

POEMS BY MAURICIO ESPINOZA

Original Spanish with translations into English by the author

Donde no somos ilegales

*A Claudia Patricia Gómez González, joven maya guatemalteca
asesinada por la Policía Fronteriza de Estados Unidos en mayo del 2018*

Vámonos a la luna, amor,
donde no hay fronteras ni policía fronteriza.

Vámonos a la luna de nuestros ancestros,
a nuestra madre Ixbalanque.

Vámonos a Marte, donde no hay pistolas,
ni terrícolas racistas, ni banderas.

Yo con mis manos libres como quetzales,
vos con tu huipil florido collar de estrellas.

Vámonos a la luna, amor,
donde no somos ilegales.



Where we are not illegal

To *Claudia Patricia Gómez González*, a young Mayan woman from Guatemala
murdered by the U.S. Border Patrol in May 2018

Let's go to the moon, love,
where there are no borders and no border patrol.

Let's go to the moon of our ancestors,
to our mother Ixbalanque.

Let's go to Mars, where there are no guns,
no racist Earthlings and no flags.

Me with my hands free like quetzals,
you with your flowery huipil a string of stars.

Let's go to the moon, love,
where we are not illegal.



Tras el Ohio

Cuando el sol se acuesta tras el Ohio
tres pensamientos me llegan a la mente,
pero igual de rápido se desvanecen,
sin aviso.

Yo pensé que te pensé
cuando el sol se acostaba tras el Ohio,
pero el ronquido de un viejo
buque de vapor me distrajo,
tu incandescencia apagándose
entre la estela
del agua más oscura.

Ese, creo,
fue mi segundo pensamiento,
pero como no hay segundas oportunidades
en esta vida del río,
me parece que ya nunca
pensaré en vos de nuevo
cuando el sol se acueste tras el Ohio.

—Cincinnati, setiembre 2016



Over the Ohio

When the sun sets over the Ohio
three thoughts come to mind,
but just as quickly they vanish
without notice.

I thought I thought about you
as the sun set over the Ohio,
but the sputtering of an old
steamboat took me back,
your incandescence drowning
in the wake
of darkest water.

That was my second thought,
I think,
but because there are no second acts
in this life on the river,
I doubt I'll ever think of you again
when the sun sets over the Ohio.

- Cincinnati, September 2016



Testigo

Mi cuarto tiene sólo una ventana.
Por ahí miro la lluvia que se traga la tarde
con su aliento de nubes negras.

Un día la tormenta devoró la casa,
y los besos suspirados en la noche,
y las tortillas palmeadas por la abuela.

Y sólo quedó esta ventana, donde aún miro al río
hacer y deshacer el mundo
con su respiración de piedras.



Witness

My bedroom only has one window.
Through it I watch the rain swallow the afternoon
with its breath of black clouds.

One day the storm devoured the house,
and the kisses sighed at night,
and the tortillas made by grandmother.

And only this window remained, where I still watch the river
make and unmake the world
with its breathing of stones.



Formas de mirar

“Tus ojos están llenos de lenguaje”,
me decís con un verso prestado de algún
folletín sin nombre, bibliografía.

“Te miro como si dijera palabras empapadas de rocío”,
respondo, la madrugada aún temblando
en su propia humedad.

Al amarnos no hablamos: cerramos los ojos.



Ways of looking

“Your eyes are full of language,”
you tell me with a verse borrowed
from a nameless tabloid, an encyclopedia.

“I look at you as if you spoke words drenched in dew,”
I answer, the dawn still trembling
in her own wetness.

When we love, we don't talk: we close our eyes.



Blues de una mañana de invierno

Carámbanos le han crecido
a la parte inferior de un semáforo
azotado de nieve como polvo fino
por la inquietud del viento.
Y ahora el semáforo
es rojo
amarillo
verde
y la tonalidad más azul
del blanco.



Winter morning blues

Icicles grow from the bottom
of a traffic light
coated in fine
powdery snow by the
restless wind.
And now the light
is red
yellow
green
and the bluest
shade of white.



Musa y oficio

La poesía es como el amor de tu vida:
tenés que buscarla,
pero también tiene que estar allí.



Muse and craft

Poetry is like the love of your life:
You must seek her,
but she also has to be there.



interstate 75

on these endless nights
driving up and down
i-seventy-five

i play loud music
on my phone
to stay awake

write love poems
in my head
to stay alive



long-distance-love

love there's
too many words
too little skin

disembodied smoke
moonless nights
behind the screen

we already know
the end of this story
from a film



America

In this country,
we have universities that teach
the art of war.

And we have universities
that teach the art of greed.

But in the end,
the consequences
are just the same.



Self-deportation

I'm here,
but not for long.
Death has my number,
my address,
the record of my thoughts.

I came here,
but won't be long.
Life has put me
on the deportation line.
"Going back to where
you came from,"
they say.
"Going back where
you belong."

But I will not give them
the satisfaction
to dispatch me along:
Tonight I will self-deport.
Tonight I'm going home.

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Mauricio Espinoza (b. León Cortés, Costa Rica, 1975) is a poet, translator, and assistant professor of Spanish and Latin American Literature at the University of Cincinnati. A Ph.D. in Latin American Literatures and Cultures from The Ohio State University Mauricio has translated Costa Rican poet Eunice Odio into English. His book *Respiración de piedras* won the 2015 University of Costa Rica Press Poetry Prize. His poetry also appears in *The Wandering Song: Central American Writing in the United States* (Tía Chucha Press, 2017).

