

THE BELLY

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Trad: Raquel Royo

FOR ALL THE ACTRESS IN THE WORLD,
AND ESPECIALLY FOR BEGOÑA,
WHO ASKED ME A QUESTION
AND FOR MARISOL, VERO, CARMEN, MILA, INMA, VERO,
WHO INAUGURATED THE DAM OF DREAMS

*“In the beginning we were islands,
Now we are urgent archipelagos.”
Mario Benedetti*

ACTING AREA

The womb of an actress
Her womb
The actress is pregnant
She should be actually pregnant
I know it is too much to ask for
She needn't get pregnant for the performance
That's to say: she should be already pregnant
Because there are pregnant women who are also actresses
Therefore they are pregnant and unemployed
Well in this case this play...

A five month pregnant belly, at least
So her pregnancy is evident
An obvious bump
The most magical theatre you may imagine
And she can show it
Just like someone who can have the world, the life, a dream
Hanging under her arm
Near her heart, just two or three beats away

THE AUDIENCE

Twenty, thirty girls, boys, little kids
Not many more
Sat on the floor
Around the magic
All accompanying adults, on looking teachers, should refrain from coming.

THE ACTRESS

An actress
Her hands, her hands, her eyes like a travelling circus
Her best smile like that of a comedy actress

THE SOUND

The sea, a guitar, a piano, the waves and also an elephant
Rod Steward, Mendelssohn, Yan Tiersenn, for instance.

THE LIGHTED SPACE

A belly
Slightly lit
Perhaps some dolphins projected onto it
Waves, clouds, birds and even an ice-skating rink where a raindrop could skate
And the rest is not silence
Or darkness
There are faces, without make-up, curly locks, islands
The fresh, unpredictable face
Of a premiere performance
The ACTRESS smiles
Barefooted
Naughty
As if she were to start an impossible magic trick
As if she had the most beautiful story and she wanted to share it

She wears a colourful blouse
Very special
Loose trousers with big pockets
She always talks softly without raising her voice

One

Your attention, please.
(Drums)
I have the pleasure of introducing you to...

(Juggling music)
She opens her blouse in the middle
Below her breast
As if she were drawing the two drapes of an entr'acte curtain
allowing an open view of her belly
Her trousers close up just above her pubis)

My belly!
I like to call it so
Wow! How big it is growing...
Some people call it womb
It sounds more elegant
But now I like to call it belly
Come on, say belly
Not shouting
BE-LLY
Come on, say it
Slowly
Like this
Bellllly
It sounds like a bell ringing at a door
And you do not know who's going to answer it
It sounds like "hello, are you there?"
What's up, whipper-snapper?
Belly
Sounds like a little thing
Like a bug that yawns, stretches its little arms and says ahhh!
It sounds good
Sounds funny
Say belly
Very softly
Like this
Beeeelllyyyy
If I press my belly button
Like this
*(She presses it with her forefinger
and a bell rings)*
Can you hear?
It sounds inside rrrring
Or
*(She presses again
and sounds ding-dong)*
Ding dong
More modern
I like rrrring better
Like old telephones
But now I do not want to ring any more
I do not want to wake anyone
Not yet
Later we'll see.

Two

You have also got a belly
Although not as big as mine
You haven't got this little line which comes up here
Can you see it?
It is called white line or linea alba
Alba is a girl name
And a name for the sunrise
The dawn
This dawn line has come up
Little by little
I didn't have it before
It's beautiful I like it
It reminds me of a line of tiny ants
Walking in the fields
All the family together
On a Sunday morning
When I was a little girl I was like you and like you
I also had a tiny belly
Like yours
Or like yours
Or even tinier
So tiny that I seemed not to have a belly
I was a very skinny girl
I didn't like spinach
Ugh! Revolting!
Or fish
Ugh!
I'm a big girl now
And I like spinach and fish
Yummy, yummy! How nice!
But I do not like liver, no
No way

For some years I have wished to have a huge belly
Like this one
Because I wanted a baby
And now my belly is big and round
And I'm happy, very happy and I want you to know it
And there is a person
Who is not here now
But who is always with me and covers me with kisses
And sleeps, dreams and thinks close to me
And touches my belly like this
Softly

And feels as happy as I am.

three

My belly is very big
And bigger it will become
A friend of mine has told me
She looks after my belly
She is a gynaecologist
I call her Lola
She always has two tubes hanging from her ears
The tubes end in a suction pad
Which is like a shell when she holds it on my skin

*(She takes out a shell
And listens to it
The sound of the sea can be heard)*

She
Lola
Doesn't hear the sea
She hears other things
And she places her shell here
And calls knock, knock, like this very carefully
Can I come in?
And listens
She can hear inside of me
(Some beats sound very far in the distance)
She says my baby is fine
It moves
And I smile
As I'm doing now
I feel a tickle inside
And my little thing smiles too
It moves
It tells me I'm so cosy here inside
And I do not know why but my belly is hungrier and hungrier
Well In fact I do know
But Lola says I shouldn't get too fat
Only a little
But not too much

cuatro

I also was in a belly like this years and years ago
But of course I can't remember

And you were also inside a belly
Perhaps some of you can remember
Because it wasn't so long ago

Can any of you remember?
Come on, raise your hand
It was warm, wasn't it
And some of you girls will have a big belly like mine some day.
No, not the boys
Only the girls
Although all of you boys and girls
Before you were born you were in big bellies
Some animals also travel in bellies before coming here.
Dogs for example
I've got a golden dog
She's a nice loving dog
Her name is Pecas

(She may show a photo of PECAS)

She likes watching the waves on the beach
Far away

(Sound of waves

The waves may be even seen

They involve the atmosphere with their going up and down) *

She stands like this

With her ears pricked up

As if she could hear them

She twitches her nose because she can **smell** the salt

She wags her tail

Which looks like a brush

Sweeping the sand

Swish, swish

And she stands watching the sea for long minutes

For hours

Like a silly-billy

Then the time stops in her eyes

For so long

That in the end

Her eyes

Which are honey coloured

Turn blue

Pecas also came from a belly

We call her "Freckles" because her face was full of freckles

Can you see them?

Just like you

When she came out of her mum's belly and was born she was dark

She had a sad look
And fitted in the palm of my hand
I remember as if it was yesterday
Now she is as big as this
She is cinnamon coloured
And she is always happy
Except when I go on a trip
She is a very clever dog
And sweet
(She keeps the photo)
Well the thing is that Pecas
Who likes doing exactly the same I do
Has got pregnant
Which is another way of saying
She's expecting puppies
Pregnant
Has an e and an a
*(She draws an a on her belly
And rubs it out)*
And also an e
*(She draws an e
And rubs it out)*
Pregnant
The letter a is a vowel with a big belly.
My belly is a letter a
(She stands and shows her profile)
Don't you think so
*(She draws an a again
as if it were a belly
even with its belly-button)*
A pregnant letter
A mummy's tummy
The word mamma has only a's
Mam-ma
(She rubs out the letter a)
Well then (/all right)
Pecas lies down on her side close to me
And touches her belly like this
*(She strokes her belly
Softly
Up and down)*
Like I do
Very softly
While she waits
She waits for her belly to deflate like a balloon
And four five six puppies are born

Good heavens!
I only have a baby in my belly
Lola told me
I don't know if it is a boy or a girl
I don't want to know
I want **it to be** a surprise
What does it matter?
Whatever it is I'm going to love it a lot
And when the baby is born and say Here I am
Well as the baby won't be able to speak it won't say so
It will only say Waa!
Which will be its way of saying I love you mummy
I'm hungry
And I'll breastfeed him or her
A breast is a baby bottle we mums have
Here and here
And it is nicer
That those they sell in chemists' shops

Now for example
The baby has hiccups
It's just got them
Hiccups
I can feel it
And when it makes a hip sound
I can feel a little jump in my belly
Hip
Hip
(...)
It is finished now
Dogs and cats and elephants before becoming babies
They were also in a belly
Before starting to bark
(*a bark*)
or to miaow
(*a miaow*)
or make baraag with their trunks
(*Elephant trumpeting*
That's to say playing the trumpet solo)
Not hens
Nor lettuce
Or flowers

cinco

There are people who talk a lot

It is said they talk off the tops of their heads
What means they talk very much
Well I like talking off my belly
Talking with my belly
Talking to my belly
And to the little thing moving in my belly
In a few years he or she will stare at me with wide open eyes
Like you are doing now
While I tell him or her that he or she lived here for nine months
Curling up
Warm
Like you or me
And that she or he had friends like you
Waiting outside the door
Sat on the floor
Just like you are now
While I talked and talked through the top of my head
Through my belly
And told them stories things words
Like these ones.

six

Taaachin!
(roll of drums)
This is my right hand
*(She shows her hand
without opening her fingers completely)*
Her name is Pepa
I gave it the name
It goes everywhere with its
(She spreads out her fingers)
Five kids
Little finger, ring finger, middle finger, index finger and thumb
(/Sammy Small, Ruby Ring, Tony Tall, Peter Pointer and Tommy Thumb)
Thumb is the fatty one
People like to call it thumb
I call it Tommy Thumb
Fingers have two faces
One and two
They know how to look caress touch
With both faces
Thus and thus
And play the guitar
*(She plays arpeggios on her womb
A guitar sounds)*

Or the piano
*(She plays imaginary keys on her womb
A piano sounds)*
Or they play flamenco
*(She dances flamenco
A heel tapping can be heard)*
Or skate
*(She skates
The sound of skates can be heard)*
And five thousand or three thousand more things.
This face is called fingertip
It is soft and if you prick it with a pin
You see stars
That 's to say you do not actually see stars
Sometimes we say things without meaning them
Such as to talk off the top of the head
Or for example
When I say or your father, your grandma or your teacher says
I see red
But I don't see red they don't see red
We simply mean
That I am we are nervous or very angry
I say if I prick my finger I see stars
Although I do not really see stars
In any case a tiny drop of blood comes out
It's very tiny
It is as if my finger cries
A small red tear
But it stops very quickly
You say
I'm starving to death
But you do not actually die
It's terrible. Words that are meaningful and meaningless at the same time
You'll get used to it

My mother says I'm going to give birth
That's to say I'm going to have a baby
And when she says that
I look at my womb
And feel like a genius

Let's go on
Where was I?
Ah the two faces of fingers
I've already introduced this face to you
It's called fingertip

But I still have another one
This
It's called nail
Note that it is like a pink looking-glass
A mirror you have to cut a little bit
On the top
From time to time
Because it grows very quickly
If you don't cut it you may scratch
There are people who paint their nails red or violet
Our fingers have also a belly
Some people say they are knuckles
You can see them if you fold your fingers like this
Then you can see the finger's belly on the nail side
(She shows it)
Each finger in your hand has three parts
The top one
The middle one
And the bottom one
See them?
These parts have strange names
I don't know them
You'll learn them when you grow up
Pepa and her five kids like dreaming
Having friends
And sleeping on my belly
As if they were sunbathing
Like this
Sometimes they even snore
(Loud snoring)
Like this
When they snore all together
There is a terrible hullabaloo

And
Taachin!
(Roll of drums)
My left hand
Wants also say Hello
Its name is Pape
And its five fingers
That are like Pepa's
But the other side round
Are also called little finger, ring finger, middle finger, index finger and thumb

Both hands Pape and Pepa

Are similar but not equal
Each one of them is the reflection of the other
They are face to face
Like this
They get closer
They seem equal
But they are not
All all all of us
Are a bit equal and a bit different
You and you and you and you and me and all the babies who are now being born
We all are a bit equal and a bit different
Even hands are equal and different at the same time
And this is wonderful
If we all were equal equal
Life would be boring
We all would like the same food
The same songs
The same movies
And what would we talk about?
And who would we play with?
With ourselves?
No fun
Pepa and Pape look at each other
Face to face
Palm to palm
And what can they see?
A big letter on their belly
Hands have also bellies and a big letter on them
Can you see?
*(She draws an m
Following the lines on her hand)*
These are the lines on my hand
My grandma looks at my hand and reads it and says
You are going to be happy
You'll travel all around the world
And when you get very old as I am now
Says my grandma
You'll have two grandsons and two grand daughters and a swing in the backyard.
And my mother says
My grandma is always right
For example when she sees a big belly like mine
She says girl
Or boy
And she is always right
I don't know how she does it
But this time I told her

Granny don't tell me if it is a boy or a girl
I don't want to know
And she looked at the palm of my hand
Spent a few seconds thinking
And said nothing
Although I know she knows

A big m
(She looks at the drawn m)
A capital M, this is its name
Capital
It looks like two mountain peaks that kiss each other
See them?
It's funny
The m on my right hand
And the a on my belly
(She puts her hand on her belly)
They come together to say ma
And the m on my left hand
And the a on my belly
Come together to say ma again
Mam- ma
We have the letters of the word mamma written on our skin
Just like on a school chalkboard

Notice that
The mountains on Pepa are not the same as the ones on Pape
*(She shows both hands
And compares them)*
They are very alike
But they are not the same
Because we are all similar
I know I insist too much but I like repeating it
We are a bit similar
But we are a bit different on the same time.

Pape's family is naughty
See them?
They can be calm
They would spend all their time playing
And jumping
Like this
And waking Pepa up
And the sleeping belly
Pepa likes being always peaceful
Pape always wants to play

Hen and chicks

Or hide and seek

(She hides her left hand)

- Where am I?

- Behind the belly?

- And now?

- Behind the head.

- Silence

Be quiet for a moment

And come here

Close to me

(Both hands

Open

One next to the other

On the belly)

Can't you hear?

- What?

- Shhh the belly is dreaming.

- Dreaming?

- Bellies dream

- I know

I also dream

Why shouldn't a belly dream?

- I know you dream

But the thing is that if you press your palm firmly on it

You'll hear the dreams

As if someone would dream behind the wall

And wanted to tell you

- It's true

But, does it dream with closed eyes?

- No Pape

says Pepa

- Real dreams are dreamt with wide open eyes.

Six (bis)

(Both hands are still extended

The actress opens wide eyes

Looking at the dream)

There is an ocean

(The sea sounds

Its reflex invades everything)

An ocean is a very big sea

Inside my belly

An ocean full of stars and clouds

And colourful fish
And huge trees that grow downwards
And rain that never stops
And worms that know how to dive
(Sound of bubbles)
Swim
An ocean that feels happy because it is very big and very small at the same time
The biggest and the smallest of all the oceans.
This ocean has a name
It's called A
Like the letter A
It is called this as it is the beginning of everything
It's the beginning of the ABC
Those are the letters
Letters form words and thoughts
The beginning of life
And also the beginning of the air and the forests.
A
My friend the ocean
A
Can see through two windows
The eyes
My eyes

A
Like us
Sleeps with its eyes closed
*(She closes her eyes
The sound of the sea and the bubbles stops)*
And when it wakes up
It opens them
*(She opens her eyes
And the sound of the sea comes back)*
It raises its shutter, which is its eyelid
And dreams
And doesn't get tired of looking
Through its two open windows.

But it can only see islands lately

*(She steps forward
Stares at the children
Moves them apart
To create a space between them)*

It can only see islands

Although it wants to see seagulls and mice
It can only see islands
Although it wants to see children and mums and slides
And TV announcers and cartoons and trains
It can only see islands
Although it wants to see giraffes and mice and moons
No
It can only see islands only sad islands
Sad islands so sad
An island is something very isolated because the sea is all around it
The sea is around
And behind the sea there are other islands
All of them surrounded by the sea
And they are always too far away one from the others
This is why islands are always lonely
And they are or they seem to be sad

Although it wants to be horses in the prairie
Boats sleeping on the sand
Flying turtles
It sees islands
Only islands
Your heads are now like small islands
Can you notice?
If you stay
Like you are now
Can you see?
Separate
The ocean
A
Is sad
And this what my belly dreams
Until
Suddenly!
(A roll of drums)
The baby inside me
Moves a little
Almost nothing
From one side to the other
Or simply sighs softly
And then then then
I don't know how
But it makes the islands join very slowly
*(She pushes the children closer
Joins them as much as she can)*

And the islands that my belly can see
Turn into
Archipelagos!
Which is a very long word
Ar-chi-pe-la-go!
What a word
Archipelago
It is like learning to say
Abracadabra
The phrase magicians say when they do their tricks
Abracadabra or alehoop
And they take a rabbit from a top hat
Well instead you can learn to say
Arrrrchipeelago!

They are islands which are close together
There is some sea between them
As there is some air between your heads
But the sea the air
Do not separate the islands anymore
On the contrary
It joins them
It makes them feel one near the others
So that they won't feel lonely and won't be sad any more

And this is why my ocean called
A
Has got happy
Because every morning my baby makes the ocean in my belly
Stop seeing sad islands
And start seeing a lot of isles like you
Near one another
With faces full of smiles

seven

Then I know it is time for a little music
Now that my belly is skin-deep sleepy
Well wake up
It is time for music
Time for a bath with musical soap
And I play a CD and it sounds like this
(*A very sweet violin sounds*
Mendelssohn perhaps)
My little thing inside me likes music
All kinds of music

I can feel it is dancing inside.
This is why after dreaming I gave it a shower of music.

First a violin like this
It's beautiful
You can also dream of music
Then I play this song
*(The sound of a popular tune
A broken and harmonious voice
What about Rod Stewart and his What a wonderful world)*

(...)
I have always liked this song
And I dance with my belly
Like this

(...)
And then I play this song
*(A song of Yan Tiersenn
like a crystal melody
in a music box)*

And do you know what I like to do?
*(She takes out a small bottle from her pocket
She unscrews the dropper
She lets a drop descend
Down her belly
Winding like a skier)*
It's a drop of water
Look how it falls down
Another
Can you see it?
The drop seems to be skating
Or going down the slide of my belly
I have filled this little bottle with raindrops
I've stood under the rain
Like this
Until it was full
They are transparent little bellies
And this raindrop is skating now full of music
(Hip hop music can be heard)
And to finish
My belly also likes fun
And moves like this
And Pape and Pepa do this with their hands
(She separates her fingers

Like a DJ

Playing discs)

Like some modern musicians do

(...)

Because it likes music

All kinds of music

All music when it sounds good is beautiful

All kinds of music are equal and all of them are different

Little sips of happiness

Which move it inside

At the rhythm of a violin or of hip hop

And I feel that my belly follows the music

(Different kinds of music are heard

We change the dial

All the music we hear is beautiful)

And Sarah or Manuel or Joseluis or Marina

I keep his or her name as a secret

The person who says Good Night to me before going to bed

Near me

Knows that my belly is also a little **him** or **her**

Feels he or she is a part of this music

And sometimes dances with me

and eight

And I think that if all the bellies in the world were filled up with music

The world would be a chocolate cake

(The dreaming violin sounds again)

You've already met my belly

It likes dreaming having its eyes wide open

And checking that every belly

Is a universe full of stars

And noticing grandmothers' bellies

Those that have filled up the universe with universes

I like my grandma's belly

Years ago it was big and plain

Now it is small and wrinkled

Never mind

I love it

I know there was a belly in there

And from that belly another belly came out

I

And from my belly someone will come out

Who knows if it will be a girl

And perhaps one day

She will have a belly like this one.

But, do you know what my belly likes best?
I'll finish by telling you
My belly likes
To feel
To feel all the hands
Big or small
Like clouds that settle on it
Doves
Islands that do not want to be isles any more
Until they get together
All the bellies in the world
Learn
How to fly

*(A flapping of wings sounds over a violin
The actress walks towards the boys and girls
Takes their hands
One by one
She puts their little hands on her womb
Her belly
With all the tenderness of life
They cover all the possible spaces
As if the tiny hands of the youngest spectators
Were islands
Which become
On her womb
Urgent archipelagos)*