

ANTHOLOGY OF FEMINIST POETRY

Yolanda Castaño: When I'm no longer a flower, I'm annoying

Yolanda Castaño



Story of transformation (original title: *Historia da transformación*) talks about identity interwoven with a gender perspective, but also about the problems associated with the representation of that identity. Gender stereotypes linked to the traditional image of the woman writer, the expectations around her public projection and the public projection of women generally; what it means to grow and enter into a markedly patriarchal public arena and the reflection of ourselves that society shows us.

STORY OF TRANSFORMATION

It began as disorder
 hurtful restraint as a kid we were poor and had less than nothing
 rickety indigence before I wanting grief
 a parable of complexes a syndrome a ghost
 (it is as dire to miss as it lament it)
 Coral shadow shattering pearls.
 It began as a slippery gill whose
 passing breath left me destitute
 The plainest face in the playground I matter
 not a whit and I'll neither grow nor sow
 you've got it or you don't renounce it comply swallow
 a maelstrom raven sky of eternal cold judgement
 a set westerly a private privation
 (a nuns' runt like all the rest

each one a lesbian or anorexic
 the letter bet into the blood the hands the head
 the conscience the cunt).
 I shut my eyes and hoped beyond hope
 to become once and for all everything I was.

But beauty corrupts. Beauty corrupts.
 Coral shadow squandering pearls.
 Day breaks conquering and there's boding in its gullet
 You fool! bedevilled with box ticking
 and not what they held inside.
 It was an idle giddy burst of flowers in winter
 The rivers leapt back to themselves in pink waterfalls
 butterflies and snails born from my hair
 The smile of my breasts fuelled airplanes
 Beauty corrupts
 Beauty corrupts
 My supple belly guided by spring
 whelks spilled over my tiny hands
 high praise pinched my heart
 and I didn't know what to do with all that light in all that shadow.

They said: "your weapon will be your punishment"
 they spat my virtues in my face in this
 club we won't have girls with scarlet lips
 a vicious tide of filth gaining interest
 that has nothing to do with my mascara
 the mice burrowed into my room and dirtied the linen drawers
 litres of scrap pitch lurking secretly litres
 of control litres of mud-slingers kilos of suspicion raised
 with just the arc of my eyebrows you should be hog-tied
 stained grey and all trace erased with acid
 renounce who I am just to write?
 they skinned me alive for my long tapering neck
 for the hair that springs from the nape in this
 club we won't have girls who strut
 We do not trust summer
 Beauty corrupts.
 Make bloody sure it's worth it.

Original poem published at *De Profundidade de Campo* [*Profundidad de campo*] (Espiral Maior, 2007; ed. Biling., Visor 2009)

Demonstrating that feminist reflection cannot only centre the axes of meaning of poems but must also must impregnate them with cross-cutting subthemes, settings, similes and secondary elements as a perpetual background, that second verse particularly alludes to the eternal problem of the public representation of women: whilst half the population of the world suffers a terrible invisibility, those who want visibility are also made to pay for it.

POETRY IS A MINORITIZED LANGUAGE

I would start with its breadth. Acidity, pH.

It walks like a woman:
between the massacre of the unseen
and the concentration camp of visibility.

It bellows style and polish,
a neighbourly epic.

In the poem, language
falls on its own deaf ears,
the words amplify
their circle of friends.

You need to frig the alphabet
till it spouts
unlikely links

The changing gears of chatter,
the tell of another order.
The mosquito's smile in the amber.

It's not that you don't get Arabic.
You don't get

poetry.

Original poem published at *De A Segunda Lingua [La segunda lengua]* (PEN Club de Galicia - Fundación Abanca 2014; ed biling, Visor 2014)

The context of this poem tries to transcend romantic love, the stereotypes of undying matrimonial love, the negation of women's desire and all the social, religious and other constructs that surround women's faithfulness. At the same time, it tries to break with a dual heteropatriarchal world and with all the social stereotypes that have been built on that world.

THE UNDERLINING IS NOT MINE

I didn't say pink, nor blue,
don't put those in my mouth.
I didn't say *the interior remains closed*,
nor did I toast for us to want all that we should.

I didn't promise to be able to manage the disaster,
nor did I say that certain words
elude me like dragonflies.
I didn't say *I need you*, I didn't invoke Providences,
not a single one of God's hundred names
came to rest upon my lips.
Don't put in my mouth
words of *forever*,
nor that my last complexes
have leapt from me like fleas.
I didn't say fatherland nor motherland,
don't put those words in my mouth.
I didn't say *marry me*, nor
I'm going to file down my life until it fits into these spaces.
It must not have been me who rhymed destiny with desire.

Don't put those in my mouth.
Put that

other thing
instead.

Translation into English by Keith Payne
Original poem published at *De A Segunda Lingua [La segunda lengua]* (PEN Club - Fundación Abanca
2014; ed biling, Visor, 2014)

B

This poem returns to questions we have already touched on about gender stereotypes and gender roles that are imposed on women when they step onto the public stage. About how difficult it is to build an identity in the margins of the constructs that are projected on us by the patriarchy, with all our intrinsically human doubts, discomfort and contradictions. The text speaks with a certain irony of all those expectations that we lay on ourselves.

When I'm no longer a flower,
I'm annoying.

But the hard thing was to be,
inexhaustibly upsetting.

Getting seriously ill
would hugely benefit my literary renown.

If I don't get a job, I'll leave for Las Vegas.
In the States I'm more gorgeous than anywhere else.

But I have been rude and pretentious,
I've smiled only for my self-interest,
the hectic sexy capitalist;
I made it compensate for my days of powerlessness.
To be
is the hard thing.
When I spoke, only my lips were contemplated.

If I take a break, would that
make me irresponsible?
If I'm vulnerable,
will I be trod on?
If things didn't look so good for me,
would I be loved better?

A profuse razor the identity project,
a mechanic nightingale the evening.
So many souvenirs will be the end of Notre Dame's
Where were you when I needed you?

Translation into English by Lawrence Schimel

Original poem published at *De Profundidade de Campo* [*Profundidad de campo*] (Espiral Maior, 2007; ed. Biling., Visor 2009)



Yolanda Castaño

Following a 25-year literary career, texts translated into more than 30 languages and books published in Italy, France, the UK, Armenia, Macedonia and Serbia, Yolanda Castaño (Santiago de Compostela, 1977) is one of the most internationally recognised Galician poets. A finalist for the National Poetry Prize, her six published poetry collections (published bilingually by Visor Libros) have been recognised by awards such as Spanish National Radio (RNE)'s *Critic's View* (*Ojo Crítico*) award and the Spanish Critic's Choice award. As well as managing her own writers retreat in Galicia, since 2009 she has been working as a cultural promoter involved in various ongoing projects with both Galician and international poets, including an annual festival, a monthly reading agenda and a poetry translation workshop.