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## A comparative study of blob detection methods: evaluation on nodule candidate detection in chest radiographs

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**THE UNIVERSAL IN MARJORIE AGOSIN'S HUMAN RIGHTS POETRY**

**Thesis**

**Submitted to**

**The College of Arts and Sciences of the**

**UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for**

**The Degree**

**Master of Arts in English**

**by**

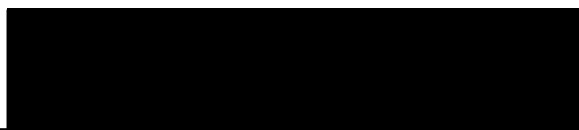
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## ABSTRACT

### THE UNIVERSAL IN MARJORIE AGOSIN'S HUMAN RIGHTS POETRY

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University of Dayton, 1998

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Exiled Chilean poet Marjorie Agosin shows traces of common problems of exiled writers, nostalgia and loss of natural audience, in her poetry. Agosin's multiple personal identities, as well as the indeterminate audience of exile, cause her to universalize both the subjects and audiences of her human rights poems: "La Desaparecida I-VI," "La Tortura," and "Los Desaparecidos." Philosopher Elaine Scarry's spectrum of perceptual states from pain to imagination/creation, provides a model through which it is possible to chart Agosin's relative focus on the pain of individual persons as opposed to universalized subjects and audiences. Although Agosin creates stronger poems by focusing on the pain of specific speakers and not addressing a universal reader, many of the poems studied fade to universal abstractions.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Passing memory, imagined and intermittent. Memory like a chest of magical echoes, like a compass in a familiar closet. I graze my memory and shake her long locks of hair not knowing if I tell what I invent or if I invent what I tell. I wish to talk about a mythical and myth-making country, on the southernmost tip of the planet. it is called Chile. A fertile and generous land, it is a country of deluded wanderers and poets. ( A Cross 1)

With this paragraph, exiled Chilean poet Marjorie Agosin begins A Cross and a Star: Memoirs of a Jewish Girl in Chile, in which she assumes the voice of her mother, though the voices of mother and daughter intertwine in the narrative. Laura Reisco, in a forward to the work, questions, "Is it really possible to say where one memory, one voice--or one person--ends, and the other begins?" (A Cross xix). Agosin, who left Chile as a teenager after the 1973 coup, writes to recover all that she's lost in exile: "Distance helped me to recreate my memory, to invent a Chile that was different from the one others lived, a Chile of myth, a Chile invented through distance" (Agosin 32).

The Chile that she invents in her human rights poetry, however, is a political one, where the disappeared speak through her poems. Agosin speaks for her mother in her memoir, but she also speaks for the distant dead in her poetry. The imperative in representing the real political repression is to imagine concretely the pain of her subjects. Agosin negotiates the problems of artists in exile, nostalgia and loss of audience, in order to represent the in pain-other. She questions *for* whom she writes, (and how she is able to write for that subject), and *to* whom she writes. When Agosin universalizes her audience

or her subject, the poems reflect critical variances in detail, the presence of which determines the effect her poems may have on a real reader.

### **Historical Context**

Nada es lo mismo antes y después del 11 de septiembre de 1973. Chile se ha partido en dos. Y aunque hablemos y pratiquemos el amor y la amistad y miremos el río al atardecer, cada uno de estos actos tiene un sentido distinto. Nada es lo mismo. ¿Tampoco la poesía? Tampoco la poesía.”<sup>1, 2</sup> (Lara 7).

Nothing has marked the lives of Chileans more deeply than the coup of 1973 and its subsequent dictatorship. In moments, with little resistance, the first democratically elected socialist government in history fell. Salvador Allende’s Popular Unity government gave way to a military junta led by dictator General Agosto Pinochet Ugarte. The resulting fallout was tremendous: “By December, at least fifteen hundred civilians were dead--shot in confrontations, tortured to death, hunted down by vigilantes, or executed by firing squads” (Constable 20). Government-sponsored persecution of Chileans resulted in the disappearance and presumed death of 1,000 Chileans by 1978 (Constable 94). By the return to democratic rule in 1989, the government-authored Rettig Report even admitted that “2115 people died as victims of disappearances, extrajudicial executions and under torture” (Heinz 83).

Those directly persecuted by the regime constituted only a small number of Chileans affected by it. Survivors of torture, relatives of the disappeared, and citizens who fled Chile during the regime number among those whose lives were dramatically altered by the dictatorship. By 1979, the official figure of Chileans in exile was 28,000, while some



estimates were as high as 200,000 between 1973 and 1986 (Constable 149, 336). One-tenth of the Chilean population lived or had lived in exile by 1986 (Alcides Jofre 1).

Included in the motivations for flight--beyond the overt political repression of the regime--were economic hardship, the authoritarian anti-intellectual attitude, the expulsion of people from educational institutions, radical changes in state education, restrictions on freedom of expression, firing of professionals, and the desire to escape coercion (Alcides Jofre 1). The connection of these motivations with intellectual endeavors contributed to the large number of intellectuals abroad.

Chile, which had been a land of poets--including two Nobel Prize winners Gabriela Minstral and Pablo Neruda--had become a country that censored all forms of public discourse. Periodicals and television were strictly controlled and opposition literature and media squelched (Constable 154-156). At the time, "El 'clima' cultural del país--su pulsación vital--decrece día a día en medio de la tragedia, el aislamiento, la persecución y el desastre económico traídos por la Junta"<sup>3</sup> (Lara 8). This breakdown of culture in Chile was a direct result of the lack of periodicals free of direct or indirect censorship, including self-censorship (Lara 8). The resulting lack of self-expression, coupled with direct persecution, forced many writers and other artists into exile. State-controlled publishing meant that few Chileans in exile could hope that Chile would see the work they produced.

An extended definition of exile is required to encompass someone like Agosin, who was not forced to leave, and has not returned to live since the return to democracy. Alcides Jofre concludes that it is impossible to distinguish between all types of exile: "Tampoco es posible detenerse en categorías tales como auto-exiliados, desterrados, expulsados, prohibidos de entrar al país, etc.; la noción de exilio engloba todas estas

situaciones”<sup>4</sup> (1). In other words, the categories of exile overlap, and though there are differences among them, they are as complicated as the sum total of individual reasons for leaving.

Edward Said gives a broad definition of an exile as “anyone prevented from returning home,” (143) but this “prevention” is ambiguous. Who or what prevents some exiles from returning home? What is home when time has passed? Adolfo Sanchez Vasquez argues that exile, once begun for any length of time, is never ending: “Y entonces el exiliado descubre con estupor primero, con dolor después, con cierta ironía más tarde, en el momento que objetivamente ha terminado su exilio, que el tiempo no ha pasado impunemente, y que tanto si vuelve como si no vuelve, jamás dejará de ser un exiliado”<sup>5</sup> (203). In other words, connections and associations with a new country, as well as the passage of time in the home country, cause double exile for those who choose to return. Agosin discusses this irony in an essay entitled “Always from Somewhere Else: Reflections on Exile”: “I have discovered that return implies another exile. The mythical Chile of my childhood, the Chile of my early adolescence and of the student Bohemia has disappeared” (Agosin 33). When Agosin speaks of a mythical Chile, it is this lost past to which she refers. Though she has returned frequently, the Chile she knew is gone. Because of this permanent state of exile, much of exiles’ writing shows a chronic sense of homelessness.

### **The Problems of Exile Writing**

The inability to ever leave an exiled state is coupled with other problems of exile, which find their way in exiled writers’ creations: survivor guilt, nostalgia, and the loss of home audience. Leon Grinberg, a psychoanalyst who studied migration and exile, found

that “[m]any exiles suffer from survivor syndrome as detected in prisoners of Nazi concentration camps who managed to survive while family members and friends were tortured and exterminated . . . exiles can be swamped by the guilt they feel toward companions who died” (158). This guilt pervades the literature of exiles. In an anthology of Chilean poetry from 1978 entitled Chile: Poesía de la resistencia y del exilio, the poetry of resistance is separated from the poetry of exile, as if the poetry of exile cannot be considered poetry of resistance. “Muchos de los poemas que integran esta antología nacieron en la represión. Otros fueron escritos en exilio. . . En todo caso esta disvisión, reflejo de esa circunstancia histórica que nos ha separado físicamente, pretende integrar en una voz solidaria de la poesía”<sup>6</sup> (Lara 10). The exiled compilers do not acknowledge, or do not believe, that exile is a type of repression. The two compilers discuss the difficult conditions of writing under the dictatorship, but also within exile: “O en esa otra condición no menos dura y *a veces vergonzante* del exilio”<sup>7</sup> (Lara 7, my emphasis). Though physical separation is a fact of exile, shame about that separation is certainly a motivational factor for the writers included in the anthology. The poems of exiled writers are often politically motivated, just like those written in Chile. There is a tendency, then, out of guilt or political passion, or both, to write for the country’s causes. Many of the exiles’ poems reflect the same political concerns as the poems written clandestinely in Chile.

Connected to the guilt an exile experiences is the feeling of nostalgia which is also reflected in exile writing. Even Agosin’s development as a poet is linked to childhood nostalgia. As a young exile, she felt isolated by language, and was ridiculed by her new classmates. Letters to friends in Chile became regional memoirs which eventually

developed into poems. "In my adolescence in Georgia, I began to write long letters to my girlfriends, asking about weather, certain flowers, fragrances, certain streets. I wanted to reconstruct all that I had lost and longed for" (30). Agosin's attempt hold on to the sounds and sights of Chile illustrates one of the problems resulting from such nostalgia. Though the writer misses her life, "[u]no de los problemas que enfrenta el escritor en el exilio es la pérdida de su contexto lingüístico originario, la pérdida de la posibilidad de un contacto vivo y cotidiano . . ." (Schopf qtd. in Alcides Jofre 15). Agosin attempts to hold on to her original Chilean Spanish by continuing to write and teach in Spanish. Nevertheless, the daily linguistic interaction is gone, as are the concrete sensations of daily life.

Nostalgia for the lost country is expressed in regional poetry, but also in political poetry. Argentinean in exile, Julio Cortázar discusses both types of exile literature. "Están los que casi proustianamente parten desde el exilio a una nostálgica búsqueda de la patria perdida; están los que dedican su obra a reconquistar esa patria, integrando el esfuerzo literario en la lucha política"<sup>9</sup> (qtd. in Alcides Jofre 14). Although in context, Cortázar thinks both categories in their extremes are misguided because they represent a victory for the oppressor, both motivations intertwine in Agosin's literature, the nostalgia flows through her political poetry. Agosin's struggle to remember regional characteristics becomes political in her poetry: "Were it not for the military coup of 1973, I would not have written poetry about the blindfolded and disappeared, about the pain of nameless bodies in common graves. I wrote obsessively because I could not forget" (31). When regional descriptions of things, become representations of other people's pain, however, problems of authenticity may arise.

The nostalgia connected with exile gives it a romantic cast that Sanchez Vasquez cautions against in overtly political actions. He makes a distinction between the same nostalgia that wonderfully informs poetry “es fatal en política, pues no se hace política en el aire, sino con los pies bien afirmados en tierra. El político tiene que ajustar exactamente las manecillas de su reloj a la hora presente (la de aquí y la de allá) . . .”<sup>10</sup> (202). In short, nostalgia as a motivation needs to be guarded against in politics. In order to represent someone else well, the exile needs to have a clear picture of the other’s pain. If guilt, too, is a type of nostalgia, basing political poetry on either of these motives is perilous; especially when the audience for the poems is not the country upon which they are based.

The final, and most critical, artistic problem of exile is the loss of the home audience. Alcides Jofre’s bibliography of exiled literature defines it by its changed audience: “Aquí el objeto de interés es la literatura chilena producida fuera de Chile, y que no circula en Chile, entendida como una esfera cultural autónoma de considerable crecimiento en la última década”<sup>11</sup> (2). Later, Alcides Jofre develops the idea that even after the loss of a “público natural”<sup>12</sup> (6) exiled writers’ work is still part of national literature. “Esta cultura chilena en el exilio difiere del productos artísticos del interior, y sin embargo, es parte de ese mismo sistema cultural nacional . . .”<sup>13</sup> (6). Though poetry is changed in elemental ways, it is still Chilean because the split caused by the dictatorship is part of Chilean history and Chilean thought.

Agosin speculates about the change of audience in her own work. “I was in exile, and I could dare to say what could not be said there, in the South. But I always wondered: For whom do I say the unsayable? (31). Immediately after this question, Agosin assumes an English speaking real reader: “I wrote in Spanish and always had to

rely on a faithful translator to tell my story" (31). This real English-speaking reader is compounded with an intended reader, "an audience of remote phantoms" (31), a Chilean audience.

I wrote to say something about the gagged place called Chile, about the silence and indifference of people who succumbed to the demons of fear.

But I also wrote to a U.S. audience who, though untouched by fear, felt some solidarity and sought to understand those stories of repression and pain. (31).

This dual sense of audience touches the issue of who the poems are *for*. Are they for the reader who grows in solidarity, or for the subject, "the gagged place called Chile," or, more specifically, the gagged and blindfolded people, the actual victims of Chilean repression? When the intended audience and the real readers are so disparate, it affects the poetry's sense of purpose. Who reads the poems and what effect are they to have? Without a clear sense of audience, the answer becomes a universal reader.

If writers can leave a nation and continue to identify strongly with it, as well as with other parts of the world where they live, teach, and write, a new kind of "transnational" (Pratt 84) identity is formed. Transnational identity focuses on all the places where cultures come into contact and thus differentiate one from another (Pratt 88). This new non-national perspective is exemplified in mestiza theory:

"[W]ithin ethnic (especially Chicano) studies, this perspective is being complemented by another point of view that regards ethnic cultures not in terms of their autonomy and discreteness but as something quite different: as borderlands, sites of ongoing critical and inventive interaction with the

dominant culture, as permeable contact zones across with significations move in many different directions.” (Pratt 89)

This fluctuation of identification with a nation, culture, and gender, accounts for a person like Agosin who has multiple identities as a Jew, Chilean, academic, poet, resident of the United States, granddaughter of European exiles, etc. Agosin’s diverse background justifies a universalized personal identity.

Gabriel García Márquez, affirms the idea of a universalized Latin American exile. He writes, “enotonces el patria del exilio borra sus fronteras . . .sumando a ese lenguaje, que es de todos y ya no es de ninguno, la persistencia del lenguaje comun y comunal del exilio”<sup>14</sup> (10). Agosin quotes the beginning of this passage in an article comparing novels written in Chile and those by exiled novelists during the 1970’s, and, while she finds differences among both types of novels, she affirms her general agreement with García Márquez (“Aproximaciones10). Exile writing becomes universal writing, borderless words from a common language. It becomes a way of writing with mixed identities, but also a way of writing to differing groups.

The experience of lacking one home audience and lacking a unified identity leads to universality. Agosin writes, “For years I thought my poems were written for the inhabitants of my far-off country, that somehow myth writing belonged to them. But exile also gave me the power to exist in many lands. . . .The experience of being a Southern cone writer in exile allowed me to become universal” (33). Agosin speaks of universal subject matter: she has written poems about the Holocaust, about Bosnian conflict, and about human rights violations in other countries. This universality of subject matter also implies a universality of audience which Agosin alludes to when she mentions translation

of her works. If, because of her multiple and transnational identities, Agosin can take as her subject victims of torture not only in Chile, but also other places in the world, then she has a universal subject. If her natural public is lost, and she is translated into different languages, she has a universal audience.

### **Elaine Scarry's Pain and Imagination Spectrum**

Agosin takes as her subject in-pain people and universalizes their plight. Elaine Scarry's The Body in Pain provides a model through which it is possible to analyze how an author, particularly an exiled author, can take as her subject the pain of others and write about it with authority. Scarry argues that pain and imagining are opposite framing ends of the continuum of all human perception: "That is, pain and imagining are the 'framing events' within whose boundaries all other perceptual, somatic, and emotional events occur; thus, between the two extremes can be mapped the whole terrain of the human psyche" (165). Physical pain is the only state of consciousness that has no object. Though it is connected to an object of agency--the foot that kicks, the hammer that falls--it is intensely known only to the person who experiences it. The pain is not the kicking foot, nor the hammer, but the pure sensation. The sensation of pain, because of its objectlessness, "does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language" (4). Moments of pain are described in all languages as groans, grunts, and yells. When pain is described, it is usually in the form of agency, the object associated with the pain, "like a knife between my shoulder blades," for example. Pain is difficult for anyone to describe, even those who have experienced it.



At the opposite end of Scarry's spectrum is imagination. Imagination, like pain, is completely internal to the person imagining. "While pain is a state remarkable for being wholly without objects, the imaginations is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects" (162). It is impossible to imagine without imagining something, someone's face or someone's anguish (5). Unlike physical pain which makes language pre-verbal, imagination encourages expression and creation. Creation, which flows from imagination, is more limited than imagination--the actual painting of a summer scene is less than the possibilities imagined by the artist before its creation--but the painting is a sharable, communal object, which may spur others' responses (171).

In Scarry's terms, this model is for one subject experiencing possible states along the continuum. I will explore a separation of the model into three persons: one who experiences pain directly; the artist who imagines and creates based on that pain; and the real reader, who imagines based on the work of the poem. Frequently, Agosin adds a further complication, when she writes in the voice of the disappeared who cannot speak for themselves. The writer's rendering of that voice, and the voice of others who experience the anguish of disappearance indirectly (relatives, etc.), causes the reader's reaction to these speakers, and supports the reader's imagination of the subject's pain. The relative strength of Agosin's human rights poems depends on how concretely she relays the pain of the subject to the reader. The more concrete identification with the pain of a subject, the clearer the mental picture the reader has to imagine. The anxiety of indeterminate audience causes Agosin's tendency to universalize her subject and audience and weakens the effect of her poems. When she universalizes her subject or audience, or both, the imagery of the poems suffers as she tries to include multiple victims and readers

in the world of the poem. Her stronger poems resist the tendency to universalize, and instead concretely describe the subject's anguish.

## Chapter II

### Application to Poetry

Perhaps the best example of Agosin's shifting of audiences and speakers, and the relative distances from the voice of the in-pain subject is a series of poems from Zones of Pain entitled La Desaparecida I-VI. This series of poems shows Agosin's difficulty with choosing an audience; she fluctuates from an informal "you" to the responsibility of a national "we" and "they," to a more specific, and stronger, "I" of the poet and the "you" of a specific mother. In "La Desaparecida II" the speaker questions that after the disappearances,

¿a quién buscarán  
los verdugos?  
¿qué haremos con  
los torturadores  
que pasean  
con las  
manos chasmusqueadas  
de sangre añeja?"<sup>15</sup> (Zones 29)

Here, the use of "they" and "we" seems to acknowledge the distinction between the real killers, the indirect administrators, and the direct participants, the torturers. Though external international statutes and political pressure can encourage retribution, most of those tortured as well as those who led them, exist with impunity. The speaker asks what "they" will do with the killers, which admits that this group is clearly outside the speaker's

control. Whereas the torturers, who receive a clearer description, “pasean,” walk about among the “we.” Therefore, the responsibility for action seems to rest close to the speaker, as the torturers walk about in specific locales, and not where those still in exile are bound to meet them. With this “we,” Agosin shows a clear mental link to Chile, an identification with those, who, like herself, are survivors of the period. In “La Desaparecida V” Agosin also employs “they.” Here it is ambiguous as to whom will call the speakers name.

Soy de lluvia y de granadas  
y cuando me nombran me  
aparezco  
porque a mi entierro  
nunca fui.<sup>16</sup> (Zones 35)

What “they” will call the disappeared woman’s name? A national they? The readers of the poem? These pronoun shifts show the exile’s confusion of audience, and, with the addition of other poems, different affective ends for each poem. Some poems ask for identification with the pain of either the disappeared woman or her loved ones, others ask for naming, or retributive acts, and some, like the above “La Desaparecida V” are merely descriptive.

In the weaker poems of the series, the speaker as well as the audience are universal. In “La Desaparecida I” the speaker, who is a non-specific disappeared woman, directly addresses a second person informal “you,” which she commands to act. The majority of the poem consists of requests for action on the speaker’s behalf, but does not

describe well the speaker's actual state; nor does it imply an audience that is more specific than the universal "you" who reads the poem.

Soy la desaparecida,  
 en un país anochecido,  
 sellado por los  
 iracundos anaqueles  
 de los desmemoriados.

¿Aún no me ves?

¿Aún no me oyes

[ . . . ]

llámame  
 para recuperar  
 el nombre,  
 los sonidos,  
 las espesura de la piel  
 nombrándome.

No conspiras con  
 el olvido,

[ . . . ]

Nómbreme.<sup>17</sup> (Zones 27)

The existence of the woman is only formed by the response of the audience to call her name. La desaparecida is one of ambiguous nationality, de *un* país anochecido, and her

silence is contingent on others memories. Her physical body “la espesura de la piel” comes only with words, which on Scarry’s continuum is the imagined artifact of the poem, but Agosin also commands a response from the reader with the theme of the poem. The universal “you” reader should name la desaparecida into existence. The final emphatic command is informal, as a person would address a relative or close friend, but no such closeness has been developed through the poem. The theme of the poem contradicts its end. If a universal reader is to respond to these commands, then no images have been given to allow her to do what is asked. The reader is asked to name the woman, to pin a specific personhood on her, without a specific voice given, without even many details or images of her; the reader is asked to take the disembodied voice and convert it into action, at least the action of imagination, by giving her a name.

In a more concrete poem, “La Desaparecida III,” the speaker asks the reader to imagine la desaparecida which is a necessary prerequisite to action. The poem surpasses “La Desaparecida I” in its imagery for the reader. Unlike “La Desaparecida I” this poem is not in command form to a universal audience, and it gives the reader more specific images of actions; the images the speaker gives are clearer and give more direction.

tenerla  
aunque sea su cuerpo  
una fábula mutilada,  
un equinoccio de  
heridas como leyendas.<sup>18</sup> (*Zones* 31)

The woman is a “fábula mutilada” with “heridas como leyendas” because she lacks official recognition; her existence is also mythological to the distant reader. Acknowledging the

difficulty of imagining woman, Agosin anticipates objections and diffuses them, before the later direction of *how* to imagine her. Asking the reader to “imagarla”<sup>19</sup>(31), makes the concreteness of her description all the more important. So, the actions the speaker requests are specific to Chile, or at least Latin America.

Sujetarla  
 para enterrarla  
 como Dios manda  
 con su nombre apegado  
 a la greda  
 con flores  
 para su santo.<sup>20</sup> (Zones 31)

These exhortations to the imagination give the reader a mental burial place in the earth of images. Yet, even these images lack concreteness; it is poetry in black and white with room for many people, not only one distinct person. For instance, she is to have a grave with only “flores,” not carnations, or any other specific flower; the speaker asks for celebration of the woman’s Saint’s Day, but not the day of Santa Elisabeth, or any other specific saint. The speaker still refrains from the specific, though the requests to the reader are more nationally specific, in that celebrations of Saint’s Days, though not unique to Chile, are common in Latin America.

The two strongest poems of the series, “La Desaparecida IV” and “La Desaparecida VI,” avoid the universal audience, as well as the universal subject. The room for reader identification and imagination is greater because of the closeness to the pain of the two subjects, both la desaparecida and someone directly affected by the loss of

the disappeared. In "La Desaparecida IV" the speaker's pain and actions are the center as she reacts to a still universal, though more concretely described, disappeared woman. The speaker's pain is synonymous with the poet's own. In the prologue to Las Zonas del Dolor Agosin writes,

Las desaparecidas se deslizaron entre los sueños. Me vigilaban, a veces  
me despertaban acariciándome, más que nada me pedían que no las olvide .  
. . .Las zonas del dolor representan la travesía de las enterradas, como  
tambien la travesía de las madres buscadoras"<sup>21</sup> ( Zones 1).

Las desaparecidas wake Agosin, just as la desaparecida is the subject of the speaker's dreams and nightmares. The wanderings of both mother and daughter, with which Agosin is intimately familiar through her human rights work with the mothers of the disappeared, is also the subject of the other strong poem of the series "La Desaparecida VI."

The speaker in "La Desaparecida IV" dreams the tortured subject and connects her with natural imagery which lends concreteness to her form.

La sueño a orillas del camino,  
a orillas de un mar intermitente.  
Lleva piedras sin inscripciones  
bajo su manta de cielo,  
y su pelo coagulado  
abandonó la miel de  
antiguos presagios.



Viene entre sus chales de  
 sol y sombra,  
 lleva golondrinas en  
 sus bolsillos  
 y migas violetas<sup>22</sup> (Zones 33)

In the beginning of the poem, the disappeared woman is represented as one who is connected to peaceful, natural elements. Though she is somewhat ghoulish with her clotted hair and shawls, she is a nurturing natural spirit, feeding the birds that she carries in her pockets. Though she is described in more detail than the other desaparecidas from the previous poems, the natural images that surround the woman are universalizing--her cloak of sky, her shawls of sun and shadow. Even the rocks she carries are without inscriptions, which is another allusion to namelessness, as well as to unmarked graves. In this poem, the murdered subject has no voice and no words, but she is described more fully as a product of the speaker's imagination. Imagining the disappeared woman is modeled by the speaker in the poem who also has a more concrete reality than the other speakers. The images in this poem are perhaps more rich than others because of the short distance from the speaker to Agosin herself. The pain here is the pain of the poet's dreams, not of the tranquil disappeared woman. The "I" of the poem is the specific woman who dreams her, first in the above silent, peaceful stanzas and next as a nightmare.

La sueño entre mis tinieblas  
 llena de la vida,  
 los espectros de la mala muerte

revolotean,  
 como los monstros, los captores,  
 pero yo la oigo  
 y en los umbrales  
 la abrazo<sup>23</sup> (Zones 33)

The center of the poem is the speaker's reaction to the woman, the speaker's dreams and nightmares, not the woman herself. The speaker/poet dreams the woman "llena de la vida," full of life, despite the dark spirits that swirl around her. Dreaming the woman during the poet's time of darkness, hearing and embracing the silent woman, is the model for action in the poem, and becomes an antidote to the poet's grief as well as peace for the calm, silent woman. She is imagined, heard, and embraced; she has the memory that the other disappeared women ask for, as well as a kind of care that the others do not request. Though dreaming the woman and universalizing the images that surround her represent an acknowledgment of the psychic distance from the subject, the poem comes much closer to a concrete subject, as well as concrete actions, than the others which address the reader as a universal "you" directly. This poem provides a model of imagination and action rather than exhorting the reader to create it on her own. As opposed to the earlier models, (naming her and imagining her are distinct from embracing her), this model is based on genuine care for the woman.

The final poem of the series also addresses a "you", but it is the you of a mother, from the voice of a disappeared daughter. In this poem, the audience is as specific as the speaker. In the first section the mother's pain is addressed by the daughter. This poem,

like "La Desaparecida IV" includes the pain of those directly affected by the disappearances, both the disappeared woman, and a mother who cares about her.

Madre mía  
sé que me llamas  
y que tus yemas  
cubren esas heridas, abiertas  
muertas y resucitadas  
una y otra vez.<sup>24</sup> (Zones 37)

The speaker is a knowing child. She calls her mother Madre mía, my mother, and recognizes the cyclical pain her disappearance causes. The pain is converted into the bodily pain of wound opened repeatedly, never given a chance to heal. The psychological anguish of disappearance, the physical loss of the loved object, is specifically described. The second section, the only poem in the series set apart with Roman numerals, separates the mother's and daughter's pain.

II.  
Cuando vendada  
me llevan a los  
cuartos del  
delirio.  
Es tu voz  
nueva,  
iluminada,

que oigo  
 tras los golpes  
 desangrados  
 como los árboles  
 de un  
 patio de  
 verdugos.<sup>25</sup> (Zones 37)

Here the mother/audience and the speaker synchronize. What the speaker desires, the audience provides because each knows the pain of the other. The pain of the torture and the mother's voice are coupled together in the imagination of the disappeared daughter. The mother's voice becomes solid and strong like a tree, innocently growing through the "patio de verdugos."

Finally, with the voice of a child waking from nightmare, the restless disembodied voice of the previous desaparecidas finds rest knowing that she is remembered.

Madre mía  
 yo duermo entre  
 tus brazos  
 y me asusto  
 ante los puñales  
 pero  
 tu me recoges  
 desde un fondo

lleno de dagas y serpientes.<sup>26</sup> (Zones 37)

The speaker sleeps in her mother's arms (which suggests near her heart) and in her memory. Though the daughter's voice may only exist in the mother's imagination, her presence there gives comfort that the other disembodied voices do not have. The childishness of the speaker in these stanzas suggests the mother's cyclical memory of the daughter. She imagines her during all of the times of her development. The mother replays the pain because is a directly affected; the absence of her daughter is a form of psychological anguish. Just as in the other successful poem "La Desaparecida IV" which explores poet's dreams/nightmares, shows the painful effects of disappearance on the living speaker. These stronger poems leave space for a reader identification with pain, through the reader's personal losses. They are closer to the in-pain subject as well as those directly affected by the loss of la desaparecida, and, though they appear less concerned with the reader (there are no commands or suggestions directed to the reader) they have a greater effect because of their closeness to both the pain of the subject, and the pain of those effected, which gives them a more concrete reality.

Two longer poems "La tortura" from Zones of Pain: Las Zonas del Dolor and "Los Desaparecidos," from the earlier Brujas y algo más: Witches and Other Things include concrete elements that fade to the universal. To describe physical pain in poetry, completing Scarry's continuum from pain to creation, requires the ability to identify with the subject to whatever degree possible. In order to describe physical pain in "La tortura" from the point of view of the tortured subject, sharing common body features seems vital for identification. Therefore, throughout Zones of Pain, Agosin focuses on the female victims of the dictatorship. In the prologue she writes that she crafted the poems in order

to “acompañar a mis hermanas muertas” (Zones 2). Agosin makes the body feminine in “La tortura” and makes the torture specifically sexual to heighten her identification with the subject.

Lentamente, cautelosamente,  
 ardía mi paladar silenciado  
 mientras ya desnuda y  
 tan lejana  
 conspiraban para atrapar  
 mis pezones, pequeños alambres de espanto.  
 Sus manos pequeños, perdidas de escamas agrias  
 viajaban por esa lenta agonía, por su oscurecida  
 claridad entre mis piernas  
 y ellos, los ociosos verdugos  
 jadeaban mientras  
 la sangre de la luna  
 aullaba en las tablas<sup>27</sup> (Zones 13)

References to menstruation-- “sangre de la luna” --and the manipulation of her nipples, as well as the panting of her torturers, underscores the sexual power the torturers abuse. Later, when they force a false confession, they literally eat her tongue “comer la lengua que no tenía que contar” (15). The remnants of her body on the floor are

las uñas extendidas sobre el suelo en llamas y menses,  
 los dientes machacados por picanas y escupos traicioneros,

se desligaban de la orilla de mis labios<sup>28</sup> (Zones 13)

Elements specifically connected to women's sexuality (nails, lips, menstruation) are highlighted. The description of the torture begins and ends with the image of her nakedness and her breasts, first her nipples, and finally her "pechos hundidos por el pavor" (Zones 15). Agosin bases her authority to write on behalf of the in-pain woman firmly on gender and writes concrete sexuality images in the poem.

Agosin also creates authenticity through her Jewish identity, which, after gender, is a prominent basis for identification in her poetry. Hair, which is a recurrent motif in her poetry, and a common symbol of feminine sexuality, figures heavily in Agosin's work as an allusion to the Holocaust. In this poem the speaker says

que comenzaban a dejar de ser palabra, verdad, luz,  
ya era esa otra,  
mientras mi cabello también se agrietaba, desteñida  
entre las cenizas se dilataba como una flor parida<sup>29</sup> (Zones 13)

Hair and its loss is linked in other poems to the Holocaust; here it withers among ashes reminiscent of Holocaustal pyres. Agosin identifies tortures and murder as distortion of sexuality; the woman is turned into something other, an object that lacks sexuality. In a recent collection of poems entitled Dear Anne Frank, Agosin constantly mentions Anne Frank's hair. She refers to what colors of ribbons a speaker would use to adorn it, how the speaker would like to caress it, and finally, how the Nazi's shaved her head, and in doing so took Anne Frank's ornament, her budding sexuality as they took her life (Dear 39, 77, 95). Therefore, hair plays a double role not only as a feature of feminine sexuality,

but also as a trace of connection to religious persecution, which Agosin identifies with personally as a Jew.

Identification through gender and Jewish persecution is coupled with the authenticity that Agosin develops through Chilean scholarship and knowledge. She dedicates the poem to a real woman, “--Para Rosa Montero y para aquellos que le contaron sus historias”<sup>30</sup> (Zones 13) which is an allusion to testimony, a basis in the actual voices of the tortured. Agosin’s research through scholarship, and contacts in Chile, lends authority to the poem. The pattern of torture closely follows academic and testimonial models of torture. For instance, during periods of respite the torturers show distorted care; they wipe the woman’s forehead. The woman in this poem is electrically shocked, which was one of the more common forms of torture in Chile, called “the grill” (Constable 95). Agosin also gives the woman two possible common Chilean names: “Ahora estoy muerta,/ me llamo Carmen, o María,” which shows Agosin’s knowledge of, and connection to, a Catholic Chile, as Carmen is the patron virgin of Chile.

Agosin’s description of the woman’s pain also matches Scarry’s model. The woman describes the pain as a series of metaphors, or in terms of its effects on specific body parts. For example, “y entre el vacío del aire/ una electricidad de lanzas y lágrimas/ se desprendía como las hojas de un otoño de guerreros desqueiciados”<sup>31</sup> (Zones 13). Right before the speaker’s death she calls the pain “terribles garras verdes”<sup>32</sup> (Zones 15). Both of these images, beyond their value as poetic language, are ambiguous descriptions of pain--specific, yet highly indescribable for the speaker. In a previously quoted passage, the speaker declares that the pain causes her to lose “palabra, verdad, luz” which underscores her inability to express pain clearly in language. Combined with torture’s



distorting effect on her sexuality, these terms show how the pain, in causing her to lose language, is causing her to lose her humanity. Agosin adds to the loss of linguistic ability the loss of spirit, with her selection of “palabra, verdad, y luz,” which echoes Jesus who is “camino, verdad, y vida.”<sup>33</sup> By naming the (probably Catholic) speaker Carmen or Maria after her death, Agosin re-sanctifies the woman after the dehumanizing experience of torture.

After establishing authority to write through gender, Jewish identity, allusions to testimony, and specific knowledge of Chilean culture, Agosin creates the dead voice of the tortured woman, but the voice becomes less specific. Instead of the voice of one in-pain body, it takes on universal characteristics.

Ahora estoy muerta,  
 me llamo Carmen, or María,  
 soy una mujer  
 en medio de este silencio,  
 en medio de mi desnudez,  
 como una piedra  
 encarcelada,  
 soy una muerta que pudo sobrevivir  
 pero no conto nada  
 nuevo  
 que perdió en unos instantes los olores, las lilas, el amarillo,  
 porque durmió junto a otros cuerpos defecando, muriéndose

de pena y no de miedo,  
 soy esa que estuvo vendada por un segundo, por un mes  
 y para siempre  
 atravesada por la  
 ceremonia eterna de la  
 tortura.<sup>34</sup> (Zones 15)

Agosin makes the woman indeterminate, first by naming her Carmen *or* Maria, next in the nouns the woman loses in death: “los olores, las lilas, el amarillo,” which translate to basic sentience, the senses of smell and sight, which all people lose in death. In contrast, she does not lose individually specific concepts like a particular loved one. Finally, the speaker’s indeterminacy is shown with time: “soy esa que estuvo vendada por un segundo, por un mes/ y para siempre.” In death, she is blindfolded forever, but she is also blindfolded for a second and for a month, giving her universality of subject. The final universalizing elements are the poem’s last words “atravesada por la/ ceremonia eterna de la/ tortura.” The woman becomes part of a never-ceasing ritual, instead of an individual being persecuted in a specific historic moment. The pains Agosin takes to authenticate her authority to assume the voice of a specific in-pain woman are diffused in the poem’s abstract conclusion. If the ceremony is never-ending, with multiple, universal victims, why should the reader imagine only one? Yet, without empathy for one victim, the sum of them do not exist in the reader’s imagination.

In “Los Desaparecidos” the shift to a universal subject *and* a universal audience occurs more strikingly.

Los desaparecidos,  
 ¿dónde están?  
 ¿Dónde esta el Miguel con el pan in los bolsillos?  
 ¿Dónde esta la señora Rosa?  
 y el eco de la sangre  
 empaña preguntas,  
 y el aire se me mancha como la sangre.<sup>35</sup> (Brujas 80)

This beginning has a specific subject and a specific speaker. The search is a search for bodies of already named victims who are close to the speaker. She describes them as *el* Miguel, and *la* señora Rosa, which indicates familial closeness. Even *la* señora Rosa is not called by her last name; therefore, the speaker in the poems has a personal stake in finding these specific people. The blood in the air also implies a very personal sense of responsibility, a closeness to the pain of Miguel and Rosa, as well as personal anguish stemming from the speaker's loss of them.

The speaker, however, lacks power to remedy the situation. She describes herself in terms of her powerlessness.

Yo soy hembra sin fusil  
 pequeña y de cabellos azules como el ácido  
 que busca tras los hospitales de una morgue improvisada  
 tras iglesias censuradas  
 tras los signos de mis viudas<sup>36</sup> (Brujas 80)

The speaker describes herself in terms of weakness, as a small woman without a rifle, who is small with blue hair which may imply age. She searches behind the places that would

traditionally help her, hospitals and churches, but to no avail. She also searches among viudas, other women who have lost loved ones. Interestingly, nowhere does Agosin make the woman's search specific to Chile, but the translator uses the adjective Chilean to describe the widows which ties the English translation closer to Chile.

An unvoiced dissatisfaction with this local, specific search, as well as this powerlessness, leads to the turn in the poem that hinges on the word "entonces." The woman, having obtained no results from the search for bodies, as well as the search among those who are sympathetic to her cause (widows, hospitals, and churches), extends her search with language.

entonces

yo juro apoderarme de la palabra

ir con ella por los muros de la ciudad

ir con ella donde anduvo el látigo

ir con esta palabra que Dios no me dió

al encuentro de las bocas desdentadas

como el hambre

ir en busca de tus ojos.<sup>37</sup> (Brujas 80)

An empowering shift occurs at this point. The stronger voice even seems angry with God, who did not give her the word. Yet, at the same time, the speaker is less specific. No longer sounding like the voice of one individual blue haired woman, the speaker has stopped the local search for particular disappeared people; the poem moves further away from the speaker's individual loss, and thus further from someone's physical pain--señora Rosa's or Miguel's pain. The woman takes the word to public space, not the traditional

spaces of help as in the first section , but to overtly political spaces. She takes the word along the walls of the city which, in the tradition of Latin American murals, may not mean the surrounding walls, but the walls within, the places of separation within the city, not the outskirts. This transition to walls may also indicate a transition of the written word. Also at this point, a shift to an indifferent or hostile internal audience occurs. Passersby may have many different responses to messages written on walls. A more direct shift to a hostile audience is the search for where the whip went, to the torturers, to the seats of power. The word goes, then, in search of cause, for the agency of the whip. The search changes from the initial reactive search for bodies, to the retributive search for cause.

The power of this word comes from its rabid search for recognition. Agosin writes that the speaker goes “al encuentro de las bocas desdentadas/ como el hambre.” Tooth loss implies age and ill health, and it is also a nearly universal sign of poverty. The loss of one’s teeth also inhibits the ability to speak which is a metaphorical indication of lack of power. Persons without the word, or the truth, lack ‘teeth’ in their convictions. Without the word, people are perhaps afraid to show courage. Surely the empowerment necessary to subvert political repression extends to the vulnerable, aged, and poor, as well as all other classes who may be mush mouthed and weak in their convictions. The speaker seeks them all “como el hambre,” as hunger which seeks all, even the fed. The speaker wants her word to have the bite of truth, to affect everyone as strongly and routinely as hunger does. The audience for the word becomes universal (as all people hunger), though the universality is still contained, at least in the reader’s imagination, within the poem.

If all people hunger, then the next leap to “ir en busca de tus ojos” flows from the original image, but it perceptibly alters the poem. The “you” is the external audience reading the poem. While the word is brought along the walls of the city, it is also imprinted on the pages of a book, which the real reader reads. The reader’s imagination of responsibility extends to herself. Now the reader is responsible for having heard the word as well.

In the final stanzas, the speaker and the word merge.

Yo juro ser la palabra  
pero nunca lamentar a los  
muertos que hoy y siempre  
están.<sup>38</sup> (Brujas 80)

With the first line, the speaker and the typeface merge on the page. The speaker, who was once local and specific, has become the artifact, the embodiment of an imagined object. The universe of the poem shrinks perceptibly at this point. In the beginning, what may be real people--Miguel and señora Rosa, and a woman in search of them--are the poem’s world. In the end the poem flattens to rhetoric; it collapses on the reader herself, “you,” and the written words. The audience for the speaker shifts repeatedly, from the original audience for the searching speaker (the widows, hospitals, churches), to the citizens in the country (who see the walls), to the torturers and murderers, to all those who hunger, then “you.” Finally all of the imagined journeys of the word collapse on the one reader, the audience farthest removed from action.

The poem goes from a specific speaker to a written artifact, from the imagined speaker who experiences the pain of disappearance, to a created object. The poem grows

from the imaginary to the real. Audiences within the poem take a similar turn. They move from specific, imagined groups, to the real reader herself. In the end the speaker is defiant, and disconnected from the original disappeared people. In becoming the word, it vows “nunca lamentar a los/ muertos que hoy y siempre/ están.” The specific grief for Miguel and Rosa, becomes the absence of grief for universal “muertos.” The question of the disappeared of Latin America, “¿dónde están?” is inverted in the end, asserting the ever-presence of los desaparecidos. They are here “hoy y siempre” *because* of the poem, and other forms of their memory. But because their existence is posited on the relationship of the reader to the text, just as the speaker’s existence in “La Desaparecida I” was contingent upon a second person reader naming/imagining her into existence, the responsibility is deferred far from the original speaker’s pain. The question becomes, does the real reader have enough images to imagine, and possibly to create her own actions/artifacts based on the poem? Will the real reader say like the speaker in the poem’s beginning, “y el aire se me mancha como la sangre”? If the reader could feel this level of responsibility, or at least empathize with the original speaker who feels it, the poem is successful. If the reader does could not, however, the poem is unsuccessful. The poem has admitted that it is only the reader and the text, and collapsed the reader’s imagination of real people (the speaker, Miguel, señora Rosa). Therefore, when the poem concludes no strong images of real people remain.

Throughout Agosin’s human rights poetry, there are moments of lucid images that seem torn directly from the lives of the disappeared. Images that increase reader identification with the pain of the other, while they represent the specific time and place of

Chile. Too often, however, the poems fade to universal concepts that do not provide enough to engage the compassionate imagination of a foreign reader. While both the impulse to write about Chile and the confusion over audience may stem from common problems of exile, all exile writers do not share the universalizing tendency that Agosin shows in some of her work. Schopf found that his exile made him have the opposite realization.

Pero quizas una de mis experiencias mas importantes en el exilio sea el descubrimiento del caracter falsamente "universal" que tenian muchos de nuestros conceptos. Su radio de validez no era solo temporal, sino también regional, espacial . . .<sup>39</sup> (Schopf qtd. in Alcides Jofre 16).

The connection to the universal, the path to concrete, empathic imagination, can only come through a writer's specific creation. Agosin's poetry at times floats to a mythical, imagined Chile, and a mythical imagined desaparecida. Both concepts, however, need to be grounded in genuine human reality to reach the reader.



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<sup>1</sup> Nothing is the same since September 11, 1973. Chile has been broken in two. And although we may speak and practice love and friendship and we watch the rive in the evening, each of these acts has a different meaning. Nothing is the same. Poetry also? Poetry also.

<sup>2</sup> All translations of non-poetry quotations are my own. The poetry translators are indicated on the works cited page.

<sup>3</sup> The cultural climate of the country--her vital pulse--decreases every day as a result of the tragedy, the isolation, the persecution, and the economic disaster brought on by the Junta.

<sup>4</sup> Neither is it possible to keep categories like self-exiled, political refugees, the banished, the expelled, those prohibited to enter the country; the notion of exile encompasses all of these situations.

<sup>5</sup> And then the exile discovers in a stupor at first and with pain later, with late-coming irony, in the exact moment that objectively his exile has ended, that time has not passed with impunity, and whether he returns or not, he will never stop being an exile.

<sup>6</sup> Many of the poems integrated in this anthology were born under repression. Others were written in exile. . . . In any case this division reflects the historical circumstance that has separated us physically, aspiring to integrate in one voice of solidarity.

<sup>7</sup> Or in this other condition, no less difficult and *sometimes shameful* of exile.

<sup>8</sup> One of the problems that an exiled writer faces is the loss of his original linguistic context, the loss of the possibility of live, everyday contact . . ."

<sup>9</sup> There are those who almost with a proustian quality get from exile nostalgia, looking for the lost homeland; there are those who dedicate their works to reconquering that country, integrating their literary efforts into the political fight.

<sup>10</sup> it's death in politics, because one cannot make politics in the air, rather with one's feet planted in the earth. The politician has to adjust exactly the hands on his watch to the present hour [here and there]. . .

<sup>11</sup> Here the object of interest is Chilean literature produced outside Chile, and that does not circulate in Chile, understood as an autonomous cultural sphere of considerable growth in this last decade.

<sup>12</sup> natural public

<sup>13</sup> This Chilean culture in exile differs with the interior in artistic product, however, it is part of the same cultural system.

<sup>14</sup> Then the exile's homeland erases its borders . . . addended with this language, that is everyone's but still belongs to no one, the persistence of language common and communal of exile.

<sup>15</sup> whom will they search for/ the executioners?/ And what will we do with/ the torturers/ who walk about,/ their hands/ charred/ by moldering blood?

<sup>16</sup> I am made of rain and grenades/ and when they call my name/ I will appear/ because I never went to my/ own funeral.

<sup>17</sup> I am the disappeared woman,/ in a country grown dark,/ silenced by the/ wrathful cubbyholes/ of those with no memory/ You still don't see me? You still don't hear me[ . . ] call me/ to give me back/ name,/ sounds,/ a covering of skin/ by naming me. Don't conspire with/ oblivion, [ . . . ] Call my name.

<sup>18</sup> hold her/ even though her body be/ a mutilated fable,/ an equinox of/ wounds like legends.

<sup>19</sup> Imagine her.

<sup>20</sup> Bind her/ to bury her/ as God commands/ with her name attached/ to the clay/ with flowers/ on her Saint's Day.

<sup>21</sup> The disappeared women slipped in among dreams. They would watch me, at times they would wake me up caressing me, more than anything else they would ask me not to forget them . . . The zones of pain represent the wanderings of buried women and the wandering of searching mothers. (Trans. Cola Franzen)

<sup>22</sup> I dream her by roadsides/ by the shores of an intermittent sea. She carries stones with no inscriptions/ beneath her cloak of sky/ and her clotted hair/ has left behind the sweetness of/ ancient omens.

She comes wrapped in shawls of/ sun and shadow,/ carrying swallows in/ her pockets/ and violet-colored crumbs

<sup>23</sup> During my dark hours I dream her/ full of life/ specters of evil death/ are fluttering round her,/ like the monsters, the captors,/ but I hear her/ and on thresholds/ I embrace her.

<sup>24</sup> Mother/ I know that you are calling me/ and that your fingertips/ are covering those wounds, open/ dead and re-opened/ over and over again.

<sup>25</sup> When I am blindfolded/ they carry me to the/ rooms of/ delirium./ It is your voice/  
new,/ luminous,/ that I hear/ after the bloodletting/ blows/ like trees/ in a /patio of/  
assassins.

<sup>26</sup> Mother/ I sleep in/ your arms/ and feel frightened/ by the knives/ but/ you gather me up/  
from the abyss/ filled with daggers and serpents.

<sup>27</sup> Slowly and in secret/ the roof of my silenced mouth burning/ and I already naked and/  
so far away/ conspiring to trap/ my nipples, thin wires of terror./ Their small fingers,  
sloughed off scales of bitter wormwood/ venture along that slow agony, through  
obscured/ brightness between my legs/ and they, the idle hangmen/ pant while/ the moon's  
blood/ howls on the sickly metal surface

<sup>28</sup> fingernails spread out over the floor in flames and menses,/ teeth crushed by shocks and  
traitorous spittle/ let go from the shore of my lips

<sup>29</sup> now shorn of word, truth, light/ now turned into something other,/ even my hair splits,  
withers/ among the ashes and fans out like doomed petals

<sup>30</sup> For Rosa Montero and all those who told her their stories.

<sup>31</sup> and between the gaps of time/ seconds of air/ electric spears and tears/ explode like  
falling leaves of unhinged warriors

<sup>32</sup> terrible green talons

<sup>33</sup> way, truth, life

<sup>34</sup> Now I am dead,/ My name is Carmen, or Maria/ I am a woman/ immersed in silence/  
immersed in my nakedness,/ an imprisoned stone,/ I am a dead woman who managed to  
survive/ who told nothing/ new/ who in a matter of moments lost aromas,/ lilacs/ yellow,/ while sleeping next to other bodies defecating, dying/ from pain and not from fear,/ I am the woman who was blindfolded for a second, for a month/ and forever/ impaled by the eternal ceremony of/ torture.

<sup>35</sup> The disappeared ones,/ Where are they now?/ Where is Miguel with his pockets full of bread?/ Where is Senora Rosa?/ and he echo of blood/ muffles questions/ and the air itself splatters me with blood.

<sup>36</sup> I am an unarmed woman/ small and with hair blue as acid./ I search behind hospitals for a makeshift morgue/ behind forbidden churches/ beneath the traces of my Chilean widows

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<sup>37</sup> then/ I swear to arm myself with the word/ take it along the walls of the city/ take it  
where the whip went/ take this word/ not given by God/ to seek out the toothless mouths/  
as hunger does/ go in search of your eyes.

<sup>38</sup> I swear/ to be the word/ but never to lament the dead/ who are present./ Now./ Forever.

<sup>39</sup> But perhaps one of my most important experiences en exile would be the discovery the  
false 'universal' character that many of our concepts have. Their radius of validity is not  
only temporal, but also regional, spatial.

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