

## map/ legend

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*sin brújula, peregrina, says my father/ called wolf by my  
mother, a boy from the fading photograph. little match, he  
says, walk ahead. you who are young/ save our place. hide  
the key under your tongues, lizard, (he says)*

how you learn the way, without speaking. your legs begin  
breaking. your spine curving. your voice changing from  
song to low growl.

(this is topography)

/

*how could I know about fire/ how could you have warned me  
(and memory?)*

*this is how we died:*

i went ahead into the woods and grew wild

i called the trees by name

my father the wolf fed me the names for this purpose

(i sewed them here, into my mouth)

\*

*what they don't tell you about raising your children in a  
foreign place/ is that they will be foreign too/ foreign to*

## points of/ departure

*mother's cathedral emptied out by officers. she returned with  
a bowed head and a hand vacant of her heirloom/ mother,  
you will soon orphan me/ how could you have given me  
something the marauders would want*

*(eldest/ you still have your body)*

*nobody said this of course/ the body is an embarrassment/  
what good is a thing so badly made that it breaks in the time  
it takes to grow a daughter up to nothing*

\*

mother  
how many lovers I will have  
I am not embarrassed  
but I will not tell you because my body  
is a language you never learned

but **your** body was my first language

take this body  
let us                    covenant

i was so young then

\*

*eldest, I will bead you white gowns full of worry/ I will take  
you to temple and teach you the singing of that other country  
(no hell to go to)/ but you will walk crooked, clumsy/ you will  
bruise like fruit/ I am sorry/ I must save some gifts for the  
one who comes after you...*

/

(the last thing i remembered was the word fruit)

because I heard you coming, I abandoned my lessons  
I stepped away, into some wild place

(*nacimiento*)

that place of damp earth/ do you remember it/ i stole a  
handful of it to eat slowly/ to remember you before i knew  
you/ *and you are?*

\*

rivers are born and grow up in your childhood  
you fashion, then, a guardian of the waters/  
your parents bring you north  
to a dry place, a place of dying

(and fires)

but i was waiting here for you/ with a forked tongue  
and your name was already written on my skin

*call me that again, that word*

*father (black and a wolf and a wild reed besides),*

i fell into the thorns and bit through my tongue.

i drowned in a pool.

my legs are always bruised.

my skin does not age.

it is a fresh page every day.

the names are written there daily.

i am saving a place for when you come, a shelter made of  
names, of my skin.

*remember me, the darker one? the one with the temper and  
birthmark like him (and her? was i ever like her?)*

\*

*am I separate from them, my family?  
am I separate from the forest?  
and my tongue, is it not forked as a river?*

*north, like the Nile  
follow the sound of your name*

*(howl)*

there is a clearing/ a doorway  
so many metaphors for casually open legs  
foreign my own hand to my body

(the hand of malediction/ making a key or legend/ or the  
sign of the cross)

**PROCENIUM/ signum crucis**

*Thrust:*

(here) is your mother's hand gesturing  
toward curtain and frame (some edge, some forever fall)

*imagine:* index finger pointing down

aquí está el infierno/ *no hell to go to*

thumb folded over tightly

aquí está mi abrazo/ *this*

in the name of names and not

that is to say un-names/ *sin nombre*

*I gave you her name.*

\*

(here) is your father's song as compass/ *compás*

a way to keep time/ *true north*

*empezar llorando/ acabar cantando (como quien dice)*

and to say/ *say this: cut a hollow in the frame*

*crush pomegranates where you wipe your feet*

where you wipe your feet, both entry and limit  
(the cliff/ the weight of eyelids)  
behind you: bruised feet through a keyhole  
before you, open mouths and folded hands  
a torn screen, swinging doors  
*y dice así:*

*autobiography of a scar*

\*

(sometimes when you are washing your hair, this happens)

*you condition your hair/ to go see your mother/ you*

*make it soft and shiny so she remembers you/ when*

*you were four years old. your mother*

*creator and destroyer*

*attends/ says*

*where are you my eldest/*

*i made you of coffee bean and milk/ i named you after the*

*sea spray/*

*after the madonna of a dark people*

*in a white savanna/ i carried you*

*across the desert,*

*flake of snow/ on the map*

*of my body/ be counted.*

*i (eldest) gave you (eldest)/ the hands of*

*maura (eldest)/ after she lost*

*the finger of malediction/ (or was it the other thing/the*

*other hand).*

*with them you traced the scars that range*

*across mother's pale body/when you asked if they were your*

*doing the only answer was ever yes.*

*mother summons and your/ mouth looses the wicked phrase/*

*put there by marauders*

(mande usted).