

Persona Recovery through Homage: Poetic Tributes to Spain's Generation of 1927

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My poems envision Madrid's Gran Vía, writers' homes like Velintonia, and other locations peopled by modern Spanish women seeking liberation and creativity. Among them, one will find Victorina Durán, an out gay actor and dramaturge, partners Carmen Conde and Amanda Junquera, and beloved children's book writer Elena Fortún. Though their lives and works illuminate the vibrant cultural milieu of early twentieth century Spain, queer and female stories do not appear in canonical Spanish literary history such that reintroducing them constitutes a political act. To write poetic tributes is to work against canonical exclusions and to inhabit liminal spaces where literary and cultural theory cannot reach. To enter the canon, one had to be a male poet born at the turn of the twentieth century who befriended other male writers during the late 1920s. According to official histories, Spain's "Generation of 1927" was birthed through homage on December 17, 1927. A well-circulated photograph of this all-male event depicts ten men in suits gathered at the Atheneum of Seville, Spain on the three-hundredth anniversary of the death of Baroque poet Luis de Góngora. These men were excited to bring Góngora's work

back into the public spotlight in the twentieth century and even more eager to make a name for themselves as poets (Mainer 2020). The homage to Góngora, the *mythos* of the Generation of 1927, would become the moment that defined the artistic trajectories of these upper-class male poets whose work continues to garner more attention by scholars than their female counterparts.¹

Homages have codified the Generation of 1927 as an object of study within the periodization of Spanish literature. Placing the study of homage, as presented through life writing and poetic tributes, within the field of persona studies offers a greater understanding of how the development of poetic and autobiographical subjects along gendered and sexualised lines of identity shapes how scholars maintain writers' and artists' legacies posthumously. Homages consist of events, publications, and performances that uphold the personae of individuals. Homages, "homenaje" in Spanish, are easily recognizable insofar as writers and organizers label them as such, thus forming a poetic category yet to be interrogated within literary and cultural theory.² Such homages inscribe men within the cultural heritage of the Spanish avant-garde and, like literary canons, operate through cultural capital (Gambarte 1996). Consequently, male poets positioned themselves well for illustrious literary careers through documenting and organizing homages (Alonso and Guillén), founding the literary magazine *Litoral* in 1926 (Prados, Altolaguirre), and developing and sharing avant-garde creative works at literary gatherings known as *tertulias* at cafés like the distinguished Café Gijón in Madrid where women were barred entry. For nearly a century, women's legacies have been excluded through a

¹ Andrew Anderson (2005) provides documentation of how the list of ten male poets has not changed since its inception. Scholars continue to cite Rafael Alberti, Vicente Aleixandre, Dámaso Alonso, Manuel Altolaguirre, Luis Cernuda, Gerardo Diego, Federico García Lorca, Jorge Guillén, Emilio Prados, and Pedro Salinas as the originators of the Generation of 1927 with an occasional nod to other male artists like José Bergamín, considered an honorary eleventh member (Anderson 2005, p. 130).

² A similar phenomenon occurs within the English tradition of odes wherein page headings, rather than consistent stylistic conventions, denoted poetic categories for eighteenth century poems like odes, elegies, and epitaphs (Teich 1985). Ultimately, the word "homenaje" itself delineates the poetic category of homages within Spanish literature.

deliberately constructed practice of homage that has granted nearly exclusive claim to cultural support for ten male poets considered the originators of the Generation of 1927.

Homages to the Generation of 1927 are comprised of fan made content like poetry, performances, and caricatures of writers. As in fan studies, homages require a certain point of entry to participate, which is often mediated through academic channels and requires a thorough knowledge of personal and cultural details about writers and their work. The public can now join organizations like the Association of Friends of Vicente Aleixandre (AAVA) to participate in homages organized by researchers and cultural activists. Given that the *mythos* of the Generation of 1927 operates through a particular construction of writers' personae, homages have traditionally highlighted literary success while obscuring networks of women writers. My "lifemaking homages" make feminist and queer readings of writers' personae possible and by doing so they make what was once a monolithic conceptualization of the generation accessible to scholars, students, and the public. For example, *Alicia y las sinsombrero* (Balló & Conde 2021) is an illustrated children's book in which the daughter of painter Margarita Manso finds her mother's diary documenting the exciting world of "sinsombreristas" ("the hatless ones") like Rosa Chacel, María Zambrano, and Maruja Mallo. Hellekson and Busse's 2014 volume on fan fiction studies also emphasizes the lifemaking potential of fan communities that adapt texts and characters to suit the diverse needs of fans, albeit with fewer gatekeeping mechanisms than literary traditions that require participants pay a much steeper charge of cultural capital.

Since the inception of the Generation of 1927, women writers and feminists alike have worked against the exclusion of women. In 1927, men at the Atheneum of Seville dared to ask whether the four women who attended the homage were in the right room. By the 1990s, Ernestina de Champourcín was surprised to have even been invited to an homage to the few

surviving poets at the Generation of 1927 Cultural Centre in Málaga. Recent feminist scholarship by Eva Moreno Lago (2019) and Capdevila-Argüelles (2017, 2018) argues that modern women, *las modernas*, were systematically excluded from the androcentric literary canon through anthologisation and research practices that discredit their work under the guise of its not meeting rigid standards for canonization. Balló's *Las sinsombrero* documentary series (2015-2021) about modern Spanish women who dared to take their hats off in public led to the creation of multimedia projects and online spaces for paying homage to forgotten women throughout history. Crowdsourced and scholarly recuperation efforts are at odds with the prevailing canonization of Spanish literature precisely because they recover the personae of women writers through surviving documentation of life writing and personal ephemera.

As an undergraduate in the United States, my first glimpse of the Silver Age of Spanish literature (1898-1939) came through reading literary anthologies and texts written and compiled by Generation of 1927 writers (Alonso, Guillén) and their close friends from subsequent generations (Carlos Bousoño). It wouldn't be until I decided to pursue doctoral research in Iberian Studies when I would finally encounter works by women writers thanks to the exciting work being done by Fran Garcerá, Cari Fernández, Nuria Capdevila-Argüelles and many others affiliated with archives and the Torremozas and Renacimiento editing houses. Women have written at length about their experiences as modern women who benefitted from women's suffrage and the right to divorce granted by the 1931 Constitution of the short-lived Second Spanish Republic (Capdevila-Argüelles 2017, 2018). Given the pervading misogyny and homophobia of Spanish society, women could not easily claim an artistic identity (i.e., persona) or legacy. Spanish women often collaborated on writing projects with their husbands without receiving written acknowledgment, as was the case for Zenobia Camprubí, wife of Nobel

Laureate poet Juan Ramón Jiménez and Concha Méndez, wife of Altolaguirre. Women frequently published using pseudonyms to ensure publication and circulation of their writing in prominent literary journals and publishers, including Amanda Junquera whose short stories and translations continue to appear under the pseudonym Isabel de Ambía.

For as much as homages are imbued in subjective cultural practices maintained by androcentric and heteronormative canon formations, they also provide a way forward for scholars and the public to better include remarkable modern women as part of the cultural imaginary of early twentieth century Spain. Homages are both celebratory and political and I challenge the hegemonic discourse surrounding cultural heritage in Spain by referencing lesser-known details about writers' lives (i.e., queer relationships, nicknames, and informal gatherings) in my poetic tributes. In studying the enduring legacy of twentieth century Spanish writers, my creative and academic work builds upon ongoing studies of the periodization and classification of the Generation of 1927 to propose a more inclusive approach to canon formation (Anderson 2005; Mainer 2020). This approach not only benefits women writers but allows for an emergence of persona based on artistic collaborations and friendships instead of prestige and cultural capital. My poetic tributes and scholarly apparatus bring together persona studies and homage to study how performances of prestige by writers and literary historians bring forth the gendered, classed, and sexualised ways that the literary history of the Generation of 1927 has been constructed. The Generation of 1927 represents a period of cultural effervescence, yet writers were denied entry into literary establishments like Atheneums and the Residencia de Estudiantes (Students' Residence) due to gender, class, and a lack of formal education, and women were excluded from

the rooms where artistic creation occurred.³ Furthermore, male homosexuality was criminalized during much of the twentieth century and made more visible than female homosexuality (Mira Nouselles 2014), resulting in lapses in (auto)biographical details by and about queer writers. Emilio Calderón's 2016 biography of Vicente Aleixandre was the first to confirm his relationships with men and women and José Luis Ferris's 2007 biography of Carmen Conde makes a similar claim regarding her nearly half-century relationship and cohabitation with fellow writer Amanda Junquera. Working with persona in early twentieth century Spain means grappling with how writers constructed their personae based on sociohistorical limitations and power structures. These dynamics come into play when labelling and referring to queer identities as well as how modern women used life writing to convey their messages for posterity.

As a participant in and creator of homages to the Generation of 1927, I take advantage of the dual purpose of literary tributes: to maintain the *mythos* of the generation and to recover the lives and stories of those overshadowed by the dominant narrative of Spanish literary history. I negotiate the ways Spanish creatives constructed their public personae during their lifetimes and how present-day tributes offer new points of entry into writers' lives by reframing artistic collaborations and writers' identities and positionality in the context of contemporary Spain. Homages emerge from literary canon formations deeply rooted in the power structures prevalent since their inception, yet the medium is also full of liberatory potential for minoritized writers. Through tributes, scholars and the literary public can celebrate the complicated and interweaving lives and artistic worlds of modern Spanish creatives across gender, sexuality, ability, and social class for the benefit of the ten male writers and countless understudied writers alike. Present day

³ Wealthy educated women organized their own intellectual and artistic spheres for modern women (*las modernas*) like the Residencia de Señoritas (The Ladies' Residence) and Lyceum Club Femenino (Female Lyceum Club) in Madrid (Capdevila-Argüelles 2017, 2018).

homages acknowledge poetic and literary persona while operating under a more inclusive framework vis-à-vis the possibilities of digital archives and social media.

In the context of Hispanic Studies, my poems demonstrate alternate paradigms for telling the narrative of the Generation of 1927 by imagining the private lives of Fortún, Conde, and Junquera. In an interdisciplinary and public facing context, homages are important pedagogical tools for making persona visible and accessible by filling in gaps in life stories not otherwise mentioned in canonical texts. Homages in their various forms (written, performed, multimedia, etc.) present many possibilities for establishing and maintaining persona, but their most important work lies in the queer potential of recovering testimonies of what people could not say or do because of the pervading social constraints of their time. My proposed theory of homage uncovers the closeted and undocumented sapphic and sororal relationships between women and imagines queer feminist futures where women's work is central to understanding cultural milieux of women and men of the Generation of 1927. The poetic tributes included in this piece are examples of what I call "lifemaking homages" that celebrate and grant prestige to recuperated knowledge of writers' queer, undocumented lives. My lifemaking homages to women writers are intimately tied to my cultural activism. As it stands, the spaces women inhabited like the "Academy of Witches" at Velintonia in Madrid are in danger of destruction.⁴ Likewise, archival preservation practices favour conserving works by and about male writers and prioritize male autobiographies over women's diaries, travelogues, and other forms of life writing.⁵ Tània Balló (2018) writes about the lengthy fieldwork she conducted for her *Las sinsombrero* documentaries,

⁴ A 2021 article in *Diario Sur* documents ongoing government initiatives to recognize Velintonia as a "house of poetry" to save it from being sold and potentially destroyed to make room for new residential properties.

⁵ I have not located much documentation about women writers while visiting the National Spanish Library (BNE), Residencia de Estudiantes Library and Archives, Residencia de Señoritas Archive at the Fundación Ortega y Gasset-Gregorio Marañón, and Library of the Generation of 1927 at the Cultural Centre in Málaga, Spain. Even among collections of female epistolary correspondence and life writing at the Residencia de Señoritas Archive, there is a marked tendency to emphasize women's relationships with famous male mentors like Juan Ramón Jiménez.

the modern women pioneers who dared to remove their hats in public, emphasizing the need to visit small towns in Spain and make many phone calls with descendants to obtain information needed to construct female personae in her books and documentaries.

Lifemaking homages validate writers' agency by pairing known details about them with an intimate understanding of the social constraints they encountered from the capacious space of the present moment. While homages to prominent writers seek to reverently elevate their verses, paying homage to non-canonical writers requires significant archival research and preparation before celebrations can begin. It is through studies of life writing and personal ephemera that twenty-first century scholars and the public can begin to piece together intimate details about writers' lives to ensure their personae convey their most authentic selves. By reading the poetic homages Conde made to Junquera compiled in *Poemas a Amanda (Poems to Amanda)* and their epistolary correspondence (Fernández and Garcerá 2021; Conde and Junquera 2021), I was able to look beyond their public facing personae to envision their lives together in their Madrid home, Velintonia 5. Since these poems and letters mostly show Conde's perspective, her diligent daily diaries inevitably shaped Junquera's less public persona. These life writing documents remain incomplete as Conde does not code herself as queer in her 1986 autobiography *Por el camino, viendo sus orillas (Along the Path, Seeing its Shores)* despite her private, affectionate messages to Junquera found elsewhere in her personal archive.

When faced with archives that do not yield sought-after information, scholars should centre practices of lifemaking homages around humanizing their honourees. Little is known about the "Academy of Witches" that convened in Velintonia 5, above the historic site of meetings between Aleixandre, Lorca, and Alonso in Velintonia 3. I can only imagine Concha Zardoya leading the inaugural reading of her play *La novia del espejo (The Bride of the Mirror)*

on February 8, 1946 while attendees listened with bated breath (Calderón 2016, p. 179). It may seem counterintuitive, but I appreciate learning about the less appealing details about a writers' personality that also must be negotiated when depicting their persona in homage. Conde's writing reveals her dual responsibilities to her husband Antonio Oliver and to Junquera, who at times appeared needy or insufferable. When scholars and event organisers include these details in carefully mediated written and performed tributes to women writers, general audiences gain exposure to the persona work achieved through contemporary homages. My homages introduce these writers to a wider interdisciplinary context through a critical and poetic approximation that actively does persona work to distance female subjectivity from social prestige.⁶

The difficulties women writers faced in their lives and careers affect the production of homages in the present. The year 2022 marks the twentieth anniversary of the death of Josefina de la Torre (1907-2002), a multitalented poet and actress of the stage and screen born in the Canary Islands, and the beginning of a new era of homages organized by loved ones, scholars, and other custodians of writers' memories. She has been immortalized in a 1997 episode of "Rincón Literario", a show featuring notable Spanish writers. Nevertheless, she once proclaimed: "Voy a ser olvidada" ("I am going to be forgotten") (Medel 2017), a grave concern for female elders reflecting on their life's work. The mere thought of an artist of Josefina de la Torre's calibre being forgotten is a testament to how homages safeguard the legacies of artists when their life writing alone cannot escape oblivion. Cultural preservation tends to rely on maintaining and mediating the personae of male writers who accrued significant prestige and cultural capital during their lifetimes. I move my own work away from focusing on writers' accomplishments and accolades to celebrate their daily acts of creativity and resilience. For as ground-breaking as

⁶ Goode's (1975) analysis of formal rewards (i.e., literary prizes) and social control serves as a precursor to persona studies and brings attention to how patriarchal and heteronormative social systems operate through prestige.

Carmen Conde's induction to the Royal Spanish Academy in 1979 was, it was only possible through the connections she formed with other writers and her partnership with Junquera.

Queer feminist tributes push back against how such homages to the "Generation of 1927" have traditionally been commemorated to retell the origin story at the Atheneum and the promising poetic careers of the ten male poets. I watched one such tribute at the Atheneum of Madrid in July of 2019 in honour of avant-garde female creatives now known as "las Sinsombrero".⁷ Unlike tributes to their male counterparts, the audience likely had little familiarity with these women, despite how well the Atheneum affiliates re-enacted their larger-than-life personalities. In one comical interlude, "María Zambrano" acted amazed as she peered upwards at the air conditioning unit, a far superior technological substitute to her hand fan that was making too much noise in the microphone. Overall, the women playing philosopher María Zambrano and painter Maruja Mallo successfully conveyed the optimism and resilience of modern women who lived their lives to the fullest and deserve the dignity of being remembered. At the end of the event, the organisers encouraged the attendees to read the life writing of "las sinsombrero", promising a rewarding reading experience.

Modern Spanish women were prolific writers of life writing and many such memoirs, autobiographies, and travelogues continue to be well read and circulated. These works include María Teresa León's *Memoria de la melancolía* (*Memory of Melancholy*), Concha Mendez's *Memorias habladas, memorias armadas* (*Spoken Memories, Assembled Memories*), and Elena Fortún's *Oculto sendero* (*Hidden Path*). These texts offer glimpses into upper-class female life throughout the course of the twentieth century, from Fortún's depiction of how her protagonist

⁷ The "las Sinsombrero" label proposed by Balló (2015) has provided an effective means for publicizing women writers and artists, however it has also been commercialized in a way that leaves out women with more marginalized creative trajectories due to class, genre, and political affiliation.

María Luisa grows into her sexuality as a gay woman to Méndez's transcribed recordings about life in exile in the Americas. Despite having participated in social and artistic experiences tantamount to admission into the canonical generation, these writers do not claim a space for themselves within the Generation of 1927 due to the discrimination they experienced in their daily lives. Women wrote themselves out of their own stories not because of a lack of engagement but due to their reluctance to construct personae for themselves like those of male writers, opting to call themselves collaborators instead of foundational canonical figures. While female autobiographical subjects tackle questions of gender, sexuality, and politics and exile, women like Méndez, León, and Delhy Tejero avoid claiming involvement in the core group of the Generation of 1927. Méndez remains steadfastly nonapologetic about her identity as a writer and what she calls her "cárcer aventurero" ("adventurous character") (2018, p. 25), however she fears that she becomes too masculine when writing about social issues. In this sense, women writers negotiate being othered by their sexuality and/or gender by refusing to claim the sociocultural influence of being writers in their life writing, thus constructing autobiographical personae from the periphery.

Female life writing and biographies tell the story of the fraught relationships women had with developing their own persona and authorial voice. During the 1920s and 1930s, young women in search of literary pursuits banned together at the "Residencia de Señoritas" ("Ladies Residence") and "Lyceum Club Femenino" ("Female Lyceum Club") in the face of the inaccessibility of male-dominated institutions. They wrote against the backdrop of a gruesome Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and Francisco Franco's authoritarian dictatorship (1939-1975) that kept countless writers in exile and in the closet for the remainder of their lives. These "sinsombreristas" never stopped writing with the fervent hope that a future generation would

answer their call. Fortún dedicates *Oculto sendero* “To all who missed their path...and still have time to change their course”, imagining the possibilities for people brave enough to challenge gender roles and lives as their authentic selves when she herself could not (Fortún 2021, p. v). While Fortún created a persona for herself as the author of the acclaimed “Celia y su mundo” (“Celia and her world”) children’s book series, the manuscript of *Oculto sendero* lay dormant from its completion circa 1945 until its recovery in the 1980s and subsequent 2016 Spanish publication and 2021 English translation. I dedicate “My Dear Encarna” to Fortún’s courage and foresight in opening a queer path for all those who refuse to conform.

León’s 1970 autobiography shows her true mettle as a staunch antifascist even when her own words betray her. She frequently refers to herself as the “cola de la cometa”, the “tail of the comet” of her husband Rafael Alberti even when nothing about her story renders her secondary (2020, p. 172). Women like León and Fortún exemplify the disjunction between their active role as creators of art and knowledge and documented reluctance to edify their personae as male writers do. Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2020, p. 29) discuss the construction of persona in literature as the creation of a poetic, fictional, or autobiographical “I” through which male poets claim expertise over their reality. In the case of Spain, Aleixandre and Salinas established male poetic personae as lovers and creators of universes in metaphysical poetry while women who wrote outside of surrealism and ultraism do not yield the same type of presence in their work.

Homages thus serve as the vehicle for performing prestige and persona to exalt creative lives. Creators of homages provide a bridge between the documented and recorded ways writers constructed persona and initiatives to engage new publics with their work. While this piece does not address the proliferation of online homages (digital humanities projects, social media) and news stories about writers’ lives and places of habitation, future work on persona in Spanish

literary history should address the influence of the internet and media in writers' status as both celebrities (i.e. Nobel laureates) and non-celebrities (i.e. women writers).⁸ I wrote these poems with the hope that, through life writing and archival materials, we can keep writers' personae and the spaces they inhabited with us a little longer. Some writers like Aleixandre require little work to maintain their legacies while others must be nurtured through ongoing recovery efforts that depict their lives in vibrant colour. Beyond the Spanish context, homages appear frequently across literary traditions and popular culture. These performances have become commonplace such that it is necessary to examine the imperatives for their creation and how personae are expressed through the mediums of homage and life writing. Doing so will allow for a fuller understanding of the individuals under question and yield fruitful collaborations between scholarly collaborations and public activism.

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⁸ See Marshall (2015) for an overview of celebrity persona amidst changing social networks and technologies.

Academy of Witches

Velintonia 5, the upstairs neighbour,
away from the rarefied air
of Alexandre's *tertulias* and famous men.
Steps above from sites of memory
lies another gathering place,
a veritable Academy of Witches,
breathing life into the Spanish avant-garde.

Already the witching hour,
the pair sets up lamps with calming
tones of yellow and perhaps a few cups of tea
and prepares the stage for their latest collaboration.

We know not how it started,
only that it was so luminous it cannot
be experienced second hand.

The histories say it was nothing,
they say it was just women talking,
but witches don't need an audience
to leave a little magic for the next generation.

We only know their names:

hostesses Carmen Conde and Amanda Junquera,
the many illustrious learned women, wives of writers,
Concha Zardoya, Matilde Marquina, Carmen Iglesias,
Consuelo Berges, Eulalia Galvarriato, and anonymous others.

Translators, poets, dramaturges,
they were the pioneers
who didn't need men
to send them an invitation.

Ambitious and determined,
they weathered history
to birth their work,
writing modernity into their lives,
and rebellion into their secretive existence.

We continue their legacy
by forming our own covens
for the bravest among us.

Carmen and Amanda

Love at first sight in 1936, her future
waited patiently across the room
on the arm of the man she married.

Tenderly Carmen wrote to her
with tales of reading Virginia Woolf, all the while
wondering if British sapphic codes would be enough
for spending a summer holiday in Cartagena.

Linked to their husbands, even in death,
through the hyphen beside her last name,⁹
we nudge Carmen Conde and Amanda Junquera closer,
no longer just lifelong friends,
by examining the photographs of the Rock of Ifach,
each smiling wide knowing her companion was behind the camera.

The pictures speak volumes,
of the dreams they deferred

⁹ The Carmen Conde-Antonio Oliver Patronage was founded in Cartagena, Spain in 1994 after Conde gave her personal archive and that of her late husband to the city of her birth.

and the memories they made together.

Slowly, careful penmanship reveals

nicknames, Amanda as “Nenita”

and her beloved Carmen as “Nis”.

We find the plays they wrote together, the letters

regaling Amanda with stories from abroad.

They suffered greatly, from the burden of Francoism,

the duty to their husbands and to each other,

the anonymity of their art and existence in Velintonia 5.

Amanda could be insufferable at times,

but they needed each other, needed queer joy

and contemplative walks at the Escorial.

Theirs is a story not soon forgotten,

brought into being through Carmen’s biography,

recovered letters, and the fervent hope

for liveable queer futures just beyond the horizon.

My Dear Encarna

Querida Encarna,

my dearest, how are you?

When your parents named you

Encarnación did they know you'd

embody resistance,

willing into being

a queer gender defying writer,

an elder who died too young?

Have tea with me for

I know your alias (Elena Fortún) and name by heart,

but most adore the work you sent upstream

to the twenty-first century, the sapphic

Hidden Path to your soul.

Encarna, if I may,

let us go on a walk,

a short jaunt through your Madrid,

and may I show you the iridescent glow

of your rainbow kin

who stare without shame,

love without limits

and follow the paths

you knew were always there.

Recovered Voices

I search for voices recorded later in life
when bright memories of transatlantic adventures
assemble the melancholy of María Teresa León's exile.
I can still hear the melody of Concha Méndez's voice
assuredly ringing through old cassette tapes,
for her granddaughter and all those
who claim her as our collective heritage.

Faded diaries, letters, and solemn admissions
of antifascism, literary magazines, and depression
do not lead me to Spanish archives
but to the hidden firmament of your own testament,
the life writing where you almost dared
to write yourself out of your own story,
never just the "wife of", but a woman with a life.

Your youthful poetic voices tell stories of modernity,
of bright lights, ocean bathers, and airplanes,
that in adulthood became the bombs and censor
of a dictatorship, revoked rights, and lives in the closet
as ocean liners reached a new horizon,

a new start in the Caribbean, New England colleges,
or the theatres of Buenos Aires.

To keep a record is to know the value of
personal experience and female wisdom
passed down in pseudonyms and letters,
yet I continue seeking the moments and monikers
between the diary dates and photographs
for I know those meant the most
for all you who sought remembrance beyond life's *adiós*.

Dreaming of the Gran Vía

All lights in Madrid lining the Gran Vía
lead to Recoletos street,
to *tertulias* at the Café Gijón,
to new metro lines and street cars,
to literary Madrid and all her possibility.

Little girls in Catalonia and Galicia
would soon realize their dreams,
reaching their port of call,
a literary city and a safe harbor
for a residence of *Señoritas*.

Ángeles Santos, a young prodigy
painted a whole world by age eighteen,
chaperoned by her father to the royal academy.

Ernestina de Champourcín, barred entry
to the domain of male poets sought sororal
company in letters to new pen pals.

Maruja Mallo, the first to dare to remove

her hat in the Puerta del Sol plaza,
for it stifled her ideas and virtues.

Victorina Durán, consummate actor
and daring socialite, her life story *Mi vida*
a testament to lesbian survival.

Excluded too long, we now dedicate spaces
to the ones kept out of the Residencia de Estudiantes,
provide safe passage to homages at the Atheneum,
and elevate their names in the vaulted Spanish academy,
for this bustling city was always their Madrid.

Velintonia 3

The House of Poetry remains empty
with a “for sale” sign placed in the upstairs window:
Velintonia 3 on Vicente Aleixandre Street in Madrid.

I yearn to ascend the short staircase
and knock on the door, waiting for the friendly poet to greet me,
but here I am on the other side of the street
envisioning an imaginary Alexandrian encounter
as if I were Carlos Bousoño, Luis Cernuda, or a young poet
like Jaime Siles showing him my humble verses.

Just think, if I were there in the 1930s,
I would cross through the threshold of the front door, summoning
the generations gathered in this house of poetry
and I would take a seat and smile with my newfound friends,
but now I fall to the ground, only hearing the sound of my own echo
because neither furniture nor gatherings appear in this house.

I wish I could enter the garden behind the house
to witness the shady magnificence of the cedar tree
that Aleixandre himself planted and continues growing

on this summer day in which I visit his house –
Sirio's barks float through the air
tertulias and memories etched into the rings of the tree.

When I leave this house devoid of residents,
I realize that this abandoned house and overgrown garden
are sometimes full of the Association of Friends of Vicente Aleixandre
striving to save this house of poetry, Velintonia 3.

Homage to Paradise

From the depths of war and personal strife,
south into homelands glistening along the shores
of Valencia, Murcia and Andalucía emerge the poets' paradise.

The sea didn't take your people, the fascists did.
La Desbandada, the massacre on the way to Almería,
a forced evacuation from Málaga, the City of Paradise,
thrown out of Eden into a lost paradise
over two hundred kilometres of road long
until they could return to the sea's embrace in Almería once more.

Málaga, an ethereal city between mountains and ocean,
capped by a bright Andalusian sky
still shining over the waves that broke
like a storm surge over Vicente Aleixandre's small feet
as he played in the sand with his sister Conchita.

I stand on the Castle of Gibralfaro,
wishing these happy marine days could last forever,
in this moment of eternity facing the postcard view
of a bullfighting ring, apartments, and the old city.

The resplendent rocks covered in seafoam,
malagueños bustling through the streets,
mounds of sand where an etched footprint
became a sign of man's ephemeral trace in the cosmos,
a sea of paradise revealing ships and adventures in the distance
for Málaga's daring daughter Isabel Oyarzábal.

The Peñón de Ifach rock greeted Carmen and Amanda
as they sought a summertime refuge, lining
photo albums with geology and their own odyssey
for entwining their lives and prosody.

Like you, I feel as though I have lived there,
the places where even after the Spanish Civil War
the sun coats the backs of tourists
and dazzling laughter dances off the rocks, a reverberation
from your earliest memories of childhood innocence
that comforted you into the murky waters of old age.

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