

Yanira Marimón

Six Poems

Translated from Spanish by Pamela Carmell

Yanira Marimón, (b. Matanzas, Cuba, 1971) is a member of the younger generation of writers in Cuba who have lived their entire lives under a restrictive government. Now with the influx of tourists and the increased availability of the internet, they are able to cast their gaze beyond their island. Their writing addresses a yearning for a more vital homeland, more opportunities to explore other cultures, and their loneliness for exiled countrymen absent for so many decades.

Marimón continues her family's literary tradition. Her father, Luis Marimón, a celebrated poet, fled to the US, where he died in 1994. Recently, Ms. Marimón collected her father's poems into two anthologies that have rekindled interest in his work.

As editor of the literary journal *Revista Matanzas*, Marimón is an active part of the vital art center Matanzas has become. She has also published children's novels and is a well-regarded literary critic.

Marimón's books have received many awards, including the Premio de Poesía José Jacinto Milanés, presented by UNEAC, Cuba's writers' union, for her collection *Contemplación vs. Acto*. The poems in this translation are from that collection.

Marimón received the 2016 Rosalia de Castro Prize for Poetry in Galicia, Spain, for her collection *Pequeña eternidad*.

P. C.

De noche, la ciudad

a mi padre

Ya no hay lumínicos en las calles
solo estrellas en el cielo
y una luna grande y redonda algunos días al mes.
Mis hijos aprenden las sílabas en libros extraños.
Todo es más real
más dado a perecer.

Ya no hay carteles brillantes
donde descubrir la fuerza de las palabras
su misterio.
Solo nos queda la noche
y una luna enorme y redonda
algunos días al mes.

No sé si podrás entenderlo
no sé si puedes.

Desde la eternidad, Céline observa Paris

Louis-Ferdinand Céline observa Paris desde la eternidad. Sabe que su ciudad no es una fiesta. Lo sabe y llora con sincera agonía.

De forma cíclica ve pasar su vida: su niñez y adolescencia en el pasaje Choiseul, la pobreza extrema, sostenida. A su madre inválida reparando encajes viejos, la escalera de caracol que debían subir una y otra vez, eternamente. Los fideos y las gachas en su plato, la Guerra.

Céline busca, pero no logra ver los Campos Elíseos, sólo suburbios donde debía haber luces, oscuridad, medios locos, hombres con heridas, historias clínicas abiertas de él mismo, pacientes pobres, sacerdotes agonizantes trepando las ventanas

Louis-Ferdinand Céline observa Paris desde la eternidad. Y cambia la vista.

At Night, the City

for my father

There are no neon signs now on the streets
only stars in the sky
a big, round moon a few days a month.
My children learn their letters in foreign books.
Everything is more clear cut
more likely to perish.

There are no more glossy posters
where we discovered the power of words
their mystery.
All we have left is the night
and a huge, round moon
a few days a month.

I don't know if you could understand that.
I don't know if you can.

From Eternity, Céline Observes Paris

Louis-Ferdinand Céline observes Paris from eternity. He knows his city is nothing to celebrate. He knows it and cries in sincere agony.

He sees the cycle of his life pass by: his childhood and youth in the Passage Choiseul, the extreme, unrelenting poverty. His crippled mother mending old lace, the winding staircase they had to climb time and time again, eternally. The thin soup and porridge in his bowl, the War.

Céline looks all around, but he can't make out the Champs Elysées, just the outskirts where there should be lights, darkness, half-crazed people, men with wounds, his own hospital records lying open, poor patients, priests in agony clambering out the windows.

Louis-Ferdinand Céline observes Paris from eternity. And he turns his gaze elsewhere.

Incapacidad del lente

Tras el clic de una cámara
la señora sonríe.
Tiene la piel blanquísima y busca—dice—
fotografiar lo exótico de cada rostro cansado.

La miseria también es digna de eternizarse,
traduzco de su cuidadoso inglés
mientras enfoca despacio su lente,
primero en un edificio destruido
donde niños descalzos juegan a las escondidas,
luego en el rostro sin edad de un vagabundo.

Yo la miro
asiento con mi cabeza
desconcertada también sonrío.

Al borde de un río extranjero

Al borde de un río extranjero
un hombre extranjero mira a los patos
a los poquísimos patos que a esta hora del día
copulan con fuerza
en su instinto terco por la supervivencia.

Es curioso—piensa—
la similitud de las suertes
entre un hombre, un ave y un río.

Y en ese preciso instante
en que el Manzanares corre tranquilo
y los patos revolotean
quisiera ser, no el hombre,
sino el río extranjero de aguas quietas
o al menos una de esas aves
que ahora ha levantado el vuelo.

The Failing of the Lens

After the click of a camera
 the lady smiles.
 Her skin is so very white and she is trying—she says—
 to photograph the exotic in every tired face.

Misery is also worthy of being immortalized.
 I translate from her careful English
 as she slowly focuses her lens,
 first on the ruins of a building
 where barefoot children play hide-and-seek,
 then on the ageless face of a beggar.

I look at her
 nod my head
 disconcerted I too smile.

On the Bank of a Foreign River

On the bank of a foreign river
 a foreign man watches the ducks
 the handful of ducks that at this time of day
 copulate with a fury
 in their stubborn instinct for survival.

It's strange, he thinks,
 how similar are the fortunes
 of a man, a bird and a river.

And at that very moment
 when the Manzanares River flows peacefully
 and the ducks flutter around
 I would like to be, not the man
 but the foreign river with its quiet waters
 or at least one of those birds
 that have now lifted off in flight.

Manantial

a Carmen Sofía

Alguien dijo:
Es conveniente tener
agua limpia frente a tu casa
aleja lo triste
las distancias
el escarnio.

Crecí
con esa certeza
y aunque tuve
sin remedio
penas
distancia
escarnio
—tengo un charco—, me decía
mi resguardo
mi agua de limpiar los miedos.

Más tarde descubrí
con espanto
cómo las cloacas
las aguas albañales
llegaban hasta mi manantial
contaminándolo
haciéndolo sucio
sin remedio.

Patria

Cómo sería pensarte desde lejos
detenida en mi memoria
ausente de tu luz
tu demasiado luz.

Imaginar tus verdes
desde el blanco absurdo de la nieve
no ser ya más la imagen que moldeaste:
barro seco yedra abrojo en el camino.

Cómo sería, Patria.

Spring

for Carmen Sofia

Someone once said:
It's a good idea to have
clean water in front of your house
it washes away sadness
distances
derision.

I grew up
with that certainty
and even though I had
troubles
distances
derision
and no remedy for them
"I have a pond," I told myself
my protection
my water to wash away my fears.

Much later I discovered
to my horror
how the sewers
their filthy waters
reached all the way to my spring
contaminating it
fouling it
and no remedy for that.

Homeland

What would it be like to think about you from far away
arrested in my memory
absent from your light
your too bright light.

To imagine your greens
from the absurd white of snow
to no longer be the image you molded:
dried clay ivy thorny weed in the road.

What would that be like, Homeland.