

domestic defeats

it must have been very hard
beheading eels
without cutting your fingers
twisting to avoid the scales of sea bream
escaping through the slip knot of the bed sheets

such wars you fought
in the dim nights
against the chickpeas growing monstrous in the water
and picking lentils from grains of rice
what a ridiculous task!
such helplessness
when the boiled milk overflows
unstoppable

and if the din of the frying pans
stopped you hearing music
if your French and German
were in vain against the grease on the stove
and the pipes sounded like babies
or seagulls and the potatoes stuck
to the bottom of the pot

why are you smiling in the photographs
mother?

Marilar Aleixandre

English translation by Mary O'Malley in *To the Winds Our Sails. Irish Writers Translate Galician Poetry*,
edited by Mary O'Donnell & Manuela Palacios. Salmon Poetry, 2010.

derrotas domésticas

debeu ser moi difícil
degolar as anguías
sen cortar os dedos
arrandearte para que non te cubrisen
as escamas do ollomol
liscar do nó corredío das sabas

nas noites opacas
que batallas contra os garavanzos
medrando disformes na auga que absurda tarefa
escoller lentellas de arroz
que impotencia
cando o leite férvido vai por fóra
inevitabilmente

e se o batifundo das tixolas
non che deixaba oír a música
se o teu francés e alemán
eran inútiles contra a graxa nos fogóns
se os tubos de auga berran como nenos
ou gaivotas e as patacas se pegan
no fondo da tarteira

nai
¿como é que estás sorrindo nas fotos?

Marilar Aleixandre

From *Catálogo de velenos*. Sociedade de Cultura Valle-Inclán, 1999. Collected in *Mudanzas e outros velenos*, Galaxia, 2017.