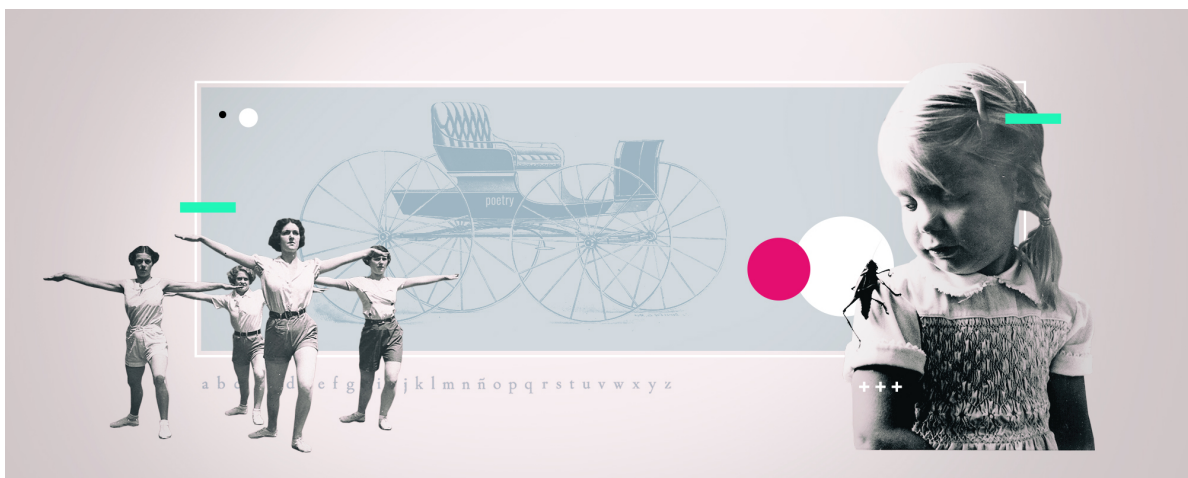


ANTHOLOGY OF FEMINIST POETRY

Berta García Faet: Call it rebellion

Translated by Kelsi Vanada

Berta García Faet



“For me poetry and feminism share something profound. Poetry is a privileged space and time for thought (and for feeling): language looks at itself slowly, it surprises itself, maybe it even makes up with itself. Language, when it is poetic, narrows and then expands our perception of the world. The feminist gaze also comes to rest, and barely passes, on and at the languages that make us historic and political subjects; languages that are revealed also as ideology. Just as poetry becomes hyperconsciousness, an “alert” sensibility open to questioning everything that seemed unquestionable. These poems from the work *La edad de merecer* (*The Eligible Age*, translated by Kelsi Vanada (2018); the title reproduces and reinterprets tragically the well-known sexist saying), also have as their theme the awakening of self-awareness, the “falling of the veil from the eyes” about what it means to be a woman, what stereotypes run through and mould our personalities, what are the costs, what are the ambivalences, the dangers”.

PAIN #8

at 8 years old came the danger
of being able to reproduce myself
the countdown from 400 eggs

begins symbol
of time
and the gum resin
filtered
through the tiny mouth of the sand clock

my mother's mother so emphatic so golden
gave me a crucifix the son of God
so slim so devoted sprouted from the braid
be careful with men starting
now she said
be careful with love starting
now she said
now you are a real woman
and the endometrium
mimicked an old fish in its
scaling off

the horror of being able to bear a child balled up
in my intestines
for having already kissed 3 or 4
primates began to expand
like an imaginary epidemic i opened
my hypochondria i took on
the bad habit of writing poems to all the boys
and girls
with soft stretch marks
and soft eyes
who used to grope my heart at recess

what does *uterus* mean exactly and what does it mean exactly to
start a family

enid blyton implanted her summer canon in my eardrum
and i wanted to be like george or georgina

at the clapping of my hands fell drops
of dolphin blood
though i pretended to be fully indifferent before so much
rain

at 8 years old at 60 inches of joyful
bone and joyful muscle
came the danger of being able to reproduce myself
and being able to multiply myself
without literature
and a blue sun
stained the geraniums with estrogen
and progesterone and a blue sun
stained my timid armpits
with new-grown
fuzz

THE ROUTE / EROS-GRAPHY

first, i scraped the atmosphere
with sticks, tamed
my loud laugh

highest aspiration when i was a baby

later, the fall:

fear of surveys
scratches on my elbows
atrophy in my orange muscles

incurable men
had nasally voices

they criticized love
as unhygienic
and silly

*impeccable group cynics their glasses
cardiac hops sweetener in bellies*

and i
meanwhile

insipid weevils
clavicles and bread crumbs on insect bites
a victorian zeal for opaque walls

*"helpless romanticism" was a violent insult
for the inhabitants of the rigid delta of my arms*

and i
meanwhile

plucked out all my fluff
kissed everyone with acrophobic mimicry
loved viscous hands, was sick
with snow

*i searched for perfectly full heat
i searched for red etymons of pains-in-roots*

but if they satisfied me
if some incurable man satisfied me
if some incurable man accidentally satisfied me

i fled to spawn
upstream
alone

PAIN #18

Believing you're pregnant

Wanting sex (wanting them to want sex
with you) but spending Friday alone

Putting yourself in the skin of Celan's sister
who never appeared

Watching an old person cry
He's just seen a report on public television
about old people being abandoned; his sad eyelid
occasionally
twitches

Going to the gynecologist and saying
I think I'm pregnant

Fainting from nerves and pain; the doctor hypnotizes you
with his fierce insult: "I don't know why this
dilator hurts you so much, dear: it's
for virgins"

Telling your mother
I went to the gynecologist
because I thought I was pregnant

Ah, you're already having sexual intercourse?
And without precautions, I'm disappointed

Seeing that your mother is disappointed, your
mother is
disappointed

Putting yourself in the skin of Celan
who never found his imaginary
sister

Putting yourself in the skin of Gisèle because
Celan tried to strangle her because
he never found his imaginary
sister

Wanting him to like you but he says

if you want let's go to my room or your room

You barely spent 10 minutes
kissing you don't trust
him

Wanting sex but not trusting

Ah, you wanted something authentic?
And without precautions, I'm disappointed

You told me your heart was leashed
to your ankle

Sorry I let it loose for a second I fell asleep
and it escaped

It's naughty
Very bad very bad tell the boy you're sorry

Sorry

boy

PIANIST'S FINGERS + LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN'S FACE WHEN I TOLD HIM I
WANTED TO WRITE A POEM WITH MORE OR LESS RHYME + WHY I GAVE UP MUSIC
AND WHY I MENTIONED THE BREEZE AT LEAST ONCE + OPTIMISTIC GREETING TO
SUCCESSIVE LOVERS AND TO THE EVER-PLURAL LYRIC YOU + CORDIAL GREETING
TO MY FIRST PIANO TEACHER (1998 - 2000)

allegro con brio, adagio molto (attacca), allegretto moderato

(A)

i gave up the piano
and my virginity
for the same philological reasons

"fail more" "fail better" all that
not-exactly-this-poem
hunchbacked frustrated mutinous *very*
naturally

that's why
i had to give up my piano studies
and my virginity
not-exactly-the-same-day,
beneath that same

rain,
 beneath that same
 mud,
 or haze, or breeze, or rain
 so acoustic so
 hazy *very*
naturally

that's why
 i had to give up the piano and my virginity
 and the rain and the rain falling
 on fallen rain
 not-exactly-the-same-day
 not-exactly-yesterday:

the word
 fails more and better,

the word
word
 fails more and better [\[1\]](#)

(B)

paralyzed by the waltz and the *cunnilingus*,
 and understanding
 that they weren't enough aren't enough couldn't be enough
 will never be enough
 not my song not my body

for all that

*(anatticinparisthepleuralcavityofthegirlsinthehoney
 moonflowers
 playingthefieldtheparisnightthereverberation
 ofthehillsideofthecheek
 ofthemountainchainthebildungsroman),*

i began to babble.

i babbled a lot, of course.
 and later on,
 i began to write and i wrote a poem very
 naturally
 with more or less rhyme and
 with more or less desperation and
 with more or less semi-cliché sunrises and semi-professional

orchestras and
 it rained a lot
 which is to say
 it deluged and i know

i should mention the breeze at least once[\[2\]](#)

(C)

it's very understandable,
 gentlemen and gentlemen of the Royal Academy
 of the Spanish Language, friends
 and enemies of Ludwig van
 Beethoven, whom you blame for
 everything
 because you understand
 nothing, whom you blame for
 everything, because everything is
 nothing

(blaming Beethoven is
 the easiest thing in
 the world:
 the world and the nothing and the sex are
 disappointing)

it's very understandable, no doubt, your complaint:

i gave up the piano
 and my virginity
 for the same philological motives

call it rebellion call it lucid call it
 resignation:

neither my song without words
 nor my body without the words of the other
 was worth it
 would not be worth it will not be worth it ever
 i gave up i understood
 i give up,

therefore i write[\[3\]](#)

NOTICE SECTION

- 1 — after orgasm ears ring head falls back coup de grace it turns out slapping the pubis is tender this way the scream and the scandal get muddy music exacerbates what was there already love's cry lingers incomplete like a half-articulated sneeze love is a half-sneeze cut off by another sneeze creaking a reflex scandalously i rest my skull on your sweet skull a phonograph before the sonata in C major accentuates and duplicates the cravings and increases wellbeing and exists and this psychic chirping doesn't end the song doesn't add color just stresses the prodigious hue of your knuckles and it is my scruples not my childhood who spits the insult at me when you're gone *you don't understand the soul of a thirty-second note you're cornered by the eighth notes* when i get home i read a note from my first piano teacher (1998-2000) in the musical staff *you read badly quit music it doesn't come to you very naturally you read badly you're more inclined to poetry*
- 2 — When i grow up successive lovers point out the necromantic length of my middle finger you have pianist's fingers she says to pass the course you'll have to stroke all of maestro Ludwig van Beethoven's bones but you'll have to be superb you'll have to faint with your eyes open she says you'll have to quit trying to translate the rain and haze and mud and breeze in befuddling poems about paris and i try hard i try fierce and industrious but fail and fail better and much better the swinging of the sacrifice secretes a very moving fresh red so i am an arid place an arid compass i play für elise very well on a 5-scale electric organ where i lose my place my parents bought it for me to make me happy that's where i find myself in short years later you arrive burn everything and take away the records detaching the needle of the example in sum i prefer braille and cherries years later you arrive you point out with your middle finger the necromantic length of my fluorescent middle finger my parents bought me a notebook covered in arabesque designs and owls to make me happy so i'd delve into the artifice of some befuddling poems about certain semi-cliché sunrises and about some guy Waldstein in sum i wrote a poem with more or less rhyme and the contours of the record player bordered on my body bordered very naturally border on your body very naturally you say you have pianist's fingers but don't touch anything lest you break it you say we'll go to the beach to clear away embers of fire and we'll reread your lactation library i really like your illustrious fertile blackberry bush the waves are onomatopoeic domes from the end of the world even though you mock everything good-naturedly you say even though you denounce all those extra-modernists even though you have pianist's fingers i love you kiss me in the heart of this mnemonic cave kiss me from your childhood and from your old age and from your collection of rain and haze and mud and the breeze you say kiss me shut up already please and don't write about this lest you break it.

3 — Many years later you say fibers are figures your hands hum
waterfalls your hands articulate pantomimes xylophagous eroticism
you have pianist's hands i wrote this thinking of you but now i'm
thinking of someone else this also is music gnawing wood this also is
music running away from paris this also goes back to the beginning
to the damage of not being a musician to the damage of being
words i give up therefore i write this also is a caress it's a slap the
world and the nothing and sex aren't disappointing i greet the ever-
plural lyric you optimistically and my first piano teacher cordially
(1998-2000) *quit music it doesn't come to you very naturally you
read badly i'm sorry for you you're more inclined to poetry*



Berta García Faet

Berta García Faet (Valencia, 1988) is the author of *The Fluorescent Psalms* (*Los salmos fosforitos*, La Bella Varsovia, 2017), winner of the 2018 'Miguel Hernández' National Young Person's Poetry Award; *The Eligible Age* (*La edad de merecer*, La Bella Varsovia, 2015), translated to English by Kelsi Vanada and published by Songbridge Press in 2018; and four more poetry collections compiled in *Traditional Heart: Poetry 2008-2011* (*Corazón Tradicionalista: Poesía 2008-2011*, La Bella Varsovia, 2017).