

## 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*

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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.

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