

Fiera de amor

Spanish

Beast of love, I suffer hunger for hearts.
Of pigeons, vultures, roe deer, or lions,
There is no more tempting prey, no more gratifying tastes,
It already strangulated my claws and instinct,
When erected in an almost ethereal plinth,
I was fascinated by a statue of antique emperor.

And I grew in enthusiasm; through the stone stem
My desire ascended like fulminous ivy,
Up to the chest, seemingly nurtured in snow;
And I clamored to the impossible heart . . . the statue,
A custodian of its glory, pure and serene,
With its forehead in Tomorrow and its feet in Yesterday.

My perennial desire, the stone stem
Has been suspended like bloody ivy;
And since then I bite my heart while dreaming
Of the statue, supreme prisoner of my beautiful claw;
It is neither flesh nor marble; a star paste
Bloodless, with neither warmth nor palpitation . . .

With the essence of a superhuman passion!

Humberto Ak'Abal

GUATEMALA, 1952–2019

The Dance

K'iche'

All of us dance
on the edge of a coin.

The poor—because they are poor—
lose their step,
and fall

and everyone else
falls on top.

I Took Your Name Out from My Mind

Spanish

I took your name out of my mind
and lost it in the mountain.

It was picked up by the air
and found its path
through the ravine.

Suddenly
it crashed against the cliffs
and bounced back:

rain made it sing
and your name reached me while crying.

Anna Akhmatova

RUSSIA, 1889–1966

The Muse

Russian

At night, as I await her arrival,
my life comes to an impasse. And, truly,
what are honors, youth, or liberty
before a cherished friend with a flute!
There she is, making an entrance. She unveils herself
and looks me over at length.
I say: “Is it you who dictated to Dante
the pages of Hell?” And she answers: “It’s me.”

The Diameter of the Bomb

Hebrew

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters
and, with four dead and eleven wounded,
the diameter of its actual range about seven meters.
And around these, in an expanding circle
of pain and time, two hospitals are scattered
and one graveyard. But the young woman
buried in the city she came from,
at a distance of more than a hundred kilometers,
expands the circle substantially,
and the lonely man mourning her death
at the far-away shores of a country across the sea
includes the whole world in the circle.
And I won't mention the howl of orphans
reaching up to God's throne and
beyond, making
a circle with no end and no God.

We Were Not the Whole Tree

Spanish

We were not the whole tree. Only graceful
branches, moss-covered bark, humid flowers,
roots liberated from the abyss.

We were not always the tree.
We didn't weather frosted, stubborn rain
or keep vigil in a night of ghosts.

And we were delightedly sheltered
in its own hollow, not its hollow.

If they burned the summer frowns,
with laughter we jumped into the well.

If ax arms were lifted,
woodcutting ballads would beat us.

If fire lines advanced,
rower and horse rhymed our fugue.

If devouring ants climbed,
we were only a mirror of disaster.

If the afternoon dragged it by shadows,
we would go to the heart of the west
to play with the sun, cooled and red.

And when the wind threatened like a giant,
foreboding the uncongealing, we saved ourselves.

We were not the whole tree.
We were not always the tree.
But the miracle fully perpetuates:
My branches are nurtured by your impulse,
my uneasiness evaporates in your resin.

Popocatépetl

Yiddish

Popo—
lying stolid with a plumage of stone,
crying from your body, with a quiet scream,
are thousands of years.

in the bluish dawn of rose,
the sun hides its whitish head
with rainbow stripes,
like a hairband.

Winds—
hidden monsters in the gallop,
throwing themselves onto you, yelling as they pillage,
humming songs and whistling
from unknown lands.

what secrets,
stored in the passing of generations,
are hidden inside you?

what scars
stapled in blood,
are engraved in individual stones?

Carry me inside your body, Popo,
stone-like,
conveying
your mysteries in my silence.

Popo—
furtive hoary giant,
the sun throws you a ray
in the darkening moments of dusk,
enlightening you fully.

I see in you now
ancient generations gone,
their blood spilled
from your vertebral column.

What plethora of travelers wandered on your silvery skin?
Have you counted their steps?

At your knees
death announces its journey,
and on your back,
this frigid, whitish
pours inscrutability . . .