

A preview of ***Juana I***,  
by Ana Arzoumanian, translated by Gabriel Amor (Kenning Editions, 2018).

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My fault

the jurisdiction, because the bitterness of riches, the unscrupulousness of not realizing, of remaining in the dark and not being understood: I, who learned some Flemish, I, who puzzled it out word by word, I pour them in a liquid magnet between my legs. I, queen.

I bend my torso. From the hip, from the waist, bending down. I crouch. Vows of loyalty to the Holy Spirit. The hands, the ointment and the confirmation of faith (I, hidden). Grace will seed the gifts of a new birth. Because in the beginning it was not like this. Who was my father? Whether Fernando's mouth waters. That death does pay in Fernando's treasure chest. That Fernando collects; he wants to collect. To suck the wound. The sentry post with trellises on each side and the Petrine purpose: proof. Becoming the memory of the oil I use to anoint myself (in grace and devotion). And you, naked. You, who are falling asleep. I, on the seventh day of the seventh month, tell you that death does not pay. That when I hide, your colors become muddled; holy oil in my hands to raise you, to carry your sleeping body to bed, and you inside that body. Of stone, flint, and grindstones used in cutting tools. Thick hail. The strongly flavored liquid that upon wringing out my lips, telling you a story, cradles you. I pick you up and take you to bed.

Session (I bend)

of the chamber (upon this rock I will construct)

of justice (my church: Felipe). Felipe, my son that I make room for in my bed . . . I display my cleavage.

Felipe, the agitated pink of my nipples trembles.

*There was a defect in the design of the first woman because she was made from a curved rib. That is why our queen has always had less faith and her carnal passion is insatiable. Blessed be the Highest who until now has preserved the masculine sex from such an attack.*

In this malignant land, subjects are recruited by royal decree. Here and in the New World, a strip of wet linen up to the throat. Then pouring water into their mouths and noses while they lie on a sort of wooden bench. The skin of that treacherous woman, La Chingada; recruitment; and women hanging in pens like livestock. Narrow serpentine paths; chained by their necks in pens, solicited by the chief magistrates. Cleanliness infects. From the expulsion, to renting out children, to soldiers, to the hanged women with their babies dangling from their feet . . . because a mother who gives birth to a male child strangles him. Cleanliness infects. Hot chocolate made with the same water she used to wash herself after fornicating with him: La Malinche, La Chingada, treacherous collaborator devoted to the conquest.

I closed the doors and windows without shutting them completely. I placed a swallow in a hole in the wall over the bed with the words, Here I put you. A leech on my thigh to suck my blood: I gave it to him to drink. I gave it to him so that he would drink it. Dried and ground up. I made him drink woman's menstrual blood. I stepped it up. Unpaired. I dress him beautifully, I decorate him, putting things on him that one puts on a steed in order to mount her. I smear myself with grease paint, thick and matte. Paint for sanding. I step it up. Me: orphaned, unpaired. It infects. Possession in the name of Isabel and

Fernando; or recruitment of livestock hanging in pens or jails in the patios of Chief Magistrates in the dense grey jungle. Through the thicket, I see long rows of prisoners.

The water infects. The water I use to wash Felipe's intimate parts, and then drink, infects. Until it propagates inside me (Felipe).

For what may happen, I climb on top.

It happens.

It happens that I have hands. Not the talons of a bird of prey. Milking. On all fours. The thick gallop, made flesh from this all-encompassing thirst, and my hands caressing you. One thing happens after another, day after day. Standing on my hands. Kneeling in service to the din of my steep, all-encompassing thirst, my hands caressing you. A shiny thick water catches in circles at the speed of fire. At the hurried turn of a salty wheel, the shiny water becomes compacted, soldered together as it runs down my neck. From what was chopped off his body, Felipe sieves, separating the fine part from the thick. It is Felipe's secret, segregating his body that penetrates deeply, slower inside me . . . deeper. A sparkling white dilates my vision, giving rise to colors. One after the other, the gallop that kneads my knuckles, palms, the hollow of my hands. Adam and Eve and the first birthing of man, and Felipe giving birth to me, giving birth to me.

*Those who keep the Law of Moses should be given ghettos and places to live apart such that they will grieve in their isolation. In this way Doña Juana will live in Tordesillas.*

The chronicle of who confesses what. Odd woman, heiress, she who says call me successor. The prayer. The

voice and not the sharp tongue with thick lips in the annexed body, coming between the outraged blood of those monarchs who signed the expulsion edict.

It happens that I am heiress in name; that I say Felipe, the hands that touch you make the sound of the wind, the metallic tone of a military order (a firm voice, of fire, of break ranks); the murmur of my voice that sings, saying: marrying a queen is remaining completely in Felipe. In me.

The  
chamber  
of  
Justice  
is  
in  
session.