

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Ximena Gómez: Two Poems (in English and Spanish)

Ximena Gómez · Thursday, January 4th, 2024

The Unmade Bed

Translated by the Author and George Franklin

You've spent hours looking through the window.
For two days in a row, it hasn't stopped raining.
Water and mist have covered the bridges,
the tunnels and streets that lead to your house.
Lying on the sofa with a book on your lap,
you pretend to be reading, you stand up, you look out,
and distracted you listen to the approaching sounds:
the *achoo* of someone's cold, the scuffing of boots,
outside the doormat, wiped cleaned from the deluge.
But these are just illusions. No one comes to your door.

Day before yesterday, at dusk, the rain started,
and you looked at the house where no one lives,
that big house on the corner painted with stucco,
where a truck would arrive after midnight.
In the early morning, you stood by the window
taking little sips of coffee from a cup,
staring at your flip-flops, your toenails,
hard as ivory, untrimmed for weeks,
staring at your hands with little blue veins,
your nightgown so loose...

Maybe it will stop raining.

Noah's raven appeared early in the morning,
Now an uncertain light peeks out from the left.
But you're still watching the rain. At times
in the room you hear your husband's moans,
the shouts of the men who came to take him away.
Sometimes you lie down, you relive everything:
the unmade bed, the clothes on the floor,
his photos and his camera, a pocket calendar,

his gagged crying... but he is no longer there.
He is not coming to your door.

The footsteps you hear approaching
belong to the mailman.

*

La Cama Sin Tender

Te la has pasado horas mirando por el vidrio.
Por dos días seguidos no para de llover.
El agua y la neblina han tapado los puentes
los túneles y calles que van hasta tu casa.
Tendida en el sofá, con un libro en las piernas,
haces como que lees, te levantas, te asomas
y distraída escuchas sonidos que se acercan:
el achís de un catarro, el roce de unas botas,
que afuera en el tapete se limpian del diluvio,
pero son ilusiones. Nadie llega a tu puerta.

Antier anocheecía, empezaba a llover
y observabas la casa donde no vive nadie,
el caserón de esquina pintado con estuco,
donde llega un camión después de medianoche.
Temprano levantada, te pusiste ante el vidrio
bebías de una taza sorbitos de café
te mirabas las chanclas, las uñas de los pies
duras como el marfil, sin cortar por semanas
te mirabas las manos con venitas azules,
el camión tan suelto...

Tal vez va a descampar.

El cuervo de Noé se apareció temprano
y una luz indecisa se asoma por la izquierda,
pero tú aún sigues observando la lluvia.
A veces oyes quejas del marido en el cuarto,
los gritos de los hombres que entraron a llevárselo.
A veces te recuestas, vuelves a vivir todo:
la cama sin tender, la ropa por el suelo,
sus fotos y su cámara, un trivial calendario,
su llanto con mordaza... pero él ya no está ahí,
ni viene hacia tu puerta.

Los que oyes acercándose
son pasos del cartero.

*

In Purgatory

Translated by the Author and George Franklin

*I hear my father saying that my mother
sometimes at noon, goes down the stairs,
from our house, up on a clifftop.
He tells me the ravine is deep and rocky,
and he panics she could slip off.*

Neither of my parents are used to heights,
they're dwellers of savannahs, cities, and valleys,
and have never had to climb stairs,

narrow and rusted, with the pit below them,
hearing the vultures and the wind howling
and knowing that no one returns from that depth.

I don't know why our house in the valley was demolished,
that place full of sun, with a rock on the patio,
or how we ended up on the edge of a cliff,

or why my two old people still live there.
In flowerpots she nurses geraniums and carnations,
he reads the papers and solves crossword puzzles.

When she goes down to the village, he stands
at the window, nervously waits for her,
sees her slowly coming back, holding onto the rail,

and when he finally sees her entering the door,
wraps her in a shawl and serves her coffee.
She takes little sips and stops trembling.

*

En El Purgatorio

*Le escucho a mi papá decir que mi mamá
a medio día, a veces, baja los escalones
desde la casa nuestra, arriba en un peñasco.
Me dice que el barranco le parece profundo
y que le da terror de que ella se resbale.*

Ninguno de mis padres es persona de alturas,
son gente de sabanas, de ciudades y valles
y que jamás tuvieron que andar por escaleras

angostas y oxidadas, con la fosa debajo,

escuchando los buitres y el aullido del viento
y sabiendo que nadie regresa de ese fondo.

No sé por qué tumbaron nuestra casa del valle,
ese lugar soleado, con la roca en el patio,
ni por qué terminamos al borde de un barranco,

ni por qué mis dos viejos aún viven ahí.
Ella cuida en macetas geranios y claveles,
él lee los periódicos, resuelve crucigramas.

Cuando ella baja al pueblo él se queda de pie
frente de la ventana e impaciente la espera.
La ve volver, muy lenta, cogida al pasamanos

y cuando finalmente la ve entrar por la puerta,
le echa una ruana encima y le sirve café.
Ella bebe sorbitos y deja de temblar.



Conversations About Water by Ximena Gómez & George Franklin

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