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Life, Strength, Woman:
English Translation of Julia de Burgos's Poetry

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
University Honors Program Requirements
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

by
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Abstract

The purpose of this translation project is to make Puerto Rican feminist and political activist Julia de Burgos's poetry available to a wider audience. Its feminist themes and exploration of powerful emotions are just as relevant today as they were in Burgos's lifetime. Translating these poems to English in the twenty-first century means a whole new generation of developing women will have access to Burgos's words. They will feel Burgos's deep and intricate emotions and understand that it's okay to struggle as long as they remain true to themselves. A detailed history of Burgos's life accompanies the translated poems in order to give a broader view of Burgos's passions and experiences and to help readers understand Burgos's politically charged poems. A scholarly analysis of my translation process is also included to explain how I narrowed down my selection to 21 poems that capture not only the spirit and style of Burgos, but also represent poetry from across her lifetime on a variety of subjects. I also deliberately included poems with unique form, as Burgos's poetry shows her individualism in its form as well as its voice. This translation project will be a useful resource for anyone studying Puerto Rican history as well as for today's women, who will surely be inspired by Burgos's empowering words.

Keywords: Spanish, English, Julia de Burgos, poetry

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Prologue to English Translation of Julia de Burgos's Poetry

“Poet, worker, teacher, political activist, devoted daughter and sister, passionate lover, immigrant, exile, alcoholic: Julia de Burgos, a woman ahead of her time” (Esteves 221). Julia de Burgos, “Puerto Rico’s most famous poet” (Agüeros iii), led a difficult life. She experienced poverty, heartbreak, and loss, but she continued writing until the end. Through poetry, Burgos found her identity and fought against imposed gender roles and societal expectations of women. By translating Burgos’s poetry to English in the twenty-first century, I make Burgos’s inspiring poetry available to a wider audience; its feminist themes and exploration of powerful emotions are just as relevant today as they were in Burgos’s lifetime.

Context

Julia Constanza Burgos García was born February 17, 1914, in Santa Cruz, Carolina, Puerto Rico, and she was the eldest child of Francisco Burgos Hans and Paula García Marcano. She was one of 13 children. Only seven of those children survived the extreme hunger and poverty that her family experienced in the countryside. In many ways, her childhood impacted her writing. Both of Burgos’s parents were storytellers. Francisco read extensively, and he recounted many tales to his children. Sometimes, he would take them riding at night, and they would sleep under the stars in an open field (Esteves 222). Paula took her children to Pozo Hondo to do laundry, and she told them stories about water spirits, angels, and the river (Esteves 222). Burgos became an avid reader as well, and she spent her life writing poetry. Her poetry was influenced as much by her hometown, Santa Cruz, as by her parents. Santa Cruz was surrounded by idyllic nature, such as hills, flowers, and fruit trees: “From her house she could hear the wind that dwells in the mountains and, above all, the whisper of her river, the Río Grande de Loíza” (Esteves 222). Nature imagery is the heart of Burgos’s poetry and frequently

acts as a metaphor that shrouds deeper meaning. Water imagery is especially prevalent in her poetry, and the Río Grande de Loíza is the inspiration for and namesake of one of her most anthologized poems.

Burgos was an intelligent, educated, and passionate individual. After completing six years of grade school in Santa Cruz, Burgos finished her last two years of grade school in Carolina in 1928. Afterwards, Burgos and her family left their home and moved to Río Piedras, where Burgos attended the Escuela Secundaria de la Universidad de Puerto Rico (known as the University High School) until she graduated in 1931. Then, thanks to a scholarship, Burgos was able to complete a two-year Department of Education program at the University of Puerto Rico, so she could become an elementary teacher. While at the university, Burgos learned about the nationalist movement and became an advocate for Puerto Rico's independence; she was a member of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party. Burgos held a variety of jobs in a multitude of locations throughout her life, including a year of teaching in rural Naranjito in 1935, and it is reported that she "enjoyed the teaching year best of all" (Agüeros xiii). Allegedly, one of her jobs, a writing job at Escuela del Aire (School of the Air) from 1936-37, was impacted by Burgos's militancy. She only worked there for one school year, and it is rumored that she left due to political reasons. Burgos was a passionate political activist as well as an ardent feminist.

After writing and publishing two books of poetry before the age of twenty-five, Burgos moved to New York City and exiled herself from Puerto Rico from 1939 until her death in 1953. When Burgos first started publishing poems, she would sign her name as "Julia Burgos" or "Julia Burgos de Rodríguez." However, after Burgos and Rubén Rodríguez Beauchamp, a radio announcer and journalist, ended their three-year marriage in divorce in 1937, Burgos began signing her poetry "Julia de Burgos." This signature was untraditional and fought against societal

expectations: “She will henceforth be of herself, for signing Julia de Burgos is like signing Julia who belongs to herself” (Agüeros xv). Burgos’s poetry reflects this mentality through its focus on individualism and freedom.

Burgos at first moved to New York City to be with her lover, Juan Isidro Grullón. She followed him to Cuba for two years until their relationship failed, and then she returned to New York City. In 1943, she briefly married Armando Marín, a public accountant and musician, and moved to Washington, D.C., with him for a year, but she hated the “city of silence” (Esteves 228) and missed the large Hispanic population in New York City. Even though New York was not her homeland, Burgos grew to think of it as a second home after many years, according to a letter to her sister, Consuelo (Esteves 228).

In 1946, Burgos was diagnosed with cirrhosis, which was the result of years of alcoholism. Because her father was also an alcoholic, it is debated whether Burgos’s alcoholism was genetic or the result of her difficult life and her broken heart from her failed relationship with Grullón. Either way, she went through a series of hospitalizations between 1948 and 1953. The last of those hospitalizations was at Goldwater Memorial Hospital, and she wrote two poems while there — the only two poems originally written in English, one of which is included in this translation and is titled “Farewell in Welfare Island.” Burgos was found unconscious at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 105th Street in New York City on July 5, 1953. She died mere minutes after arriving at Harlem Hospital. With no identification papers on her body, she was buried in a standard coffin at Potter’s Field. It took a month for her body to be identified, exhumed, and returned to her homeland, where she was reburied in Carolina.

Clearly, Burgos experienced more than her fair share of hardship. But her experiences helped shape her as a person, and they contributed to the creation of her invaluable poetry.

Burgos's poetry explores "the social and psychological condition of women of her era" (Román-Odio 34). It expresses not only what it means to be a Puerto Rican, but it also expresses what it means to be a woman in a sexist society. She exudes "the voice of a rebellious woman who deliberately constructs her own identity while denouncing the social impostures of her bourgeois society" (Román-Odio 36) while exploring the interiority of the feminine mind. Her poetry inspires people to explore themselves, inside and out, and urges women to fight for social and political justice. When I read Burgos's poetry, I saw a woman struggling with her identity. I saw a woman exploring deep emotions, like love and pain, with reckless abandon. I saw a woman ready to fight for what was important to her. Translating these poems to English in the twenty-first century means a whole new generation of developing women will have access to Burgos's words. They will feel Burgos's emotions and understand that it's okay to struggle as long as they remain true to themselves. These messages are important and will continue to remain important until the world reaches undeniable equality, where everyone is accepted for exactly who they are with no questions asked; in other words, these words will remain relevant forever.

Methods

Before I began translating Burgos's poems, I went through a lengthy selection process to ensure that the poems in this translation reflect a complete image of Burgos's spirit and writing style. First, I read 203 of Burgos's poems, which were compiled by Jack Agüeros in *Song of the Simple Truth: The Complete Poems of Julia de Burgos*. While reading, I took notes and marked 46 of the poems that best embody the spirit of Burgos. From there, I narrowed down my selection to 21 poems that capture not only the spirit and style of Burgos, but also represent poetry from across her lifetime on a variety of subjects. I also deliberately included poems with unique form, as Burgos's poetry shows her individualism in its form as well as its voice.

Some of the poems were selected because of their deep exploration of emotion, which is one of the main features of Burgos's poetry responsible for her fame and success.

"A Julia de Burgos" ("To Julia de Burgos") was selected because it explores the complexity and duality of her personal identity. In the poem, nature imagery describes the part of herself that is free and liberated while societal images describe the part of herself that is imprisoned by traditional gender roles. For example, "Tú te rizas el pelo y te pintas; yo no; / a mí me riza el viento; a mí me pinta el sol" ("You curl your hair and apply makeup; not me; / The wind curls my hair; the sun applies my makeup"; Burgos 18-19) contrasts societal expectations of feminine beauty against images of natural beauty to emphasize Burgos's inner turmoil about whether she should adhere to societal standards or be her natural self. The poem has underlying tones of feminism in its euphoric description of freedom from men and traditional gender roles, but it also captures the pain and confusion caused by this duality of self.

"Momentos" ("Moments") is included in the translation because it uses beautiful words to portray a pessimistic and confused outlook on life, which highlights the existential questions in the poem. For example, "Bebíendome la vida / en cada estrella desorbitada / en cada grito estéril" ("Drinking life / in each star put out of orbit, / in each sterile cry"; Burgos 14-16) shows how elegant language can represent painful ideas. I also included this poem because its form differed from many of the other poems. Each stanza begins with "yo" ("I") except the final couplet, making the poem seem like a deeply emotional internal reflection. The final couplet gives the rest of the stanzas meaning when it asks, "¿Y todo para qué?" ("And all for what?"; Burgos 18). This question reflects the internal turmoil and confusion that is common among young people, which makes the emotions explored in this poem relevant to society today.

“Cortando distancias” (“Cutting Distances”) earned its place in this translation because its ideas of freedom and self-truth appear frequently in Burgos’s poetry. The poem’s title represents the fight against prejudice: “De espalda al prejuicio y a solas contigo, / llegaste a mi vida cortando distancias” (“Back turned to prejudice and alone with yourself, / you arrived in my life cutting distances”; Burgos 3-4). Burgos repeats “distancia” (“distance”) throughout the poem to emphasize the various ways that the present society is unjust and to persuade readers to say goodbye to their prejudicial ways: “Un fuerte y cortante adiós al cobarde / que vive sumiso a credos y trabas” (“A strong and sharp goodbye to the coward / that lives submissive to creeds and obstacles”; Burgos 23-24). In this way, the poem not only reveals the shortcomings of society, but it also encourages readers to reject traditional prejudices, which reflects Burgos’s social activism.

“Yo misma fui mi ruta” (“I Was My Own Route”) brings up topics of gender and individuality, and the first few lines especially leaped out to me during the selection process: “Yo quise ser como los hombres quisieron que yo fuese: / un intento de vida; / un juego al escondite con mi ser” (“I wanted to be like men wanted me to be; / an attempt at life; / a game of hide and go seek with my own being”; Burgos 1-3). These first few lines emphasize how women can feel oppressed by society and tradition, making them unable to embrace their full potential. This message reflects Burgos’s involvement in feminist activism. Furthermore, the poem uses a variety of verb tenses and challenging vocabulary, so I thought it would be a worthwhile addition to my translation.

“Canción de la verdad sencilla” (“Song of the Simple Truth”) uses beautiful diction to describe how the narrator and the lover’s lives are interconnected. The way the words interact with each other on the page is stunning: “No es él el que me lleva ... / Es mi vida que en su vida

palpita” (“It is not he who takes me away ... / It is my life that in his life beats”; Burgos 1-2).

The poem is a prime example of Burgos’s second published collection of poetry, titled *Canción de la verdad sencilla*, which “depicts the perceptions, feelings, and pain of a woman in love” (Román-Odio 37) and delves deep into the feminine consciousness.

While “Canción de la verdad sencilla” focuses on the connection between lovers, “Poema para las lágrimas” (“Poem for the Tears”) depicts a failed love and the empty pain of rejection. Burgos uses water imagery to express how lost and confused the narrator feels when rejected: “Como si me tuvieras nadando entre tus brazos, / donde las aguas corren dementes y perdidas” (“As if you had me swimming in your arms, / where the waters run demented and lost”; Burgos 3-4). Nature imagery continues throughout the poem to paint vivid pictures of the narrator’s intense emotions. “En mis dedos se suicidan las aves, / y a mis pasos cansados ya no nacen espigas” (“In my fingers the birds commit suicide, / and at my tired steps shoots no longer grow”; Burgos 21-22) shows that the narrator feels dead on the inside, and nothing beautiful can live while in contact with her agonized soul.

“¿Milagro yo?” (“I, Miracle?”) is included in this translation because of its unique form and its resulting portrayal of the narrator’s existential crisis. For much of the poem, each stanza begins with a “yo” (“I”) verb; for example, “soy” (“I am”; Burgos 9), “quiero” (“I want”; Burgos 11), and “permanezco” (“I remain”; Burgos 20) are all “yo” verbs that describe the narrator and provide insight into the narrator’s internal turmoil and the agony that comes with not understanding oneself.

“Nada soy” (“I Am Nothing”) is short but intense. It uses repetition, color imagery, and innocent diction to emphasize the pain of being treated like nothing by someone who once cared — an emotion felt by everyone at some point in their life. Every single stanza begins with “nada”

(“nothing”), which infuses Burgos’s words with the force of the narrator’s pain, and lines like “Nada para su azul perpetuo” (“Nothing for her perpetual blue”; Burgos 10) uses the color blue to show the narrator’s depression.

“El hombre y mi alma” (“The Man and My Soul”) is included in this translation because it shows Burgos’s feminist ideals through its presentation of the strength of a woman’s soul against a man: “Porque mi ahora es fuerte columna de avanzada / en la aurora que apunta, / es grito de corazón vacío en la nave del mundo” (“Because my now is a strong avant-garde / in the dawn that erupts, / it is a shout of empty heart in the ship of the world”; Burgos 6-8). It has a more triumphant tone than some of Burgos’s other feminist poems, and it is essential to include in my translation so that the project reflects a complete picture of Burgos’s spirit.

“Vaciedad” (“Emptiness”) uses intricate diction to describe equally intricate sensations of emptiness and nonexistence. The last stanza is especially moving:

Estoy en blanco
sobre el impulso que me anda la vida,
entre el minuto que acaba de pasar
y el puerto de la nada ...

(I am speechless
above the impulse that walks me through life,
between the minute that just went away
and arrival of the port of nothing ...; Burgos 35-38)

It uses white color imagery to express the narrator's speechlessness, but the narrator is still fated to be dragged from one meaningless moment to the next. Although the poem has a hopeless tone, it shows Burgos's prowess with imagery and effective use of rhetorical questions to strengthen the impact of her words.

"Latigazos" ("Whiplashes") is included in this translation because of its unique form and strong portrayal of pain. Burgos had a painful, difficult life, so it is not surprising that some of her best poetry portrays pain and difficulty. "Latigazos" is one of only a few of Burgos's poems that includes dialogue; for example, "Vete, amada. Hoy no puedo acompañarte, / pues me esperan" ("Go away, my beloved. Today I cannot accompany you, / well they wait for me"; Burgos 27-28). The dialogue adds an intimate element to the poem and makes the reader feel more involved with the narrator's painful story of the loss of her child. The poem is dedicated to Burgos's son that she lost.

Other poems were selected because of their intense nature imagery, which is a key feature of Burgos's poetic style.

"Río Grande de Loíza" ("Río Grande de Loíza") is arguably Burgos's most famous poem. The poem uses beautiful nature imagery to describe an amatory experience, but it is also clearly politically charged. "Muy señor río mío. Río hombre. Unico hombre / que ha besado mi alma al besar en mi cuerpo" ("Most sovereign river of mine. Man river. The only man / that has kissed my soul upon kissing my body"; Burgos 39-40) shows the intimate connection between the narrator and the river, which represents the deep connection between the narrator and her country. Then, the last three lines infuse the poem with political meaning: "El más grande de todos nuestros llantos isleños, / si no fuera mas grande el que de mí se sale / por los ojos del alma para mi esclavo pueblo" ("The greatest of our island's tears, / if the one that comes out of me

was not greater / from the eyes of my soul for my enslaved people”; Burgos 42-44). In this way, the poem is a stunning representation of Burgos’s style of poetry through its use of nature imagery to make political commentary.

“Ronda sobremarina por la montaña” (“Round Overseas Through the Mountain”) is chosen primarily for its unique form. Each stanza begins with dialogue, which is represented by dashes instead of quotation marks like the dialogue in “Latigazos.” The dialogue is between the narrator and various nature spirits, including the wind and the sea. In this way, the personification of nature shows a deep connection between Burgos and nature and is another example of how Burgos uses nature to portray difficult situations.

“Entretanto, la ola” (“Meanwhile, the Wave”) uses nature imagery to express the narrator’s feeling of being alone in the world. The narrator uses imagery of incessant rain, dead birds, and dead flowers to portray her emotions. Furthermore, “Mis puertos inocentes se van segando al mar, / y ni un barco ni un río me carga la distancia” (“My innocent ports go cutting off the sea, / and neither a ship nor a river carries the distance for me”; Burgos 5-6) shows the defeated tone of the poem. The poem is a well-written example of Burgos’s tendency to portray negative emotions through nature imagery.

“Ya no es mío mi amor” (“My Love Is No Longer Mine”) is included in my translation because of its use of “si” (“if”) clauses and nature imagery. Each stanza begins with a “si” clause and describes the uncontrollable and free nature of the narrator’s love. Burgos emphasizes the narrator’s need for her love to be free, wild, and unrestrained by comparing her love to untamed nature: “Si mi amor es así, como un torrente, / como un río crecido en plena tempestad, / como un lirio prendiendo raíces en el viento” (“If my love is like this, like a torrent, / like a growing river in full turmoil, / like a lily taking root in the wind”; Burgos 1-3). Freedom is a theme that

frequently appears in Burgos's poetry and reflects Burgos's feminist activism and her desire for women to be unrestrained by sexist tradition.

“Adiós ...” (“Goodbye ...”) is included in this translation because of its unconventional portrayal of stars. It personifies stars in a negative way, “La miserable estrella / que goza en su miseria” (“The miserable star / that rejoices in its own misery”; Burgos 7-8), which is in stark contrast to the traditional depiction of a star. In this way, it is a good representation of Burgos's poetic style that frequently goes against tradition in its unique portrayal of the world.

Four poems were selected because they strongly reflect the political ideology of Burgos. Burgos's political ideology frequently inspired and shaped her poetry, so it is important to include some of her strongest political poems in this translation.

“A José Martí” (“To José Martí”) is a good example of how Burgos sometimes writes poems to specific political figures. José Martí is a journalist and poet that fought for Cuban independence and died on the battlefield in 1895. Burgos's poem shows gratitude for Martí's sacrifice and uses his struggle for Cuban independence as inspiration in the struggle for Puerto Rican independence: “Porque tengamos cerca de la muerte, un consuelo, / Puerto Rico, mi patria, te reclama en su suelo, / y por mi voz herida, se conduce hasta ti!” (“So when we are close to death, we will have one comfort, / Puerto Rico, my homeland, clamors for you on its soil, / and through my injured voice, drives itself toward you!”; Burgos 13-15). As such, it reflects Burgos's political activism and militancy.

While “A José Martí” shows support for a fellow political activist, “Himno de sangre a Trujillo” (“Blood Hymn to Trujillo”) shows Burgos's disdain for a corrupt dictator of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo. Trujillo abused many human rights during his 30-year reign, including the torture and murder of thousands of civilians. Burgos's poem is a curse cast

on the general. “General Rafael, Trujillo General, / que tu nombre sea un eco eterno de cadáveres, / rodando entre ti mismo, sin piedad, persiguiéndote” (“General Rafael, General Trujillo, / that your name is an eternal echo of corpses, / rolling between yourself, without piety”; Burgos 19-21) shows how the poem uses imagery of death to accuse Trujillo of his crimes and to curse him for eternity.

“Somos puños cerrados” (“We Are Closed Fists”) is one long stanza with a combative and determined tone, showing the narrator's determination to reject being exploited by the rich and privileged: “Continuemos la huelga, camaradas: / ¡Ya no somos esclavos!” (“We continue the strike, comrades: / We are not yet slaves!”; Burgos 31-32). It reflects Burgos’s involvement in political and social activism through its message of social uprising for greater equality.

“Despierta” (“Wake Up”) is an actively feminist poem. Burgos writes, “A la mujer puertorriqueña; / en esta hora de trascendencia” (“To the Puerto Rican woman; / in this hour of importance”; Burgos 1-2). The poem reflects Burgos’s political activism by urging women to fight for Puerto Rican independence and offer their blood for liberty. In this way, Burgos fights for the new Puerto Rican identity to be free and equal, where women can defend their homeland just like men.

The final poem in the translation, “Farewell in Welfare Island,” was selected because it is one of only two poems written originally in English by Burgos, and it was one of the last poems that Burgos wrote. Burgos wrote the poem while hospitalized at Goldwater Memorial Hospital in New York City four months before her death. While at the hospital, she also wrote many letters to her sister, Consuelo, about her depression, her financial situation, and her attempts to remain dignified. The poem reflects Burgos’s feelings of depression and acts as a last cry into the world.

It's translated from the original English to a Spanish version, which is opposite from the other poems in this collection.

Compared to my selection process, my translation process was simple. First, I read each poem in its original language (Spanish for 20 of the poems and English for the final poem). Then, I translated each of the poems to English (Spanish for the final poem) while trying to stay true to the original meaning of each poem, which was the biggest challenge of the project. There is no single way to translate one language to another, so I frequently had to take artistic liberty to find creative solutions for difficult-to-translate lines. The process itself was enjoyable and strengthened my Spanish language skills, my problem-solving skills, and my love of Latin American poetry.

Conclusion

Julia de Burgos's poetry is an expression of her inner being. It reflects her essence: her ardent feminism, political activism, and rejection of traditional gender roles. In an essay by poet Audre Lorde titled "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," Lorde describes a deep place of possibility within all women, where there is a reserve of "creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling" (218). Burgos clearly embraces and celebrates this reserve of emotion and feeling in her poetry; much of the poetry in this collection reflects Burgos's deep exploration of emotion. According to Lorde, "Feelings were expected to kneel to thought as women were expected to kneel to men" (219). Burgos fights against these expectations with her mesmerizing descriptions of feelings and with her verses that empower women to seek liberty. Poetry was never a luxury for Burgos. It was a means of survival, a means of inspiring change, and a means of understanding herself. In Burgos's poetry, we see her essence. It is that same essence that will continue to inspire women for centuries to come.

A Julia de Burgos

Ya las gentes murmuran que yo soy tu
enemiga

porque dicen que en verso doy al mundo tu
yo.

Mienten, Julia de Burgos. Mienten, Julia de
Burgos.

La que se alza en mis versos no es tu voz: es
mi voz

porque tu eres ropaje y la esencia soy yo;
y el más profundo abismo se tiende entre las
dos.

Tú eres fría muñeca de mentira social,
y yo, viril destello de la humana verdad.

Tú, miel de cortesanas hipocresías; yo no;
que en todos mis poemas desnudo el
corazón.

Tú eres como tu mundo, egoísta; yo no;
que en todo me lo juego a ser lo que soy yo.

Tú eres sólo la grave señora señorona;
yo no; yo soy la vida, la fuerza, la mujer.

To Julia de Burgos

The people already murmur that I am your
enemy

because they say that in verse I give away
your self the world.

They lie, Julia de Burgos. They lie, Julia de
Burgos.

The one that rises in my verses is not your
voice: it is my voice

because you are the covering and the
essence is me;

and the most profound abyss stretches
between us.

You are a cold doll of social lies,
and I, the virile glint of human truth.

You, honey of courtesan hypocrisies; not
me;
that in all my poems undress my heart.

You are like your world, egotistical; not me;
that in everything I hurl to be what I am.

You are just the serious lady very lady;
not me; I am life, strength, woman.

Tú eres de tu marido, de tu amo; yo no;
yo de nadie, o de todos, porque a todos, a
todos,
en mi limpio sentir y en mi pensar me doy.

You belong to your husband, your master;
not me;

I belong to nobody, or everyone, because to
everyone, to everything,

in my clean feeling and in my thoughts I
give myself away.

Tú te rizas el pelo y te pintas; yo no;
a mí me riza el viento; a mí me pinta el sol.

You curl your hair and apply makeup; not
me;

The wind curls my hair; the sun applies my
makeup.

Tú eres dama casera, resignada, sumisa,
atada a los prejuicios de los hombres; yo no;
que yo soy Rocinante corriendo desbocado
olfateando horizontes de justicia de Dios.

You are a married dame, resigned,
submissive,

attached to the prejudices of men; not me;

I am Rocinante running out of control
sniffing out horizons of God's justice.

Tú en ti misma no mandas; a ti todos te
mandan;
en ti mandan tu esposo, tus padres, tus
parientes,
el cura, la modista, el teatro, el casino,
el auto, las alhajas, el banquete, el champán,
el cielo y el infierno, y el qué dirán social.

You over yourself do not rule; everyone
rules you;

your husband, your parents, your relatives
rule you,

the priest, the dressmaker, the theater, the
casino,

the car, the jewels, the banquet, the
champagne,

heavens and hell, and the social, "what will
they say."

En mí no, que en mí manda mi solo corazón,
mi solo pensamiento; quien manda en mí
soy yo.

Not me, only my heart rules me,

only my thought; the one who rules me is
me.

Tú, flor de aristocracia; y yo, la flor del pueblo.

Tú en ti lo tienes todo y a todos se lo debes, mientras que yo, mi nada a nadie se la debo.

Tú, clavada al estático dividendo ancestral, y yo, un uno en la cifra del divisor social, somos el duelo a muerte que se acerca fatal.

Cuando las multitudes corran alborotadas dejando atrás cenizas de injusticias quemadas, y cuando con la tea de las siete virtudes, tras los siete pecados, corran las multitudes, contra ti, y contra todo lo injusto y lo inhumano, yo iré en medio de ellas con la tea en la mano.

You, flower of the aristocracy; and I, flower of the people.

You have everything in you and you owe it to everyone, while in me, my nothing I owe to nobody.

You, nailed to a static ancestral dividend, and me, one in the number of the social dividing, we are the duel to death that comes near fatal.

When the multitudes run rioting leaving behind ashes of burned injustices, and when with the torch of the seven virtues, the multitudes run after the seven sins, against you, and against everything unjust and inhumane, I will go in the middle of them with the torch in my hand.

Momentos

Yo, fatalista,
mirando la vida llegando y alejándose
de mis semejantes.

Yo, dentro de mí misma,
siempre en espera de algo
que no acierta mi mente.

Yo, múltiple,
como en contradicción,
atada a un sentimiento sin orillas
que me une y me desune,
alternativamente,
al mundo.

Yo, universal,
bebiéndome la vida
en cada estrella desorbitada,
en cada grito estéril,
en cada sentimiento sin orillas.

¿Y todo para qué?
—Para seguir siendo la misma.

Moments

I, fatalist,
watching life arriving and distancing itself
from my brothers and sisters.

I, inside of myself,
always in wait of something
that my mind can't guess.

I, numerous,
as in a contradiction,
attached to a sentiment without edges
that unites me and disunites me,
alternatively,
to the world.

I, universal,
drinking life
in each star put out of orbit,
in each sterile cry,
in each sentiment without edges.

And all for what?
—To continue being the same.

Río Grande de Loíza

Río Grande de Loíza! ... Alárgate en mi espíritu
 y deja que mi alma se pierda en tus riachuelos,
 para buscar la fuente que te robó de niño
 y en un ímpetu loco te devolvió al sendero.

Enroscate en mis labios y deja que te beba,
 para sentirte mío por un breve momento,
 y esconderte del mundo y en ti mismo esconderte,
 y oír voces de asombro en la boca del viento.

Apéate un instante del lomo de la tierra,
 y busca de mis ansias el íntimo secreto;
 confúndete en el vuelo de mi ave fantasía,
 y déjame una rosa de agua en mis ensueños.

¡Río Grande de Loíza! ... Mi manantial, mi río,
 desde que alzóme al mundo el pétalo materno;
 contigo se bajaron desde las rudas cuestas,
 a buscar nuevos surcos, mis pálidos anhelos;

Río Grande de Loíza

Río Grande de Loíza! ... Lengthen yourself in my spirit
 and let my soul lose itself in your streams,
 to seek the fountain that robbed you as a child
 and in a crazy vigor returned you to the path.

Coil yourself on my lips and let me drink you,
 to feel you as mine for a brief moment,
 and hide you from the world and hide you in yourself,
 and hear voices of astonishment in the mouth of the wind.

Dismount for an instant from the loin of the earth,
 and seek the intimate secret in my longings;
 baffle yourself in the flight of my bird fantasy,
 and leave me a rose of water in my daydreams.

Río Grande de Loíza! ... My wellspring, my river,
 since the maternal petal lifted me to the world;
 with you they came down from the craggy hills,
 to seek new furrows, my pale longings;

y mi niñez fue toda un poema en el río,
y un río en el poema de mis primeros
sueños.

Llegó la adolescencia. Me sorprendió la vida
prendida en lo más ancho de tu viajar eterno;
y fui tuya mil veces, y en un bello romance
me despertaste el alma y me besaste el
cuerpo.

¿A dónde te llevaste las aguas que bañaron
mis formas, en espiga de sol recién abierto?

¡Quién sabe en qué remoto país
mediterráneo

algún fauno en la playa me estará
poseyendo!

¡Quién sabe en qué aguacero de qué tierra
lejana

me estaré derramando para abrir surcos
nuevos;
o si acaso, cansada de morder corazones,
me estaré congelando en cristales de hielo!

¡Río Grande de Loíza! ... Azul. Moreno.
Rojo.

Espejo azul, caído pedazo azul de cielo;
desnuda carne blanca que se te vuelve negra
cada vez que la noche se te mete en el lecho;
roja franja de sangre, cuando bajo la lluvia

and my childhood was all a poem in the
river,
and a river in the poem of my first dreams.

Adolescence arrived. Life surprised me
pinned to the widest part of your eternal
voyage;
and I was yours a thousand times, and in a
beautiful romance
you woke my soul and kissed my body.

Where did you take the waters that bathed
my forms, in a sun blossom recently
opened?

Who knows what faun will be possessing
me on the beach

in some remote Mediterranean land!

Who knows in what downpour of what far
off land

I will be spilling to open new furrows;
or if by chance, tired of biting hearts,
I will be freezing in crystals of ice!

Río Grande de Loíza! ... Blue. Brown. Red.

Blue mirror, fallen blue piece of sky;
nude white meat that turns into black
each time that the night gets into your bed;
red streak of blood, when the rain falls

a torrentes su barro te vomitan los cerros.

in torrents the hills vomit their mud.

Río hombre, pero hombre con pureza de río,
porque das tu azul alma cuando das tu azul
beso.

River man, but man with the purity of river,
because you give your blue soul when you
give your blue kiss.

Muy señor río mío. Río hombre. Unico
hombre

Most sovereign river of mine. Man river.
The only man

que ha besado mi alma al besar en mi
cuerpo.

that has kissed my soul upon kissing my
body.

Río Grande de Loíza! ... Río grande. Llanto
grande.

Río Grande de Loíza! ... Great river. Great
weeping.

El más grande de todos nuestros llantos
isleños,
si no fuera mas grande el que de mí se sale
por los ojos del alma para mi esclavo
pueblo.

The greatest of our island's tears,
if the one that comes out of me was not
greater
from the eyes of my soul for my enslaved
people.

Cortando distancias

Chispeando de luces del rumbo futuro
que adviértese en todas las nuevas llamadas,
de espalda al prejuicio y a solas contigo,
llegaste a mi vida cortando distancias.

Distancia de innobles pisadas sociales.
Distancia de huellas de loca avanzada.
Distancia de credos, de normas, de anhelos.
Distancia de todo lo que hace la nada.

Llegaste. Eso es todo. Rasgaa tus sentidos,
y dame un lenguaje de voces calladas.
Renuncio al legado de un mundo ficticio.
No quiero limosnas de herencia gastada.

Prefiero al murmullo de todos los tiempos,
el secreto íntimo de las circunstancias,
prendida al silencio de tu vida mía
y oyendo en tus ojos y no en tus palabras.

Lancemos un grito de adioses al viento
por todas las fugas que cortan distancias.

Cutting Distances

Sparkling of the lights of the future course
that is present in all new signals,
back turned to prejudice and alone with
yourself,
you arrived in my life cutting distances.

Distance of ignoble social footsteps.
Distance of traces of advancing insanity.
Distance of creeds, of rules, of desires.
Distance of everything that makes
nothingness.

You arrived. That is all. Stroke your senses,
and give me a language of silenced voices.
I renounce the legacy of a fictitious world.
I do not want handouts from a worn-out
inheritance.

I prefer the murmur of all times,
the intimate secret of circumstances,
pinned to the silence of your life mine
and listening in your eyes and not in your
words.

Let us launch a shout of goodbyes to the
wind
through all the escapes that cut distances.

Un místico y suave adiós al ensueño
que engaña las mentes y teje la nada.
Un grave y piadoso adiós al imbécil
que vive tan sólo de sol, aire y agua.

A mystic and soft goodbye to daydreaming
that tricks minds and weaves nothing.
A grave and pious goodbye to the imbecile
that lives only on sun, air and water.

Un fuerte y cortante adiós al cobarde
que vive sumiso a credos y trabas.

A strong and sharp goodbye to the coward
that lives submissive to creeds and
obstacles.

Y un loco y salvaje adiós a nosotros
en ritos y normas y gestos y máscaras.

And a crazy and wild goodbye to us
in rites and rules and movements and masks.

Que sea nuestra vida presente de todo.
Que busque futuro tan sólo en el alma.
Que ensaye verdades. Que sienta en idea.
Que siempre se extienda cortando distancias.

That our life is present in all.
That it seeks future solely in the soul.
That it teaches truths. That it feels in idea.
That it always reaches out cutting distances.

Y que sea más íntima que todas las frases,
de todos los tiempos, de todas las razas.

And that which is more intimate than all the
sentences,
of all times, of all races.

Yo misma fui mi ruta

Yo quise ser como los hombres quisieron
que yo fuese:
un intento de vida;
un juego al escondite con mi ser.
Pero yo estaba hecha de presentes,
y mis pies planos sobre la tierra promisoro
no resistían caminar hacia atrás,
y seguían adelante, adelante,
burlando las cenizas para alcanzar el beso
de los senderos nuevos.

A cada paso adelantado en mi ruta hacia el
frente
rasgaba mis espaldas el aleteo desesperado
de los troncos viejos.

Pero la rama estaba desprendida para
siempre,
y a cada nuevo azote la mirada mía
se separaba más y más y más de los lejanos
horizontes aprendidos:
y mi rostro iba tomando la expresión que le
venía de adentro,
la expresión definida que asomaba un
sentimiento
de liberación íntima;
un sentimiento que surgía

I Was My Own Route

I wanted to be like men wanted me to be;
an attempt at life;
a game of hide and go seek with my own
being.
But I was made of nows,
and my feet flat on the promising land
would not bear walking backward,
and would follow forward, forward,
flouting the ashes to reach the kiss
of the new paths.

At every advancing step in my route towards
the front
the desperate flapping wings of the old
guard tore my back.

But the branch was unpinned forever,
and at each new lash my gaze
separated more and more and more from the
far off
learned horizons:
and my face was taking the expression that
came from inside,
the defined expression that showed the
feeling
of intimate liberation;
a feeling that was arising

del equilibrio sostenido entre mi vida
y la verdad del beso de los senderos nuevos.

from the sustained equilibrium between my
life
and the truth of the kiss of new paths.

Ya definido mi rumbo en el presente,
me sentí brote de todos los suelos de la
tierra,
de los suelos sin historia,
de los suelos sin porvenir,
del suelo siempre suelo sin orillas
de todos los hombres y de todas las épocas.

My course already defined in the present,
I felt myself a sprout of all the lands of the
earth,
of the lands without history,
of the lands without future,
of the land always land without edges
of all men and all ages.

Y fui toda en mí como fue en mí la vida ...

I was all in me like my life was in me ...

Yo quise ser como los hombres quisieron
que yo fuese:
un intento de vida;
un juego al escondite con mi ser.
Pero yo estaba hecha de presentes;
cuando ya los heraldos me anunciaban
en el regio desfile de los troncos viejos,
se me torció el deseo de seguir a los
hombres,
y el homenaje se quedó esperandome.

I wanted to be like men wanted me to be:
an attempt at life;
a game of hide and go seek with my own
being.
But I was made of nows;
when the heralds announced me already
in the royal parade of the old guard,
it twisted in me the desire to follow men,
and respect was waiting for me.

Canción de la verdad sencilla

No es él el que me lleva ...
 Es mi vida que en su vida palpita.
 Es la llamada tibia de mi alma
 que se ha ido a cantar entre sus rimas.
 Es la inquietud de viaje de mi espíritu
 que ha encontrado en su rumbo eterna vía.

El y yo somos uno.
 Uno mismo y por siempre entre las cimas;
 manantial abrazando lluvia y tierra;
 fundidos en un soplo ola y brisa;
 blanca mano enlazando piedra y oro;
 hora cósmica uniendo noche y día.

Él y yo somos uno.
 Uno mismo y por siempre en las heridas.
 Uno mismo y por siempre en la conciencia.
 Uno mismo y por siempre en la alegría.

Yo saldré de su pecho a ciertas horas,
 cuando él duerma el dolor en sus pupilas,
 en cada eco bebiéndome lo eterno,
 y en cada alba cargando una sonrisa.

Y seré claridad para sus manos
 cuando vuelquen a trepar los días,

Song of the Simple Truth

It is not he who takes me away ...
 It is my life that in his life beats.
 It is the tepid call of my soul
 that has gone to sing among his rhymes.
 It is the anxiety of the journey of my spirit
 that has found an eternal path in his course.

He and I are one.
 One self and forever among the peaks;
 wellspring hugging rain and earth;
 molten in a sigh of wave and breeze;
 white hand connecting stone and gold;
 cosmic hour uniting night and day.

He and I are one.
 One self and forever in injuries.
 One self and forever in conscience.
 One self and forever in happiness.

I will emerge from his chest at certain hours,
 when he sleeps the pain in his pupils,
 in each echo drinking from me the eternal,
 and in each dawn carrying a smile.

And I will be clarity for his hands
 when they turn to climb the days,

en la lucha sagrada del instinto
por salvarse de ráfagas suicidas.

in the sacred fight of instinct
to save oneself from suicidal gusts.

Si extraviado de senda, por los locos
enjaulados del mundo, fuese un día,
una luz disparada por mi espíritu
le anunciará el retorno hasta mi vida.

If lost from the path, by the caged
lunatics of the world, was a day,
a light shot by my spirit
will announce the return to my life to him.

No es él el que me lleva ...
Es su vida que corre por la mía.

It is not he that takes me ...
It is his life that runs through mine.

Ronda sobremarina por la montaña

—Almamarina ... Almamarina ...

Eso me dijo el viento cuando le di la
mano en la montaña.

—Si yo me llamo ... no sé cómo me llamo.

¿No ves allá mi nombre colgando de
los pétalos,
pronunciando en los frescos “buenos
días” del arroyo,
o abriéndose en el vuelo de alguna
golondrina?

—Almamarina ...

Eso me dijo el viento ruborizándose
en mis ojos,
nerviosos,
enamorándome.

—Pero si soy de la montaña ...

—Almamarina ...

—Pero si ya le di mi corazón al río ...

—Almamarina ...

Y me tomó en los brazos,
anegando de océanos mi nombre.

—Almamarina ..

—Por qué has parado el orbe?

Round Overseas Through the Mountain

—Seasoul ... Seasoul ...

The wind said that to me when I
gave it my hand on the mountain.

—If my name is ... I don't know what my
name is.

You don't see my name hanging
from the petals over there,
pronouncing on the fresh “good
mornings” of the river,
or opening itself in the flight of some
swallow?

—Seasoul ...

The wind said that to me blushing in
my eyes,
nervous,
falling in love with me.

—But if I belong to the mountain ...

—Seasoul ...

—But if I already gave my heart to the
river ...

—Seasoul ...

And it took me in its arms,
flooding my name with oceans.

—Seasoul ...

—Why have you stopped the globe?

—Almamarina ...

—Por qué has retado al risco salvaje?

—Almamarina ...

—Por qué pintas mi nombre de azul?

—¡Déjame verde!

Y me rasgó la risa de los bosques.

—Almamarina ...

Hubo luego, en silencio, como un
desplazamiento

de una niña de agua en la sed de los
valles,

La voz sobremarina se irguió sobre
los cerros,

y partió para siempre con la niña en
el talle.

—Seasoul ...

—Why have you challenged the wild ridge?

—Seasoul ...

—Why do you paint my name blue?

—Leave me green!

And it tore my laugh from the
forests.

—Seasoul ...

It was then, in silence, like a shift
of a child water in the thirst of the
valleys,

The oversea voice stood up over the
hills,

and parted forever with the child on
its waist.

Entretanto, la ola

Las sombras se han echado a dormir sobre
mi soledad.

Mis cielos,

víctimas de invasoras constelaciones ebrias,
se han desterrado al suelo como en bandadas
muertas de pájaros cansados.

Mis puertos inocentes se van segando al
mar,
y ni un barco ni un río me carga la distancia.

Sola, desenfrenada en tierra de sombra y de
silencio.

Sola,

partiéndome las manos con el deseo
marchito de edificar palomas con mis
últimas alas.

Sola,

entre mis calles húmedas,
donde las ruinas corren como muertos
turbados.

Soy agotada y turbia espiga de abandono.

Soy desolada y lloro ...

¡Oh este sentirse el alma más eco que
canción!

¡Oh el temblor espumado del sueño a media
aurora!

¡Oh inútilmente larga la soledad siguiendo
mi camino sin sol!

Meanwhile, the Wave

The shadows have gone to sleep above my
lonesomeness.

My skies,

victims of drunken invading constellations,
have banished themselves to the ground like
dead flocks of tired birds.

My innocent ports go cutting off the sea,
and neither a ship nor a river carries the
distance for me.

Alone, uncontrollable on a land of shadow
and silence.

Alone,

shattering my hands with the withered desire
to build doves with my last wings.

Alone,

among my damp streets,
where the ruins run like the disturbed dead.

I am an exhausted and turbid bud of neglect.

I am devastated and I cry ...

Oh this feeling of the soul more echo than
song!

Oh the foaming shiver of the dream at mid-
dawn!

Oh uselessly long loneliness following my
journey without sun!

Entretanto, la ola,
 amontonando ruidos sobre mi corazón.
 Mi corazón no sabe de playa sin naufragios.
 Mi corazón no tiene casi ya corazón.
 Todo lo ha dado, todo ...
 Es gesto casi exacto a la entrega de Dios.

Entretanto, la ola ...
 Todo el musgo del tiempo corrompido en un
 éxtasis
 de tormenta y de azote sobre mi ancho
 dolor.

Tronchadas margaritas soltando sus
 cadáveres
 por la senda partida donde muero sin flor.
 Pechos míos, con lutos de emoción, aves
 náufragas,
 arrojadas del cielo, mutiladas, sin voz.

Todo el mundo en mi rostro,
 y yo arrastrada y sola,
 matándome yo misma la última ilusión.
 Soy derrotada ...
 Alba tanto distante,
 que hasta mi propia sombra con su sombra
 se ahuyenta.

Meanwhile, the wave,
 piling noises over my heart.
 My heart knows no beach without
 shipwrecks.
 My heart has almost no heart anymore.
 All that it has given, everything ...
 Is a gesture almost exactly like the surrender
 of God.

Meanwhile, the wave ...
 All the moss of time corrupted in an ecstasy
 of storm and lashing over my wide pain.

Sliced daisies set free their corpses
 through the divided path where I die without
 a flower.
 Breasts of mine, with mourning of emotion,
 shipwrecked birds,
 tossed from the sky, mutilated, without
 voice.

All the world in my face,
 and me, dragged and alone,
 killing that last illusion myself.
 I am defeated ...
 Dawn so distant,
 that even my own shadow with its shadow is
 driven away.

Soy diluvio de duelos,
toda un atormentado desenfreno de lluvia,
un lento agonizar entre espadas perpetuas.
¡Oh intemperie de mi alma!
¡En qué ola sin nombre callaré tu poema!

I am a downpour of mourning,
all a tormented rampage of rain,
a slow near death between perpetual swords.
Oh open sky of my soul!
In what wave without name will I silence
your poem!

Ya no es mío mi amor

Si mi amor es así, como un torrente,
como un río crecido en plena tempestad,
como un lirio prendiendo raíces en el viento,
como una lluvia íntima,
sin nubes y sin mar ...

Si mi amor es de agua,
¿por qué a rumbos inmóviles lo pretenden
atar?

Si mi amor rompe suelos,
disuelve la distancia como la claridad,
ataja mariposas al igual que luceros,
y cabalga horizontes como cruza un rosal ...
Si el universo es átomo siguiéndome las
alas,
¿por qué medirme el trino cuando rompe a
cantar?

Si mi amor ya no es mío,
es yo misma borrando las riberas del mar,
yo inevitablemente y fatalmente mía,
germinándome el alma en mis albas de
paz ...

Si mi amor ya no roza fronteras con mi
espíritu,
¿qué canción sin su vida puede ser en mi
faz?

My Love Is No Longer Mine

If my love is like this, like a torrent,
like a growing river in full turmoil,
like a lily taking root in the wind,
like an intimate rain,
without clouds and without sea ...

If my love is of water,
why do they pretend to tie it to immovable
courses?

If my love breaks ground,
dissolves the distance like bright light,
divides butterflies the same as bright stars,
and rides horizons like it crosses a rose
bush ...

If the universe is an atom following my
wings,
why measure my birdcall when it breaks
into song?

If my love is no longer mine,
it is myself erasing the banks of the sea,
me inevitably and fatally mine,
germinating my soul in my dawns of
peace ...

If my love no longer grazes borders with my
spirit,
what song without its essence can be in my
mask?

¡Si mi amor ya no es mío!

Es tonada de espumas en los labios del
mar ...

If my love is no longer mine!

It is a tune of foam on the lips of the sea ...

Poema para las lágrimas

Como cuando se abrieron por tus suelos mis párpados,
rota y cansadamente, acoge mi partida.

Como si me tuvieras nadando entre tus brazos,
donde las aguas corren dementes y perdidas.

Igual que cuando amaste mis ensueños inútiles,
apasionadamente, despídeme en la orilla ...

Me voy como vinieron a tus vuelos mis pájaros,
callada y mansamente, a reposar heridas.

Y nada más detiene mis ojos en la nube ...
Se alzaron por alzarle, y ¡qué inmensa caída!

Sobre mi pecho saltan cadáveres de estrellas
que por ríos y por montes te robé,
enternecida.

Todo fue mi universo unas olas volando,
y mi alma una vela conduciendo tu vida ...

Todo fue mar de espumas por mi ingenuo horizonte ...

Poem for the Tears

As when they opened my eyelids through your lands,
broken and tiredly, accept my departure.

As if you had me swimming in your arms,
where the waters run demented and lost.

Same as when you loved my useless daydreams,
passionately, say goodbye to me on the shore ...

I leave like my birds came to your flights,
quiet and tamely, to rest injuries.

And nothing more keeps my eyes in the cloud ...

They rose to lift you, and what an immense fall!

Above my chest leap cadavers of stars
that I tenderly stole from you by rivers and hills.

All my universe was some waves flying,
and my soul a sail driving your life ...

All was a sea of foam through my naïve horizon ...

Por tu vida fue todo, una duda escondida.

Through your life went all, a hidden doubt.

¡Y saber que mis sueños jamás solos
salieron

And to know that my dreams never left
alone

por los prados azules a pintar margaritas!

to paint daisies through the blue meadows!

¡Y sentir que no tuve otra voz que su
espíritu!

And to feel that I had no other voice than his
spirit!

¡Y pensar que yo nunca sonreí sin su risa!

And to think that I never smiled without his
laugh!

¡Nada más! En mis dedos se suicidan las
aves,
y a mis pasos cansados ya no nacen espigas.

Never more! In my fingers the birds commit
suicide,
and at my tired steps shoots no longer grow.

Me voy como vinieron a tu techo mis
cielos ...
fatal y quedamente, a quedarme dormida ...

I leave like my skies came to your roof ...
fatal and curfewed, to stay asleep ...

Como el descanso tibio del más simple
crepúsculo,
naturalmente trágico, magistralmente herida.

Like the tepid rest of the simplest twilight,
naturally tragic, magisterially wounded.

Adios. Rézame versos en las noches muy
largas ...

Goodbye. Pray verses in the very long nights
to me ...

En mi pecho sin lumbre ya no cabe la
vida ...

In my fireless chest life does not fit ...

¿Milagro yo?

Llovizna caída gota a gota

para mirar sepulcros.

¡Quién no dijera viento!

¡Quién aupara mis brazos sobre la soledad,

hasta dejarme quieta como ausente reflejo,

allá donde no es nada,

ni habita la nostalgia,

ni solloza el adiós de un amor moribundo!

Soy

dilatada tonada de un amor que no es mío.

Quiero

crecer de pies adentro

desterrada de todo,

agonizar lo inútil que en cada vida vive,

y golpea y moribunda reverdece feroz,

para la angustia.

Ecuación de las olas y del aire remoto

permanezco,

redonda, en el abismo donde caen las
estrellas.

I, Miracle?

Drizzle falls drop by drop

to watch tombs.

Who would not say wind!

Who boosts my arms above the loneliness,

until leaving me quiet like an absent
reflection,

over there where nothing is,

where not even nostalgia dwells,

where not even the goodbye of a dying love
sobs!

I am

a drawn-out tune of a love that is not mine.

I want

to grow from inside my feet,

banished from everything,

to agonize over the uselessness that lives in
each life,

and beats, and dead, ferociously blooms,
for anguish.

Equation of the waves and the far wind

I remain,

round, in the abyss where the stars fall.

Permanezco
perenemente yo,
como un agonizar perpetuo de mí misma
sin escalas ni voz para escucharme.

Quiero
despiertamente,
sin piedad,
con un dulce reposo sin reposo,
irme perdiendo sola entre todos los ecos
y que entre grito y grito,
haya,
una callada ausencia de distancias
para abrirme los brazos a la nada.

I remain
perennially me,
like a perpetual agonizing of myself
without scales nor voice to listen to myself.

I want
awake,
without pity,
with a sweet rest without break,
to get me losing myself alone among the
echoes
and that between shout and cry,
there will be,
a quiet absence of distances
to open my arms to nothingness.

Nada soy

Nada soy para ti, que me llevas de niña
en la tristeza azul de tu nostalgia.

Nada para la niña ausente
que nutriste de risas y de lágrimas.

Nada para su soledad,
su soledad solemne de camándula;
nada para su corazón de tierra,
donde llora un “coqui” recién nacido,
y un niño que no avanza.

Nada para su azul perpetuo
donde duermen sus lágrimas.
Nada desde el silencio que la borra
como se borra el agua.

Nada desde el espejo de tus ojos
que estallaron de amor sobre mi alma.

Nada desde la rosa que me huye
de tu tierna caricia desolada.

Nada desde tí mismo en agonía
para la muerte breve de mi alma.

I Am Nothing

I am nothing to you, who bears me as a child
in the blue sadness of your nostalgia.

Nothing for the absent girl
that you nurtured with laughter and tears.

Nothing for her loneliness,
her solemn rosary loneliness;
nothing for her earthy heart,
where a recently born tree frog cries
and a child who does not progress.

Nothing for her perpetual blue
where her tears sleep.
Nothing from the silence that erases her
like it erases the water.

Nothing from the mirror of your eyes
that burst of love over my soul.

Nothing from the rose that escapes me
from your tender desolate caress.

Nothing from yourself in agony
for the brief death of my soul.

El hombre y mi alma

¡Qué caricia larga de acción me sube por las
venas

anchas de recorrerme!

Me veo inmóvil de carne esperando la lucha
entre el hombre y mi alma,

y me siento invencible,

porque mi ahora es fuerte columna de
avanzada

en la aurora que apunta,

es grito de corazón vacío en la nave del
mundo,

es esfuerzo de ola tendido en playa firme
para arrasar calumnias de las conciencias
rotas.

Entre el hombre y mi alma

se ha cruzado la espada ...

(La mente es una intérprete que traduce la
fuerza

en ideas que avanzan.)

De mi lado se bate la conciencia del hombre
en un sol de principios sobre el Soy de las
almas.

The Man and My Soul

What a long caress of action climbs through
my veins

wide from going all through me!

I see myself immobile of flesh waiting for
the fight

between the man and my soul,

and I feel invincible,

because my now is a strong avant-garde

in the dawn that erupts,

it is a shout of empty heart in the ship of the
world,

it is the effort of wave stretched out on the
firm beach

to raze calumnies from broken consciences.

Between the man and my soul

the sword has crossed ...

(The mind is an interpreter that translates
strength

into ideas that move forward.)

On my side the conscience of man is beaten
in a sun of principles above the I Am of
souls.

En la mano del hombre se defiende la hueca
escultura de normas sobre el tiempo
moldeada.

In the hand of the man the hollow
sculpture of rules defends itself molded over
time.

Ha sonado la lucha ...

The fight has sounded ...

Y me siento intocada ...

And I feel untouched ...

Estoy sobre los siglos con fiereza de olas ...

I am above the centuries with ferocity of
waves ...

¡Nadie palpe la sombra que mi impulso
ahuyentara!

Nobody touches the shadow that my impulse
chased away!

Vaciedad

Estoy en blanco
sobre el impulso que me anda la vida.

Como si en mí callara toda voz de
existencia,
me echo a andarme yo misma
sin preguntar apenas qué ala de mariposa
triste
recogerá mis pasos.

Voy en tumbos cayendome en los instantes
largos de dolor
que han subido mi sensación hospitalaria,
y me beso en su sangre
por la gota de angustia que volverá mañana.

Se me aprieta el silencio ...
Me prosigo en la entraña.
Con voz precipitada de nostalgia
me veo en mi alegría,
pobre, hace mucho tiempo, de soledad.

Beso su noche corta entre cien risas
abandonadas
y me vacío en un deseo de descorrerme toda.

Emptiness

I am speechless
above the impulse that walks me though life.

As if every voice of existence got silenced in
me,
I start to walk myself
without hardly questioning what wing of a
sad butterfly
will pick up my steps.

I walk in jolts falling in the long instants of
pain
that have heightened my hospitable feeling,
and I kiss myself in its blood
by the drop of anguish that will return
tomorrow.

Silence grows on my throat ...
I pursue myself in my entrails.
With a hurried voice of nostalgia
I see myself in my happiness,
poor, for a long time, of loneliness.

I kiss its short night among a hundred
abandoned laughs
and I empty myself in a desire to flow
completely.

Me he dejado llegar allí donde el polvo
tiene color de nada,

al instante sin tiempo donde muere mi
sombra.

Allí donde mi sueño sólo él mismo se oye
desde su canción muda,

y la idea avanza sin sonido al punto de
partida.

¿Dónde comienza aquel momento triste
que ahogó la danza de mi espíritu,
detenido en cien penas apretadas?

¿Dónde se ensancha en goces la bondad del
momento?

¿Dónde suena mi vida en el polvo sin notas
del instante
que se aleja sin tregua de sí mismo?

Todo aquí tiene soplo de infinito,
y ni siquiera es ...

Hasta los ojos se me pierden ahora
en la sombra sin límites del vuelo reflexivo
donde he trepado, en manantial, mi mente.

Estoy en blanco
sobre el impulso que me anda la vida,

I have let myself get there where the dust
has no color,

at the instant without time where my shadow
dies.

There where my dream only hears itself
from its mute song,

and the idea advances without sound to the
point of departure.

Where does that sad moment begin
that moment that suffocated the dance of my
spirit,
stopped in a hundred cramped sorrows?

Where does the goodness of the moment
widen in joy?

Where does my life sound in the dust
without notes of the moment
that moves away without a trace of itself?

Everything here has a gust of the infinite,
and doesn't even exist ...

Even my eyes get lost now
in the limitless shadow of the pensive flight
where in a spring, I have made my mind
climb.

I am speechless
above the impulse that walks me through
life,

entre el minuto que acaba de pasar
y el puerto de la nada ...

between the minute that just went by
and the arrival of the port of nothing ...

Adiós ...

Adiós ...

La miserable estrella de la tierra
nos dice adiós.

La miserable estrella
interpuesta, entre
el gusano y el rocío.

La miserable estrella
que goza en su miseria
de ser capullo estéril de luz
sobre unas yerbas.

Nos dice adiós la miserable
estrella ...
Nos dice adiós ... adiós ... adiós.

Estoy sobre el silencio,
preguntando ¿por qué?
¿Por qué la miserable
estrella me dice
“adiós”,
nos dice “adiós”?

¿Por qué?

Goodbye ...

Goodbye ...

The miserable star of the earth
says goodbye.

The miserable star
intervenes, between
the worm and the dew.

The miserable star
that rejoices in its own misery
of being a cocoon barren of light
over some grasses.

It says goodbye, the miserable
star ...
Goodbye ... goodbye ... goodbye.

I am above the silence,
asking, why?
Why does the miserable
star say
“goodbye”,
say “goodbye”?

Why?

A José Martí

(Mensaje)

Yo vengo de la tierna mitad de tu destino;
del sendero amputado al rumbo de tu
estrella;
el último destello del resplandor andino,
que se extravió en la sombra, perdido de tu
huella.

Yo vengo de una isla que tembló por tu
trino,
que hizo tu alma más fuerte, tu llamada más
bella;
a la que diste sangre, como diste camino
(que al caer por tu Cuba, ya caíste por ella).

Y por ella, la América debe un soplo a tu
lumbre;
su tiniebla hace un nudo de dolor en tu
cumbre,
recio Dios antillano, pulso eterno, Martí.

Porque tengamos cerca de la muerte, un
consuelo,
Puerto Rico, mi patria, te reclama en su
suelo,

To José Martí

(Message)

I come from the tender half of your destiny;
from the amputated path in the direction of
your star;
the last glimmer of the Andean splendor,
that got lost in the shadow, lost from your
footsteps.

I come from an island that trembled at your
song,
that made your soul stronger, your call more
beautiful;
to which you gave blood, like you gave a
path
(that when you fell for your Cuba, you
already fell for Puerto Rico).

And for Puerto Rico, America owes fuel for
your fire;
its darkness makes a knot of pain on your
summit,
tenacious Antillean God, eternal pulse,
Martí.

So when we are close to death, we will have
one comfort,
Puerto Rico, my homeland, clamors for you
on its soil,

y por mi voz herida, se conduce hasta tí!

and through my injured voice, drives itself
toward you!

Latigazos

Latigazos,
 latigazos de la vida,
 destrozaron la ilusión de mi alma tierna,
 y muchas emociones
 se agolparon en un nudo de tragedia.

Fue un instante decisivo ...

Las palabras se rompieron en mis labios
 y brotó la triste nueva:

“El destino se ha llevado a nuestro
 hijo
 que fue brote de la música primera
 cuando apenas hacía nido en mis
 entrañas
 enredado en la emoción de mil
 poemas.”

Las palabras se partieron en mis labios
 y en mis ojos se volcaron
 plentitudes de tristeza,
 y alma adentro
 cada tímido murmullo tenía sed del hijo en
 fuga
 y cadencia de tragedia.

Latigazos,

Whiplashes

Whiplashes,
 whiplashes of life,
 destroyed the illusion of my tender soul,
 and many emotions
 piled up in a knot of tragedy.

It was a decisive moment ...

The words broke on my lips
 and the sad news emerged:

“Destiny has taken our son
 who was a sprout of the first music
 when he barely made a nest in my
 gut
 entangled in the emotion of a
 thousand poems.”

The words split on my lips
 and in my eyes they expressed
 plentitudes of sadness,
 and inside my soul
 each shy murmur had thirst for the escaped
 son
 and a cadence of tragedy.

Whiplashes,

latigazos de tu alma
 respondieron a mi pena.
 Tus palabras en estado inalterable
 prorrumpieron en efímero—“¿de veras?”,
 y tus ojos acunaron en mi rostro
 como siempre su mirada dulce y quieta.
 Al instante:

“Vete, amada. Hoy no puedo
 acompañarte,
 pues me esperan.”

Las palabras se anudaron en mis labios
 y quedéme
 muda y yerta.
 Mi alma absorta se me hizo
 un temblor de mil sorpresas
 y se me fue tras el hijo
 mientras el alma del padre
 fue a enroscarse en la alegría
 de otra ilusión pasajera.

Latigazos,
 latigazos de la vida
 en conjura con tu alma
 destrozaron la ilusión de mi alma tierna.
 Todo en mí asomaba sed del hijo en fuga
 y créime que en tus brazos
 tendría aliento mi tristeza;

whiplashes of your soul
 responded to my pain.
 Your words in an unalterable state
 burst into a fleeting “really?”,
 and your eyes cradled in my face
 like always his gaze sweet and motionless.
 Instantly:

“Go away, my beloved. Today I
 cannot accompany you,
 well they wait for me.”

The words knotted on my lips
 and I stayed
 mute and rigid.
 My engrossed soul became
 a tremor of a thousand surprises
 and I went towards the son
 while the father’s soul
 went to coil in the happiness
 of another fleeting illusion.

Whiplashes,
 whiplashes of life
 in conspiracy with your soul
 destroyed the illusion of my tender soul.
 All in me appeared thirsty for the escaped
 son
 and I believed that in your arms
 my sadness would breathe;

y tus brazos me ofrendaron
 el vacío de una rafaga andariega
 que en tus ojos se me dio con vuelo álgido
 y en tus labios con palabras pasajeras.

Y te fuiste ...

Otros brazos te aguardaban en un vértigo de
 fiesta,
 y yo, triste,
 fui cayéndome en un ritmo de tragedia.
 Pero entonces ... en mi corazón herido
 quiso el cielo que surgiera
 una plentitud de voces abnegadas y serenas;
 y en actitud tan sublime
 sentí un rapto silencioso que floreció
 madresevas;
 me fui detrás de tu alma
 y le arrebaté el pedazo de la mía, herida y
 yerta,
 la volví a mi cuerpo ardiente
 y ella, con ansia materna
 se me fue detrás del hijo
 que iba volviéndose estrella.

and your arms offered me
 the emptiness of a restless gust
 that in your eyes it gave me with decisive
 flight
 and on your lips with fleeting words.

And left ...

Other arms awaited you in a dizziness of
 celebration,
 and I, sad,
 went falling in a rhythm of tragedy.
 But then ... in my injured heart
 The sky wanted a plentitude
 of selfless and calm voices to rise;
 and in attitude so sublime
 I felt a silent rapture that flourished
 honeysuckle;
 I went behind your soul
 and I snatched the piece of mine, injured and
 stiff,
 I returned it to my burning body
 and she, with maternal longing
 went after the son
 that was turning into a star.

Himno de sangre a Trujillo

Que ni muerto ni las rosas del amor te
sostengan,
General de la muerte, para ti la impiedad.

Que la sangre te siga, General de la muerte,
hasta el hongo, hasta el hueso, hasta el breve
gusano condenado a tu estiércol.

Que la sangre, la sangre
se levante y te siga.

Que la sangre que heriste por los caminos
reales
se levante y te siga.

La sangre campesina, descolorida sangre,
buena sangre violada,
que despierte y te siga.

La que muerta, aun vigila en un rostro de
madre,
que despierte y te siga.

Que la sangre que muere por tu voz cada día
se levante y te siga.

Toda tu sangre, ronco general de la muerte,
toda tu sangre en fila para siempre, y
gritando
para siempre, y siguiéndote,
toda, toda tu sangre.

Blood Hymn to Trujillo

That neither death nor roses of love sustain
you,
General of death, for you impiety.

That the blood follows you, General of
death,
until the mushroom, until the bone, until the
brief maggot condemned to your manure.

That the blood, the blood
rises and follows you.

That the blood that you hurt along the royal
streets

rises and follows you.

The peasant blood, discolored blood, good
blood violated,

that it awakens and follows you.

That the dead woman, still stands guard with
a motherly countenance,

wakes and follows you.

That the blood that dies for your voice every
day

rises and follows you.

All your blood, hoarse general of death,
all your blood in line forever, and shouting
forever, and following you,
all, all your blood.

General Rafael, Trujillo General,
 que tu nombre sea un eco eterno de
 cadáveres,
 rodando entre ti mismo, sin piedad,
 persiguiéndote,
 que los lirios se tapen sus ojos de tus ojos,
 vivo y muerto, para siempre;
 que las flores no quieran germinar de tus
 huesos,
 ni la tierra te albergue:
 que nada te sostenga, General, que tus
 muertos
 te despueblen la vida y tú mismo te
 entierres.

Dictador. ¿A qué nuevos horizontes de
 crimen
 vuelves hoy a apuntar tu mirada suicida?
 Esa cumbre de muertos donde afianzas tu
 triunfo,
 ¿te podrá resguardar del puñal de la vida?
 Ese pálido miedo que otra vez te levanta,
 ¿durará sobre el rostro de un mundo que te
 espía?
 Dictador de ese hermoso pueblo dominicano
 masacrado en tus ansias y dormido en sus
 iras,
 ¿de qué llevas tu cetro? ¿De qué sol te
 alimentas?

De los hombres que muerden tu nombre
 cada día,

General Rafael, General Trujillo,
 that your name is an eternal echo of corpses,
 rolling between yourself, without piety,
 chasing you,
 that the lilies cover up their eyes from your
 eyes,
 alive and dead, forever;
 that the flowers do not want to germinate
 from your bones,
 nor the earth harbor you:
 that nothing sustains you, General, that your
 dead
 depopulate your life and you bury yourself.

Dictator. To what new horizons of crime
 do you return today to indicate your suicidal
 gaze?
 That summit of dead where you secure your
 triumph,
 will it protect you from the dagger of life?
 will it last over the face of a world that spies
 on you?
 Dictator of that handsome Dominican
 people
 massacred in your longings and asleep in its
 rages,
 what is your scepter made of? What sun
 nourishes you?

From the men that bite your name each day,

del dolor que un gran lecho te prepara en sus brazos,

pero no de la espiga:

pero no de los ríos que limpiarán el polvo por donde te paseaste, pisoteando la vida;

pero no de las manos de los niños que crecen

abonando de nuevos universos sus risas;

pero no del futuro, dictador de la muerte,

que tu burla a una tumba con desprecio te fija.

¡Maldición, General, desde el sepulcro en armas

que reclama tu vida;

desde la voz presente de los muertos que marchan

a polvorear de creces tu insolente conquista!

¡Maldición desde el grito amplio y definitivo

que por mi voz te busca desde todas tus víctimas!

Sombra para tu nombre, General.

Sombra para tu crimen, General.

Sombra para tu sombra.

from the pain that a great bed prepares you in its arms,

but not from the blossom:

but not from the rivers that will clean the dust

by where you traveled, trampling life;

but not from the hands of the children that grow

fertilizing their laughter with new universes;

but not from the future, dictator of death,

that your mockery of a tomb with contempt fixes you.

Curse, General, from your tomb in arms that demand your life;

from the present voice of the dead that march

to sprinkle crosses on your insolent conquest!

Curse from the ample and definitive shout

that through my voice looks for you from all your victims!

Shadow for your name, General.

Shadow for your crime, General.

Shadow for your shadow.

Somos puños cerrados

Somos huelga en los muelles.
 Nuestros brazos se cierran a descargar los barcos.
 La vergüenza del hombre no resiste más tiempo
 el insulto al trabajo.
 Todos dicen que hay huelga en los muelles,
 y nosotros decimos
 que hay mucho trabajo.
 Nuestros brazos son astas que sostienen la lucha.
 Nuestras mentes trabajan.
 Nuestros pechos trabajan.
 Nuestros puños trabajan.
 ¡Estamos descargando! ...
 Descargando los siglos de sus máquinas-hombres;
 ya no somos esclavos.
 Descargando la historia de la voz de los ricos;
 ya nosotros hablamos.
 Descargando el sistema de las leyes que explotan;
 ya nosotros pensamos.
 Descargando el horario de los capitalistas;
 el momento demanda el reloj de las manos.
 Sigamos camaradas,
 sigamos descargando

We Are Closed Fists

We are a strike on the docks.
 Our arms fold at unloading the ships.
 The embarrassment of man does not withstand more time
 the insult to work.
 Everyone says that there is a strike on the docks,
 and we say
 that there is a lot of work.
 Our arms are lances that sustain the fight.
 Our minds work.
 Our chests work.
 Our fists work.
 We are unloading! ...
 Unloading the centuries of their machine-men;
 we are no longer slaves.
 Unloading the history of the voice of the rich;
 we now speak.
 Unloading the system of laws that exploit;
 we now think.
 Unloading the capitalist schedule;
 the moment demands the clock of the hands.
 We continue comrades,
 we continue unloading

del sistema que explota nuestras masas
el esfuerzo de todos nuestros brazos.

Lancemos la ofensiva
en un soberbio empuje proletario,
nuestras mentes alertas,
nuestros brazos parados,
rechazando la carga de los muelles
mientras el rico insista en explotarnos.

Continuemos la huelga, camaradas:

¡Ya no somos esclavos!

Anunciamos el grito del presente:

¡Somos puños cerrados!

from the system that exploits our masses
the effort of all our arms.

We launch the offensive
in a superb proletarian push,
our minds alert,
our arms stopped,
rejecting the cargo of the docks
while the rich insist on exploiting us.

We continue the strike, comrades:

We are not yet slaves!

We announce the present shout:

We are closed fists!

Despierta

A la mujer puertorriqueña;
en esta hora de trascendencia.

Mujer,

tú que llevas en tus venas el ardor de la
tierra borincana;

tú que sientes los gemidos de la patria que
respira esclavitud;

deja a un lado las orgías,

deja a un lado los placeres,

y defiende heroicamente de tu patria la
inocencia y la virtud.

La inocencia amenazada por tiranos que
procuran corromper

nuestros puros sentimientos,

y lanzarnos a un abismo seductor;

donde absortas en placeres;

y olvidando mil deberes

respiremos de los vicios el perfume
degradante y destructor.

Mujer,

tú que viertes a menudo las amargas
melodías de tú alma

tú que sientes, tú que sufres, tú que lloras en
amarga soledad.

¿No percibes los tormentos?

Wake Up

To the Puerto Rican woman;
in this hour of importance.

Woman,

you that wears in your veins the burning
heat of the Borinquen land;

you that feels the cries of the homeland that
breathes slavery;

leave behind the side of orgies,

leave behind the side of pleasures,

and heroically defend the innocence and
virtue of your homeland.

The innocence threated by tyrants that seek
to corrupt

our pure feelings,

and launch us into a seductive abyss;

where you engross in pleasures;

and forgetting a thousand duties

we breath the degrading and destructive
perfume of vices.

Woman,

you that often pours the bitter melodies of
your soul

you that feels, you that suffers, you that cries
in bitter loneliness.

You don't sense the torment?

¿No oyes tú los mil lamentos,
de tus hijos, de tu alma, de tu patria que
reclama libertad?

¡No vaciles!

Son tus hijos los que lloran, es tu patria la
que sufre sin cesar.

La que llama a todas horas a sus hijos,
a sus hijos de su tierra y de su mar.

A sus hijos valerosos,
a sus hijos fervorosos,
que se olvidan que en su tierra hay grandeza,
que en sus almas hay pureza sin igual.

Marcha tú, mujer boricua, en la fila
delantera que defiende tu virtud
rompe el lazo miserable que te tiene
encadenada a tu prisión
y resurge valerosa,
a ofrendar tu sangre hermosa
a la causa libertaria que te ofrece dignidad y
redención.

You don't hear a thousand moans,
of your children, of your soul, of your
homeland that demands freedom?

Don't waver!

They are your children that cry, it is your
homeland that suffers without cease.

That which calls to their children at all
hours,
their children of their land and their sea.

To their valiant children,
to their devout children,
who forget that in their land there is glory,
that in their souls there is unparalleled
purity.

March, Borinquen woman, in the forward
line that defends your virtue
break the miserable bond that has chained
you to your prison
and come back brave,
to offer your beautiful blood
to the libertarian cause that offers you
dignity and redemption.

Farewell in Welfare Island

It has to be from here,
right this instance,
my cry into the world.

Life was somewhere forgotten
and sought refuge in depths of tears
and sorrows
over this vast empire of solitude
and darkness.

Where is the voice of freedom,
freedom to laugh,
to move
without the heavy phantom of despair?

Where is the form of beauty
unshaken in its veil simple and pure?
Where is the warmth of heaven
pouring its dreams of love in broken spirits?

It has to be from here,
right this instance,
my cry into the world.
My cry that is no more mine,
but hers and his forever,

Adiós en Welfare Island

Tiene que partir de aquí,
en este mismo instante
mi grito al mundo.

La vida fue olvidada en algún lugar
y buscó refugio en profundidades de
lágrimas
y penas
sobre este gran imperio de soledad
y oscuridad.

¿Dónde está la voz de la libertad
la libertad de reír,
de moverse
sin el fantasma pesado de la desesperanza?

¿Dónde está la forma de la belleza
impasible en su velo simple y puro?
¿Dónde está el calor del cielo
vertiendo sus sueños de amor en espíritus
rotos?

Tiene que partir de aquí.
en este mismo instante,
mi grito al mundo.
Mi grito que no es más mío,
pero es de ella y de él para siempre,

the comrades of my silence,
the phantoms of my grave.

It has to be from here,
forgotten but unshaken,
among comrades of silence
deep into Welfare Island
my farewell to the world.

Goldwater Memorial Hospital
Welfare Island, NYC
Feb., 1953

los camaradas de mi silencio,
los fantasmas de mi sepultura.

Tiene que partir de aquí
olvidado pero impasible,
entre camaradas del silencio
muy adentro en Welfare Island
mi despedida al mundo.

Goldwater Memorial Hospital
Welfare Island, NYC
Feb., 1953

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