

*Ten
Contemporary
Spanish Women Poets*

SAMPLER
edited & translated

by

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Shearsman Books

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SAMPLER

Pilar Adón

ESTIGMA

Nunca la vi llorar. A mi abuela.
Se le salió la matriz por la vagina
y ella se la curó con limón
porque todo lo trataba con limón. Y con saliva.
Barro, humedad y fuego.
La punta babeada de los pañuelos en el batín.
Las medias de algodón. Agujeros en su faldagrís de abuela.
Y las capas de tela desdibujada
tras las que ocultar el calor enchufado a la trampa
que colgaba del techo.

No preguntar. No saber.
Metió el pulgar en la tierra y lo sacó negro.
Barro seco y disperso. Pedazos de ladrillo bajo las plantas.
Restos pegados a las púas del tenedor.

Elevaba el cuchillo por encima de los hombros.
Lo bajaba y lo hundía en la madera.
Cortaba las uñas a las niñas recién nacidas
para que cantaran bien, como ella.
Voz de ofrenda, voz de Pascua.
Conmigo no lo hizo.
Yo era de rodillas arañadas, picaduras de avispa.
Huida de insectos y huida de juegos.
Ser orgánico que crecía. Mudaba y crecía
al tanto de mi situación.
Con las manos alrededor, las cejas sobre las piernas.
O cruzada de brazos
caminando hacia el puente.
Botas altas al borde de la presa.
Sin admitir el abandono ni la pauta.
La cólera de la herencia.

Pilar Adón

STIGMA

I never saw her cry, my grandmother.
Her womb came out of her vagina,
she healed herself with lemon
because lemon was her cure-all. And saliva,
mud, water, fire.
Damp handkerchiefs in her dressing-gown pocket.
Cotton stockings. Holes in her grey grandma skirt.
And the faded cloth sheets
to hide the heater
plugged into the ceiling socket.

Never asking. Never knowing.
She stuck her thumb in the earth, it came out black.
Dry crumbs of mud. Brick chips from under the plants.
Bits of food stuck to the tines of the fork.

She raised the knife above her shoulders
and sunk it into the wood.
She cut the nails of newborn girls
so they'd sing true like her.
Voices of offering. Easter voices.
Not me, I was all
scabbed knees, wasp-stings,
a runaway from insects, runaway from play,
organic being growing, growing,
mute in the knowledge of who I was.
Wrapped in my arms, head on my knees,
or arms folded
walking to the bridge,
teetering in high boots on the edge of the dam.
Refusing abandonment and rules,
the anger at belonging to the tribe.

Martha Asunción Alonso

Nació
con una oposición bajo el brazo
y largo pelo.

De camino a la clínica,
dilatando en un taxi, a su madre
se le antojó un banana split.

El Papa estaba nuevo en esa época.
Los cronistas lo saben porque andaba. Y yo me lo imagino
vistiendo un par de levis bajo las sacras faldas.

Aquel año dio comienzo en miércoles. Descubrimos diez
satélites danzando en torno a Urano. Bélgica
ganó en Eurovisión.

A lo que voy:
llegó con largo pelo, demasiada vergüenza
y el equilibrio justo para un bípedo.

Aprendió a reparar sin ruedines al cumplir veintimuchos.
Le crecían preguntas sin regarla.
Fue a la universidad por no volver al médico.

Viajó. Se drogó poco. Una vez tuvo
que defender su casa a paraguazos. Se enamoró muy mal,
peor y por fin bien.

Mantiene
todavía una estrecha correspondencia con el monstruo
del Lago Ness y el Duende del Armario.

Vive y se acabará con el trastorno
de la fe. Para que se la entienda: rebusca
poesía.

Martha Asunción Alonso

Was born
with an exam-result in her pocket
and long hair.

Dilating in the taxi,
on the way to hospital, her mother
had a craving for a banana-split.

There was a new pope back then.
Journalists know that because he went walkabout.
I imagine him with a pair of Levis under his holy skirts.

That year began on a Wednesday. We discovered ten
satellites waltzing round Uranus. Belgium
won Eurovision.

To get back to the point:
she arrived with long hair, a surfeit of shame
and just enough sense of balance for a biped.

She learned to breathe without stabilisers way in her late 20s.
Questions grew from her with no need for rain.
She went to university so as not to have to go back to the doctor.

She travelled. She didn't really do drugs. Once
she had to beat off intruders with an umbrella. Love went
very badly for her, then worse, and in the end ok.

She's still
in close contact with the Loch Ness
monster and the Witch in the Wardrobe.

She lives and she'll die with an inconvenient
faith. To make herself clear: she aspires to
poetry.

Graciela Baquero

CRÓNICAS DE OLVIDO

encuentro

Sucedío en el barrio de Lavapiés en Madrid, durante una noche calurosa de verano. Yo estaba paseando con algunos amigos, aprovechando la oscuridad para refrescarnos después de haber pasado el día escondidos de un sol implacable. Ibamos por la calle Argumosa cuando me separé del grupo y entré en un bar para comprar tabaco. Ya dentro del local, me aproximé a la barra donde una mujer estaba bebiendo un vino. Era una mujer adulta; mas bien envejecida, desaliñada, extremadamente flaca y borracha.

Mientras yo intentaba hablar con el camarero, ella se volvió hacia mí y mirándome fijamente, se fue acercando, hasta que de pronto, me preguntó “Cómo estás?”. A lo que yo respondí “Muy bien” cosa que realmente era cierta. Pero como solemos hacer en estos casos, no mostró demasiado entusiasmo, por no entrar en diálogo con una persona herida de alcohol y soledad.

La ignoraba dirigiendo mis ojos hacia la imagen parlante de un televisor, cuando ella continuó diciendo, “Ya no me conoces”. Entonces, curiosa, la volví a mirar por si se tratara de alguien que hubiera cambiado demasiado (hay veces que el tiempo hace magia con nosotros), pero su cara me resultó absolutamente desconocida. Así se lo dije y volví a desviar mi atención hacia otras realidades, tratando de dejarle bien claro que nada tenía que ver con ella. Sin embargo insistió: “Ya no me conoces,... ya no quieres reconocerme. Pero yo soy tu hermana,... yo soy tu hermana Olvido”.

Fui incapaz de responderle en aquel momento pero no pude dejar de pensar en ella durante toda la noche. Cuando llegué a casa, ya de madrugada, busqué en el diccionario el significado de aquel nombre que tanto me había impactado y allí encontré esto:

Olvido.– Falta de recuerdo acerca de algo.

Cesación de un afecto que antes se sentía.

Omisión o negligencia de algo que se debía hacer o tener presente.

Nombre de mujer.

Graciela Baquero

YOUR SISTER, OLVIDO

encounter

It happened in the Lavapiés district of Madrid on a warm summer night. I was out with friends taking advantage of the dark for a relaxing stroll after a day spent in hiding from the pitiless sun. We were going down Calle Argumosa when I peeled off to buy cigarettes in a bar. Inside, I went up to the counter where a woman was sitting drinking wine. She was middle-aged, old before her time, down-at-heel, terribly thin and drunk.

I was trying to get served when she turned to me and asked: 'How are you?' and I said 'Fine', which I really was. But as we do in these cases, I said it neutrally, not wanting to start a conversation with a creature marked by alcohol and solitude.

I was ignoring her, gazing at the muted spectacle of a television, when she went on: 'You don't know who I am'. Then, curious, I looked at her again in case she were an acquaintance on whom time had wrought its transformations, but, no, I'd never seen her before. I said so and turned away to other realities, trying to make her understand she was nothing to me. But she was undeterred: 'You don't know who I am..., you don't want to acknowledge me. But I'm your sister... your sister, Olvido.'

I said nothing to her then but I thought of her all that night. When I got home in the early morning, I looked up the meaning of that name which had so struck me and found this:

Olvido:

*failure to remember something
numbing of an emotion once felt
omission or neglect of a duty
woman's name*

Mercedes Cebrián

MUCHACHA DE CASTILLA

¿Pero qué te has creído, muchacha de Castilla,
que podías desear lo mejor en forma de país?
Te engañaron quienes aseguraban que el castillo en desuso
y la almena mellada le daban hidalgüía a tu meseta.
Algo irrumpió hace tiempo y nos quitó
con muy malos modales
el arcabuz, la pica y el palillo atrapado
entre hileras de dientes.

Hoy tu meseta es un erial cuyo horizonte
no voy a describir.

Hay mal diseño en los campos de Castilla
y peor intención: se expanden
a lo ancho igual que tú y en ellos
solo brota, a raudales, la vida sedentaria.

Y mientras tanto, en otras latitudes ya no se dice
Colón descubrió América. Se dice *la encontró*
porque iba despistado por completo. Los rudos
señores extremeños que llegaron con él
a ese allí tan lejano, ¿a qué se dedicaban?
Entérate, muchacha de Castilla,
observa el disimulo con que esconden
puñados de esmeraldas en sus calzas.

Reconozcamos el valor de esos hombres
al viajar en un barco mugriento durante diez semanas.
Salieron en agosto, llegaron en octubre
y hasta febrero del siguiente año
nadie tuvo noticias de su paradero. ¿Habrán
llegado bien nuestros muchachos? ¿O acaso
perecieron por falta de Vitamina C?

Mercedes Cebrián

GIRL FROM CASTILE

But who did you think you were, girl from Castile,
to be handed the country of your heart's desire?
They fooled you when they told you the ruined castle
with its crenellations gave your meseta grandeur.
Something irrupted a while ago and robbed us
in the most ill-bred fashion
of hackbut, pike and toothpick stuck
between rows of teeth.

Today your meseta is a wasteland and I won't trouble
to describe its horizon.

There is bad faith in the fields of Castile
and worse intention; they expand
in all directions as you do and their only
abundant crop is the sedentary life.

And meanwhile on other latitudes they no longer say
Columbus discovered America. They say he *found it*
because he had absolutely no idea. And the Extremaduran
hard men who landed with him on that so distant
over there: what was their role?
Keep up, girl from Castile,
watch them craftily stuffing
fistfuls of emeralds into their britches.

Let's acknowledge the bravery of those men
who voyaged ten weeks in a filthy tub.
They set sail in August, they arrived in October
and no-one had word of their whereabouts
until February of the following year. Did our lads
arrive safely? Or maybe
they perished of scurvy.

María Eloy García

LA SOPERA

en el ciclo artúrico de mi mueblebar todos prueban a abrir la llave que va a dar a ginebra

lleva una sopera dentro porque es un mueble conceptual
la cuestión de lo artístico se resuelve en lo cotidiano
¿por qué resulta mi sopera sin estrenar atrapada en las entrañas del mueble
tan poderosamente sentimental?
qué duda tan presocrática
¿la veré como la primera vez será menos azul?
¿cuántos pensaron en su producción en cadena que estaría
condenada a la oscuridad más absoluta?
¿puede llamarse sopera a lo que nunca contendrá?
ante mi intuición empírica el fenómeno es la sopera
sólo un juicio sintético podría acercarme a tocarla
pero cuántos juicios universales necesito tan sólo para el recuerdo
este idealismo trascendental merece una crítica necesaria
imposible hacer pucheros
pero si me pongo empírico-racional y digo que
la experiencia es el origen y el límite de nuestro conocimiento
mi sopera tiene en sus cualidades sensibles
ideas complejas que mantienen mi religión y mi memoria
la sopera es este deseo imposible hacer pucheros
y yo me pregunto
¿cómo será la sopera con su realidad
o cómo sería la sopera sin mi idea?

María Eloy García

TUREEN

in the Arthurian cycle of my drinks-cupboard everyone tries to turn the key that opens on gin

it has a tureen inside because it is a conceptual cupboard

the aesthetic question resolves itself in the everyday

why does my virgin tureen imprisoned in the cupboard's innards pack
such an emotional punch?

what a very pre-socratic dilemma

will it be the same tureen?

will I see it as I saw it first will it be less blue?

how many imagined is it left the factory it would be
condemned to the utmost obscurity?

is a tureen that will never hold soup worthy of the name?

in the light of my empirical intuition the phenomenon is the tureen

only a synthetic judgment could bring me to touch it

but how many last judgments do I need for the memory

this transcendental idealism calls for a critique

impossible to make soup or weep

but if take up an empirico-rational stance and say

experience is the source and limit of all our knowledge

my tureen holds in its material qualities

complex ideas sustaining my religion and my memory

the tureen is this impossible longing to make soup

and I ask myself

how the tureen gets on with its reality

or what would become of it without my idea?

*1st line pun : *ginebra* = gin/Guinevere

Berta García Faet

QUERER QUERER (II)

Nadie nunca nada me es constante
Carlos Edmundo De Ory

Qué importa el libro qué importa el orgasmo
si luego vienes con tu rostro le falta sal
con tu rostro le falta llama le falta ron
si luego vienes con tu ¡más lento, el metrónomo
no miente jamás!

Qué importa la curia pontificia

(allí decidimos que los besos eran sagrados
y en una definición perifrástica memorable
conseguimos explicar la vida con palabras sencillas
como pan de cereales como tinto como bocas)

si luego vienes tú cabizbaja tú temblorosa
con tu querer querer
con tu No sé No puedo Tengo prisa
con tu Imposible ya estoy llena Aquí no cabe
ni un recuerdo más: Véte
con tu bella imagen de La Rochelle
a tu cama y olvida qué fuimos, olvida que fuimos
las flores más felices del siglo veintiuno;

dime,

qué importa la Canzonetta que no muere
de Piotr Ylich si luego vienes tú llorosa
con tu tengo sed con tu tengo frío
qué importa la alegría el alcohol o las ciudades
que te matan con sólo mirarlas
si luego vienes tú con tus limitaciones
con su *no ser perfecta, me hiere* que te apropias
con tus miedos de escritora paranoica
con tu Lo siento Yo no quiero a nadie.

Berta García Faet

WANTING TO WANT (II)

Nothing no-one ever stays with me
Carlos Edmundo De Ory

What good the book what good the orgasm
if then you come with your face like salt
with your face with no flame with no rum
if then you come with your steady, go steady, the metronome
never lies!

What good the Pontifical Curia

(where we declared kissing sacred
and in a memorably lengthy definition
established the meaning of life in simple words
like bread like wine like mouth)

if then you come you with your head down you shaking
with your wanting to want
with your I'm not sure I can't I have to go
with your Impossible I'm full now There's no room here
for one more memory: Take your beautiful
image of La Rochelle and go back
to your bed and forget we were, forget we were
the luckiest flowers of the 21st century;

tell me,

what good the immortal Canzonetta
of Piotr Ylich if then you come sobbing
with your I'm thirsty with your I'm cold
what good contentment or drink or cities
that kill you with one glance
if then you come with your complexes
with your borrowed *not being perfect, hurts me*
with your paranoid female writer's fears
with your I'm sorry I don't love anyone.

Erika Martínez

MIRAR A TRAVÉS

Primera. Acumulo llaves
porque mucha gente confía en mí
y su confianza es un plumaje
donde apoya la cabeza todo aquello
de lo que nunca fui capaz.

Segunda. Acumulo llaves
porque me propago por dispersión
desde que atravesé la rendija
de mi nuevo horizonte laboral,
viajando a múltiples ciudades
para realizar tareas muy urgentes
de utilidad no demostrada.

Tercera. Acumulo llaves
porque su peso en el bolsillo me alivia
de un miedo genérico y detactor
a no poder entrar (detrás del miedo
siempre hay un tipo emboscado
que se abraza la gabardina).

Cuarta. Acumulo llaves
porque disfruto del sufrimiento
que me produce confundirlas
mientras trato de abrir y alguien me observa
reverenciando la cerradura.

Última. Acumulo llaves
hasta que desaparecen los lugares que abrieron
(¿no deja lo que marcha como un rastro de humo?)
y empiezan a dibujarse, quién sabe dónde,
los próximos lugares que abrirán.

Erika Martínez

SEEING THROUGH

First. I collect keys
because a lot of people trust me
and their trust is a pillow
on which all I could never do
rests its head.

Second. I collect keys
because I have several selves
since I squeezed through the crack
in my work horizon
travelling far and wide
on urgent but possibly
futile errands.

Third. I collect keys
because their heft in my pocket calms
my all-encompassing revealing fear
of being locked out (behind this fear
there's always a man in ambush
clutching his mackintosh.)

Fourth. I collect keys
because I enjoy the pain
I feel when I'm trying to get inside
with the wrong one and a neighbour sees me
worshipping the keyhole.

Last. I collect keys
till the spaces they opened are vanished
(but don't they go up at least in smoke?)
and the next doors they'll open
begin to materialise,
appear who knows where.

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Elena Medel

I WILL SURVIVE

Tengo una enorme colección de amantes.
Me consuelan y me aman y con ellos mi ego
se expande y extramuros alcanza la azotea.
Cuando estoy con cualquiera de ellos,
o con todos a la vez, siento la pesada carga
de millones de pupilas subidas a mi grupa,
y a mi oído lo acosan millones de improperios,
se habrá visto niña más desvergonzada / pobreccita,
Dios le libre del problema que suponen / habría
que encerrarlas a todas. Languidezco.
Quiero volar y volar y volar como Campanilla
—blanco y radiante cuerpo celestial,
pequeño cometa, pequeño cometa—
de la mano de mis amantes, que dicen cosas bonitas
como *estigma, princesa, miss cabello loco, asteroide.*
Todo sea por mis amantes, que no son dignos de elogio:
son minúsculos, y redondos, y azules, azules
o blancos, o azules y blancos,
y su boquita de piñón es invisible,
y para besarles introduzco a los pitufos
en mi boca, y para gozar de ellos
los trago, porque me sé mantis religiosa.
Quién soy, quién soy, ni siquiera sé quién soy.
Solo los necesito cuando me desdoble en dos,
cuando mi ego se encoge incomprendiblemente
e intramuros alcanza un punto mínimo,
cuando lloro demasiado o río demasiado,
y entonces los llamo y ellos, decidme vosotros
quién soy, mi pequeño y urgente consuelo,
se adentran en mi boca sin dudarlo, complacidos,
y me recorren por dentro, y al fin sonrío, soy,
sonrío tras sus cuatro, cinco, seis besos azules,

Elena Medel

I WILL SURVIVE

I have a vast array of lovers.
They solace me and love me and with them my ego
balloons and floats out of the window to the roof.
When I'm with one or other of them
or with all of them, I feel the heavy burden
of millions of pupils on my hindquarters,
and my ears are assaulted by millions of insults,
did you ever see such a trollop/ poor thing,
God help her with her trouble/they should
lock them all up. I languish.

I want to fly and fly like Tinkerbell –
white and radiant celestial body
little kite, little kite –
hand in hand with my lovers, who say pretty things
like *stigma, princess, Miss Pretty Flats, asteroid.*
All because of my lovers, who are nothing to write home about:
they're minuscule, and round, and blue, blue
or white, or white and blue,
and their little pout is invisible,
and to kiss them I place the smurfs
in my mouth, and to enjoy them
I swallow them, because I know I'm a praying mantis.
Who I am, who I am, I don't even know who I am.
I only need them when I come apart at the seams
when my ego shrinks improbably
and the room closes in on me,
when I cry too much or laugh too much,
and then I call them and they, tell me all of you
who I am, my tiny urgent solace,
pop gladly into my mouth
and run around inside me, and at last I smile, I am,
I smile after their four, five, six, blue kisses,

Miriam Reyes

HAZ LO QUE TE DIGO

¿ES un juego de correr
un juego de cartas de mesa o un videojuego?
¿Necesito destreza física suerte o práctica?
¿He de seguir instrucciones o guiarme por mi instinto?
¿Sudaré me quedaré sin aire tensaré los músculos hasta
[el agotamiento
o repiquetearé con mis uñas sobre la mesa imitando
los cascos de los caballos que golpean mis costillas?
¿Moveré piezas de mí sobre el tablero?
¿Te como o me comes?
¿Se trata de aparentar que tienes lo que no tienes?
¿Seremos rivales adversarios compañeros?
¿Ganaremos dinero trofeos dignidad?
¿Qué perderemos?
¿La vida una oportunidad el honor la palabra el tiempo la fortuna?
¿Qué perderemos?

ESTE puede ser un buen lugar para esconder
la vida que nunca tendremos.
No llegaremos más lejos ni más cerca
aquí
donde yo tengo el control de lo que sucede
y no cabe la decepción.
Un espacio que puede expandirse o plegarse
como una tela elástica o el universo
que puede ser por igual hatillo o vestido
como la diferencia entre la palma de tu mano abierta y un puño.

—Cuando te miro se me enredan hebras en los tobillos—.

Puedo levantarme y cerrar esa puerta
o quedarme donde estoy y pedirte que la cierres.

Miriam Reyes

DO AS I SAY

IS THIS a game of run and hide
a board-game or a videogame?
Do I need fitness luck or skill?
Should I read the rules or follow my instincts?
Will I sweat will I pant will I tense
my muscles till I faint
or will I drum my nails on the table
in time with the horse-hoofs beating on my ribs?
Will I move pieces of me on the board?
Do I eat you do you eat me?
Is it about pretending what isn't yours is yours?
Will we be rivals enemies companions?
Will we gain money trophies respect?
What will we lose?
Our lives an opportunity our honour power of speech time luck?

What will we lose?

THIS can be a good place to hide
the life we'll never have.
We won't get any further or closer
here
where I'm in control of events
and there's no room for disappointment.
A space that can expand or retract
like stretch fabric or the universe
which can be either a bundle or a garment
like the difference between the open palm of your hand and a fist,

'When I look at you threads enmesh my ankles'.

I can get up and close that door
or stay here and ask you to close it.

Julieta Valero

LA CARENCIA VISTA DESDE EUROPA

Más que al crecimiento aspira a variar las formas de tu cordura.
Agárrate a ese cuerpo que mirando hacia su trópico te mantiene bien caliente.
Para todos los que trabajan la función del cielo es de viernes a domingo.
Detenerse, contemplar el paso de las nubes aún es punto de partida.
Madre naturaleza pero padre mercado.
Hemos trocado el deseo por las ganas.
Estamos listos, mediáticos, estamos muertos de escaparate y caballo sin
llanura.

Al final lo aberrante no es la obviedad de la belleza sino la crónica de
nuestra ceguera,
todos tan capaces de procrear, por otra parte
hay que mantener la conciencia de la cruceta y una botella en cada mano
ama cuanto puedas, come muy despacio
efectúa un único disparo proyector para tus semejantes

y no, no es este un texto resignado, es el diptongo de la sonrisa y la calma
cuando el vaso se viste medio lleno porque ve a su sed regresar.

UN DIVORCIO

Detengámonos en el portento de la mutilación, su instante:
el aire gira sobre sí, palpa su camisa, busca lo que falta.
La ausencia es una succión sin pecho

Julieta Valero

POVERTY SEEN FROM EUROPE

Don't wish for growth, wish for different kinds of common sense.
Hold tight to the body looking towards its tropic that keeps you warm.
For all working people the sky puts on its fireworks from Friday to
Sunday.

Pausing, gazing at the passing clouds is still a starting point.
Mother nature but father market.
We don't desire now, we crave.
We are smart, connected, we swoon at shop-windows and horses with
no grazing.

In the end what's out of sync isn't the blinacy of beauty but the
chronicle of our blindness.
all of us so fertile, also
we must remain conscious of the puppeteer with a bottle in each hand
love as much as you can, eat very slowly
fire a bullet for humankind

and no, this isn't a stoic piece, it's the diphthong of smile and of calm
when the glass appears half full because it sees its thirst returning.

DIVORCE

Let's reflect on the impact of amputation, its split second:
The wind turns on itself, pats its shirt, looks for what's gone.
Absence is suction without a breast

MOUNTAIN-CLIMBING

'De la montaña que nos vedaron bajar hombres enloquecidos agitando sus manuales de razón trascendental. Ignorarlo es agacharse como un desclasado frente al espejo.'

—Erika Martínez

'Down from the mountain they forbade us swarm frantic men, brandishing their manuals of transcendental reason.' The mountain is of course Mount Olympus, and the frantic men Spain's all-male poetry establishment bent on excluding women from all their activities. 'Not to confront them,' continues Erika Martínez, 'would be to bow one's head in shame in front of one's own mirror.'

Women poets have only been published in numbers in Spain in the last 25 years and still account for only 15% of the poetry books published every year. The Premio Nacional de Poesía has been awarded 52 times and been won by a woman 4 times. It isn't at all uncommon for influential anthologies to be all-male or include at most one or two women among twenty men. Women are usually absent from the lists of the most venerable publishers. The founder of *Visor*, Jesús García Sánchez, known affectionately as Chus Visor, recently declared in *El Mundo*'s culture supplement: '...women's poetry doesn't bear comparison to men's. There wasn't an important woman poet in the whole of the twentieth century and there isn't one now.'

This neglect and disdain (gradually diminishing in the new generation) and the consequent delay in the appearance of Spanish women poets in translation was one of the motives for this anthology, but to bring their musical, lucid, forthright poems to English readers is its principal intent.

Women, themselves, have set up resistance to the stubborn hegemony of the patriarchy and are bringing about a revolution in poetry. Elena Medel, included in this anthology, established her own publishing house, *La Bella Varsovia*, described by Andrés Barba as having the most significant catalogue in current Spanish poetry. She publishes four of the poets here; her books are also remarkable for their beautiful cutting-edge design.

These ten poets form a polyphony of voices. Some have elected to confront gender identity head on, some to ignore it completely. Erika Martínez believes that it's impossible to write poetry that isn't imprinted

with one's gender 'Even if you try and resist, that's what you end up doing, but the way it happens is very complex. Sometime it's explicit, sometimes implicit.' Male critics' stereotype of women's poetry is that it's all about the self, the body, love, sex, relationships. Martínez accepts that this one of the ways women are subverting the canon, by causing men discomfort. Berta García Faet considers that 'the emphasis on feelings is another spin on the literary-ideological stereotype of women's poetry as 'confessional' and 'sentimental'. I have poet friends who renounce completely this territory, and I find that fascinating, but for myself I say, okay if you expect me to be romantic and talk about my body, I will, but I'll do it so radically, to such an extreme, that I explode the stereotype.' García Faet accepts the label 'neo-romantic' which she defines as 'transcending a paralysing scepticism, and making a leap of faith into what is not the void but something else – I don't know what exactly, but to speak of the void is defeatist... I'm trying to rid myself of that pugilistic lexicon.' *Pugilistic* because 20th century Spanish male poets had seemed obsessed with the abyss, *la nada*, and existential dread.

Miriam Reyes' book, *Do as I say*, an account of a love-affair, perhaps begins romantically with the wish to enter the lover's bloodstream, 'to live in a cave in your body' but founders when looked at with a critical eye. 'It's inadvisable to invest all one's hopes in another body', the 'I' of the poems realizes and embarks on the rebuilding of her separate identity, a kind of rebirth. 'I hate imprecision', she remarks having subverted the categories of male and female in her forensic analysis of the relationship.

Elena Medel cleverly charts the course of a doomed love-affair through the symbol of her pride in her perfect apartment ('Because every woman / marries her house'): a potted hydrangea. The plant is tended with love and a gardener's manual, and is the unsuspecting focus of future plans, marriage, children. These are the woman's plans: 'meanwhile the man is sleeping. / The woman / stays awake.' The hydrangea develops black spot, then aphids, then 'the man is gone'.

María Eloy García brings a coruscating wit to her satires of couple-dom: controlling partners, mothers-in-law ('widows of fright') who sleep between the happy couple, or, in her *Song turning forty*:

Now wrath is my husband
and his mother comes round every Saturday
to jam together the two bunk-beds
of the *children of wrath*.

Then there are her robot children of bionic lovers, ‘who would put out the eyes of birds / with their metallic hands.’

Mercedes Cebrián expresses a similar scepticism about children: ‘You wouldn’t credit it if I told you, / but a couple I’ve known for a while / have produced a miniature human being.’ In response to a question from a thoughtless friend, Pilar Adón’s poem *Who will care for me when I am old?* reflects on childlessness: ‘if I am nobody’s mother’. Erika Martínez states bluntly: ‘If I am nullipara / the life I withhold / destroys no life / Right?’ And Julieta Valero evokes a future child, a *Dream Child*, but ‘how hard / the awaited blood’. She also remarks in another poem, ‘People with children have access to lucid despair.’

These ten poets belong to the first generation whose lives have been lived free of the long shadow of Franco’s dictatorship, in the bright promise of the new democracy. They are, however, well aware of their parents’ and grandparents’ suffering, the latter, according to Martha Asunción Alonso, ‘who had sweated all / their country’s blood’, and the former ‘a nation of sleepwalkers’. They have an ambivalent take on the new consumer paradise. Mercedes Cebrián, in particular has mocked its absurdities with a wild surreal humour. ‘I represent modernity’, she declares, with her perfect cosmetic dentistry, and her woman orthodontist who takes city breaks abroad ‘just for fun’. She uses the kiwi fruit as a metaphor for the quest for novelty and how soon it loses its savor. ‘But who did you think you were, girl from Castile, / to be handed the country of your heart’s desire?’

Julieta Valero’s poem *Coney Seen from Europe* is in a similar vein:

~~SAMPLE~~
‘For all working people the sky puts on its fireworks from Friday
to Sunday...’

Mother nature but father market.

We don’t desire now, we crave.

We are smart, connected, we swoon at shop-windows.’

But the poem ends with a foreboding: ‘the glass appears half full because it sees its thirst returning’, and the 2008 global recession, and the subsequent austerity, were particularly catastrophic in Spain. There are two vivid poems here on the Madrid Occupy movement based in the Puerta del Sol, by Martha Asunción Alonso, and Julieta Valero.

The life of one of those left behind by prosperity and modernity is chronicled by Graciela Baquero Ruibal in her book-length sequence of prose poems *Chronicles of Olvido*, a selection of which are included here.

Olvido is living a rackety life as a homeless woman on the streets of Madrid when she hails the poet and claims her for a sister, and guides her through her subterranean world till their two identities almost merge:

‘She loses for me, sickens, flees, blasphemers, takes drugs, breaks, while I look on from a distance of strange health.

But I’m not safe. I bleed from my Olvido’s body, without leaving a stain, in all this stranger’s hurt.’

In her sequence, *Decalogue*, Pilar Adón depicts brutal rural poverty from the point of view of an abused wife, the hunter and his prey.

The ten poets brought together here are very different in their poetics and in their poetic voice, but as a group they represent very well the richness of current Spanish poetry.

SAMPLER