

*ire'ne lara silva*

"EL CUERPO ES PARA USARLO"

—*What Octavio said*

*el cuerpo es para usarlo* he said *delicious directive* i thought  
 my body an activated archive my mother said i danced before i  
 walked and what joy there was in running as close to flying as i  
 could come until my chest said *soccer is not your destiny* and the  
 brilliance of moving through saltwater and freshwater and all water  
 body become all weightlessness all power what it was to dance  
 my bare feet on bare earth and everything a drumming and  
 everything a spiraling and the joy of laying on the earth as the  
 thunderstorm raged every particle of me humming in welcome and still  
 the joy of waking stretching every liquid limb against soft sheets  
 the joy of breathing deep and grateful the prickling memory  
 of hot breath on my skin the animal comfort of one body moving against  
 another with another to another and also the animal contentment of  
 the body alone in its burrow all the freedoms of  
 solitude

*el cuerpo es para usarlo* he said and i thought my father would have said the  
 body was for working like hands were for working like  
 backs were meant for burdens eyes meant for eagle awareness  
 feet for forcing beyond the weakness of flesh step after step  
 hour after hour that the body was for toil and sweat and struggle  
 that the body was for hunger and its denial pain and its  
 denial suffering and its denial power and power's dominion over  
 everything it could force i wonder what my mother would have said  
 my mother whose body was labeled *motherbody* and  
*wifebody* and so i think sometimes that's why she went away  
 somewhere deep inside where no one could touch her  
 where she didn't belong to anyone

*el cuerpo es para usarlo* he said and i thought *how innocent that sounds* it assumes the body is not in pain assumes the body is able assumes the body is strong assumes the body is beautiful seems to say the body is made wholly for pleasure made me think i have reveled in my body and i have longed to have no body at all there are so many ways in which we are not taught that girlbodies are our own so many ways we are shown that womanbodies are not our own how very few women i know who are not carrying stories of violation abuse violence who have not made all their choices in that knowing who are not aware of each word each touch and the threat of danger there are grey spaces in my mind memories that are lost that i lost that i never need to recover i know i can't make the body forget

*el cuerpo es para usarlo* he said and i think of what other bodies carry my body carries songs and stories my body loves the wind more than anything sometimes i think what different lives different bodies must live and who would i be in a different body and perhaps it takes fifty years of life to finally say i would not wish for a more beautiful body if it was a silent body a body that didn't hold stories and tell stories and birth stories if it didn't love the wind and find the thunder glorious if it lived some other life without the love this body has lived if it was a body whose every cell didn't sing *live live live* and *fight fight fight* and i think it takes fifty years of life to say i wouldn't choose anything else fifty years to give thanks for a body that would never name itself *fear* or *ingratitude*

*el cuerpo es para usarlo* he said and i think of how so many people seem to not live in their bodies at all they hardly even seem to know they are bodies they live and they walk in sleeping bodies and in bodies they choose to numb choose to silence bodies they never allow to fall or fly bodies that never set them free and i think of my body this humble body for whom each sense and the ceaseless intertwining of all the senses is a doorway

is a prayer    is a portal    to transcendances    small and large  
passing and eternal    that can and can't be put into words

*el cuerpo es para usarlo* he said