

BARBARA JANER EYES

INVOCATION
TO
DAUGHTERS

CITY LIGHTS SPOTLIGHT NO. 16



CITY LIGHTS
BOOKS

BARBARA JANERREYES

INVOCATION
TO
DAUGHTERS



CITY LIGHTS

SAN FRANCISCO

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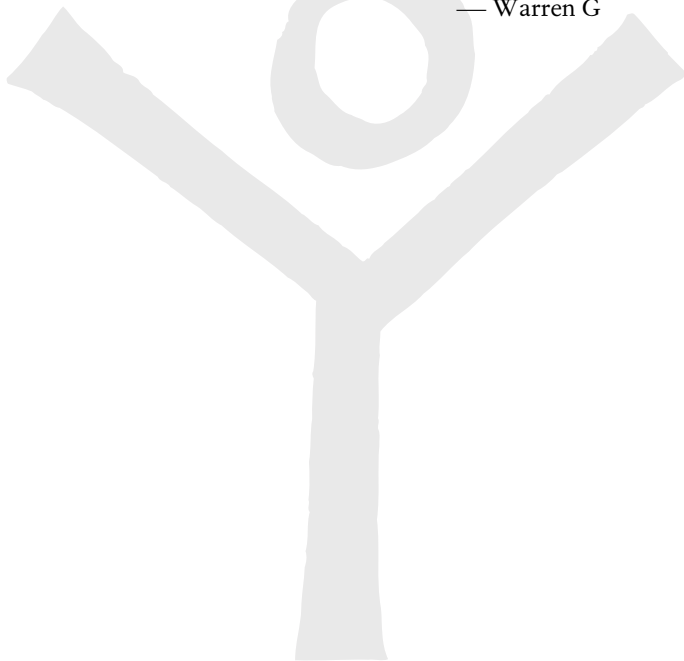
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*Give your daughters to us,
and take our daughters for yourselves.*

— Genesis 34:9

If I had wings I would fly, let me contemplate . . .

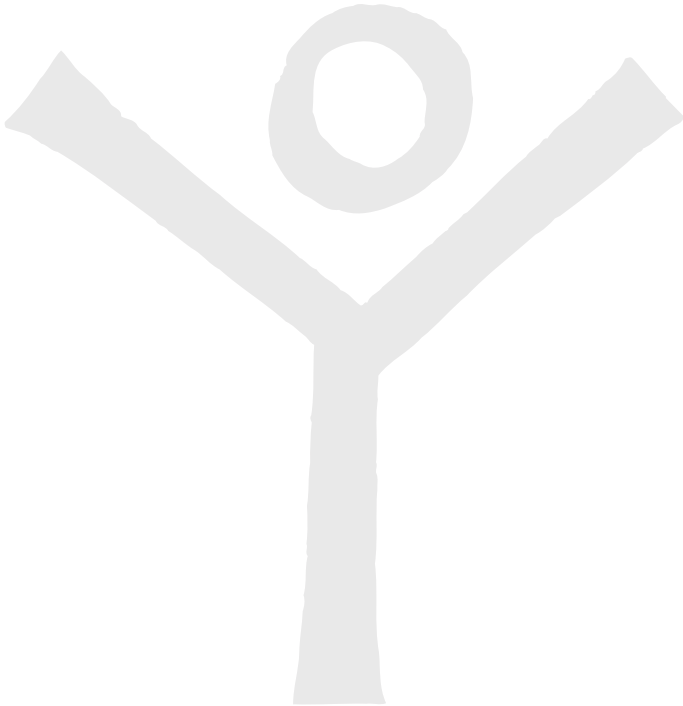
— Warren G



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INVOCATION TO DAUGHTERS



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1. *Are you fluent in your mother tongue? What is your mother tongue?*

I am fluent in the language of la luz, ang lakbay, el cruzamiento. My mother tongue is criollo y kimera; it is also mongrel and bastard. The tongue is not déficit but prisma, and light (in)forms its root and offshoot. It is sometimes called refraction. Ang aking gramatika, un arco iris.

Madre mía migrante, señora, doña. Lenguaje ay wikang casa, wikang esposa, wikang ciudad, wikang trabajo, y wikang mundo. Yes, I am fluent in my mother's tongue.

2. *Don't you worry that other people might not understand you?*

People will come to understand what they want to understand. Those who know una significado es ilusyon (o delusyon), ang intindi ay simaron, they know liminaridad. The ones who demand understanding en una lengua, the ones who demand una kortada ng dila, the ones who request una violencia de la media lengua, intolerante. They really want obediencia. Di ba? They want me to

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be their mono. Mga suplado. Reklamo-reklamo. Xenófobo. Ako po ay sigurado.

3. *Why are you so angry? Don't you ever smile?*

Why aren't you angry? Why does my outrage inconvenience you? Why is my resting bitch face your concern? Are you afraid of me?

Who told you that a lady should always smile, and for whose benefit and pleasure would that be? Why did you believe them? Why do you believe them still?

4. *Why can't you just write about beautiful things?*

Voz is beautiful. Home is beautiful. Lenguaje is beautiful. Grit is beautiful. Orasyon is beautiful. Daughter is beautiful. Kuwento is beautiful. Safety is beautiful.

Do you see the woman fighting for air? Do you see the woman guarding her kin? Do you see the woman learning to speak? Do you see the woman resisting being broken?

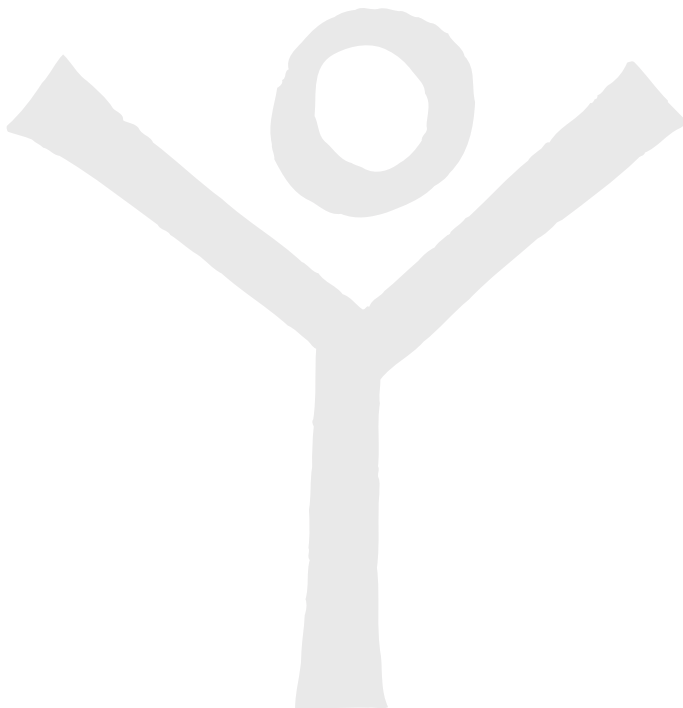
If you do not see the beauty in these, then I am sorry for you.

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5. *Why don't you just say what you mean?*

That's what I do. Siempre and siyempre.



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Daughters, our world is beyond unkind. We know it is downright brutal. We have no haven; we have known only words for our bodies such as commerce, coercion.

A passive language strips us of our kick and grit and fight in our bloodlines. A vulgar language attributes our survival to others' benevolence, belying our scars' true, cruel sources. A language of consumption frames our humanity as thighs, breasts, and eggs. A language of proprietorship brands and cages us.

We are una herida abierta, isang bukas ng sugat.

We are una lengua quebrada, isang putol na dila.

We are piraso, parsela, objetos para komersyo.

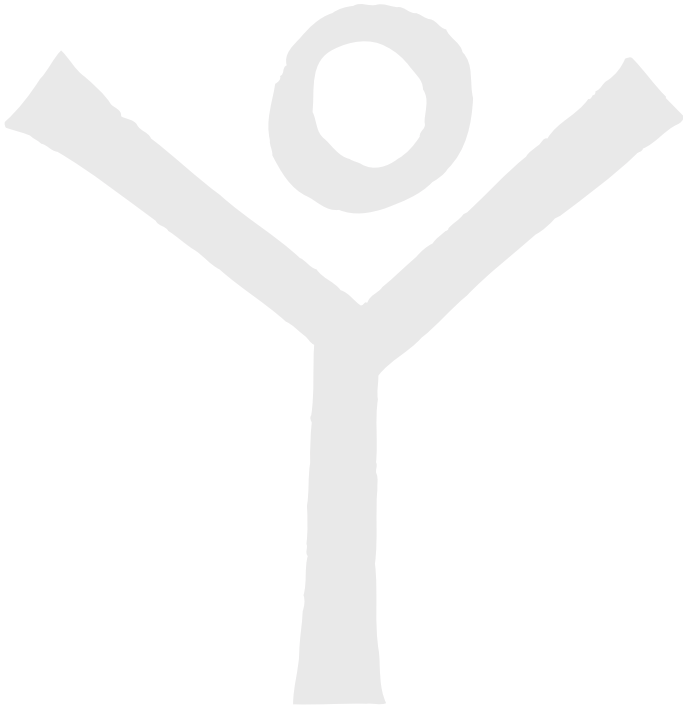
Daughters, the fathers monitor our developing curves, control our bodies, redact consent from our tongues. They deem us deficient, dirty.

Daughters, our kind is now endangered; we are dying young and desperate, and no words were ever ours.

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Daughters, let us create a language so that we know ourselves, so that we may sing, and tell, and pray.



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THE GOSPEL OF MARY JANE

Isa rin akong babae na may pangarap

I am a lady who has ceased to be

Alam ko kung gaano ang hirap

A lady, your lessened abjectee

Isa rin ako sa inyo nakipagsapalaran

I am a lady, no more than symbol

Pag-asa ng ating bayan

Homeless hope of our hapless people

Marami man pong hindi naniniwala

I am a lady, fighting for my life

Na wala akong kasalanan

Servile, unmeant to survive

Alam nang Panginoong Diyos na

I am a lady, writing for my life

Nagsasabi ako nang katotohanan

This anti-silence is my right

(All ages to come shall call me blessed)

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CITY LIGHTS MYTHOS BOOKS

Fulcrum

The daughter's body is the fulcrum of the father. She is burdened and dirt. She is vulnerable. The daughter's body is the water of the father. She is watched and walled. She is inaudible. The daughter's body is the artifice of the father. She is parcel and article. She is vernacular. The daughter's body is the sediment of the father. She is silt and salt. She is unsentimental. The daughter's body is the prism of the father. She is precious and priggish. She is pregnable. The daughter's body is the shears of the father. She is shrill and jilt. She is spectacle. The daughter is the language of the father. She is latent and gauge. She is translatable.

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Cancer

The daughter's body is the cancer of the father. She is callused and cowed. She is antithetical. The daughter's body is the platform of the father. She is bland and blanked. She is implantable. The daughter's body is the loophole of the father. She is foolish and foul. She is unlovable. The daughter's body is the incisor of the father. She is biting and bile. She is stifled. The daughter's body is the simulacra of the father. She is simplistic and small. She is lachrymal. The daughter's body is the preservative of the father. She is pert and pristine. She is vestigial. The daughter's body is the arsenal of the father. She is source and sinner. She is archetypal.

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Collateral

The daughter is the collateral of the father. She is worth most on the market if pure. The daughter is the merchandise of the father. She is properly trained in housewifery. The daughter is the consequence of the father. She is one too many mouths to feed. The daughter is the failure of the father. She is tits and hips, a uterus to fill. The daughter is the error of the father. She is hidden away from the world. The daughter is servant of the father. She is also her brothers' nursemaid. The daughter is the burden of the father. She is quietly planning her exit.

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