

Ojalá

He holds on to the force
that stretches the narrow light
and finds himself somewhere behind history.

He thinks,
All we have left
is to invent God,
to find an infinite number to hope in,
to touch the grounds of La Manquita,
say *Insha'allah*,
and wait for the church bells
to remind us of who we have become.

He knows what it means
to live in another sleep—
time moving over faces.

There are different varieties of loss—
his is contemplating
water trapped in mouths,

his is never entering
La Malagueta,

his is trying
to understand
what *God willing* means,

or if that is what we say
to erase the fog on our tongue.

Walking to the Alcázar

Esta es la dulce Málaga, llamada de Bella, de donde
son las famosas pasas, las famosas mujeres y el vino
preferido para la consagración.

Rubén Darío

Who rewrites what's slanted,
the shape of the position you just left,
how your body molds the air,
leaving a fixed space?

I leave different shapes of me
all over Málaga—

I walk Alameda Principal
and people pass by me
as if they know something
I don't. Franco is gone,
but it's difficult to forget
the map of bones
he left behind.

The Puerto opens up,
waiting for a message or a breeze—
no one can hide anything from the sea,
people fill the chiringuitos,
and Rubén awaits at the end of the avenida.

Now facing the Gibralfaro
I accept the moment,
what will come.
I ask about the rampart, the Coracha, the Alcazaba,
ask about the limestones, the Patio de los Naranjos,
the gunpowder, and the Airón Well.

Where are you Rubén?
What haven't you shown me,
what do you look like undressed,
what do the earth and the waters
have in common
when a woman presses her breast against them?

My clothes are now wet,
it's winter,
I belong nowhere this minute,
it begins to rain.

My voice accepts the other voice—
Arabic then Spanish.
The ocean is broken
but not even that can divide us.

Nothing belongs to me,
but I am here and you exist—
you keep showing me
the way love moves what's past.

The Wounded Horse and a Tree in an Old Night

Village after village
I move
gather salt
some biznagas
what would the ruin say

It's not possible to flee
the past or the thunderstorm
death or the heart

A bird passes by unsure

Like the photo of a boy
with his father
in Basque Country 1937

The faces yellow
their names unknown

A bombing
gray black and white
a soldier with an open palm
a mother staring
at a light bulb
a human skull a bull
and a pale horse—
can peace rest
among bodies
unmoving

A shadow by a horn
waiting to find the open window
on the dark wall

On the dark wall an open window
Plaza de la Merced
where he was born—
how would he paint his birth
or his baptism
in la Iglesia de Santiago

I look at the church's Mudéjar tower
walk Calle Granada

and my breath aches
death is closer to life
than we accept
and we try counting—

they were killed early
they kissed early
they roamed the city early
they forgave the earth no more
nor did they forgive the ant bites
the sun's rays
and they were thankful
to those who wanted
to bring them back
by knowing
their age
name
face
by taking the thorn out
of their ashes

A bird passes by

A tree in an old night

See the wounded horse

And moves toward me
as I move toward a village

Like a ghost gathering
what the ruin said
except we weren't there to hear

Gypsy with a Song

I could take Harlem night and wrap around you.

Langston Hughes, "Juke Box Love Song"

I was born far from a plain
close to a church
far from a stream
close to a field
far from a God with eyes

Smoke curls like thick fog
a song
by Duke Ellington is playing—
trumpets teasing souls

I'm in St. George's Anglican cemetery
in Málaga
where musicians and lovers of jazz
gather to play tunes
by tombs

A gypsy
I've wandered the globe
especially the shadows
I've spent life without a song—
day after day drifting along
but tonight
my song is in every campfire
every violin
my song is here
along with some happiness
some version of peace
some feet tapping earth
and the ocean deciding time

This is how it begins—
I am in your arms now
where I belong
am not a gypsy
not gitana
without a song
sin una canción
no
not no more
no more
I carried the Mississippi
and the Dead Sea
black folks and brown folks
the delta
the delta
la voix de la Nouvelle Orléans
and that of Harlem
here with me

All here—
the stretching of time
against hills
the drummer
the Moors
the heart aging
down a valley

Tonight
I am not a gypsy
I wear water like song
its moistness
its hum
its banjo
its guitarra
and the whisper coming
like a cry abandoned some place

Canta
faster
faster
sing
until the Teatro de la Libertad
(Teatro Cervantes)

sing
until Atarazanas

until Antigua Casa de Guardia

until the tunes
cross
the river Guadalmedina

The color here—
is in the trombone
the cornet
in the hand that stops fire

Tonight I have a song—
about sharp wild breath
three windows
one echo
a slow shadow
that no longer pretends
it knows what it sees

Tonight I am a gypsy with a song
about belonging, and longing
the second set—
a drowsy tune
the speed of solitude