

bear in mind the errors
you committed on account of style:
the raw flesh of habit,
the solitary vice of guilt,
the anxiety so poorly worn.
It won't be enough:
your voice a cold footstep over the past,
you vomiting the worm of faith.
Don't forget the bright morning sun
trapped in the room, the cherry tree
in the courtyard, the cistern among mulberries,
the flashes of joy
in the thick river of horror
*and remember that everything we could have been
must already have been there for better or worse.*

Stories 2

Esther tells your story:
(here we're talking about a thin air
that embroidered the house with a fragrance of timeless jasmine
and a cold rage of outcast)
You fell in love.
You fell in love
and so far yours could be a shoddy love story:
your large lock of hair and the yellowish photo
that today looks remote and somnolent,
your faint nostalgia
of hallways where you swore love forever etcetera
and the clandestine notes that began
My love My sweet beloved
(sugar syrup—white lily—
butterfly—heart and soul).
It happens that to you everything became distance,
eternal silence in the books,
and sullen like an icon you frightened the children.
Ever since the No of your father
you refused to talk to anyone
and today I feel that thirty years is too long

to end up silent
to end up with nothing to say.
I never saw you but remember
you at the table where you never looked up
to see your brothers
(here Esther lists four or five:
the one married to
the widow of
doctor such, and so on)
no longer caring they were your brothers.
Your world had no windows
the streets never saw you again,
because the earthy smells from market
the street concerts by the military bands
and the altar to Saint Isidro
weren't enough to beckon you.
You abandoned your *mantilla* on the top shelf and surrounded it
with mothballs.
You let the gray appear with solitude like a halo
and discovered that the air in the house froze before you.
You read no matter what for thirty years
in your chair, facing the dim courtyard
(sometimes the night's breath
made your memory walk
on the path leading to the cemetery).
Your skin is your skin no more
it's the ashes, the quicklime of despair
the stubborn wing of destruction
the brick courtyard still asking about you.

Now that you are buried next to our grandfather
Alfredo looked at your grave trying
to imagine your solitude, outcast from the mollusk island,
aware of the silence you relished, aware of your rage.
Alfredo was looking over your grave
and while the words of Esther told the end of the story
an intense fragrance of jasmine seeped through every corner
of the crypt.

Translated by Ernesto Trejo