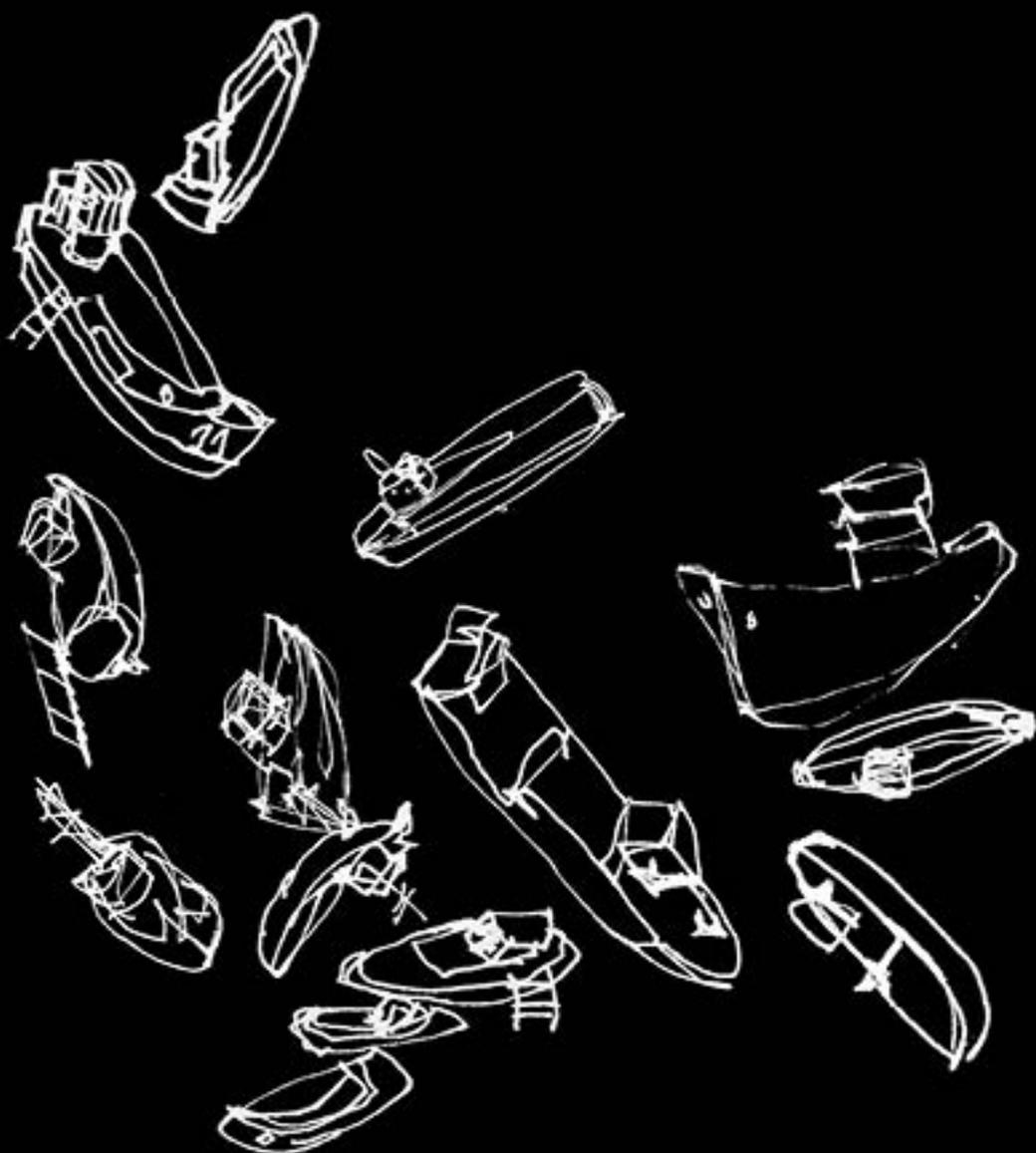


Calque Press Pamphlet 1

Marian Womack
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Sonia Bueno



CALQUE PRESS PAMPHLET I

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Kingfisher
'To return and find'
Five poems from *Aral*



KINGFISHER

While Birds of Calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

John Milton

We sat on the couch, still wearing our coats,
and waited for darkness to fall around us.
It is very sudden here, like in the Tully Wood.
I said nothing, and he said nothing.

*

What I longed for was to see a kingfisher.
I had collected over the years a few precious pictures,
I knew well the bright feathers,
the bird's determined chin.
I left our bed.
The living room was warmer, but I still had to wrap myself in a blanket.
I started writing for the first time in months.

*

I had ideas:
stories about floodings,
about snowed-in places about to flood.
Stories about birds and strange flowers.
Stories about glaciers and jungles and odd weather and lost things.
Stories about ghosts and forests and wolves in sheepskin.
I looked at the table and longed not to be so tired.
Birds flying everywhere,
flocks forming curious shapes.
I needed to ask someone about the kingfishers.
It would be better if we all forgot about these things.

*

I should have known even then that the act of writing was beyond me.
I felt as if I would let go of it,
slowly at first, and then irrevocably.
Like taking a fist of sand on the beach:
a few grains fall,
and then a few more,
until you can't resist opening your fingers.
You yourself let it all go, quite willingly.

*

I was writing a list of stories
that would never be written,
little sentence-length cadavers,
dead before I put them down on the page.

*

It came gradually, that realization
of things not quite adding up.
And then I noticed something odd,
little grey fluffy things sometimes in his wake, like bits of fluff,

although they were not fluff, exactly;
they weren't feathers either, but between these two things.
I started finding them everywhere.

*

He always cleaned the little things in an uncaring way;
he didn't see what they were.
How could he not see?
His way of unseeing looked rehearsed;
At night I lay next to him, dreading the moment when I would go to sleep.
I woke up and he was not there.
Instead of him, little feathers.
I worried he would come back and find them,
and understand what was happening to him.

*

I sneaked out of bed.
The whole room was full of little grey feathers.
They followed me downstairs.
They sat in the air gracefully.
I didn't want to risk the main light.
I pushed the first sheet of paper inside the circle of lamplight.
I took my pen, and started working on the story.
From time to time the house would crack and complain.
It was never Jonas, and I could work uninterrupted.
When the light changed
and I knew
it was time to get ready for work
I had finished the first draft.

*

The house was a wreck,
a mess of grey feathers,

blue feathers,
pink feathers,
gluey depositions,
fleshy masses of indeterminate pulp.
The furniture was covered, dark stains on the walls.
The feathers floated everywhere.
And the parakeets in the wallpaper were speaking to me.
I scrubbed the house clean.
He had not come back

*

I was carrying an egg in my belly.
It made perfect sense.
When I circled it with my hands I could find no bumps,
no kicks:
an even and hard curved thing underneath my flesh.

*

I looked through all the cupboards, took out all the bags of feathers.
I found my yarn, and my sewing.
I had no idea how I would do it.
The shirt would be made of feathers, to his measurements.
It had to fit him properly, or he wouldn't come back.
I sewed all day and part of the night,
the parakeets in the wallpaper shrieking
... not coming back, not coming back, not coming back ...
The feathers would escape,
dance around me, refuse to be tamed.

*

I could not move from the sofa anymore;
I was a rounded thing.
I had stopped eating and drinking, I only counted feathers.

I think that I had called upon the kingfisher myself,
I was so lonely.
On the landing I bent and fell to my knees.
Something told me to go on all fours
and push and push.
I think I saw him then, the kingfisher, looking at me.
I pushed and pushed and pushed once more:
whatever was coming seemed huge, impossible.

*

I felt I was breaking,
I was shocked
to see what had come out of my body.
Two legs, two arms, one perfect little head,
blue and red and gluey.
It took all my will to go to the little thing and take her in my arms.
She was crying, shouting perhaps,
and I could make up some words behind the shrieking:
... he is here, he is here, he is here ...
And the parakeets were silent.

‘TO RETURN AND FIND’

To return and find
the sloe harvest.

Tomatoes in the garden.

Vast meals spreading into long conversations.

The past, when my grandmother
became a shout for help
in the woods at Bértiz one morning—grey,
rainy, in my childhood—
a stick and a wicker basket. We were going
after mushrooms.

To return and find the people under your muddy feet.
The cross, right up in the air.

Paths which chew a few centimetres of life
from the rocky hillsides.

The things that one always forgets.

The seasons, which tell us
everything that happens in the village.

because the word is an eye they walk in silence
/ they are all ribs
/ they fill with signs / separate ly

they climb
another's
body
with
all the
ballast
of their
bodies

there
is
a
truth
here
:
there
is
something
loves
the
ladder

its
descent

it sews *its own* feet

it embroiders a ring
in *its* cheek

it doesn't distinguish between skins it shares a shroud

and [a needle]
calls

communion

their bodies *are* filled
with light but another
hand is
the one which scatters seeds
for
 the fire

MARIAN WOMACK is a bilingual writer and a graduate of the Clarion Writer's Workshop. Her short fiction has been nominated for a BSFA and British Fantasy Award, and she has published one collection of ecological stories, *Lost Objects* (Luna Press, 2018). Her writing often dialogues with collage, bookart, and other knowledge-making practices, most recently as part of Somerset House's 2019 Earth Day installation about activism and ecology. Marian is a doctoral researcher looking at the intersections of eco-storytelling, independent publishing, and activism. She teaches on the Oxford University creative writing MSt, and her two speculative-ecological novels, *The Golden Key* and *The Swimmers*, are forthcoming from Titan Books in 2020.

HASIER LARRETXEA was born in Arriaoz, a village in the Valle de Baztan, Navarra, in 1982. He has lived in Madrid for many years. In 2018 he published his first prose book in Castilian, *What the Woods Speak*, a multi-media work including illustrations by the artist and designer Zuri Negrín and photographs by Paola Lozano. He regularly performs his nature poetry alongside his father, a famous *aizkolari* (traditional Basque sportsman), who accompanies his son's recital while cutting tree trunks with an axe. He began his career as a poet in Basque, publishing two volumes of poetry, *Azken bala* (2008) and *Atakak* (2011). Then he began to translate his own work and to write directly in Castilian. His work in Castilian includes the books *Fog at the Border* (2015), *From a New Land* (2016), and *Earthly Meridians* (2017).

Sonia Bueno was born in the Spanish North African enclave of Melilla in 1976. She works with the literary collective Lavarca ebria, whose remit is to investigate the possibility of the word and its relation with other arts. She has published two collections of poetry: *retales (leftovers)*, which won the Premio Internacional de Poesía Fundación Centro de Poesía José Hierro in 2011) and *Aral* (2016). She has published poems in literary magazines in Spain and abroad, including the English-language magazine *The Wolf*. She was an invited reader at the 49th Rotterdam Poetry International in 2018. She lives in Madrid.

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