

poetry anthology II

*the Language of the Drums | songs of the Rivers | prayer |
grandma | bahian Free Will to Say I Love You | to my melanated
love | they won't rid themselves of me so quick | the obsolete value
of No*

Rosa Chamorro | Sara Regina | Jho Ambrósia | Luana Galoni | Noemi
Alfieri

| Colombia | Brazil | Italy |

translated by Stephanie Reist

Rosa Chamorro

the Language of the Drums

Open the palms of your hands.

There is no world yet. Push the wind to the drumhead. A strike. The crying begins, the beginning of all things. I am history, song. The word that echoes through thousands of years out of the resistance to death. Rebellion. As my body hits the earth I ask myself about the pain of my people. I expel the sweat of life. I breathe into the beast. Called, I held all of us within me. Answered, we have conquered fear. We have penetrated the night with our ancestors. The light is old, it has left the calluses of sperm on our hands. Listen to what we are. The gods speak it.

songs of the Rivers

In my grandma there remained something of the rivers
utterly hers that she carried from one side to the other
I waited to return
in one of her currents

To save me

prayer

Save me
Josefina
Before the world hurls me into the chaos of its noise

Lull me
Sway me
in this back and forth
Known only
to men and women
with footsteps in flight

Sing to me, Josefina
now I am a fish
keep time on the washboard
Before the sun opens like a mirror on the water
and hides the traces

I want to save myself
without leaving,
Josefina

Take me as far as memory will allow
teach me to wring out our memories
returning to them to keep them alive
to continue singing

grandma

They hit you in the head too
and didn't knock you down

I already imagine you, grandma, listening to the voice of the bush
Seeing their stormy spirit clear
Saving you in the monstrosity of their breath
in a timeless night

They didn't knock you down grandma
In the plantations
or in the heated darkness of the mine
Not even, grandma
When, indeed, they took your children, in the hunger of the moon

Not with the weight of their God
or the club of their law

Grandma,

in song you waited for the lost return
and in your hair dawned the promise of a new day

They, didn't see you coming
they were distracted by the good black woman
Trusting in the seal like a stain in her last name
Espriella, López, Mina... from generation to generation
but you knew that they brought an invisible cage
And that's why
they didn't knock you down

And here I stand
fighting with those that live in the night of yesterday,

And no, no grandma
They won't knock me down.

*to Harriet Tubman, to my grandmother Josefina
and to all the Black women of the Americas*

Sara Regina

bahian Free Will to Say I Love You

Like carnival season they were born

In the Bahian alcove
Configurations and reconfigurations of love between me and you

He came like a certain Maracás Indian

Allowing me the rhythm of a song appropriate for weaving
Intimate enchantments in my heart

He rocked me sweet in the moonlight of the backlands
Presented me with words of justice

Leading me to hear sounds and smiles, never in vain
Trumpteting the heartiness of a true warrior
Warming me without cannibalism

But in a warmer and hotter way
A tender way, a way all his own of engaging himself

He perpetrated high temperatures in my soul
He activated within me a never-ending process,

So magical to love

In the most erosive and explosive way

Rending in his own way to the soft and clairvoyant emotion

And Me? Who thought that I had a mechanical and unshakeable heart
I say that I love you and today I reach my soul
The grave serenade and intense attitude of being a Free, dreaming woman,
Clear, expressive and unique

Just like the glowing northeastern country moon of Bahia

Black, firm, intense, beautiful and shrewd

Just like the early loving night

Of Humaitá in the Bay of All Saints

Fia Di Dona Dorva america dances africa

Dance girl dance!

Dance for me to the sound of the CANDOMBE

Dance black girl dance

The agogô is beating so:

Pim pim pim pim pim

Pim pim pim pim pim

Dance black girl dance

Dance to the JAZZ that auntie

Chanted and enchanted up North

And made life within the rhythm of death

Dance and sing

My girl

Sing the IJEXÁ that rings out

On the hill of Pelourinho

Sing, dance, swing and grind

To the REGGAE of São Luiz

With the MARACATÚ of Olinda,
Before the water takes it over
Like you took over me

Sing, my black girl
Dance the FUNK of life
And bring the peace
Of the dance of my soul
Swing your soles
In the dusty room
Of the CALANGO of the mines
My grandma made coffee with
Cornbread, for you and me
Dance black girl sing
The low-brow BAIÃO
That browbeats the browbeaters
And enchants the browbeaten

Come girl!
Trip up my
CAPOEIRA ANGOLA heart
And swing through the lust
I have in my hands
Berimbau, Berimbau
Berimbau, Berimbau, Berimbau

Luana Galoni
to my melanated love

to my melanated love,
in the midst of my selfishness
of the privilege of the palette
of more or less nothing
i'm already asking for forgiveness and permission
but
sometimes i wanted to paint you with other color so
that others could see you beyond your tone
and could discover all that I know
i wanted to make you a rainbow to see every injury smile
and licked-wound heal.
i wanted to color you sky blue
sea blue
i wanted you indigo
to see if all of this commotion would go away
dissolve
taking on a different sound
a different chord,
but speaking of color,
I wanted you a full pallet
a shade of everything that you can become
my melanated love,
I just wanted you my love
without them reminding me on every corner that
they prod your open wounds
every time they see us from afar,
afraid.
I wanted to give you back every place
and
feeling unlived,
and loves refused
and resumés rejected.
to my melanated love
my melanated friend

my melandated author
my melanated painter
my melanated father,
i wanted to make you just father
just painter
just author
just friend
just love.
i wanted you orange,
red,
i love red,
but
more than that
i wanted that I,
of that almost high privilege of the more or less nothing palette, that
your color,
is,
this,
beautiful,
yes,
your lips,
mhmm,
this color,
this exact one,
that it did not make you yell only out of pain. That it
was just
as it is,
beautiful
your color

Noemi Alfieri

they won't rid themselves of me so quick

Foreigner: never.

Citizen of nowhere
Soul from all over,
Cursed witch,
Scourge.

They won't rid themselves of me so quick

the obsolete value of No

No.

Two obsolete letters together on a wave.
Castaways on the edge of two continents
they group months of voyage on a single hope.
Two thousand people per day on the border of life,
three thousand knives in the heart of Damascus.

Two or three solemn voices
from their comfortable leather chairs
say that no, we do not have the resources
to let the souls over the wall,
they have to stay on the side of death.

That no, no we cannot allow

That terrorist powers
Inculcate the germ of violence in prosperous Europe
of the unemployed
of the homeless
of debts
of the Euro.

Let them have the atrocities we have created!
— say the hidden ones

Two loose letters come together

In front of the exhausted eyes of children
the determination of a father
the strength of a mother carrying her child
the generations of the holocaust of our millenium

Two loose letters come together
They form a knot in the middle of your stomach.
They say enough
that today, tomorrow, always
will be the time of no.
