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The Room You Just Left

Bertha I. Crombet

Florida International University, bcrom001@fiu.edu

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

THE ROOM YOU JUST LEFT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

CREATIVE WRITING

by

Bertha Isabel Crombet

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This thesis, written by Bertha Isabel Crombet, and entitled *The Room You Just Left*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Denise Duhamel

Asher Milbauer

Campbell McGrath, Major Professor

Date of Defense: February 27th, 2018

The thesis of Bertha Isabel Crombet is approved.

Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences, & Education

Andrès G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
And Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2018

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
THE ROOM YOU JUST LEFT

by

Bertha Isabel Crombet

Florida International University, 2018

Miami, Florida

Professor Campbell McGrath, Major Professor

THE ROOM YOU JUST LEFT is a poetry collection written from the perspective of a female speaker as she navigates relationships, culture, and identity via the lens of the Cuban-American experience. The collection is divided into three sections: Paleotempestology, Machete, and Saturn Returning. The first illustrates the often turbulent nature of romantic relationships, the second highlights the speaker's culture, and the third is a singular long poem offering both insights and questions about what it means to arrive at the age of twenty-seven.

The collection is composed of free verse, prose, experimental, and formal poetry, and includes code-switching to illuminate the speaker's family dynamic and dueling dualities within herself. Many poems revolve around mortality, and more specifically, the

speaker's relationship with her father and his descent into old age, as well as an imagined mythology for her mother's family while detailing their struggles as exiles.

Another major theme is romantic relationships, heartbreak, and traversing the modern dating world. Other themes explored include childhood, memory, and the body, utilizing narrative as well as surrealistic techniques. It draws influence from the intense Latina-feminist pulse of Sandra Cisneros, the revelatory sexuality of Sharon Olds, the imaginative whimsy of Kiki Petrosino, and the dark wit of Frank O'Hara.

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I.

PALEOTEMPESTOLOGY

WAITING FOR HURRICANE IRMA

Confession: I asked for this. I wished for a fresh disaster
to eclipse my old one. I laid in bed,
red wine stains dappling my sheets,
drunk off hunger after not eating for a week,
and I said *Please God, let something more terrible come.*
Something bigger than this pain. Anything. Anything.

And God leaned back in his brown leather armchair,
holed and bursting with polyester foam like
cookie dough from a Pillsbury tube,
propped his long feet up on the coffee table
littered in newspapers, and mused
on all of my past ridiculousness:
the midnight bargaining before exams I failed
to study for, excuses, unmet promises of all I'd give up
(meat on Fridays, men, the word "fuck"),
all while maintaining my skepticism. *If you even exist,*

I'd start every prayer, *then do me this solid, will ya?*

He was like the year-round Santa Claus whose lap

I got to sit on as soon as I dropped to my knees.

The genie unleashed when I rubbed

the ensorcelled lamp, wrists cuffed in gold,

a prisoner of his own phenomenal cosmic power.

I had this coming. Forgive me. I wanted so badly to mourn

something new, so that devastation

would extinguish all the old ones. Even you.

And God knew I meant business,

that I was all gristle and pulped heart, wrong and wronged,

my eyes two rags wrung and hung

out to dry in the yard, so he said *Here comes the storm*

of a lifetime. Here's the catastrophe you've been crossing

all your fingers and toes for. And I said, *Thank you.*

THE LIBRARY

The library smells like you,
like your clothes, like your bed and whole home—
old, deep, well-lived— and for a moment,
I am inside you as I am inside it.
How peripatetic!
Me inside you, taking the shape and name
of all your stunning viscera,
the spines of the books gleaming
like slippery spleens, empurpled and intimate.
I'd travel the length of your flank,
and settle in some fertile hollow between the ribs,
only to be created again from the fine bone, begotten,
this time better, more curious, more agile, even,
as I climbed through your eyes,
green and gray
like jade that has been splintered by lightning,

and finally up to your succulent brain, nibbling
on tangy morsels of memory,
feasting on them like a corpulent king,
your greasy dreams dripping down to my elbows.

Hungry— hungry— greedy—greedy!

Satisfied, I'd spelunk down to the middle of your middle,
right between those two great pink shelves of breath,
and ride the exhale out of you
like a skilled almond-skinned surfer.

Wouldn't you like to hear my report,

how I swallowed to learn you before I knew you?

Wouldn't you like me to tell you everything?