

# mpT

NO.3 2024

THE BEST OF WORLD POETRY

## YOUR LANGUAGE ANTICIPATING MINE: FOCUS ON CATALAN



## ROXANA CRISÓLOGO

Translated by Kim Jensen and Judith Santopietro from Spanish

Roxana Crisólogo's book *Kauneus: la belleza* (Kaneus: Beauty) is a distinguished collection of formally innovative poems that give voice to the alienation and ironies of exile and migration within a leftist framework embedded in the global struggle against structural inequality. Set in Peru, Finland, and other regions from Mozambique to Palestine to Turkey, the poems offer a transnational, intergenerational feminist poetics irrigated from the vein of 20th century's defeats.

The challenging yet beautiful sequences in *Kauneus* delve into her family's experience of internal displacement, replicated across Peru, which has seen waves of migrants leaving rural communities in search of opportunities in Lima. Crisólogo brings this diasporic sensibility as she writes about other 'forced countries' and the refugees who flee poverty, violence, and climate catastrophe.

One of the challenges of translating these poems is the swift thematic upheavals, ever-shifting subjectivities, and rhetorical leaps that mark her style. The poems are multivalent and invite a synaptic, intuitive reading; many seemingly unrelated strands coalesce into a mosaic that is both figurative and abstract. Having studied law, Crisólogo deploys and then subverts an ironic form of 'legalese', drawing attention to the illogic that undergirds the dichotomies between the global north and south.

As translators we have spent time and care in rendering the complexities and lyrical dexterity of this poem with its hallucinatory glimpses into the refractive hall of mirrors created by the social pressures of inherently discriminatory feminine ideal, objectification, Orientalism, and the inevitable horizontal hostility among the marginalised women 'who weren't invited' to the ceremony.

*Here we pay homage to Peruvian beauty*

The women who weren't invited follow the ceremony  
glued to their phones

I get overwhelmed by these kinds of invitations  
I don't know which part of me will be cut off by a scalpel  
until I'm left wide open a tumour in the brain  
I'm starting to worry about the lines around my eyes  
the bags of wasted years  
the traces of alcohol that form tinted  
fumes when I dream  
that make me look too smart too wise  
the long dishevelled hair that hangs from me  
like a stampede no one ever heard  
but a hand appears  
and this wasn't in the script reaches up to arrange it

It seems as though I smile all the time and that's fine  
[something flares up on my tongue]  
It's better if we correct your position  
and your hand falls into place  
What if we submerge ourselves like in an aquarium  
with little diamond-coloured fish  
The relationship of fish to water is unobjectionable  
they say yes to everything  
and the water laps on and on

What if I say yes to everything and drown myself in tears  
A good and sweet mother  
forgets about herself

that hand does not forget me  
it drives  
the anxiety of a hundred eyes waiting for something to happen  
It would better if this and everything else could take the shape of  
aquarium panes  
the winding curves of the things that can't be said

A good wife doesn't drown herself says the hand  
a real woman whom the same hand arranges  
to leave her stranded in the centre  
of the runway  
is the imitation  
of another good woman

And I remain lodged like a tumour in everyone's brain  
the anxiety of a hundred eyes waiting for something to happen

It seems that none of this is true

a busy bustling avenue  
where a man passes dragging a woman  
by her hair

It seems that I'm beautiful  
It seems that a downpour of stars will surround my head  
It seems that something will explode in front of their eyes