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If this heart had a mouth: A forbidden romance narrated through mimesis: Poems

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IF THIS HEART HAD A MOUTH: A FORBIDDEN
ROMANCE NARRATED THROUGH
MIMESIS: POEMS

A Thesis

by

JULIETA V. CORPUS

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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December 2016

Major Subject: Creative Writing

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ROMANCE NARRATED THROUGH

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December 2016

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ABSTRACT

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If This Heart Had a Mouth consists of forty-two poems where love is the catalyst for a multitude of emotions, ranging from falling in love, to hopelessness, to a begrudging kind of acceptance at losing the beloved to somebody else. To create all forty-two poems, 23 written in Spanish, and 19 poems written in English, I employed the literary device called Mimesis which entails deriving an original poem from someone else's work.

For each poem, I followed another poet's original work, line by line, dancing with that poet's writing rhythm. Throughout this creative process, however, the most important decision dealt with choosing the appropriate poets and poems for the sentiments I was trying to convey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Steven Schneider for his invaluable guidance in revising this thesis and giving me suggestions on how to improve it. Thank you, Dr. Elvia Ardalani, our meetings proved fruitful and extremely helpful. Not only did you give me advice and suggestions on my poetry, but you also praised what I was doing. Dr. Edna Ochoa, I also want to acknowledge you for your support to the poetry scene, and the theater scene here in the Rio Grande Valley. You are inspiring. I want to extend my gratitude to the wonderful people I have met along the way in my poetic journey who have given me a platform to publish or perform my work: Daniel Garcia Ordaz, Edward Vidaurre, Rossy Evelyn Lima-Padilla, Raquel Lopez, Ramiro Rodriguez, Roberto de la Torre, Dr. Enriqueta Ramos, Rachel Udow, and Meliton Hinojosa. Special thanks to the Narciso Cultural Arts Center, The Narciso Writers Forum, and to El Hueso de Fraile for serving as forums where I continue to share my words. I would have to invent a new word to convey my everlasting gratitude to my parents, Julia Vielma Corpus and Agustin Corpus.

Forever grateful, as well, to the greatest source of inspiration for writing the poems in this collection, my husband, Arturo Saldaña who passed away in March 26, 2016. Thank you, Corazón, for coming into my life. You will forever be my light, my heartbeat, and my smile.

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CHAPTER I

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

One's native tongue embeds itself in every nerve, fiber and neuron that makes us who we are as individuals. In the formative years, language breathes meaning and profoundness into everything around us in a variety of ways. Words pulsate with life in the vivid narratives shared as cautionary tales at family gatherings. Language's effervescent essence flows through poems found in textbooks or recited from memory.

Phrases converge into images arousing emotions or prodding one's memory when a certain song plays on the radio. Our native tongue even connects us to the divine through prayer and hymns of praise. But what kind of linguistic transformation does a ten-year-old experience in a new country after being uprooted from her region of birth? For me, this transition was difficult emotionally, linguistically, and psychologically.

In 1978, after several years of traveling back and forth between work in the United States and Mexico to spend time with us, Dad decided it was time to seek permanent legal residence in America for the entire family. He had finally found steady employment with a construction company in Houston, Texas, and he wanted a better life for us in "The Land of Opportunity", as he often referred to the United States.

I knew that it would be challenging to learn English, a language I had often flirted with in Mexico while watching subtitled movies, such as *The Killer Dobermans* or singing along to “Morning Angel” with The Carpenters blasting from the radio. Unfortunately, the reality of accommodating a new tongue atop my maternal one lacked any traces of my early infatuation.

In the United States, I found myself surrounded by fluent English speakers who did not understand my thick accent. I said *jello* instead of *yellow*, or I often placed unnecessary emphasis on the *sh*, so that it would come out sounding like *ch*. In Mexico, I had been fully immersed in Spanish, my first love, for a period of ten years prior to our arrival in the Rio Grande Valley. Spanish held me enthralled with its different rhythms and inherent musicality.

In the burgeoning town of San Pedro, Coahuila, México where I spent four years of my childhood, simple words and colloquial phrases reverberated in my ears whenever someone sang, cursed, spoke, told a story, shared a dirty joke, chastised or prayed around me. On Monday mornings, I solemnly pledged allegiance to the Mexican flag at school. During weekends, I hungrily devoured boxes filled with comic with titles like *Lulú*, *El Pato Donald*, *Tarzán*, *Rarotonga*, and *Memín Pinguin* among others. I also watched old *Cantinflas* movies in black and white at the local movie theatre.

Spanish enveloped me like a cozy quilt on a daily basis, reinforcing a strong sense of self: *Allá, yo era Julieta Corpus, la hija de Julia Corpus y Agustin Corpus*. Aquí en South Texas, however, my fourth-grade teachers promptly changed my name to *Julie*; thus, effectively silencing the music. Sometime after arriving in the United States, however, I must have decided to straddle both worlds by remaining articulate in Spanish, while galloping at full speed with English.

At eleven years old, the art of rhyming in two languages posed an intellectual challenge. Therefore, I resolved to strengthen my vocabulary during a time in which I was struggling with identity, a sense of belonging, and academic self-confidence. Living in Mexico and attending school from prekindergarten through fourth grade, left an indelible imprint regarding all three. Subsequently, our move to the United States made it almost indispensable for me to adjust on different levels. Language acquisition breeds confidence; thus, I sought to enhance my English in conversation, and on the written page.

In *The Writer's Chronicle*, Andy Fogle interviews the poet Arthur Sze, and asks him a question about playing with language. Arthur Sze replies: "It's great to play around with language and discover possibilities one never knew about before, but the creative play has to be harnessed to a cogent vision" (Fogle 24). I find myself in complete agreement with Arthur Sze. Language lends itself to fun experimentation; but as the poet matures, this game of words must evolve side by side, and the poet must begin to develop his own poetic vision.

In my teens, I was already aware of the nuances and double-entendre inherent in Spanish. I remember singing a song with sexual connotations at ten years old written by Joan Sebastian, a Mexican singer. The lyrics describe a young man and a young woman having sex in the middle of a wheat field. At first listen, the words seem innocent, but when one arrives at the chorus, the scene is quite vivid. The chorus mentions the sun going down, and then a pair of blue jeans, and soon after, a schoolgirl's skirt: "Y en aquél trigal, el sol cayó primero, después un pantalón vaquero, y una falda escolar" (Song-lyrics).

Despite those early influences, I still did not feel confident enough to include any hidden meanings in my poetry by resorting to clever wording. However, I did have an affinity for

rhyiming since throughout my childhood, I had been exposed to it in various guises. Rhyme surrounded me in the form of playground games, such as “La Víbora de la Mar”, a popular children’s song by an unknown author. I found the song in a website called Mamalisa.com:

A la víbora, víbora
de la mar, de la mar,
por aquí pueden pasar,
los de adelante corren mucho,
los de atrás se quedarán (1-5).

I also played with language when I engaged in patty-cake games with classmates: “Cuando era niña, niña, niña, me pegaban, me pegaban, me pegaban”. Rhyme and repetition flowed into my conscious and subconscious through lullabies, songs of praise, the poetry within the pages of my Mexican textbooks, and every romantic songs bursting from the radio. This is why, as a teenager, the poetry I wrote closely followed some of the same patterns I had been exposed to while living in Mexico. An early poem I wrote using rhyme is simply titled, “México”, I write: “La grandeza de su gente / Es la que mantiene viva / A la patria Mexicana / Tierra del sol, tierra bravía”.

As a college student, I became acquainted with a wider array of Spanish poets, such as Rosario Castellanos. In one of my old notebooks, dated March 10, 1994, I found the following stanza I hand-copied from a poem by Rosario Castellanos, titled “Tercera Elegía”. Not trusting my memory, I searched for the complete version of the poem, and found it in a poetry website named *Poemaspoetas*.

Tal vez no estés aquí dominando mis ojos,
dirigiendo mi sangre, trabajando en mis células,

galvanizando un pulso de tinieblas.

Tal vez no sea mi pecho la cripta que te guarda.

Pero yo no sería si no fuera

este castillo en ruinas que ronda tu fantasma (28-33).

Influenced by her work, and the work of others, my own poetry became enriched with more intricate images and carefully chosen words. In a poem titled, “Time”, I play with words to form images, rather than focus entirely on rhyme, “Blood stained all that I touched: / Face and body like a martyr”. I believe that when poets shift their focus from word play for the sake of word play, and start including the element of narrative in their work, this is what Arthur Sze refers to as having a “cogent vision”. Each word within a poem, then, becomes a strategically placed pebble on the road to a well-structured piece of poetry.

Playing with language is an art form in Mexico where people speak with dichos, or sayings such as, *muerto el perro se acabó la rabia*, or dead dog, no more rabies. Fortunately, I grew up in a linguistically rich environment where people interwove colorful sayings with their anecdotes, and often spoke en doble sentido, or double meaning. In Mexico, we call it *picardía Mexicana*, or Mexican naughtiness. Daily exposure to a multitude of colorful words in the form of jokes, witty allusions, refrains, sayings, songs, gossip, and filthy language shaped my early experiences. In essence, this sweet cacophony of linguistic contributions by my native tongue, opened an entirely new door for me. Unlike my siblings, I embraced all of it, and I continue using its sweet cacophony as a way to announce who I am and where I come from.

As a fluent Spanish speaker, I transitioned more effectively into English, after recognizing that a lot of English words were spelled like Spanish words, and vice versa. In essence, I became aware of cognates. Not a lot of time passed before I started using English to

communicate with my teachers, classmates, school friends, and siblings. Since neither one of my parents knew the language, I became the family translator. I filled out welfare forms, translated television shows, and opened mail from bill collectors.

By the time I was in my late teens, my English vocabulary had become enriched through school textbooks, library books, anything from *Grim Fairy Tales* to Rod Serling's, *The Twilight Zone*, television, radio, and movies. Interestingly, by this time, I had already filled several notebooks with poems and stories in Spanish. Yet, I still did not feel confident enough to produce any works in English. In fact, writing poetry in English did not happen until my senior year in high school.

Through hard work and diligence, I eventually adapted to English's idiosyncrasies and intricacies. Also, at some point during this journey, I came to the realization that the verses flowing from my pen in English fell into two categories: humorous and/or frivolous. By contrast, the poems I wrote in Spanish focused on the themes of love, self-reflection, drama, idealism and nostalgia. Thus, confirming what I already knew, that Spanish was the language of the heart, and English was the language of the intellect.

An early poem I wrote in English about mortality titled "How Will I Die?" comes across as simple. It is a written exercise in hyperbole and rhyme, but it is also an attempt at humor:

At times I sit and ponder, call it a waste of time,
The mindboggling question dealing with how will I die?
In the daylight of my youth, such thoughts border on morbidity,
but who can resist the quest of solving an impossibility? (1-4)

I wrote other poems for an English class in my senior year, most of them in the same humorous vein as “How Will I Die”. By contrast, I wrote the following poem around the same time as “How Will I Die?”, but this one is written in my native language:

Mi pecado se llama quererte,
Convirtiéndolo todo en un sueño,
De esas noches nadando desnuda,
Ten por cierto que no las recuerdo.

In this poem, the speaker longs for an absent lover whom she refers to as “her sin”. She reminisces about intimate moments using a metaphor for their lovemaking with the words, “swimming in the nude”. Reflecting on these two writings, it is almost as though they were written by two different people, or by the same person, but written at different stages in her life. The dramatic, romantic overtones in most of my early poetry owes a heavy fine to the myriad love songs in Spanish I have been listening to since I was five years old.

For my thesis, *If This Heart Had a Mouth*, English is the language through which the man’s wife releases her emotions, as in the poems titled “Sorrow”, “Love in the Mourning”, “Apart”, and “Pyro Lover”, among others. Now that I have matured as a poet and acquired a larger vocabulary, I enjoy using either language to write about love, and the drama which surrounds it, but Spanish continues to hold me enthralled.

Throughout my teenage years, I had been filling notebooks with songs, short stories, essays and poems that I only shared with my family. When I enrolled in the University of Texas Pan American, I finally received feedback on the quality of my writing. In 1991, I confidently submitted two poems to the University of Texas Pan American’s *Gallery Magazine*, a poem in English, and another poem in Spanish. To my great surprise, and delight, both poems were

published. This bold literary magazine, a conglomerate of prose, poetry, photography, and illustrations edited by students in an English course played a pivotal role in my self-confidence.

Finally, here was irrefutable proof that my intellectual acrobatics with images and language in two languages had produced literary works worthy of publication. The taste of success galvanized me to continue submitting poems in Spanish and English. Later that same year, *The Mesquite Review*, a local magazine based in McAllen, Texas, and created by Noe Hinojosa, Jr. published my poetry. In the 1990's, I also published my work on the internet where I found a group of avid poetry writers who read my work. Receiving immediate feedback on my poetry is one of the aspects I enjoyed the most. Intoxicated by their praise and helpful suggestions, I made it a worthy goal to write and post one poem per day.

After graduating from UTPA in 1996 with a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, I married my college sweetheart. Later that year, I found a permanent teaching position, and I stopped writing. Looking back, I think that my writing suffered due to multiple distractions and lack of solitude. As a college student, I traveled alone to Mexico by bus. I remember carrying a small notebook and pens to write while en route to my destination. Also, in college, I had a lot of time to read and write in between classes.

Marriage changed a lot of things for me. I had a constant presence in my life who placed demands on my time, and I had responsibilities at work that kept my mind occupied. Now that I'm 48 years old, I am married to my second husband, and I still have a teaching job. I don't write as often as I should to continue honing my writing skills, but I have learned to take advantage of tiny crevices of time in which to write. I "write" during my daily commute to work as a teacher in Harlingen, Texas from my home in Port Isabel. Twice a week, I also have plenty of time to think about poems or ideas for stories when I drive to visit family in Donna, Texas.

My technique is to dictate poems into my cell phone via texting, which I then send to myself and type onto my laptop as soon as I get home.

In 2009, thirteen years later, my life changed for the better when I came across a community of writers brought together by Daniel Garcia, “El Poeta Mariachi” for a poetry festival in the Rio Grande Valley, *The Valley International Poetry Festival*. His staff accepted one of my poems, in Spanish with an English translation. Ever since my participation in this festival, I have not stopped writing, submitting, and participating in different kinds of poetry forums. Knowing that there was a community of writers who supported each other through writing workshops, poetry readings, and anthologies filled me with the impetus to create. After Daniel Garcia’s poetry festival, I became involved with the Narciso Martinez Cultural Arts Center. Then, I began to organize poetry readings in Weslaco at the Savory Perks Coffee Shop. Soon after, I met Ramiro Rodriguez who invited me to participate in a reading event at the University of Brownsville. Lately, thanks to Facebook, my network of writers has grown, exponentially.

I continue reinforcing and polishing my bilingual skills, investing time and effort to build a richer vocabulary for speaking and writing. The bilingual fluency I have painstakingly acquired, cemented my decision to write a bilingual thesis with original poems in Spanish and English. As I write this thesis at the end of the year 2015, I realize that I have been creating poems in both languages for three decades. I have been asked which language I prefer for poetry writing, and my reply is that sometimes one language captivates me more than the other, thanks to my passion for words.

Here is a good example of that statement. Two years ago, while reading an article in the New York Times, I came across the word *remora*. Upon reading its definition, I found that it

meant “delay”, but it also means “remorse”. This led me to think about my biological clock, and the unstoppable onslaught of middle age. The first lines of the song came to me, but I was driving, so I decided to sing the words into a small tape recorder I carry in my purse. By the time I arrived at UTPA, I had produced a sarcastic, ironic, humorous piece about a childless, middle-aged woman who stands before an all-female jury. I titled it, “Remora: An Operetta About Menopause”.

In the beginning of the song, “Remora”, the woman pleads for mercy and apologizes for never giving birth. Soon, though, she changes her attitude, and starts railing against all of them, telling them that she doesn’t need children in order to prove her worth to society. In the chorus, sung by the jury of her peers, they condemn her to death with the words, “Hang her already, / drown her in that river, / leave her without food, and hope that she dies from the cold. / Useless, useless, useless, / as a woman.” What I find fascinating is that I wrote it all in Spanish, even though, I came across the word "remora" in an English newspaper.

I remain forever grateful to my parents for helping me to further cultivate and preserve my native language. Over a period of ten years after moving to Weslaco, Texas, our entire family continually visited San Pedro, Coahuila and Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas to stay with relatives during school holidays and weekends. Thanks to those trips, I remained firmly rooted in the Mexican culture by actively participating in posadas, pilgrimages, funerals, weddings, and religion.

Poems embody the best of what language has to offer in terms of nuances, images, combined words and phrases used to convey an emotion. In a profound article by Susana Guadalupe Pérez Trejo, Antonio Gamoneda, a Spanish poet from the 1950’s describes poetry as being formed by “composition, memory and an awareness of death...” He goes on to write that

every poem is “a composition within a space, the presentation of a musicality that evolves within [that space] in time (81). Memory is necessary for the poem because this is what offers the poetic material; it is the memories, some past event, that light the creative spark...those same memories carry with them a nostalgia and an awareness of death...[they] remind us that our passage through this world is ephemeral.” The word “musicality” in Gamoneda’s quote, evokes a deeply engraved image in my mind, Tía Petra. I can still see her petite but stout form, waist long grey hair, and deeply set, dark brown eyes standing before us, reciting. Tia Petra only recited two poems she had memorized as a child, but she did so with hand gestures, facial expressions and voice changes. One of these poems, “El Hijo Desobediente” or “The Disobedient Son” written by José Rosas, narrates a simple story about a baby bird who falls off his nest after disobeying his father. At one time, I knew her poem by heart but had since forgotten an entire stanza. I found the entire poem in a Christian website named *Profeta Silencioso* or the Silent Prophet:

En una selva sombría,
un nido en un árbol vi,
y desde el nido, pío pío,
un pajarito decía.
Su buen padre que lo oía
fue y le dijo cariñoso;
voy a volar presuroso,
ricos granos a traerte,
espérame sin moverte
y procura ser juicioso (1-10).

The poem’s simple ABAB rhyme scheme makes it perfect for reading aloud, imbuing the

narrative with a playful rhythm that soon turns somber in the last six lines. The baby bird attempts to imitate his father, fails to take flight, and crashes to the ground: “Y horrible muerte encontró / Siempre el cielo castigó / Al hijo desobediente.” I never grew tired of her recitation, even begging, whenever she visited, to please recite her poems. I often credit “El Hijo Desobediente” in my presentations as the first poem I ever heard. Praising Tía Petra in public for igniting an enduring passion for poetry is a way of expressing my gratitude. Regretfully, as a child, I didn’t yet possess the maturity to thank her while she was still alive.

In addition to Tía Petra’s poetic influence, attending Mexican schools from kindergarten to fourth grade, opened a wide array of literary windows via government issued textbooks. They provided an escape to imaginary lands where animals spoke to one another, and a snake haired woman transformed men into stone. Incredibly, I found a blog created for the internet by Cesar JM, Libros de Primaria de los 80’s, where he posts scanned pages of those same Mexican textbooks. To my delight, I found one of the many poems that have influenced me, “El Lagarto Está Llorando”. This poem, written by Federico García Lorca, describes two lizards sobbing disconsolate at the loss of their wedding rings:

El lagarto está llorando.
La lagarta está llorando.
El lagarto y la lagarta
con delantillos blancos.
Han perdido sin querer
su anillo de desposados (14).

Those school books also contained Aesop fables, songs and games, tongue twisters, riddles, refrains, short stories, and poems. The illustrious list of poets included Federico García

Lorca, Alfonsina Storni, Vicente Guimaraes, Fernando Luján, Emma Pérez, Nicolás Guillén, Ida Reboli, Lope de Vega, and Regina Esther Sasson among others. Whimsical, colorful illustrations accompanied each text, igniting my young imagination. The well-rendered animals, children, gods, goddesses and magical scenes continue to inspire me to sketch and write. In an early poem I wrote at twelve years old, I narrate the tragic tale of a repentant cat who kills his first mouse. I titled this poem “El Gato y El Ratón”, inspired by an illustration in one of my school textbooks:

En una noche de luna llena
un gato negro maullaba su pena.
Maullaba y maullaba en aquel rincón
pues en un mal día el mató a un ratón (1-4).

As an emerging writer, I remember sharing those types of silly poems with my mother, and siblings. Interestingly, once I started delving into romantic poetry, I became more selfish and guarded. In addition, the impressive amalgam of worldwide writers I encountered at school, soon began to ingrain themselves in my conscious and subconscious states. When awake, I spent hours reenacting some of their stories and fables with dolls, entertaining my siblings. In dreams, I saw giants, serpent headed women, mermaids, Aztec gods, sobbing lizards, and singing frogs. In a 1919 issue of the poetry magazine *Poetry Foundation* found online, the poet Conrad Aiken writes the following lines in his poem, “Multitudes Turn in Darkness”: “Where have we been? What savage chaos / of music whirls in our dreams?” (Aiken) In my case, though, the music in my dreams carried the voices and songs of myriad of literary giants from those early free school textbooks, and they all lulled me in Spanish.

Another benefit I gleaned from those initial encounters with poetry was how they influenced the way I structured my early poems. Once again, thanks to Cesar JM, and his nostalgic online blog, *Libros de Primaria de los 80's*, I found a Regina Esther Sasson poem. In “Los Días de la Semana” or “The days of the Week” Regina Sasson uses the ABAB rhyme scheme:

Somos los siete pequeños
de la señora semana;
damos a la noche sueños
y alegría a la mañana (46,47).

For many years, I resorted to this particular rhyming pattern for my own poems, not realizing that I had other styles to choose from. In a poem titled “Hambre” or “Hunger” published by the University of Texas Pan American’s *Gallery 1991 A Literary Magazine*, I write:

Mi alma grita en silencio y se estremece de frustración
Gritar al viento cuanto te quiero es ya en mí una obsesión.
Escribo versos y hago poemas, dibujo tu rostro una y otra
vez. ¿A quién le importa en donde me encuentro si ya ni yo
misma lo sé. (1-4)

Another important source for my early inspirational rhyme schemes stems from the romantic music I listened to over a period of two decades, the 1970’s and 1980’s. In 1972, Mexico experienced a resurgence in excellent songwriting with the success of *El Festival Mundial de la Canción Latina* produced by a coalition of Latin American countries under the acronym OTI or Organización de Televisión Iberoamericana.

Invariably, the themes in most of the participating songs dealt with love, disillusionment, jealousy, yearning, loss and uncertainty, all perfect ingredients for the type of poetry I began to write in my late teens and early college years. A dizzying number of songwriters participated in this festival with songs blaring from radios and televisions once they won the coveted first prize. Among these talents, Camilo Blanes, Joan Sebastian, Armando Manzanero, José María Napoleón, and Sergio Esquivel galvanized me to write an extensive number of love poems.

In this thesis, I pay homage to those songwriters who inspired me the most, José María Napoleón and Camilo Blanes. These songwriters' narrative style appealed to me, along with the subject matter of their songs. In their most popular songs, both songwriters broach a myriad of themes, such as unrequited love, childhood memories, betrayal, unfaithfulness, passion, and jealousy.

In José María Napoleón's most iconic song titled, "Pajarillo" or "Little Bird", he tells the story of a prostitute he knew as a child. Again, not trusting my memory, I searched for the lyrics to "Pajarillo" and found them in a website titled simply, *Musica*. In the song, José María Napoleón describes her physical deterioration, which he witnesses working for her as an errand boy:

Maquillaje a granel usaba a diario
y vendía su piel a precio caro
de las ocho a las diez en una esquina
era joven y fiel, era rosa y espina (1-4).

I include the mimetic form of this poem, "Dolores", in the first section of my thesis, titled WHISPERS. In the poem, the speaker tells a similar story to José María Napoleón's. To clarify, when I use the term, mimetic, anywhere in this thesis, I am referring to an imitation of

sorts. In this particular poem, for example, I attempt to follow José María Napoleón's original rhyme scheme, musicality, and rhythm. Here is the first stanza in my poem, "Dolores":

Maquillaje a granel usaba a diario
y vendía su piel a precio caro
deshecho humano carente de deseo,
pajarillo atrapado en pleno aleteo (1-4).

Mimesis is the vehicle I employed in my literary approach to writing all forty-two poems for my thesis, *If This Heart Had a Mouth*. Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus defines mimesis as "the act or art of copying or imitating closely". Mimesis can also be found under the words imitation, shadowing, juxtaposition, echoing, parody, mimicry, mirroring, and copy making.

Dionysian Imitatio, a literary method created by Greek author Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the first century BCE, is the perfect explanation behind the concept for my thesis. Here is an excerpt from an online article named *The Daily Omnivore*.

[Dionysian Imitatio] is the rhetoric practice of emulating, adapting, reworking and enriching a source text by an earlier author...Dionysius' three volume work 'On mimesis' ('On imitation'), which was the most influential for Latin authors, is lost. Most of it contained advice on how to identify the most suitable writers to imitate and the best way to imitate them...

I will only take two words from the above quotation, emulating and adapting, as those are the only words that apply to the process I used to write my poems for this thesis. Using these two

words, I will further explain how I used other poets' works to create my own poems. To emulate someone means that we are trying to be like that particular person because we admire him or her. Perhaps, our admiration stems from certain characteristics that person exhibits; in this case, I am referring to the poets I selected. For the majority of the forty-two poems I wrote, I selected poets who captivated me with their words, at some point in my life.

Carl Sandburg, for example, a poet whom I greatly admire, writes with a heartfelt simplicity that is difficult to imitate, but I tried my best with his poem, "Arithmetic", which became "Dear Solitude" through mimesis. "Dear Solitude" is found under the section in my thesis titled, BELLOW. Another poet I attempted to emulate is Rosario Castellanos whose poetry, at times, focuses on the tragedy and drama of being a woman with multiple roles in society. As I browsed through her poems, a particular title in one of her poems caught my eye. The poem's title, "Jornada de la soltera", or "The Spinster's Journey" inspired me to write "Jornada de la Querida", or "The Mistress' Journey" also in BELLOW. In Rosario Castellano's poem, the speaker describes an old spinster's sad fate and inner shame at being single, illustrated in the second line with the words, "arde un rubor terrible en su mejilla..." which translates to "a terrible flush burns her cheek..."

Ironically, I chose this poem for a title I failed to translate correctly. I accidentally misread the word "jornada" for "journal", which inspired me to write a poem told from a mistress' point of view who feels mortified at her status. Initially, I noticed that the first three lines in "Jornada de la soltera", however, can be expressed by either a spinster or a mistress. This became the second reason I chose Rosario Castellano's poem. The speaker in the original poem describes the spinster's humiliation: "Da verguenza estar sola. El día entero / arde un rubor terrible en su mejilla (pero la otra mejilla está eclipsada)" (*PoemasdelAlma*).

To craft my own poem with mimesis, I started writing "Jornada de la Querida", with those same first three lines, as some sort of literary trampoline to produce my own version of Rosario Castellano's poem. Keeping both poems side by side, I began by counting the number of syllables in each line. For example, in Rosario Castellano's poem, Line 4 contains thirteen syllables. This is Line 4 from "Jornada de la Soltera": "La-sol-te-ra-sea-fa-naen-queha-cer-de-ce-ni-za..." The line I created with thirteen syllables makes an allusion to the mistress' empty womb, with the words, "La-que-ri-da-seen-ros-caen-su-vien-trein-ters-ti-cio...", which translates to, "The mistress coils herself around the interstices of her womb..."

The rest of my poem continues along the same vein, serving as a voice for the mistress who vents her dissatisfaction with having to wait around all day for her lover's phone calls, or his visits. For every mimetic poem I included in this thesis, I not only worked to match syllable counts in each line, but I also sought a point of departure from the original poem's subject and start exploring my own. I soon realized that using an original poem's first lines, served me as a catalyst to start writing, such as I did with Rosario Castellano's poem.

Another approach I used as a "literary trampoline" for creating my own poems was to write a contrarian version of a poem, such as my poem, "Die Screaming" in the section titled WAIL. When I use the term "contrarian", I am referring to penning a poem that refutes or negates whatever the poet is saying in his or her original poem. To illustrate, "In Silence", a Ghazal by Mimi Khalvati, the poet ends each line with the poem's title:

Let them be, the battles you fought, in silence.

Bury your shame, the worst you thought, in silence.

At last, my Beloved, has haggled with death.

"One more day" was the pearl she bought, in silence (*Poets.Org*).

After reading her poem in its entirety, I considered the words, "in silence", too submissive. Therefore, I opted for contrast, replacing her words with mine, "die screaming", which represent a rallying cry against defeat:

Don't succumb; you've fought too hard: Die screaming.

Unearth brutal force: be unmerciful: Die screaming.

Feel strong and powerful as a Red-tailed Hawk,

Formidable foe whose preys die screaming (1-4).

Once again, I counted syllables and followed the poet's rhythm as dictated by the poem's form, a Ghazal; but most importantly, I established my own theme from the beginning. Using mimesis to produce all forty-two poems was no easy task, as it was not often possible to follow a poem's syllable count with fidelity, nor its rhythm.

The process was daunting, difficult but totally engrossing, and even delightful. It was an attempt to follow an original poem's syllable count per line, its meter, rhythm, and assonance, consonance, and rhyme. During the creation process, I visualized these departures as a form of dance where I attempted to match my partner's dance steps. Sometimes our dance was flawless, but other times, I faltered. I will confess, though, that this creative process was far more challenging in English than it was in Spanish. I believe the disparity lies in having a far-ranging vocabulary in Spanish, as opposed what my resources are in English.

Later in this thesis, I mention that the poems I chose for my collection essentially chose me. I could not browse poets or poems at random without first having in mind whose mental state I needed to inhabit that day, the wife's or the mistress'. With this in place, I could then look through the poet or poets I thought had something to say on the subject of love, loss or grief,

frustration, anger, longing or suffering. The poets who inspired this collection are extremely gifted wordsmiths whose works served as conduits for my imagination. I find it amazingly wonderful that their words and my words managed to intertwine and fuel the impetus behind each of the forty-two poems in my thesis.

Another challenge for writing my own derivations of English poems, I attribute to the language's lack of musicality. As I stated earlier in the section titled, A Poet Uprooted, I find that the Spanish language has an inherent musical quality lacking in the English language. With some of the poems in this thesis, such as "No Me Gusta Que Calles" which can be found in the section titled BELLOW, I found myself singing the lines I was creating. Here are a few lines from that poem:

No me gusta que calles porque de mí te alejas
Sumiéndote en la bruma de lo que te derroca.
Sé que ya no me escuchas, ni distingues mi rostro,
Y sé que las palabras se ahogaron en tu boca (1-4).

What intricate selection process did I use for finding all forty-two poems contained in my thesis? My response, though simplistic, is completely honest: the majority of those poems I selected came to *me*. Due to the romantic nature of the narrative behind this compilation of poetry, I gravitated toward poems bearing traces of the predicament I was trying to convey, namely, a love triangle. The majority of the poems mention the man involved in the love affair, but he is not given a voice of his own. I deliberately chose to leave the unfaithful husband out of the equation to focus my energies on elevating the intensity of the emotions felt by both women. The main character in Jorge Luis Borges' short story, "The Circular Ruins", attempts to dream up a man made of flesh and blood. For this collection of poems about a love triangle, I

too, dreamed up three characters. The members of this love triangle were not made of flesh and bone. They were culled from life-long personal experiences, observations, pieces of conversations, and people I knew. As a poet, however, I took several liberties. In my mind, I imagined a marriage on the brink of disintegration where the man has ceased to invest himself, emotionally. He cares about his wife, but it is not a romantic union; rather, it has become a marriage of convenience.

To write the poems, I first chose which woman I needed to inhabit for a while. Once that was in place, then I would try to write two to three poems at a stretch. It wasn't long before I realized that writing about the wife's emotional pain, left me physically and mentally drained. I experienced the same debilitating side-effect whenever I would create poems from the mistress' perspective. She was also undergoing extreme mental duress during the affair. Admittedly, the mistress possesses a lot of my own characteristics. She, too, is a hopeless romantic. This similarity helped me pen those poems about loss, desperation, frustration, heartache, and solitude.

The conscious elimination of a third voice, however, did not facilitate my search for the women's. I needed a variety of Spanish poems that could serve as emotional vehicles for the mistress, and an array of excellent poems in English to express the wife's emotions. To find the right poem, I had to first decide what type of emotion I wanted either woman to articulate. With these two prerequisites in mind, I could then initiate the hunt.

However, in order to form a concrete image of the mistress who is experiencing a myriad of strong feelings, I required a forceful, Spanish voice. Luckily, I had come across a magnificent Chilean poet named Gabriela Mistral in one of my graduate courses. In many of her poems, Gabriela Mistral writes about love. In her poem, "Ausencia", she speaks of

abandonment:

Se va de ti mi cuerpo gota a gota.

Se va mi cara en un óleo sordo;

se van mis manos en azogue suelto;

se van mis pies en dos tiempos de polvo (1-5).

Gabriela Mistral's words, full of longing and sadness, provided the perfect framework for the mistress in my thesis to speak about her absent lover. For my mimetic version of Gabriela Mistral's poem, I kept the theme and sentiment behind her words. Using the same title, and including this poem under the section titled BELLOW, I wrote:

Se va de mí tu sombra cada día.

Se va la esperanza fallecida;

se van mis manos a surcar tu cielo;

se van mis pies a servirte de guía. (1-4)

When I needed a voice for the wife, who has begun to realize the tenuous hold she has on her husband, I found her voice in "Apart". I included this poem in the section titled WAIL. Poet Louis Simpson, tells the story of someone distancing themselves from their beloved. His powerful words immediately placed me in the state of mind to write a poem about divorce. In Louis Simpson's poem, he writes,

Do not write. I am sad and want my light put out.

Summers in your absence are as dark as a room. I have

closed my arms again. They must do without (1-4).

My version of his poem retains the original poem's title, but I use mimesis to give the wife a voice for venting her anguish:

Not another word. I am numb, and the sun is no longer
out there. I have exhausted every argument. I refuse to
continue justifying
fragmentation. You, the victor. Listen, that blanket in the closet,
Mom's wedding gift—Yes. Burn it (1-4).

The forty-two poems I wrote for *If This Heart Had a Mouth*, weave a tale of forbidden romance and intense heartbreak for two women whose hearts speak through a WHISPER, WAIL, BELLOW, and a HOWL, each representing a separate section. “If This Heart Had a Mouth”, the first poem under WHISPER, introduces a metaphorical announcer who foretells the lovers' bleak future:

If this heart had a mouth
I'd lean close, my ear,
to her whisper and roar,
her tongue scorched
with sin (1-5).

The next poem in this section titled “Canción de Marzo” marks the beginning of the love affair, and the man's lover shouts her joy:

Para escribir un poema mis palabras tienen hoy
un tono alegre,
el más jubiloso quizás
que había tenido
en mucho tiempo (1-6).

This section ends with a poem titled “Sin Daños a Terceros”. Here, the speaker ruminates

about her love affair, allowing self-pity to fuel her frustrations. She's aware that people have started to spread malicious rumors, "Ya las gentes murmuran que soy su enemiga / porque dicen que en verso destruyo su honor..." In the last four lines, however, she has resolved to wait for him, "deambulando por cada habitación, / y derramando frías lágrimas / igual que ella lo hace por ti."

WAIL, the second section in the table of contents, contains eleven poems where the speaker's heart addresses the betrayal by her husband. *Poets.org* offered me "Love in the Mourning", the opening poem, she uses her sorrow as a catalyst:

Mourning's a new song
softly spurring me
out of self-denial
bursting sapience – (Finch)

In the second poem, "Our Many Broken Dreams", the betrayed woman defiantly confronts the source of her pain, her husband, telling him, "You entered the bedroom and fell to your knees / I await the rest of my life to hear you say, I made a mistake..." In "Apart", the speaker enters a state of resignation and acceptance, "Not another word. I am numb, and the sun is no longer out there. / I have exhausted every argument..." Yet, she's still demanding answers,

"...Tell me, was it ever love? I ask my past. I ask / your past. / Will we ever know? ..."

But in the last poem of this section, "Die Screaming", the speaker refuses to quietly step aside; instead, she emits a rallying war cry:

Don't succumb; you've fought too hard: Die screaming.
Unearth brutal force; be unmerciful: Die screaming.
Feel strong and powerful as a Red-tailed Hawk

formidable foe whose preys die screaming.

Heed this: do not tread softly upon hard ground

for the beneath guards those who, too, died screaming (1-

6).

In the third section, titled BELLOW, the speaking heart belongs to the woman, the mistress, who waits for her lover to return as a free man. “Jornada de la Querida” or “The Other Woman’s Journal” finds her musing about her current state, “Es frustrante estar sola. El día entero / arde un fuego sublime en su pupila / (pero la otra pupila está cegada.)” When her lover returns for a brief stay; her happiness becomes overshadowed by his constant silences:

No me gusta que calles porque de mí te alejas

sumiéndote en la bruma de lo que te derroca.

Sé que ya no me escuchas, ni distingues mi rostro,

y sé que las palabras se ahogaron en tu boca (1-4).

After his departure, though, the speaker loses hope and escapes within herself to alleviate her despair: “Se va de mi tu sombra día a día. / Se va la esperanza fallecida. / Se van mis manos a surcar tu cielo...”

In the last poem for this section, “Confesiones”, the speaker addresses her mother’s ghost in a defeated tone:

Esta tarde estoy cansada, madre,

demasiados sentimientos agobian,

tántas lágrimas derramadas,

los años pesan, la nostalgia ahoga,

la esperanza, apenas se vislumbra (1-5).

In the last section for this thesis, titled HOWL, the two women's hearts scream their pain with verses such as this one, "This pathetic little poem, / burn it, if you wish, / as a mischievous child scorches / a harmless bug..." The first poem, "What Is She Doing in the Next Room?" takes the reader into the mistress' mind which is full of questions about the man's wife:

Is she unmaking everything?

Is she kissing her father's ghost?

Is she fending off her childhood rapist?

Is she gnawing on bones from former affairs? (1-4)

In the collection's last poem titled, "I Have Been One Conversant with This Heart", the mistress offers herself up for scrutiny by reflecting upon her role in the events leading up to the dissolution of a marriage. The repetition of the "I" at the beginning of every line in the first two stanzas serves to emphasize the woman's summation of the affair, imbuing the poem's speaker with the voice of experience and self-awareness:

I have been conversant with this heart.

I have experienced pain, and then again,

I have not thought it was in vain to part.

I have wrung out an opulence of tears.

I have meandered through darkened paths,

setting bonfires to extinguish fears (1-6).

If This Heart Had a Mouth contains forty-two poems that do not speak, they WHISPER, BELLOW, WAIL, and HOWL about love, grief, loss, and irreparable damage in two languages. A perfect quote that explains the concept of mimesis, the propelling force behind all the poems I wrote for this thesis can be found in the King James Version of Ecclesiastics I.9:

The thing that hath been, it is that which
shall be; and that which is shall be; and
that which is done is that which shall be
done: and there is no new thing under the sun (1-4).

For me, the last words from this quote, “there is no new thing under the sun” refer to the futility of seeking to create something no one has ever seen before. In terms of writing poetry, our love for words galvanizes us to maintain a sizable trove of words. Inevitably, however, we will write a line of poetry or a clever word pairing that someone else has already conceived. Thinking this way motivated me and inspired me.

Poetic departures have the potential to endow written pieces with transformative properties that allowed me to produce effective works of poetry. In essence, I danced with other poets’ words. As I worked on this introduction, I fully realized how this literary vehicle was instrumental in the creation of forty-two original poems filled with my own word choices, images, sentiments, and story. This method opened an entirely new venue through which I continue channeling my creative energies into poetry form.

I found it to be an exhilarating but exhausting experience to inhabit two different women involved in a love triangle. The result is the forty-two poems in this manuscript written from different points of view. I resorted to my own experiences with the subject of love to write as the mistress, but I lacked the history of betrayal to write from the wife’s point of view. However, to quote the late Maya Angelou when she said, “Nothing that is human is alien to me”. Her words inspired me to approach the poems from an understanding about human emotions, and love is the most basic human emotion of all.

CHAPTER II

WHISPER

If the Ocean Had a Mouth

*I'd lean close, my ear
to her whisper and roar,
her tongue scattered
with stars.*

Marie Elizabeth Mali – “If the Ocean Had a Mouth”

IF THIS HEART HAD A MOUTH

I'd lean close, my ear
to her whisper and roar,
her tongue scorched
with sin.

She'd lick her open sores
beneath a drab streetlight
howling her pain to the world.

Would she ever shred
the lattice of veins?

Would she wail from the ribs
to release wads of filth,
or would she bellow, yelp
through every chamber with
premeditated rhythms
to unbosom?

What did she mean to say
in cryptic dialogue
intended for the souls
of those unjustly tortured?

The unburdening frays
Voice reeds. Expelled
Breaths. Vibrating larynx.
Within her folds a song is born,
weaving membranes, scintillating,
to supplicate for pardon.

*Para cantarte
mis palabras tienen hoy
un eco triste
el más profundo quizás
de mis montañas.*

Armando Valladares – “Canción de Septiembre”

CANCIÓN DE MARZO

Para escribir un poema
mis palabras tienen hoy
un tono alegre,
el más jubiloso quizás
que había tenido
en mucho tiempo.

Cantarino
Dichoso
Efervescente
alentado por nuestras misivas.

En los breves espacios
que hemos creado
ha ido aumentando el eco
de una bonita relación
entre ambos.

Tu risa me hace bien.
Tus palabras me hacen bien.
Tu presencia me hace bien.
Por esto y por mucho más,
mis palabras tienen hoy
un tono alegre.

*Eres como el agua.
Como el agua clara
de la fuente alta,
como el agua fría
de la nieve líquida.*

Francisco D. Lopez Herrera – “Como el agua”

FUEGO

Eres fuego intenso
de una gran fogata,
fuego que me quema
pero que no mata.
El fuego encendido
en noches de invierno,
el fuego en el bosque
que alumbra lo eterno.
El fuego callado
que vela mi sueño,
fuego vengativo
que no tiene dueño.
El fuego apasionado
que me ha hecho su presa,
el fuego candente
que hoy fluye en mis venas.
Eres como el fuego,
fuego que calienta.

*No, no es que extrañe tanto el sol de tu mirada
ni es que me falte el tierno roce de tu piel
sencillamente es que me canso de hacer nada
entonces tiendo a recordar, a recordar cosas de ayer.*

Joan Sebastian – “Sentimental”

PERSUASIÓN DON JUANESCA

No, no es que extrañe tanto el sol de tu mirada
ni que sienta el deseo por ver tu desnudez,
desperté con tu miel en mis labios, malvada
entonces recordé que nos interrumpió tu timidez
la que es un muro que habrás de derrumbar,
un hombre no se enciende con rancio pudor
habiendo tantas damas para conquistar,
no hay tiempo, no hay tiempo alguno, bella, para exhibir candor.
No, no es que extrañe tanto lo tibio de tu abrazo
o que augure a la hembra que ya se forma en ti,
simplemente quisiera estar en tu regazo
y que alardees, y que alardees, yo a un Don Juan derruí.

*Maquillaje a granel usaba a diario
y vendía su piel a precio caro
de las ocho a las diez en una esquina
era joven y fiel, era rosa y espina.*

Jose María Napoleón – “Pajarillo”

DOLORES

Maquillaje a granel usaba a diario
y vendía su piel a precio caro
deshecho humano carente de deseo,
pajarillo atrapado en pleno aleteo;

Esa noche la busqué por vez primera,
mi frío invierno invadió su primavera
mis labios no emitieron promesa alguna
mis caricias templaron su amargura

Admirable mujer, contó su historia:
se confió de un bufón y fue engañada
subastaron su cuerpo, mas no su alma
selló su corazón y a la esperanza

Se volvió mi refugio de cada día
donde sólo el presente ahí existía,
musa que de mí sólo exigía
que le brindara elogios y mi compañía;

Y su risa aliviaba mis dolores,
dos dementes entregados al derroche
compartí con ella mis tristezas,
hablamos de fracasos y flaquezas.

Mas en ella incontables cicatrices
resistieron suturarse por completo
provocando un tumor inoperable
que se la fue tragando, implacable;

Y una noche de octubre en otro cuerpo
se quebró mi corazón con su recuerdo;
Dolores se libró de su agonía,
llevándose con ella mi alegría.

*Quisiera esta tarde divina de octubre
pasear por la orilla lejana del mar;
que la arena de oro, y las aguas verdes;
y los cielos puros me vieran pasar.*

Alfonsina Storni – “Dolor”

GAVIOTA

Quisiera esta tarde soleada de marzo
Insertarme alas para irlo a buscar;
Que las nubes blancas, y el vaivén del viento;
Y su voz impulsen este navegar.

Ser ágil, ligera, alada, quisiera,
Como una gaviota, para conspirar
Con los cardenales, y la fiel paloma,
Y cada cenizote que ronda su hogar.

Con ansias malditas, y negro deseo,
Y la fé perdida, dejarme engañar;
Contemplar su rostro desde aquella rama,
Querer ser la sombra detrás de su andar.
Ver cómo sus ojos cansados parecen
Iguales a los míos, de tanto llorar;
Pensar que son meses desde su partida,
Remueve mi angustia, y vuelvo a penar.
Ver que se adelanta, la garganta al aire;
El hombre que yo amo; quererlo besar...

Perderme en su barba ardorosamente,
Perderme en sus labios, y nunca emigrar.
Y ya entrelazados en romance eterno,
Sentir que ya nadie nos podrá apartar.

*En los ojos que observaron
la tormenta avecinarse
había calles empedradas
y trigales todavía húmedos
por la lluvia de la noche.*

Lucha Corpi – “Invernario”

INDÓMITO

En los ojos que observaron
la tragedia avecinarse
había un páramo en llamas
y bestias huyendo de allí
embrutecidas por el humo,
un susurro de voces
presagiando nefastas,
una figura encorvada deshaciendo
su rostro a jirones
presa de convulsions febriles.

Me observé en esos ojos
como quien se ve en sueños,
no reconociéndose en
cada gesto estudiado
y se ve convertirse
en rosal
y sal
y espectro
en agua
y estela de gaviotas.

Desde entonces
entrelazado
en baile perpetuo con las niñas
de sus ojos subyugantes
como un náufrago arraigado
me consume la obsesión
de esclavizarlo.

Arithmetic is where numbers fly like pigeons in and out of your head.

Arithmetic tells you how many you lose or win if you know how many you had before you lost or won.

Carl Sandburg – “Arithmetic”

SORROW

Sorrow is where memories nest like doves
seeking a prolonged stay.

Sorrow reminds you of the many losses
you have sustained throughout a well-worn
life.

Sorrow is tears and fears combined to make arrears,
or insane pain clawing its way out of your brain.

Sorrow is a bottomless well, harboring muddied
fragments of skull and rib cage.

Sorrow is where no one voices answers, and anything
worth saying is tinged with poisoned ivy.

If you take one chest spasm and multiply it by two,
and then double that and again multiply it by two,
Sorrow indubitably increases by just that much.

*Hay Días
en que podría ser presidente
calmar el dolor del hambre que entre lágrima y lágrima
sueña y se alimenta de esperanza.*

Yolanda Rosas – “Hay Días”

HAY DÍAS

En que podría desbordarme
arrasar con la esperanza que aún no se ha percatado
de que yo existo en este plano
podría diluirme en las aguas fangosas
del río que hace años cruzé

Hay días
en que podría escribir mil versos
con cenizas del incendio
mayor
que falló en destruir su recuerdo infame
pasar horas bajo un árbol escuchando aquél cenzontle
diseñar un cuerpo femenino incapaz de reaccionar
saber lo que sueñan los cuervos por las noches
destruir estas cadenas que ciñen mi piel.

Hay días
en que salir a la calle no ahuyenta este hastío
y me pregunto
por qué me arrojé en sus aguas
mejor hubiera sido quedarme sola que unir
nuestros destinos a espaldas de otra presencia
siempre amenazando con disolvernó.

Hay días
en que librar esta lucha conmigo misma consume mis horas
diurnas y nocturnas todas
que se deslizan silenciosas frente a mi
y que a veces una de ellas se detiene
para intentar convencerme de ya no aferrarme a él ni a su
ausencia.

Más no requiero argumentos
seguiré siendo la misma
esperándolo
como si lo nuestro en verdad lo ameritara

mientras yo
me desbordo
me diluyo
y escribo nuestra historia con cenizas.

*Ya las gentes murmuran que yo soy tu enemiga
porque dicen que en verso doy al mundo mi yo.
Mientes, Julia de Burgos. Mientes, Julia de Burgos.
La que se alza en mis versos no es tu voz: es mi voz.*

Julia de Burgos – “A Julia de Burgos”

SIN DAÑOS A TERCEROS

Ya las gentes murmuran que yo soy su enemiga
porque dicen que en verso destruyo su honor.

Mienten, hombre mío. Mienten, hombre mío.
la ilusa en mis versos jamás será ella, soy yo.
Porque ella no mancha su blanco plumaje; es inmune al
mundo que constantemente conmigo se ensaña.

Yo soy la mentira que asoma a tus labios constante,
el súcubo insaciable que aguarda tu ansiedad.

Ella, libre para gritar tu nombre; yo no;
que censuro poemas para no revelarte.

Ella ve tu sonrisa, a diario;
yo no; que solo se conforma con oír tu voz.

Ella es la gran señora exigiendo seriedad; yo no;
yo soy juguetona, apasionada, impropia.

Ella navega por mundos inocuos; yo no;
yo fornico con sombras hirientes, porque esas
sombras, al rasgar mi piel, mitigan ansiedades.

Ella se esmera por ser perfecta; yo no;
soy muy mal hablada aquí y allá, nunca sumisa.

Ella es ama de casa, se desvive por ti,
es ajena a su rostro en el espejo; yo no;
que yo soy Frida Kahlo tragándome la vida
plasmando mi dolor con pigmentos luminosos.

Ella en sí misma no manda; por ti,
enterró la música junto a su sonrisa, preparó
anécdotas sobre el fin del mundo, se hizo
una burka, ahogó la esperanza,

perfeccionó el arte de vivir sola.

En mí no, que en mí manda mi solo corazón,
mi solo pensamiento; quien manda en mí soy yo.
Ella, mujer entrada en años; y yo aún joven.

Ella en ti se vacía y se queda vacía sin
imbricar la causa de tanta pesadumbre en su alma.

Ella, obsesionada por mantener las apariencias,
y yo, aguardando el día cuando por fin tú
decidas ponerte las agallas y hablarme frente a frente.

Cuando entres por esa puerta, no correré desbocada
olvidando la angustia infame que viví
durante esa cruel ausencia cuando me sorprendí bailando
con amargos recuerdos, ataviada de telarañas,
deambulando por cada habitación,
y derramando frías lágrimas igual que ella lo hace por ti.

CHAPTER III

WAIL

*Morning's a new bird
stirring against me
out of a quiet nest
coming to flight.*

Annie Finch – “Love in the Morning”

LOVE IN THE MOURNING

Mourning's a new song
softly spurring me
out of self-denial
bursting sapience ear-piercing,
tight-fisted,
blood red
accomplice,
open-minded,
restless,
heart-rending
echo,
brain-draining,
high-functioning
chief motivator,
burka and death shroud,
not skin deep,
broken-hearted.

*You entered the bedroom and fell to your knees.
I await the rest of my life to hear you say, I made a mistake.
Inside my chest, a mangle.
Inside yours, a deflating balloon.*

Courtney Queeney – “Our Many Never Endings”

OUR MANY BROKEN DREAMS

You entered the bedroom and fell to your knees.
I await the rest of my life to hear you say, I made a mistake.

Inside this house, false echoes.
Inside my heart, a jagged cliff.

You took Costa Rica's rainforests, the mountains, the oceans
and left me barbed trees, a towering horror, a foul lagoon.

I would like to request that we bury all
promises and dreams we whispered to each other
contorting our limbs, seeking flesh redemption.

Mostly, I would like to witness your implosion
and dispose of the rubble somewhere near
the neglected Huisache.
Occasionally, I glimpse the man I once knew
and I, too, fall on my knees.

*I remember the hour
you stole time from me
and here in these late pages
I try to collect back
the kisses in the parking lot.*

Sally Van Doren – “Thief”

PILLAGER

I remember the hours
You have stolen from me
And here in this aching house
I am woefully tethered
To the voracious memories
That excrete acrid venom
On deliberate days
When I castigate myself.

*Last night when my work was done,
And my estranged hands
Were becoming mutually interested
In such forgotten things as pulses.*

Hazel Hall – “Habit”

DOLOR

Last night when my work was done,
And my gnarled fingers
Kept intertwining in a grotesque tango
Pulsating with peaked agonizing rhythms,
I briefly ventured outside
To a pantheon of shadows.
And then...
Began to carbon sketch every one of my miseries.

*I have lived so long
on the cold hills alone ...
I loved the rock
and the lean pine trees.*

Janet Loxley Lewis – “Austerity”

ENCASED

I have lived so long
Incarcerated by bone ...
I loathe the view
And the perpetual throe
Loved the youthful elasticity,
Loved the unrestrained vitality.

I have lived for so long
Under fear of inflicting irreversible damage,
I am finally breaking free
From ignominy and self-doubt.

*Look, I've already ruined it
or it's ruined me.
The dawn I see by doesn't need me.*

Tom Thompson – “After Light”

AFTER

Look, I've already ruined it
or it's ruined me.
The tumult within devours me
grinding bone
and whole days slither past with no respite.

What you call clemency
is a remote, twisted path
fraught with contrite silence and traversed alone.

You might contradict me
and shed tears
or recite the damage done
calling it brutal or unjust
and deny exculpation.

*Aren't there bigger things to talk about
than a window in Greenwich Village
and hyacinths sprouting
like little puce poems out of a sick soul?*

Lola Ridge – “Scandal”

EQUITABLE

Aren't there bigger things to talk about
Than who owns the swamp in Belize
Or those silver knives
No one has used for the last thirty years?
Please say yes. It can't all be
Legalese, not today...

Whisper me mountain treks
Under a blue sky...
Or recite
Every poem you wrote me
Where you compare my eyes
To those of a Sphinx cat, bright as moonstones.

Do not write. I am sad, and want my light put out. Summers in your absence are as dark as a room. I have closed my arms again. They must do without. To knock at my heart is like knocking at a tomb. Do not write!

Louis Simpson – “Apart”

APART

Not another word. I am numb, and the sun is no longer out there. I have exhausted every argument. I refuse to continue justifying This fragmentation. You, the victor. Listen, that blanket in the closet, Mom's wedding gift—Yes. Burn it.

Not another word!

Not another word. Tell me, was it ever love? I ask my past. I ask Your past. Will we ever know? You say, I love you but not the way I used to love you. Those words hit hard. Like that part in a movie when the hero can no longer hold on to her hand, and she plunges—screaming.

Not another word!

Not another word. I do not trust you. I will never again trust anyone or anything. One of the Many personal privileges I must surrender, I suppose. What else remains to be sacrificed at the Altar of our separation? How many restless nights await me when I will wake up drenched in Tears? I wonder...

Not another word!

Not another word. You might pry loose a final happy memory I keep in a secret compartment, one I have been saving for an inevitable Moment, such as this. It is a photograph of us laughing at god-knows-what, both our heads thrown back in mid-laugh.

Not another goddamn word

*From the window the river rinses
the dark. I twist
the wedding beads around my neck. I've lost
my ring, silver and antique, bought from a night market.*

Nicole Cooley – “Marriage: A Daybook”

MARRIAGE: A YENTA'S NOTEBOOK

From the window the ocean seems
aloof. I peer
into my neighbors' kitchen. I write:
She sits in her chair with her face buried in her hands, sobbing
while he stands with arms crossed
lips tight, his gaze worlds away
perhaps caressing the other's youth,
silent burn.

*

Khalil Gibran wrote, *be willing to bleed*, and he wasn't talking about marriage.

*

Not talking about two contenders
who probably tasted defeat
after the space between them widened
when another bent his willingness
to melt and bleed unquestioningly.

Move to the City
live life as a stranger. Disappear
into frequent invention, depending
on the district, whenever you get off
the train.

Nathaniel Bellows – “Move to the City”

MOVE TO SAN MIGUEL DE ALLENDE

Live here as a native. Redirect
your shadow often, depending
on where the light falls whenever
you cross El Jardín Principal.
On a Sunday (any Sunday) demand
of everyone to call you Frida or
La Catrina, those damas recognized
by many, seen everywhere, worn
by everyone. Avoid engaging in
conversation with a street musician he
will only try to sell you his version
of nostalgia. This is a city where
people take measured steps, embrace
unabashedly in public, converse
with friends under bougainvillea
balconies, eschew wristwatches
for La Parroquia’s bells. Exhale
deeply to exorcise a recurring dream,
the one where an angry ocean
creeps into your living room you
are its main target.
Remember, only prowl street corners
overlooked by holy niches. They’re
your only protection. Don’t ask anyone
(male or female) to spend the night
back at your place. You might wake
up with a coyote, instead.
But also know the above derives
from personal experiences and
speculations and might not apply
to every situation you encounter.
In the end, nothing you do or say
will keep you from re-directing your
fatigued shadow or from assuming
any other identity but your own.

In the end, nothing you do or say will stop you from requesting a melody from an idle mariachi, who will then regale you with his endless sorrow. In the end, nothing you do or say will keep you from flitting from corner to street corner, whether protected by a holy niche or not. In the end, nothing you do or say will keep you from inviting an angry ocean into your living room late at night. In the end, nothing I say or do will prevent you from asking a beautiful stranger to your bed, risking it all for the rare opportunity to dance with a coyote by sunrise.

*Let them be, the battles you fought, in silence.
Bury your shame, the worst you thought, in silence.
At last my Beloved has haggled with death.
'One more day' was the pearl she bought in silence.*

Mimi Khalvati – “Ghazal: In Silence”

DIE SCREAMING

Don't succumb; you've fought too hard: Die screaming.
Unearth brutal force; be unmerciful: Die screaming.

Feel strong and powerful as a Red-tailed Hawk
formidable foe whose preys die screaming.

Your mind in turmoil, the body always ready
to tear enemies asunder: Die screaming.

Heed this: do not tread softly upon hard ground
for the beneath guards those who, too, died screaming.

Submerge yourself in rowdy throngs, not silence
blood moons command from high above: Die screaming.

At night, when dark creatures do stir and awake
grab a hammer, disfigure or maim: Die screaming.

The only guilt I carry is sheer defiance
your last words before the court, then: Die screaming.

Audentes fortuna iuvat: Die screaming.
Audentes fortuna iuvat: Die screaming.

Eight syllables of equal weight, equal stress,
felt deep in your entrails as you die screaming.

Alas, when the Reaper decides to arrive
you won't kneel and beg for your life: Die screaming.

CHAPTER IV

BELLOW

*Da verguenza estar sola. El día entero
arde un rubor terrible en su mejilla.
(Pero la otra mejilla está eclipsada.).*

Rosario Castellanos – “Jornada de la Soltera”

JORNADA DE LA QUERIDA

Es frustrante estar sola. El día entero
arde un fuego sublime en su pupila
(pero la otra pupila está cegada.)

La querida se enrosca en su vientre intersticio,
pretende ser esencial y palpita:
y al vaivén de suspiros quebrantados
inevitablemente se deshace,
bramando enloquecida
como mujer sumida en aguas pantanosas
en las que cada lirio, cada enea
carcomida por insectos, cada junco
perenne, la ignoran
o se burlan de ella al ver su derrota.

De noche la querida
conjura la presencia de su amado.
tiembla de placer al sentir sus manos recorrerla
y gime levemente
inhalando su íntimo caudal.

Y la querida aguarda, aguarda, aguarda.

Y no ha encontrado aún el hechizo apropiado,
y no quiere morir
en su vientre intersticio, malogrado,

infestado por espectros dolientes
que detienen su fuga.

Adherida a una ventana la querida
débil flama acecha el retorno del infame
con ojos que los años han nublado
y la presa de su pecho se derrama.

*You're the shadow shadow lurking in me
and the lunatic light waiting in that shadow.
Ghostwriter of my halflife,
intention's ambush
I can't prepare for, ruthless whammy.*

Gail Mazur – “Dear Migraine”

DEAR SOLITUDE

You're the echo echo bouncing off me
and the mad cackle within that echo.
Iridescent shadow of a lifetime, soft footed
familiar I often avoid, unyielding confessor
You have me pouring my sorrows in the dark
naked and bleeding behind drawn curtains—
Ravenous creature, unwelcome guest
prowling this house, you're my daymare,
I am your incompatible stallion too blind
to navigate your churning, treacherous waters,
I've given up trying to predict you, so I've
decided to call a truce—
What you were to me, I've recreated;
I think we can finally coexist.

Irrevocably Yours,
Julieta

*Mis ojos de plaza pública
Mis ojos de silencio y de desierto.
el dulce tumulto interno
la soledad que despierta.*

Victor Huidobro – “Contacto Externo”

AISLAMIENTO

Mis ojos de plaza pública
Mis ojos de silencio y de desierto
el infierno que presencian
la predecible sorda agonía
implosionando en cada célula
arrasando con la lógica
y el tiempo burlón largo largo
hostigando desnudo desde el balcón

No regresará
ya ha regresado.

Sus palabras se enredan con las telarañas
el viento gime
la luna se interpone entre ambos

He won't return
he has returned

y mis labios resisten abrirse para abrazarlo
intento encender cada una de mis venas
intento penetrar sus pupilas
empequeñeciendo.

*No sé cuándo sufro más
si amándote o queriéndote olvidar
qué amargo es amar sin ser amado
y sentirse atado
a los recuerdos de un pasado.*

Camilo Blanes Cortés – “Con el Viento a Tu Favor”

CON EL VIENTO EN CONTRA

No sé cuándo sufro más
si esperándote o querer dar paso atrás
qué triste es amar así apartados
y saberse odiado de quien aún te cree su esclavo.

Camino confusa entre la nada
sabiendo que la otra te acompaña
Los días se pasan sin oír tu voz
el viento me lo advierte ya viene lo atroz.

Esta vida es un eco
con el viento contra mí
de esta vida de sombra
pronto tendré que huír.

No sé cuando sufro más
si esperándote o querer dar paso atrás
no sé si seguir quemando pábilos
para un hombre que sólo los apaga.

*Me deseabas sumisa
para demostrar tu hombría.
me deseabas fiel
y de la fidelidad te burlabas.*

Raquel Valle Senties – “Egoísmo”

ALTRUISMO

No me deseabas sumisa
de eso ya estabas harto.
No me deseabas fiel
lo nuestro nunca fue posesión mutua.
No me deseabas casta
ambos habitábamos submundos.
No me deseabas bella
mis defectos también eran los tuyos.
No me deseabas inteligente
el tema no lo ameritaba.
No me deseabas tonta
para saber valorarte.
No me deseabas madre
para así disfrutarnos.
No me deseabas confiada
para saber cuestionarte.
No me deseabas fría
nuestro fuego interior ardía.
No me deseabas fuerte:
“Ríndete, si es necesario”.
No me deseabas débil
para poder apoyarte.
Y tú que nada exigiste
¿Qué lograste darme a cambio?
Días de ilusiones
por un retorno feliz
e irreversible. Noches de ilusiones
conversando hasta la madrugada
inhalando tu aroma
y aferrada a tu cuerpo.
Cinco años de soledad
mientras derretías cadenas.

*Me gusta cuando callas porque estas como ausente
y me oyes desde lejos, y mi voz no te toca
Parece que los ojos se te hubieran volado
y parece que un beso te cerrara la boca.*

Pablo Neruda - "Me Gusta Cuando Callas"

NO ME GUSTA QUE CALLES

No me gusta que calles porque de mí te alejas
Sumiéndote en la bruma de lo que te derroca.
Sé que ya no me escuchas, ni distingues mi rostro,
Y sé que las palabras se ahogaron en tu boca.

Como con cada encuentro nos entregamos todo,
No existe recoveco que aún no haya sido mío.
Amante poseído, me inquieta tu silencio
Y me inquieta perderte en ese gran vacío.

No me gusta que calles porque de mí te alejas
Y habitas otros mundos poblados de murmullos
Sumiéndote en la bruma cada vez más intenso:
Déjame formar parte de esos silencios tuyos.

Déjame que te toque, romper así el encanto
Que el fuego de mi cuerpo derrita tanto hielo.
Desahoga tus penas, deja correr el llanto:
Cada gota una perla que decore mi cielo.

No me gusta que calles porque de mí te alejas
Navegas otros mares envueltos de amargura
Un simple parpadeo, un brillo de tus ojos
Y en tí yo desfallezco, sedienta de ternura.

*Nos tiramos en la cama con el miedo
de morir mientras dormimos.
Nos lavamos los dientes para evitar
el horror de la boca vacía.*

Ricardo Orozco Castellanos – “Morir Mientras Dormimos”

NOS TIRAMOS A LA CAMA SILENCIOSOS

Nos tiramos a la cama silenciosos,
con temor a descubrirnos.

Nos cubrimos por completo sin deseos
de desear tanta carne no encendida.

Murmuramos mil excusas desvariadas
que mantengan nuestros labios apartados.

Inhalamos rencorosos
aire rancio, estéril, sofocante
tras concluir otro encuentro de
argumentos inventados, nocherniegos.

Alzamos témpanos entre ambos
contra el daño físico, permanente.

Deambulamos somnolientos
allá afuera, aplazando retornos.

Nos privamos de amistades,
para no revelarnos ante el mundo.

Nos disfrazamos de normalidad,
portando la máscara adecuada.
Evitamos toda clase de reuniones,
y ya en casa, solos,
nos hacemos diminutos, invisibles.

Nos tragamos las palabras cariñosas.
Y ya en casa, solos,
nos tiramos a la cama silenciosos
con temor a descubrirnos.

*Se va de ti mi cuerpo gota a gota.
Se va mi cara en un óleo sordo;
se van mis manos en azogue suelto;
se van mis pies en dos tiempos de polvo
¡Se te va todo! ¡Se nos va todo!*

Gabriela Mistral – “Ausencia”

AUSENCIA

Se va de mí tu sombra día a día.
Se va la esperanza fallecida;
Se van mis manos a surcar tu cielo;
Se van mis pies a servirte de guía.

¡Se te va todo! ¡Se nos va todo!

Se va mi vaho que te cubrió entero
Durante noches de gritos babélicos.
Se van mis huellas que trazaron con miel
Sendero recto hasta tu tibio vientre.

Y se te va la sonrisa elocuente,
Al ver los negros columpios bajo mis ojos.
Me voy de ti, levitando solemne:
Como fantasma rondando su sepulcro.

Me voy de ti arrullando mis lamentos,
Los que después sumiré en el fango.
Y en tu mirada ya no habrá reflejo
Del gran fuego donde nos consumimos.

Sudor sería y brotaría de tus poros
En las horas implacables, mitigando.
Tu sangre fuese y ardiendo correría
Extinguiendo el enjambre maligno,
¡Y excitaría tu corazón leonesco
Donde sé que aún yo habito!

¡Se te va todo! ¡Se nos va todo!

*Quiero morir cuando decline el día,
en altamar, y con la cara al cielo;
donde parezca un sueño la agonía,
Y el alma un ave que remonta el vuelo.*

Manuel Gutierrez Nájera – “Para Entonces”

CANTO DE REBELDÍA

No moriré al declinar el día,
cerca del mar, contemplando aquel cielo;
donde mi madre descansa todavía,
y a quien yo amo aún es su prisionero.

No escucharé el canto delirante,
ya sumergida en inefable duelo;
de aquel mar obstinado y arrogante
que sólo me ha traído desconsuelo.

No moriré cuando el sol se hunda
ante el peso malsano de la sombra,
seré un tigre de la selva profunda,
quien todos conocen, pero nadie nombra.

No moriré, prolongaré los años,
antes que el mar reclame mi estadía;
viviré a pelo, sin reparar en daños,
que sea mi vida un canto de rebeldía.

*Si me voy este otoño,
entiérrame bajo el oro pequeño de los trigos,
en el campo,
para seguir cantando a la intemperie.*

Enriqueta Ochoa – “Despedida”

DESPEDIDA

Si me voy este verano,
entiérrenme bajo la sangre coagulada del granado,
en el patio,
para vertirme cada primavera.
No me cierren los ojos.
No fuercen estas manos a cerrarse.
Mi vida ha sido un grito amordazado,
un deambular solitario,
una historia frustrada
que compartí a retazos con corazones francos.
Y no quiero vagar después de muerto
por ningún lado,
como esos seres infelices,
almas bifurcadas,
transitando dos mundos.
Yo quiero que un ceniztle vuele
desde lo alto de los Picachos
a llenar aquel patio
con sus cantos agudos, delirantes como mi vida,
si me voy este verano.

*Esta tarde estoy cansado, padre.
Demasiadas palabras me pesan,
tantos libros que caen de mis manos.
El tiempo pesa, duele la nostalgia,
el horizonte imposible.*

Ricardo Orozco Castellanos – “Esta Tarde”

CONFESIONES

Esta tarde estoy cansada, madre.
Demasiados sentimientos agobian,
tántas lagrimas derramadas.
Los años pesan, la nostalgia ahoga,
la esperanza, apenas se vislumbra.

He perdido las ilusiones que tenía, madre,
me duele la luna llena bañándome de plata.
Las brisas han dejado de existir, se escaparon
por las heridas abiertas de mi alma.

Son muchos los amores que se han ido, madre,
por culpa de esta maldita hambre,
una lista interminable de inconsistencias
a lo largo de los años, madre.

Estoy cansada y no te tengo, madre.
Ciega deambulo por rumbos sin nombre,
debatiendo con ilusos igual que yo.
Navego a diario dentro de una espesa niebla,
esperando ver el muelle destinado
a ser mío para arrojar el ancla.

Estoy sola y cansada y es de noche, madre.
Sorbo un café negro, amargo,
me alimento del aire de otros,
aún hay obstáculos en el camino
entre él y yo, madre, fantasmas
que intentan arrancarlo de mi lado.

Estoy desnuda y tiemblo, madre,
de rodillas en medio de la calle.
Es de noche y se avecina el último diluvio,
no estoy segura si estas ruinas

se mantendrán firmes.

Ya empiezo a desintegrarme, madre,
acabada y de rodillas en medio
de esta maldita calle.

CHAPTER V

HOWL

*Are they unmaking everything?
Are they tuning the world sitar?
Are they taking an ice pick to being?
Are they enduring freedom in Kandahar?*

Bruce Smith – “What Are They Doing in the Next Room?”

WHAT IS SHE DOING IN THE NEXT ROOM?

Is she unmaking everything?
Is she kissing her father’s ghost?
Is she fending off her childhood rapist?
Is she gnawing on bones from former affairs?

Cries, meant to be heard, in the dark.
Cries like someone riding a night mare.
Cries like the day she finally gave birth.
Cries like her mother recoiling from him.

And the artist met the poet and loving
became quicksand and she needed a vice
after contending and slicing was slicing
and love was a sore albatross

erecting a reflective wall between them
with panic buttons on either side.
Cries like the neighbor attacked by her spouse
while she slept, an alcohol-induced seizure.

The past is a relentless, clamoring presence.
Arthritic limbs uncoil to embrace him.
Why am I undone?
Her cracked lips hardly move.

Is she unraveling yet?

Is she clawing from within?
Is she tearing off her frock?
Is she painting gray hurricanes?
Can she hear me as I write their tragedy?

*Cuando lo único que escribes
no da para llenar el requisito
la palabra forzada, el ritmo escueto
se siente oscuro, frío por dentro.*

Ricardo Aguilar Melantzón – “El Rojo Sello de Tus Labios”

EL SELLO IRREVERSIBLE

Cuando lo único que amaste
ronda la cama matrimonial
arrastrándose, ocultando el rostro
se siente oscuro, frío por dentro
se discierne un futuro gris
que tritura los huesos
y el espectro de aquella concubina te acosa,
luego, con la lengua hechizada
por el licor, susurras su nombre
y sientes pudrirte por dentro,
incapaz de articular tu desprecio hacia la bestia,
de arañarle la espalda con saña,
rehusas dormir junto a aquel cuerpo,
asqueada por saberlo ya ajeno,
circulas entre hipócritas sus chismes, y las risas
con el rubor en tu rostro traicionando el pudor,
maldiciendo por siempre el lugar y la ocasión
en el que ambos coincidieron ese día, en aquél parque,
fijando un sello irreversible a la mutua desintegración
de dos desposados.

This was once a love poem, before its haunches thickened, its breath grew short, before it found itself sitting, perplexed and a little embarrassed, on the fender of a parked car.

Jane Hirshfield – “This Was Once a Love Poem”

THIS WAS ONCE A LOVE POEM

This was once a love poem,
before time
and constant wear left scars,
before it grew whiskers and a permanent
hunchback, triggering a series of cruel taunts
by thick-knuckled troglodytes.

It remembers wrapping itself in silks,
wearing long, white gloves to fancy parties,
applying rouge.

Once, it devoured an entire carrot cake,
felt sublimely guilty, fed the remaining
miniature sugar carrots to its cat.

Once, it pretended to have reached an
enlightened state, boasted in public forums,
recanted by nightfall.

It danced naked on rooftops and crowded streets.
It was irrepressible then, this poem. No persistent
arthritis to keep its swift paintbrush from
imbuing glints of mischief on green jays perched
upon mesquite trees.

The passion has not ebbed.
Still, it knows surrender. It has begun to loosen
its grip upon that other poem.

Yes. It is time to contemplate:
a new niche. A place less balmy, one not
thriving with flora & fauna.

*No quiero ser quien soy. La avara suerte
me ha deparado el siglo diecisiete,
el polvo y la rutina de Castilla,
las cosas repetidas, la mañana
que, prometiendo el hoy, nos da la víspera.*

Jorge Luis Borges – “Ni Siquiera Soy Polvo”

NI SIQUIERA SOY SOMBRA

No deseo esta piel. Un creador infame
rehusó lanzarme aquí como halcón,
soy polvo de una roca maltratada,
el eco de sus pasos, árbol estéril
que, al no dar fruto, se vuelve leña,
la terquedad de una lluvia veraniega,
reflejo fulgurante sobre el lago
y un extraño anhelo de ser sombra.

Soy mujer ingenua. Un susurro de olas
me confió que moriría sin él un día,
bordando su nombre en sábanas de seda.
Vendí mi corazón y compré un poema
que entrelaza mi voz con la de Borges:
él se queja del siglo diecisiete
carente de aventuras justicieras,
yo comparto mi rechazo por el cuerpo
condenado a jamás surcar los cielos,
él dice ser *un hombre entrado en años*,
yo declaro madurez a mis cuarenta,
él nos confía sus sueños de Quijote,
yo apenas si vislumbro mi destino
enredado desde siempre con el duelo.

Hoy espero que el hueco de mi pecho
no me inquiete con silbidos nocherniegos.
El viento los incita. Ya le conozco
su pasión por la música suscitada.
No soy este poema. Yo, sin corazón,
seré aquella leona. Seré un halcón.
No quiero ya renegar de esta piel
que a diario se debate con el tiempo
y que resiste arrojarse entera
a las profundidades del océano.

¿El océano? Mi piel (que se regenera)

no sabe del anhelo que me impulsa.
Ni siquiera soy sombra. Soy ese halcón
que sueña ser mujer quien disfruta
perderse en las letras de Borges,
experto en laberintos de su propia
autoría con rasgos delirantes...

Soy polvo, soy roca, soy árbol estéril.
Soy lluvia, soy reflejo, soy mujer ingenua.
No soy este poema. Yo, sin corazón,
ni siquiera soy sombra.

*This little crying life dissolve
it, if you wish,
as a sponge from a blackboard
wipes an ephemeral scrawl.*

Eugenio Montale – “Dissolve It, If You Wish”

PYRO LOVER

This pathetic little poem,
burn it, if you wish,
as a mischievous child scorches
a harmless bug using the
lethal rays of an unwitting sun.

My own doubt-filled
existence
refuses to stop orbiting
your unwillingness.

My very persistence once
justified the insane disorder
which during my travels
I had forgotten.

These carefully woven words
are my testimony to a passion
without any reciprocity.

Whenever I have heard the
vaguest hints of affection,
my pulse has quickened, blurring
all reason, but much to your delight
and peace of mind, I have shown restraint;
I have even gained some wisdom.
choosing, instead, to spend long,
desolate hours penning pathetic,
little poems for your ghost.

BURN THEM ALL, if you wish.

*Todo me lo diste, todo:
el ritmo azul de las cunas
en cuentos maravillosos
glosados de suaves músicas.*

Maria Eugenia Vaz Ferreira – “Historia Póstuma”

HISTORIA PÓSTUMA

Todo me lo diste, todo:
La disonancia de espectros
Irrumpiendo cada sueño
Vociferando secretos...
Las promesas incumplidas
Vacías como el silencio,
Las caricias compartidas
Tan sucias como tu mente...
Los crepúsculos malditos
De noches agonizantes
Aguardando tu partida
Saturada de rencores...
Las llamadas inconclusas
De furtivas escapadas
La soledad, el olvido,
Y ésta vil incertidumbre.

*I would have wanted to be rough and
essential
as the pebbles you turn over
gnawed by the sea salt;
a splinter outside time, witness
to a cold, perpetual will.*

Eugenio Montale – “Rough and Essential”

REFLECTIONS

I would have wanted to be still and
quiet
as a pond that no one disturbs. A mirror
for the skies above, silently
witnessing the passage of birds.

No, I was a woman speeding through life;
one bent on defining those hungers that
give no respite.

A woman who refused to delay self-gratification.
Someone who flew very close to evil and
then howled her pain to the universe.

The comfort I needed was not found in
your intellectual acrobatics.

Yet, I have no regrets.
I leave you as you lure
the feeble-minded with your talk.
And I—
I slowly turn away from your once
quiet fire.

*Es media noche. En medio del recinto
está solo el cadáver de la hermosa . . .
Y en la pared, desmantelada y fría,
de su cara proyectase la sombra.*

Julio Florez – “Es Media Noche”

IMAGEN

Es media noche. En medio del recinto
está solo el cadáver de la hermosa . . .
y cerca de ella una pintura al óleo
representando el rostro amado.
Una figura se acerca, y en el oído
de la mujer inerte ésta susurra;
y en la pintura, el mismo gesto amargo
se dibuja en el rostro de su amado.
Y aquél susurro: No fui feliz a tu lado,
ni tú tampoco lo fuiste, compañera.
Y en cada párpado por fin descansa
la imagen falsa que forjó de ambos.

*Miro tu tumba llena de matorros salvajes
y quiero estirarme sobre tus huesos largos
y besar cada cuenca vacía
e imaginar que esa grama es tu pubis.*

Luz Maria Umpierre – “Bella Ilusión Que Fugaz”

BELLA PERMANENCIA

Miro su tumba llena de matorros salvajes
y quiero sentarme a invocar su fantasma
y contarle la única verdad
y convencerla que no cargo culpa alguna.
Quiero ayudarle a comprender los motivos,
Señora,
quiero que entierre a su lado tanto odio innecesario
que amargó su existencia por demasiados años
quiero que comprenda por qué nunca le perteneció,
ese hombre mal amado,
el mismo que la rehusaba
noche a noche con excusas;
hombre incomprendido,
hombre desanimado,
hombre nocturno
que debatía si continuar
con su acto de fiel compañero
o mandarlo todo al diablo.
Quiero que recorra mi vía crucis
y contemple impasible este idilio
de dos almas
y susurrarle al oído
la crónica de su génesis
en aquel parque con nombre de viejo huracán
y asegurarle que nadie urdió ningún plan
para hablarnos sólo con la mirada
excluyendo al mundo exterior
totalmente
y que una fuerza mayor
creó esa atracción
avivó la llama y
nos arrasó.
Es noviembre otra vez, Señora.
no le guardamos duelo;
él ya superó su ausencia
acunándose en mi abrazo y lealtad
pero a veces me despiertan sus aullidos

de intenso dolor o culpa
que no ha logrado espantar
de su alma.
Venga, venga, hable conmigo.
yo también conozco el odio
que consume.
Extirpemos juntas el veneno
y lo escupiremos sobre la tierra,
cal y sal,
tierra que no traiciona
santificada.
Miro su tumba
y quiero invocar
y explicar
y convencer
y la sal
y la cal
penetran todo
y sé, Señora,
que esta tarde
de este noviembre mezquino
yo lo amo.

*I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.*

Robert Frost – “Acquainted with the Night”

I HAVE BEEN ONE CONVERSANT WITH THIS HEART

I have been one conversant with this heart.
I have experienced pain, and then again,
I have not thought it was in vain to part.
I have wrung out an opulence of tears.
I have meandered through darkened paths,
Setting bonfires to extinguish fears.
I have stopped breathing and stood quite still
As lustful spirits stirred from fragile slumber
To squeeze old sins from the tip of a quill
With malicious intent to reveal all:
Entanglements of the flesh sans passion,
Nocturnal tremors conjured by moon glow
Creating faults upon glass surfaces, like art
I have been one conversant with this heart.

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APPENDIX

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In 1978, Julieta Corpus crossed the Progreso International Bridge into the Rio Grande Valley, leaving behind her ombligo, but not her strong sense of Mexican culture and love for her native tongue. She describes her poems as attempts to encapsulate a moment, an emotion, aiming to leave an indelible mark in her readers. Her poems have been published in *Tendiendo Puentes*, *The Mesquite Review*, UTPA's *Gallery Magazine*, *Festiva: The Writers Issue*. Her latest pride and joy is a compact disc titled: *Corazón Parlante*, a compilation of twelve original love poems with musical accompaniment by local musician Mario Mora from *Dulce Tóxico*. Julieta has done translations from English to Spanish for various authors, including Irene Silva Lara's poetry collection titled, *Enduring Azucares*, and Alan Oak's *Darklings*. Currently, she is translating a series of short feminist fairy tales written by Sara Rafael Garcia, author of *Las Niñas*. Julieta Corpus has earned a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Rio Grande Valley. She can be reached at nocturnalflor@yahoo.com.