululan por la punta de esta lengua
que es eterna
como el cráter
junto al hueso,
ese
que lleva los nombres.

Michigan Lake

Mis pies recorren
una tierra hecha de leche y cebada
hacia su parte superior
una costra en cada pie,
si mi dedo las palpa
aprendo braille,
entonces
cada punto
es una letra de tu nombre.

Separation

I've crossed,
I shouldn't go any closer to the name
the nostalgia and its causes
exhausted us with thoughts,
my hand
never reached you.

South Africa

For Karen y Fabricio

I return to the port where we departed
disgrace multiplies from the point of this
tongue
eternal
like the void
next to the bone,
the one
that carries the names.

Michigan Lake

My feet traverse
a land made of milk and barley
toward its peak
a scab on each foot,
if my finger touches them
I learn Braille,
and
each point
is a letter of your name.

Curtin Hall

*Los sentidos tan jóvenes
frente a un mundo se abren
sin goces ni sonrisas,
que no amanece nadie.*
Luis Cernuda

Nuestras manos se liquidan
cuando mi labio
y tu lágrima
fueron asfalto

el recuerdo
se refeja al pie del árbol
donde la ardilla agita sus patas

Florence y Mónica
ordenan restos de una Navidad prestada,
mientras yo
te escondo en el viento,
entre el silencio de la nieve

ellas ignoran que
allá en Lima
alguien se ha quedado
a solas con la muerte.

Curtin Hall

*The very new feelings
facing a world are opened
without pleasures nor smiles
ever brought to light.*
Luis Cernuda

Our hands turn to liquid
when my lip
and your tears
were asphalt

the memory
is reflected at the foot of the tree
where the squirrel shakes its feet

Florence and Monica
order the rest of a borrowed Christmas,
while I
hide you in the wind,
within the silence of the snow

they ignore that
far away in Lima
someone has remained
alone with death.

Continuidad

*Ella tiene la luz, tiene el perfume,
el color y la línea,
la forma, engendrada de deseos,
la expresión, fuente eterna de poesía.*
Bécquer

Siempre acabas siendo una música
cuando, este alígero sentimiento,
esto, que crece porque sí,
inicia el viaje de la sangre

el incendio ha permanecido, ligero y feroz
incluso, en aquellos momentos en los que a una se le
agolpa la vida
entonces, pienso en saquearnos y robarnos
mutuamente

vahos, humos imposibles

ahora que
la noche se ha derramado,
en un brindis mudo y cerebral te nombro

no hay que preguntarse
¿cómo fue que no fue?
una ola muere en la orilla
y tú,
tú siempre acabas siendo una música.

No Calatrava

Todos tus puntos
fueron mis dedos
hacia la palabra

ahora
sólo el silencio de la nieve
blanca como el papel.

Continuity

*She has the light, has the perfume,
the color and the line,
the shape, creator of desires,
the expression, eternal fountain of poetry.*
Bécquer

You always end as music
when, this winged feeling,
this, that grows on its own,
begins the blood's journey

the fire remains, light and fierce
constant, in those moments when one is
thronged by life
then, I think about plundering and robbing us
equally

mist, impossible vapor

now that
night has spread,
in a mute and cerebral toast I drink to you

no need to wonder
how was it that it wasn't?
a wave dies on the other shore
and you,
you always end as music.

Not Calatrava¹

All your points
were my fingers
creating the word

now
only the silence of the snow
white like the paper.

¹ This name refers to Santiago Calatrava, the architect of the Milwaukee Art Museum in the same city where Dr. Almenara attended school.

Erika Almenara
Perhaps
c.2018

Parte uno

Yo sé la verdad y de nada me sirve

I.

Ma
ma-me-mi-mo-mu
mi mamá no me mima
mi mamá me atormenta en la agonía de desear lo mismo que yo

mi papá me mima
mi papá me mima y me pesa

pa-pe-pi-po-pu
pe-ne
pe-ne

que se resbala hacia mi boca

ladrido de perro y perra a mitad de la noche
pe-rra me ha dicho
¿Es que acaso no disfrutas del sortilegio?
repites
pa-ra-ya-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa

Emily Aguayo
Perhaps
c.2020

Part One

I know the truth and it does me no good

I.

Mommy
may-me-my-mo-mu
my mommy doesn't spoil me
my mommy torments me in the agony of desiring the same as I

my daddy spoils me
my daddy spoils me and weighs down on me

pay-pe-py-po-pu
pe-nis
pe-nis

that slides toward my mouth

barking dog and bitch in the middle of the night
you-bitch she has called me
Is it that perhaps you don't enjoy the magic spell?
you repeat
pah-rah-yah-pah-pah-pah-pah-pah-pah-pah

II.

Mi esqueleto de niña sufrió alteraciones
desarmando las tuercas
desbarataste mi estructura y equilibrio

que no eres culpable, me dices
que sólo te urgía hacerme feliz

tú y tus juegos de palabras
tan astuto en tu verbo
dando incluso hoy
ecos en mi dilatada existencia.

III.

Movimientos y migraciones
para arrancar tu célula de la mía
tu porción de ADN incrustada en mi historia

no te conformaste con darme tu sangre
me obligaste a dormirme en tu semen
a los cuatro, a los cinco, a los seis, a los siete...

hasta que sangré
y entonces, ya mujer
ante tus ojos
nunca más apetecible.

II.

My girlhood skeleton suffered alterations
removing the screws
you ruined my structure and my balance

it's not your fault, you tell me
you felt the urge to make me happy

you and your word games
so astute in your words
causing still today
echoes in my prolonged existence.

III.

Movements and migrations
to rip your cells out of mine
your portion of DNA encrusted in mine

you weren't satisfied by giving me your blood
you forced me to sleep in your semen
at age four, five, six, seven...

until I bled
and then, a woman
in your eyes
no longer appetizing.

IV.

Para J.C.

Padre,
oh, Padre/falo/ley misericordiosa
y esta daga
y este aliento adolorido de las noches
espesando mi nube

laberinto de palabras acostumbradas en el deseo
lo imposible en la cumbre de mis uñas

tanto por alcanzar
y mis pies que se estiran
y
no llego,
aún no llego.

V.

Sé sudar con la palabra seducción
sudar desde abajo,
cuando se calientan mis piernas desde el odio
y el recuerdo.

VI.

La mitad del porcentaje del material genético que me heredaste
gotea en la memoria
deforma
desgarra

me recuerda
cada día
yo también fui tú

no encuentro,
todavía,
otros compuestos que me deslinden de tu legado agónico.

IV.

For J.C.

Father,
oh, Father/phallus/merciful law
this dagger
this nighttime pained breath
thickening my cloud

labyrinth of words accustomed to desire
the impossible in the arch of my nails

so much to reach
and my feet that stretch
and
I don't get there,
I still don't get there.

V.

I know how to sweat with the word seduction
sweat down below,
when my legs get hot from the hate
and the memory.

VI.

Half the genetic material you passed down to me
drips in my memory
deforms
rips

reminds me
each day
I was also you

I can't find,
still,
other compounds that separate me
from your agonizing legacy.

VII.

One should not allow oneself to be terrorized by the demand of clarity.
Theodor W Adorno

Para mi abuela
yo soy la bestia
porque seduje

para mi hermana
yo soy la bestia
porque no perdono

para la ley
yo soy la bestia
no él
porque el vestido
su genital
desde el que motivo.

VIII.

Sólo me quedó respirar
para atravesar esta ráfaga de memorias

lágrimas
aullidos

ecos de un yo misma
entre la llovizna del todos los días,
de la náusea de todos los días

la voz aletargada que sólo ahora enuncia.

VII.

One should not allow oneself to be terrorized by the demand of clarity.
-- Theodor W. Adorno

To my grandmother
I am the beast
because I seduced

to my sister
I am the beast
because I don't forgive

to the law
I am the beast
not him
because by my dress
his genitalia
is motivated.

VIII.

All I had left was to breathe
to pierce this burst of memories

cries
howls

echoes of a me
among every day's drizzle
every day's nausea

The listless voice that only now speaks out.

IX.

Los gritos llegan hasta ahora desde ese entonces como jinetes que traen consigo
muerte
espero a la mitad del camino
no con la cabeza gacha
ya no cuento siete
cuento treinta y nueve

no tiemblo ante el encuentro,
la batalla

y así, siento los vientos mezclados con polvo
que susurran bienvenidas a lo lejos.

X.

Lamo la herida que entre mis dientes se resbala
mientras doctorcarlawilliams me ausculta a lo lejos
me libera de toda culpa
renuncia al poder que invisibilice
el daño
la patología
el intercambio
lo inconmensurable.

IX.

The cries from that time come, even now, like horsemen who bring
death

I wait in the middle of the path

with head no longer lowered

I am not seven anymore

I am thirty-nine

I do not tremble at the encounter

the battle,

and just like that, I feel the air mixed with dust
that whispers welcome from afar.

X.

I lick the wound that slides between my teeth

while doctorcarlawilliams assesses me from across the room

she frees me of all guilt

she renounces the power that makes invisible

the pain

the pathology

the exchange

the immeasurable.

Hay dos panteras negras descarnando ocasos en el regazo de un borde
soy la estéril mariposa que, impermeable y giratoria, enfurece al viento
no me reconozco mujer
tampoco hembra
and I don't want to be here alone

¿qué me espera mañana?
la risa es de otros,
una canción ajena

¿hacia dónde ir?
ya no hay poesía
Pedro Lemebel ha muerto
and I don't want to be here alone

todavía los pájaros no vienen a desvelar a mi insomnio
pero apago el cigarrillo
sobre el cual aplasto las cenizas de mi deseo

Erika, mujer, compañera me dice
y sus alas no inquietan las ondulaciones de este cuerpo.

Two black panthers devour sunsets in the bosom of a border
I am the sterile butterfly who, impermeable and spinning, enrages the wind
I do not see myself as woman
nor female
and I don't want to be here alone

what awaits me tomorrow?
smiles belong to others,
a song far away

where do I go?
there is no more poetry
Pedro Lemebel has died
and I don't want to be here alone

still the birds don't come to expose my insomnia
but I put out the cigarette
and crush the ashes of my desire

Erika, woman, friend it says
and its wings don't disturb the quivers of this body.

Parte dos

El color y la línea

I.

Nuestros cuerpos se eslabonaron, se trabaron: un enredijo de ropas arrugadas y de miembros. La piel no fue límite, ni la consciencia: todo se anudó en un garabato, incomprehensible y furioso como un ideograma sin otra voluntad que el placer, sin más que el goce en su hermosa inmediatez.
Severo Sarduy

No sólo la nieve de Ann Arbor crujía entonces
allí cuando aventureras,
iniciamos danzas a cada paso

crujía también la piel,
el papel
la arena
que con cada caricia
hizo del cuerpo
un cuerpo nuevo
un cuerpo maravilla

escindimos el “yo no sé”
el “¿qué quieres que te haga?”
y repetimos
en cada noche de reterritorialización.

Part Two

Color and Line

I.

*Our bodies linked together, got tangled up: a riddle of wrinkled clothes and members.
Skin wasn't the limit, nor was the conscience: everything knotted in a scribble,
incomprehensible and furious as an ideogram with no other will but
pleasure, nothing more than enjoyment in its lovely immediacy.*
Severo Sarduy

Not only the snow of Ann Arbor crunched
there when adventurous
we began dancing at each step

the skin also crunched,
the paper
the sand
that with each caress
the body made
a new body
a body marvel

we divided the "I don't know"
the "what do you want me to do to you?"
and we repeated this
each night of reterritorialization.

II.

*I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am.
The main interest in life and work is to become someone
else that you were not in the beginning.*
Michel Foucault

Calibro la distancia hacia la que he volado
me meso en una rama para adormitar pensamientos
mientras miro mi pecho colorado acercarse hacia el diluvio,
el que adose las huellas y los pedazos de historia esparcida

mi pico no apunta al cielo
no pretendo adivinar, definir sus colores
ni aliviarme en su nebulosa celeste
a donde mi propio Nombre no se halla

sin embargo, mi plumaje aletea
al conmoveerse frente a lo tibio,
el goce que se dibuja
en cada espasmo tuyo.

III.

Tu lengua
firme
rígida

mi cuerpo
todo
astillas.

IV.

Detalles que parpadean en la nada de nuestros cuerpos
se re-crean
se curan
se generan

desde un rincón
viejas penas nos observan
callan
respetan nuestro silencio

tu boca
reflejada en el armario
santifica mi sexo.

II.

*I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am.
The main interest in life and work is to become someone
else that you were not in the beginning.*
--Michel Foucault

I measure the distance I have flown
I light on a branch to quiet my thoughts
I watch my colored breast draw near the deluge
that deposits my tracks near pieces of scattered history

my beak doesn't point to the sky
I don't try to guess, define its colors
or ease my pain in its heavenly haze
where my own Name can't be found

nevertheless, my feathers flap
unsettling the tepid,
the pleasure visible
in each of your spasms.

III.

Your tongue
firm
rigid

my body
all
splinters.

IV.

Details that flicker in the nothing of our bodies
re-create
cure
generate

from a corner
old ghosts watch us
quietly
respecting our silence

your mouth
reflected in the armoire
sanctifies my sex.

V.

Este terremoto en estribor
y tu oleaje que me surca en delicias impronunciadas

lamo en silencio las posibilidades de un nuevo movimiento en gracia
y tú
aprietas
tuerces
aballestas
hundes

esquivar
la resaca del navío entre tus aguas
el naufragio que provoca el abismo en tus ojos.

VI.

La más amante
su ausencia deliberada
construye
lagunas en el centro
atrapando los mismos sueños
que han soltado.

V.

This starboard earthquake
your wave that ploughs through me in unspeakable delights

I silently lick the possibilities of a new graceful movement
and you
squeeze
twist
tense
sink

avoid
the ship's undercurrent amidst your waters
the wreckage that rouses the abyss in your eyes.

VI.

The most loving
her deliberate absence
forms
pools in the center
trapping the same dreams
she has let loose.

Parte tres

Silver

I.

La sábana cierra mi boca
como un beso

tú
refugiada en lo tibio
te ahogas sorbiendo,
respirando
de mí.

II.

Zurces el ropaje con el cual
llegué hasta a ti

remallas agujeros
inventas pliegues

maquinas parches
para que no me derrame
y en un beso
cierras la pesadilla.

Part Three

Silver

I.

The sheet closes my mouth
like a kiss

you
sheltered in the tepid
you choke slurping
breathing
me in.

II.

You mend the clothes I wore
when I reached you.

You re-mesh holes
create folds

sew on patches
so they won't fall apart
and in one kiss
you end the nightmare.

III.

Digo poesía que me duelo

digo sí

digo sí a la invitación de tu cuerpo
a los viajes marcados en tu piel de arena
a la hendidura que es mi guarida

digo sí a esta travesía que continúa

digo sí
poesía que me duelo
porque tengo miedo
y sin embargo
aquí estoy:
a estar contigo.

IV.

Ahí el pasado
la herida
el crepúsculo que por las noches
hace menguar el gusto en mi saliva
cuando trémula
abrazo tempestades
porque recuerdo

entonces tu abrazo
tu risa

desarmas desasosiegos
colocas semillas en los huecos
que me ha dejado el pasado.

III.

I say poetry I am hurting

I say yes

I say yes to your body's invitation
to the travels marked on your sandy skin
to the fissure that is my lair

I say yes to this continuous voyage

I say yes
poetry I am hurting
because I am afraid
and nevertheless
here I am:
to be with you.

IV.

There the past
the wound
the twilight that every night
diminishes the pleasure in my saliva
when trembling
I embrace tempests
because I remember

your embrace
your smile

you disarm misgivings
you sow seeds in the holes
that the past has left me.

V.

Solamente una vez
renuncié a lo imposible

sólo una vez
solté mordazas
y respiró mi boca
porque tus besos

solamente una vez
surqué los mares de mis demonios
para regalarte sinfonías

solté todas las amarras
para alcanzar el puerto
junto contigo,
sólo contigo.

VI.

Contigo
la escritura se hizo desde el silencio

los versos ahora,
cuando ya no estás
cuando nos hemos ido
los remos perdidos
en esas tantas batallas de lo pasado
nos han traicionado
y
nos han colocado
cara a cara con la supervicia hacia el revés
hacia lo distinto
hacia lo no común.

V.

Only one time
I renounced the impossible

just one time
I loosened the gags
and my mouth breathed
because of your kisses

only one time
I ploughed through the seas of my demons
to give you the gift of symphonies

I set loose all the moorings
to reach the port
together with you,
only with you.

VI.

With you
the writing came from silence

the verses now,
when you are no longer here
when the lost oars
have floated away
in those countless battles of the past
they have betrayed us
and
placed us
face to face with survival, turned around
toward the different
toward the uncommon.

VII.

Perhaps the impossible is the only possible chance of something new.
Jacques Derrida

Mi vida,
cuánto te he amado
tanto
que mi alma
aún no puede gritar

te has ido

miro
la huella de un despropósito,
la tesitura
que de Arkansas a Missouri
no sella un hasta luego

quizá,
perhaps
acudamos a los montes,
las Ozark Mountains
que nunca caminaste conmigo

quizá,
perhaps
volvamos a reírnos bajo la Torre Eiffel
compartiendo el mismo abrigo
sin gente que estalle
sin gotas de sangre manchando al mundo

quizá,
perhaps
susurremos,
nuevamente
“ahí”
con mente libre y concentrada

quizá,
perhaps
no seamos más
intolerantes
a nuestra lactosa

quizá,
perhaps
vuelva a ser
alguna noche
tu bailarina,
tu kohala.

VII.

Perhaps the impossible is the only possible chance of something new.

Jacques Derrida

My everything,
how much I have loved you
so much
that my soul
cannot even scream

you have gone

I look at
the imprint of an ill-chosen word
the tessitura
that from Arkansas to Missouri
doesn't seal a goodbye

perhaps,
quizá
we'll turn to the mountains
the Ozark Mountains
that you never walked with me

perhaps,
quizá
we'll laugh again under the Eiffel Tower
sharing the same coat
with no bursting people
with no drops of blood staining the world

perhaps,
quizá
we'll whisper,
anew
"there"
with free and concentrated minds

perhaps,
quizá
we'll no longer be
intolerant
of our lactose

perhaps,
quizá
one of these nights
I'll again be
your ballerina,
your cuddly koala.