

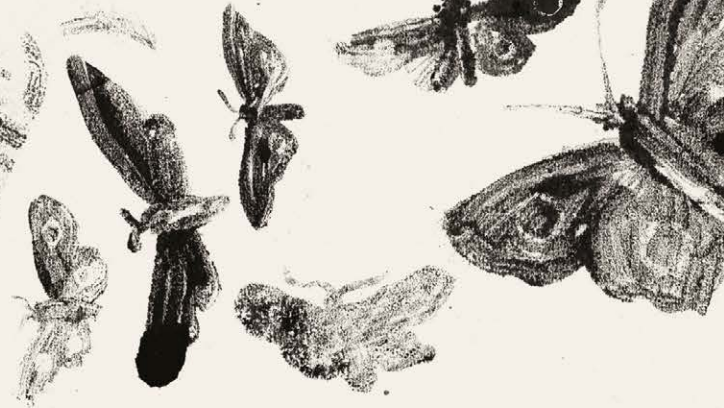


DISSERTATION ON THE ORIGIN OF SIGHT

by Elisa Díaz Castelo*
Illustrations by Armando Fonseca**

*Poet; @elisa_carinae.

**Visual artist; @fuenteseca.

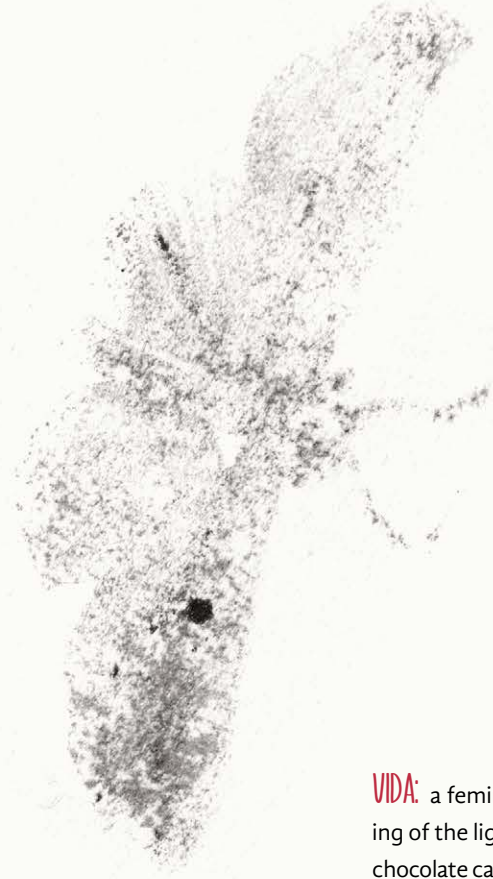


The first time you looked at me that way,
trying to decipher the riddle of my body,
my blood thickened and suddenly, I was skin,
wholly, at midday. Years later
I learned that our submarine ancestors
developed, on their skin, a pair of slight,
more sensitive grooves. They were eyes: black holes
in which the world fell. What was temperature
became light, seen for the first time,
translated from touch.

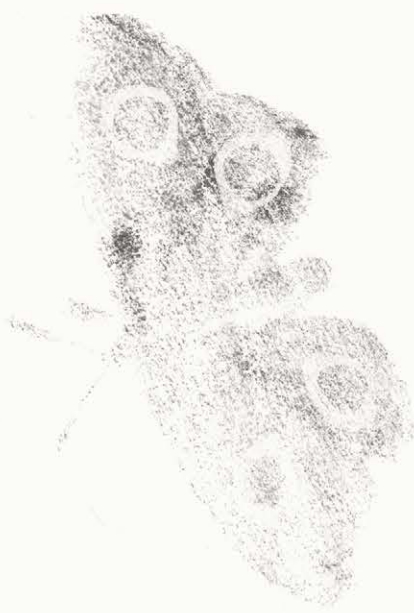
But in a way I'd already known.
Without words, you showed me
that to see is to touch, a variant
that waives
proximity. You were right
in my hands, my lips,
my drawn-out clavicles, what was visible
and serene in my body. You knew me,
glimpsed the ardor of skin,
the true grit of sight,
and without knowing,
it's true, you touched me.
Let that be of comfort.

(From *Principia*, 2018)





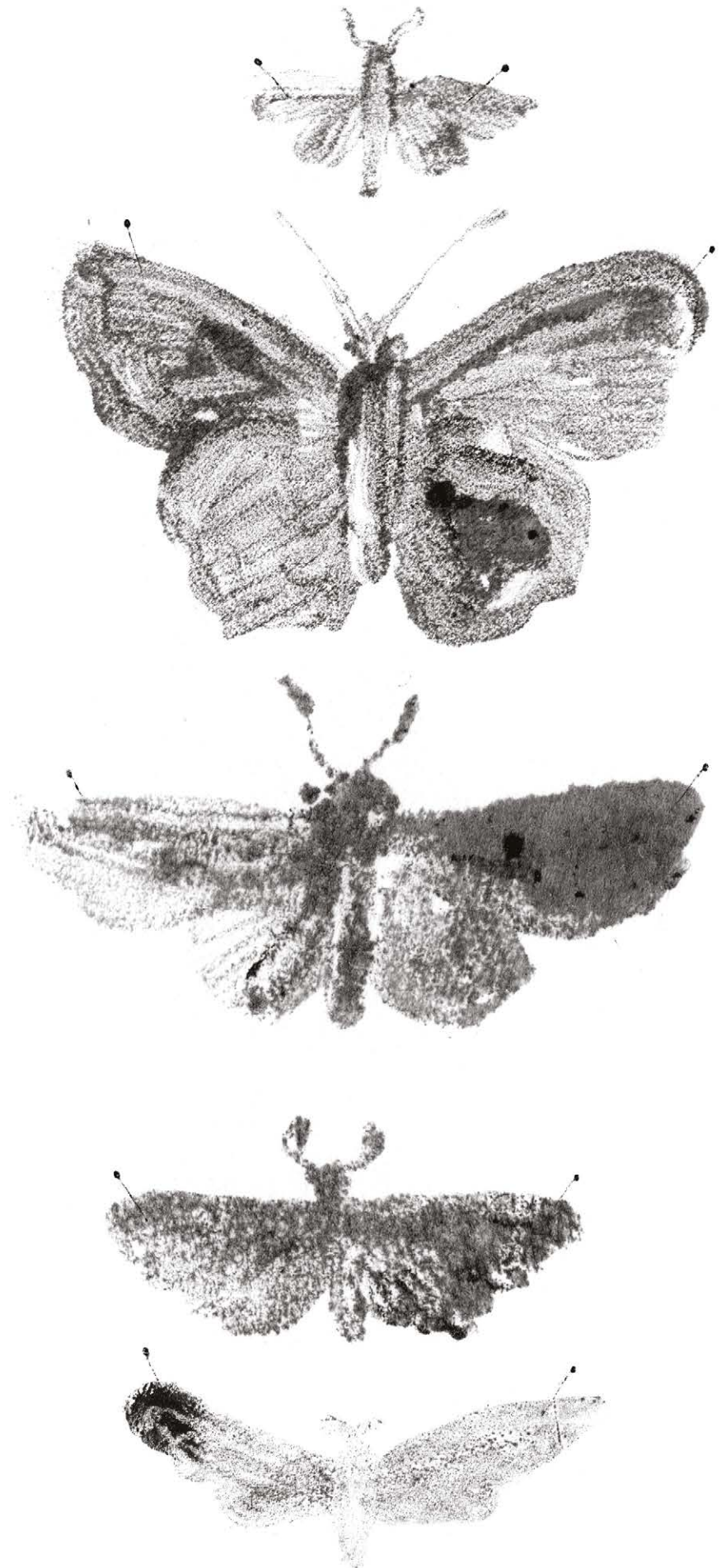
VIDA: a feminine noun: a needle in a haystack: a certain leaning of the light: vida: noun: see also: esto es vida: referring to chocolate cake: referring to smoking after sex: vida: gestation: reproduction: ovaries: fingernails on fetuses: vida: electrocardiogram: a declaration of love: of taxes: x-ray: leaves against the light: write a book plant a tree: etcetera: vida: etcetera: sound as a dollar: plus everything we forget:

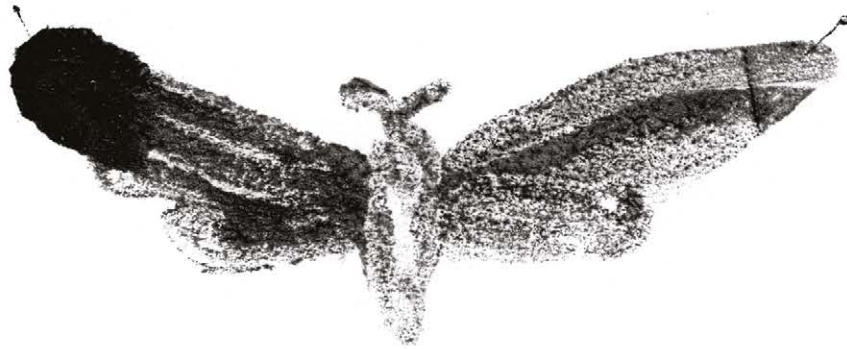
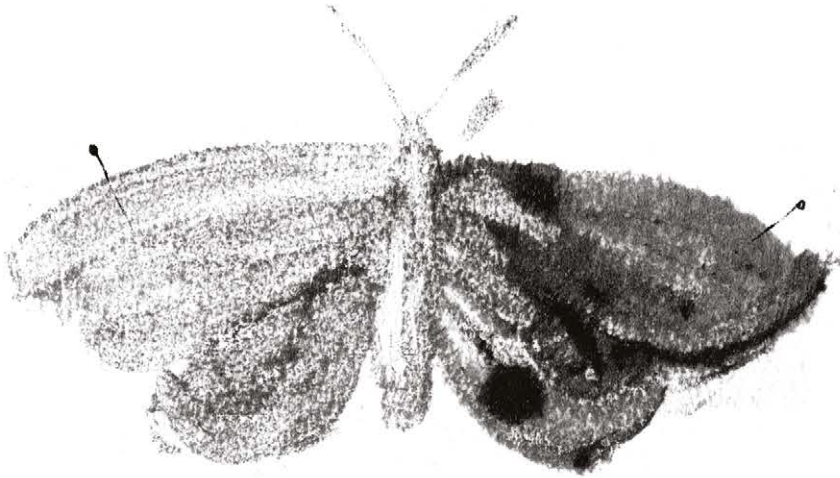
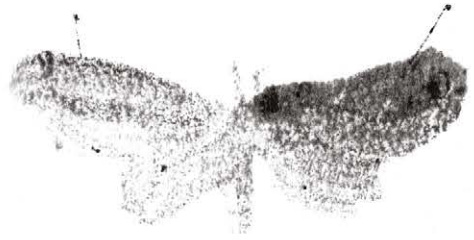
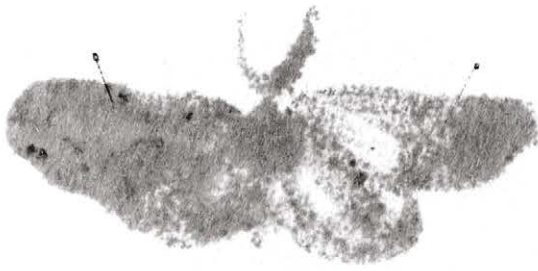


ORFELIA CLEANS OUT THE CLOSET

The bridal dress hangs still
in my closet and I don't know where
to buy moth balls. Lately
this has been eating away at me.
For starters, I worry I'm not familiar
with the scent of white tar.
I lack that memory, a grandmother
taking pains to trace her first motifs
with macerated hands, those days
when she truly lived, years
translated into fabric, lace, hems.
Now more than ever I'm pained
by all I didn't have and thus
cannot remember. I'm not familiar
with the scent of moth balls. Worse yet,
I don't know where to buy them. It's pressing.
I imagine black moths, eyes on their wings,
flitting across my white dress:
filaments and antennas: muslin and lace.

I don't want to feed the insects,
butterflies with night habits.
Better for it to hang
amid blank hours, its pages
not written and thus unable
to hold it all: what is no longer, a forever
cut on the bias, finished off, a place
where we were not, those we'll never be.
Because not us, I want
the dress to hang, waistband,
sequins and glass beads, every seam
sustained by the white thread
in the weave of a life
that won't ever be our own.
Any moment now
I could put it on and revert
to the person I was
like that favorite page
of a cherished book, read so often
it always opens exactly there.
To tell time: this.
This moment that didn't pass. Let it go on,
passing always.





Or perhaps the moths would be better,
in the closet's dusty, perennial night,
feeding off it on demand
like mother's milk
sweetly aged in lace and muslin,
so that chrysalids and caterpillars
might grow, and, from the fabric, antennas
morph into what they should be,
flying, wing to wing, they rise.
They will be the life not lived
and take flight with aplomb.
A descendance. They'll don
my wedding dress
through the air, flutter
light as ever,
translated to nutrients,
sustenance, substance of another life,
one that won't bear our name.
They'll be what we were not.
Because it's neither vile nor absurd
to hope that only insects
will survive us.

(From *El reino de lo no lineal*, 2020)