

# OVERKILL

FIRST POEMS IN ENGLISH (1993-1995)

MÓNICA DE LA TORRE

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First Poems in English (1993-1995)  
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**Things Could Be Worse**

Substitute what's lost and bingo.

Got a tooth ache?

Eat a piece of anise candy.

Lost a boyfriend?

Well, buy yourself a fond dog  
and done.

Substitute what's lost and bingo.

**The Blind Man at Cantina La Cubita, Mexico City**

He loves to give people his account  
of what good or bad tequila  
is, while drinking some  
himself, of course, without the lime.

When it's bad it's like swallowing  
a cat, tail first. Its paws drawn down  
resist and scrape your throat. By the time  
he's done with the anecdote

he holds the nearest rail or trips.  
Which is the one he drinks?  
I only know that when he smiles  
his teeth are fake and nonchalant.

**A Party So Big People Don't Have to Talk to Each Other**

I love my friends in a slightly weird way.

The one who says "You look intelligent  
when you wear that scarf." Or, "Yeah, yeah,  
medicine is about us going downtown together  
to buy hats with meaning."

I drink beer with the American who is so Peruvian,  
I flirt at the sight of the other who brings out  
the French in me: we sip wine, café au lait.  
Around Scarface I'm prone to call myself Eric.

There's also the Princess who tells me I am stupid  
when I sleep with guys without stature,  
the outcast who admired me for dating  
a locksmith with a missing tooth.

I love my friends in a slightly weird way,  
like loving a mouth the size of New York.  
My mind is full of voices and I get claustrophobia  
when I feel I too tightly belong.

They are so different from me anyway, if it weren't for me  
they'd have nothing in common.  
(O this infidel's weird love for them,  
this trembling chameleon betraying the colors she takes on.)

**Arms**

There comes a moment of awareness. No one ever hears  
our thoughts while we bathe, while we look in the mirror.

We call this feeling of a lost animal, but it might as well  
be called the insulation of a single foot that walks a path

that could be linear or spiral or winding its way back  
home. We always think in twos. An ice just landed

in my vodka. In these days we talk in circles knowing waves  
never did listen. I even used to feel that someone was talking

to me. Tracing our own dirt road or highway or route made us  
painfully unique. You are always right. We lie when we say

this is missing our mother. She must miss the amnion too. The more  
isolated, the more mothers stand out. If only I could love an octopus.

**Menage**

-For K and T

That night, us three  
listened to Satie.

It was lovely to hear  
Our laughter fall  
like underwear.

The glances between us tasted  
of wine and spice's complicity.

We all know what the other was thinking  
while we repeated "The sweet pork of my thoughts."

Music came like water,  
like the light's impression  
in the windowpane's drops.

Enchantment glared through Mona Lisa's eyes  
chiseled to the wall.

Oddly we talked about ghosts  
before the food had fallen to the floor.

Poetry was there, the hostess of smoke,  
a woman reclining in a burgundy couch,  
her solitude far more artistic when men think of it.

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Yes, you could say I was boiling,  
like water for chocolate. I also  
wanted to cook for you.

In Mexico they say love begins with the mouth.  
Two mouths, three months.  
Open.

**Fabiola**

Fabiola feels really free.  
She has decided she is an artist.  
She refuses to wear underwear,  
wants to get laid.

Fabiola is beautiful  
when she destroys herself.  
She calls you up at midnight,  
she wants to go think at a bar.

Fabiola is an airplane self-consciously  
descending that drags your attention along.  
She makes you feel low when she laughs  
but doesn't pull you up when she cries.

Fabiola doesn't like to be alone;  
but in your company, she looks through you  
the way you look at yourself in the mirror.  
She's a vampire and a nymph.

Fabiola pretends she's as fragile  
as her leopard skin stockings,  
but always gets what she wants.  
She tricks you, like a hyena.

Her face reflects one thousand faces.  
Some of them are yours.

**One the Trapeze Artist, the Other a Clown**

Why is it that I hear brother and I become ready to plunge into the familiar scent. And why is it that you act as a different repellent. You are the house I am leaving behind; your soap never took me in. (I chew these boxes with a tongue full of windows.)

We took the intersection seriously, forgetting it was only a matter of chance. You called me chubby for the pieces of you I ate with dessert. It was never enough and we thought it was a question of language. At dinner you poured that sweet liquid, heavy like a blanket. We spoke about bridges but when you took off your shoes your feet pulled back; your warmth was not like hands but steel. I feared mimetizing and growing your belly. I came here because of the curtains and my high heels, not to hear about devouring buildings.

The more I think about bracelets the less I understand bonding. I meant a possible escape for you, but I escaped from me to you and we met at the niche for the seed we hate. A frame is melting and I'd rather be alone thinking these diverting luxuries. It's easy to think in terms of others: a self lies in identifying or not. Fully present in the world of having been everything, distorted in the mirrors of the circus.

**Poetry Is a Man Who Sells Tools in California**

So you buy yourself a hammer,  
a couple of nails, thick cardboard  
or wooden plates, depending on how  
thick you want the walls to be.

Make sure you have a ruler and a pencil  
to draw out the windows before you make  
the holes. Windows don't have to be  
square, you can carve out  
a rhombus, a trapeze.

It doesn't matter if the ceiling  
outgrows the floor,  
or vice-versa, if you have more ground  
than ceiling, because what  
if you don't fit in a perfect kind of house?

What you need is these tools  
and some flower-boxes. If you want to cry  
let the drops fall in the tear machine  
and make the flowers blossom,  
(you can even build a blue den).

How about a sitting room  
for your many kinds of friends?  
You may have the giraffe,  
the scuba-diver and the astrologer  
over for tea and pastries.  
You'll need space for their heads.

Doors and grass are equally important,  
if it's not raining out  
you can find a warm spot  
and build a rocking chair  
to see the clouds and the moon,  
eclipses and meteor rain,  
or just the stars when it's dark.

**Overkill**

That said now all I need is a hammer.  
I would have followed my master's instructions,  
If only I hadn't mistaken them for lettuce,  
And swallowed them. Since then every time I want  
To speak something green comes out, first a toad,  
A rose, an asparagus. Not that I have anything  
Against them, but I like the silence that comes  
After pounding, and if anything remains  
it must be called a relief.

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