

## Sara Elkamel      I Make Myself Mad, Pluck My Feathers

I don't know if it's better to mourn  
or to dance, when you watch a body  
become a ghost.  
I used to love one, now a ghost  
He held my shoulders  
and sang of ships  
sailing eternally adrift.  
Now that no one is singing it  
the song wrinkles and cracks.  
Every day, a new language  
leaves me.  
I scrub orifice after orifice—  
but the filth of love lingers  
I wanted to write an elegy  
on god's face,  
like I saw in a dream—instead  
I go to the sea  
and howl: My love drowned and took my eyes  
should I sing for my love  
or sing for my eyes?  
God never looks at me.  
Even at sea  
there is no water for me—

## with Alejandra Pizarnik

like someone not wanting anything  
like a girl drawn in pink chalk on a very old wall  
like a bird stepping away from the sharp edges  
crossing endlessly through the mirror.  
Like two little animals lost in the desert  
trembling in panic before the future,  
I have consumed my life in one instant.  
The name I was called by is already lost—  
I dance and lament myself at my countless funerals.  
In the span of a scream  
Bouquets die in the memory.  
I hear the song of the mourners  
asleep on my throat—  
stripped bare of blood and wings  
smiling behind the wind—  
I rise from my corpse  
to scream until dawn  
in the black sun of silence  
a ship set sail from me and took me with her—  
I am alone now.  
I hear night crying inside my bones.  
The night is shaped like a howling wolf—  
and there is a lock but no keys.

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Note: In this contrapuntal, the right column is composed entirely of lines from the English translations of poems by Alejandra Pizarnik, extracted from the following collections: *The Last Innocence/The Lost Adventures* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2019), *Diana's Tree* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2014) and *Extracting the Stone of Madness: Poems 1962-1972* (New Directions, 2016).