

*Jennifer Clement*

Also by Jennifer Clement

*Poetry*

The Next Stranger / El Próximo extraño  
Newton's Sailor / El marinero de Newton  
Lady of the Broom / La dama de la escoba

*Prose*

Widow Basquiat  
A True Story Based on Lies  
A Salamander-Child  
The Poison That Fascinates

JENNIFER CLEMENT

**New & Selected Poems**

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*for*

***Victor Manuel Mendiola***





## **New Poems**



## **Iceman**

In bed  
you lie with your back to me  
and it is a lake of ice.  
Like fish frozen under the cold,  
frozen as they swam  
(dead, but not dead, in a winter sleep),  
I can see,  
under the ice surface of your back,  
the glimmer and blue and red  
of spleen and kidneys,  
the long pole of esophagus  
under the frozen surface.

I place my hand on  
your cold, cold skin  
and crack the ice.  
My hands enter you.

I can see my left hand  
lightly hold your liver  
and my right hand caress your ribs and then slide  
down  
the length of your arm

until your arm is a sleeve I am wearing  
and my fingers rinse themselves in your fingers.

I want to dip my face into the lake of your back  
and feel your vertebrae  
like stones, uneven stones, on my cheek.  
Can I open my eyes  
under blood?

I push closer, take a deep mouthful of air,  
and dive into your body.  
With long strokes I move,  
washing myself in you.  
I swim down your leg  
along the soleus muscle,  
down past fibula, femur, down along the femoral vein  
and down down down  
under your heel —  
where you touch ground.  
I need to know how deep you are  
how long my breath can last.

## **The Dream After Translating C.D. Wright**

In a glass dress everyone can see inside her body. If she wears a glass dress she has to walk carefully so that she doesn't fall and break her garment into pieces. A shard, splinter, or sliver of the glass dress can cut her arm. Under the glass dress, which surrounds the poet like a fish tank, I can see her navel float in the centre of the Earth. The sun shines through and flesh turns into water. I can see who places his hand under her dress. Through the glass dress, which surrounds the poet like a terrarium, at certain times I can see where the heart beats and where salamanders and horned toads hide. The man who loves her carves his initials in the glass with a Swiss army knife. A branch leaves scratch marks along the windowpane of her sleeve. She did not wear a glass slipper; she wore a glass dress.

## Deus Ex Machina

*For Reverend Martha Black Jordan*

Because it rained inside the house  
and became a house of tears  
there were plastic buckets  
and pans and pots and porcelain teacups  
scattered everywhere filling with water.  
Thimbles were set out to catch  
the smallest drops.  
I heard the sound of rain  
or the sound of crying  
and everything  
— even the apples and figs —  
tasted like salt.  
One day I asked,  
as I stood knee deep in water  
in the middle of my bedroom,  
“Is this a tragedy, this house?”  
Sunday morning,  
at the moment when my bed  
began to float like a raft,  
the great red tractor  
drove up to my door with its headlights on  
illuminating the Christian day.

As though it were bringing fire,  
smoke poured out of its exhaust stack  
and the sound of the potent diesel motor was thunder.  
God drove the giant machine  
that came to rib and plant  
and harvest and rake  
the wet, graveyard  
earth of my house.

## Scarecrow

When I see you at the end  
of the cornfield  
I still my breath.  
you are so tall tied upright,  
up high on a pole.  
I have to lift my head to see you—  
man of straw and rag—  
and almost see your black Waterman-ink eyes  
under the frayed Panama hat.  
I know there is a 19-centimeter  
Phoenix Sheath knife  
with a black leather handle  
and an engraved pommel and hilt  
in the dishtowel  
and mop padding at your waist.  
I know there is a Colt .45 in dry grasses,  
and, your favourite weapon,  
a crowbar for a crow  
in your sleeve.  
Standing here, in the afternoon light  
under your long Hitchcock-movie shadow,  
my crow-heart  
my crow-feather black,



crow-black crow heart  
is scared of you,  
scarecrow.  
And even birds close their eyes.

## Making Love in Spanish

When I make love to you in English  
the objects in the room have no sex  
and I only hear our voices.  
But when I make love to you in Spanish  
the chairs — those little girls — chatter,  
and our shoes  
want to step, with adoration, on the body  
of light, lamplight,  
that falls across the floor.  
In Spanish the tangled sleeves of our sweaters  
sigh with soft womanly voices,  
and fall like long vines  
around an armchair  
that has become their master.  
*(El sillón con las mangas).*  
The roses bathe and bow  
filled with desire for the clock  
and the fragile windows  
want to break into the mirror.  
Here, your pockets worship  
my stockings.  
Here, the white walls worship  
the white moon.

In the dark,  
I give you my feminine mouth.  
In the dark,  
*el amor mi amor,*  
I give you my masculine eyes.