

## Domestic Battles (1989)<sup>1</sup>

By Teresa Calderón (Chile)

Translated from the Spanish by Celeste Kostopulos-Cooperman

I began losing battles.

Accordingly, I ended up losing you.

With a shadow radar  
I pursue you among so many people.

There you are scrunched up in your trench  
with an escort of accumulated hatred  
unravelling kisses in a useless sheet.

With me you sustain the most savage struggle  
because it is the last of all.

From now on I will be the guerilla fighter  
the one who takes your mouth by storm  
the one who installs her flag in your memory,

the one who dies of love in other arms  
believing that she is invading  
the distant territory of your body.



Teresa Calderón  
born 1955

### Love is Compared to a Battle

#### Guiding Questions

- How is winning someone's love like a battle?
- What is a "guerilla fighter"?
- If the speaker is going to fight like a guerilla fighter, what kinds of tactics will she adopt?
- In the logic of the poem, is doing this a good or bad thing?

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<sup>1</sup>

Guerrilheira doméstica

Comencé perdiendo las batallas.  
En consecuencia terminé perdiéndote.

Con un radar de sombras  
te persigo entre tanta gente.

Allí estás parapetado en tu trinchera  
con una escolta de odio acumulado  
deshilando besos en una sábana inútil.

Sostienes conmigo la lucha más feroz  
porque es la última de todas.

Desde ahora seré la guerrillera  
la que te tome tu boca por asalto,  
la que instale su bandera en tu memoria,

la que muera de amor entre otros brazos  
Creyendo que invade  
el esquivo territorio de tu cuerpo.

## Chess (1972)<sup>2</sup>

By Rosario Castellanos (Mexico)

Translated from the Spanish by Magda Bogin

Because we were friends and occasionally lovers;  
perhaps to add another interest  
to the many that already bound us,  
we decided to play games of wit.

We placed a board between us:  
evenly dividing pieces, values,  
possible moves.  
We learned the rules, swore to respect them,  
and began the match.

We've been sitting here for a century, meditating  
Furiously  
on how to deal the final blow that, once and for all,  
will irremediably forever annihilate the other.



Rosario Castellanos  
1925-1974

### A Relationship is Compared to Playing a Game

#### Guiding Questions

- How is love like a chess match or other game of strategy?
- What kind of relationship is the speaker describing?
- Does the nature of the relationship make her think about love in this way?
- In the logic of the poem, is this a good or bad way to conduct a relationship?

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<sup>2</sup> Ajedrez

Porque éramos amigos y, a ratos, nos amábamos;  
quizá para añadir otro interés  
a los muchos que ya nos obligaban  
decidimos jugar juegos de inteligencia.

Pusimos un tablero enfrente de nosotros:  
equitativo en piezas, en valores,  
en posibilidad de movimientos.  
Aprendimos las reglas, les juramos respeto  
y empezó la partida.

Henos aquí hace un siglo, sentados, meditando  
encarnizadamente  
cómo dar el zarpazo último que aniquile  
de modo inapelable y, para siempre, al otro.

## Sonnet XVI (1959)<sup>3</sup>

By Pablo Neruda (Chile)

Translated from the Spanish by Gustavo Escobedo

I love the piece of earth you are,  
because in all the planetary prairies  
I do not have another star. You repeat  
the multiplication of the universe.

Your wide eyes are the light I have  
of the vanquished constellations,  
your skin pulses like the roads  
which the meteor follows in the rain.

Of so much moon were your hips to me,  
of all the sun your deep mouth is its delight,  
of so much burning light like honey in the shade

your heart burnt by long red rays,  
and this way I follow the fire of your form kissing you,  
small and planetary, dove and geography.



Pablo Neruda  
1904-1973

### A Romantic Partner is Compared to the Universe

#### Guiding Questions

- How can a lover be both the earth and the universe?
- In what ways does Neruda develop the comparison?
- What characteristics does his lover possess that make the extended metaphor work?
- How should the reader make sense of the contradictory ideas in the last line?

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<sup>3</sup> Soneto XVI

Amo el trozo de tierra que tú eres,  
porque de las praderas planetarias  
otra estrella no tengo. Tú repites  
la multiplicación del universo.

Tus anchos ojos son la luz que tengo  
de las constelaciones derrotadas,  
tu piel palpita como los caminos  
que recorre en la lluvia el meteor.

De tanta luna fueron para mí tus caderas,  
de todo el sol tu boca profunda y su delicia,  
de tanta luz ardiente como miel en la sombra

tu corazón quemado por largos rayos rojos,  
y así recorro el fuego de tu forma besándote,  
pequeña y planetaria, paloma y geografía.

## A Tree Within (1987)

By Octavio Paz (Mexico)<sup>4</sup>

Translated from the Spanish by Eliot Weinberger

A tree grew inside my head.  
A tree grew in.  
Its roots are veins,  
its branches nerves,  
thoughts its tangled foliage.  
Your glance sets it on fire,  
and its fruits of shade  
are blood oranges  
and pomegranates of flame.  
Day breaks  
in the body's night.  
There, within, inside my head,  
the tree speaks.  
Come closer-- can you hear it?



Octavio Paz  
1914-1998

### A Lover is Compared to Nourishment for a Tree

#### Guiding Questions

- What is the tree growing inside the speaker's head?
- The speaker identifies what the roots and branches represent, but what are the fruit?
- Why is the fruit identified with fire?
- Why does a lover's glance have such effects on the tree?

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<sup>4</sup> Arbol adentro

Creció en mi frente un árbol,  
Creció hacia dentro.  
Sus raíces son venas,  
nervios sus ramas,  
sus confusos follajes pensamientos.  
Tus miradas lo encienden  
y tus frutos de sombras  
son naranjas de sangre,  
son granadas de lumbre.  
Amanece  
en la noche del cuerpo.  
Allá adentro, en mi frente,  
el árbol habla.  
Acércate, ¿lo oyes?

## The Menace of the Flower (1917)<sup>5</sup>

By Alfonso Reyes (Mexico)

Translated from the Spanish by Samuel Beckett

Flower of drowsiness,  
lull me but love me not.

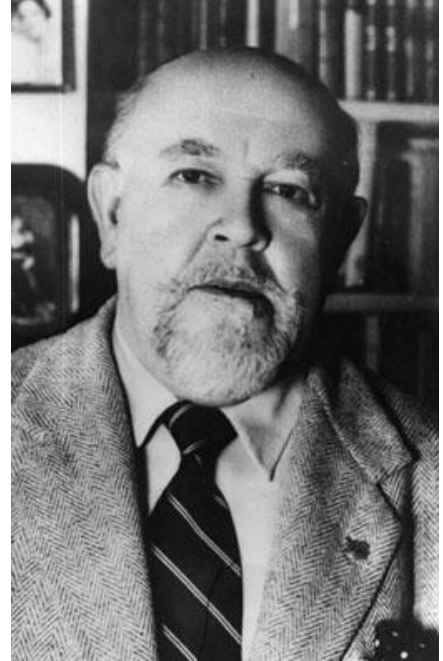
How you profuse your perfume,  
how overdo your rouge,  
flower who kohl your lids<sup>6</sup>  
and exhale your soul in the sun!

Flower of drowsiness.

There is one resembles you  
in your deceiving blush,  
and too because she has  
black eyelashes like you.

Flower of drowsiness.

There is one resembles you...  
(And I tremble alone to see  
your hand in mine,  
tremble lest you turn  
into a woman one day!)



Alfonso Reyes  
1889-1959

### A Potential Lover is Compared to a Flower

#### Guiding Questions

- Why does the speaker ask the flower to “lull,” but not “love” him?
- How does the fruit resemble a woman? How does the poet develop the comparison?
- Why does the speaker “tremble”? Of what is he afraid?

<sup>5</sup>

La amenaza de la flor

Flor de las adormideras:  
engáñame y no me quieras.

¡Cuánto el aroma exageras,  
cuánto extremas tu arrebol,  
flor que te pintas ojeras  
y exhalas el alma al sol!

Flor de las adormideras.

Una se te parecía  
en el rubor con que engañas,  
y también porque tenía,  
como tú, negras pestañas.

Flor de las adormideras.

Una se te parecía...  
Y tiemblo sólo de ver  
tu mano puesta en la mía:  
¡Tiemblo no amanezca un día  
en que te vuelvas mujer!

<sup>6</sup> Kohl is a black powder used in eye makeup. The translation here is more poetic than literal (in Spanish, Reyes simply uses the verb *to paint*).

## The Most Ancient Names of Fire (1994)<sup>7</sup>

By Roberto Sosa (Honduras)

Translated from the Spanish by Jo Anne Engelbert

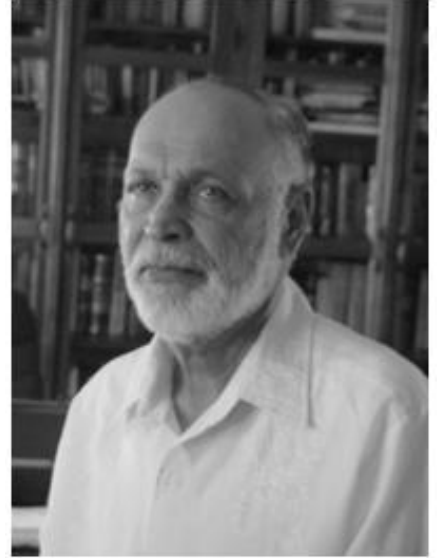
Blessed are the lovers  
for theirs is the grain of sand  
that sustains the center of the seas.

Dazed by the play of fountains  
they hear nothing  
but the music sprinkled by their names.

Trembling,  
they cling to one another  
like small frightened animals who tremble, knowing they  
will die.  
Nothing is alien to them.

Their only strength against the wind and tide  
are the beautifying words of all existence: I love you.  
We shall grow old together to the end.

Male and female ravens steal lovers' eyes,  
their beautiful gestures, even the moon in their mirror  
but not the fire  
from which they are reborn.



Roberto Sosa  
1930-2011

### Lovers are Compared to Small, Delicate Things that are Still Very Strong

#### Guiding Questions

- Why are lovers compared to small, delicate things (a grain of sand, small animals)?
- Why are these small, delicate things also described as a sturdy, strong, and important?
- What is it about lovers that makes them strong (even though they would seem to be weak)?

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El más antiguo de los nombres del fuego

Dichosos los amantes por que les  
pertenece  
el grano de arena  
que sostiene el peso del centro de  
los mares.

Hipnotizados por los juegos de agua  
no oyen  
sino la música que sus nombres esparce.

Unidos,  
pegándose entre sí como los animalitos  
aterrados  
que presienten que van a morir,  
tiemblan sus partes.  
Nada les es ajeno.

Para ellos contra viento y marea  
sólo tienen sentido las embellecedoras  
palabras  
de todo lo que existe: --te amo, juntos  
hacia el final  
llegaremos a viejos.

Los cuervos y las cuervas les sacarán  
los ojos,  
los bellos gestos, incluso la luna del  
espejo,  
pero no el fuego,  
de donde surgirán de nuevo los amantes.

## Tired Animal (1919)<sup>8</sup>

By Alfonsina Storni (Argentina)

Translated from the Spanish by Lauren Watel

I want a fierce love of claw and tooth  
that assaults me treacherously at midday  
and stifles this arrogance of mine,  
the pride of being all powerful.

I want a fierce love of claw and tooth  
that bleeds me raw  
to see if the melancholy  
that corrupts my soul will end.

I want a love that is a storm  
that breaks and renews everything  
because a deep energy feeds it.

If only my mud<sup>9</sup> could be revived there  
my poor, tired animal mud  
sick of covering the same old ground.



Alfonsina Storni  
1892-1938

### Potential Lovers are Compared to Animals

#### Guiding Questions

- Why does the speaker want a love like a fierce animal?
- In what sense would this potential love be fierce?
- What kind of animal is the speaker, and why does she describe herself this way?

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<sup>8</sup> Animal Cansado

Quiero un amor feroz de garra y diente  
Que me asalte a traición a pleno día  
Y que sofoque esta soberbia mía  
este orgullo de ser todo pudiente.

Quiero un amor feroz de garra y diente  
Que en carne viva inicie mi sangría  
A ver si acaba esta melancolía  
Que me corrompe el alma lentamente.

Quiero un amor que sea una tormenta  
Que todo rompe y lo renueva todo  
Porque vigor profundo lo alimenta.

Que pueda reanimarse allí mi lodo,  
Mi pobre lodo de animal cansado  
Por viejas sendas de rodar hastiado.

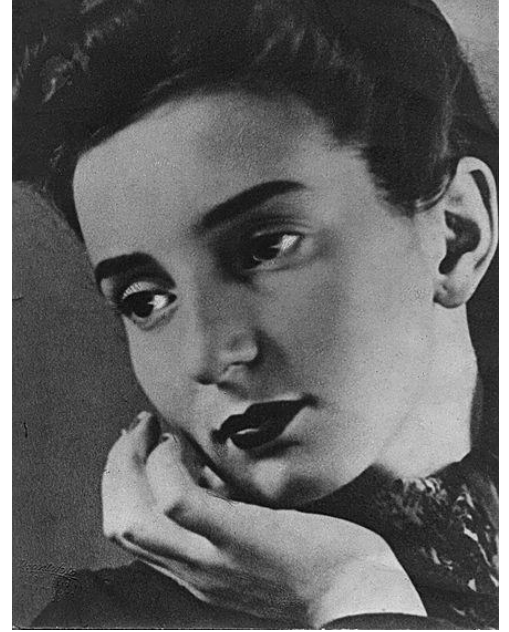
<sup>9</sup> In the sense of clay or earth from which humans were formed (alluding to the biblical story of creation).

Love (1955)<sup>10</sup>

By Idea Vilariño (Uruguay)

Translated from the Spanish by Andres Alfaro

A bird is singing to me  
and I sing back to him  
He twitters upon hearing me  
And I twitter back  
He injures me and I bleed on him  
He smashes me  
I break him  
He tears me apart  
I crush him  
He helps me  
I pick him up  
All filled up with peace  
with war  
with hate and love  
and once untied  
his voice whines and I whine back  
He laughs and I laugh back  
He looks at me and I look at him  
He talks to me and I talk to him  
He loves me and I love him  
-- It's got nothing to do with love  
we produce life--  
and he asks me and I ask him  
and he defeats me and I defeat him  
and he completes me and I complete him.



Idea Vilariño  
1920-2009

**Lovers are Compared to Birds**

Guiding Questions

- In what way are lovers like birds?
- Why is the imagery so violent in the first half of the poem? Is this meant to suggest the relationship is bad or unhealthy?
- Why does the speaker deny that their relationship is about love? In what sense are they producing "life"?

Un pájaro me canta	todo de odio de amor
y yo le canto	y desatado
me gorgojea al oído	gime su voz y gimo
y le gorgojeo	ríe y río
me hiere y yo le sangro	y me mira y lo miro
me destroza	me dice y yo le digo
lo quiebro	y me ama y lo amo
me deshace	-- no se trata de amor
lo rompo	damos la vida--
me ayuda lo	y me pide y le pido
levanto	y me vence y lo venzo
lleno todo de paz	y me acaba y lo acabo.
todo de guerra	