

6 POEMS FROM SALGADO MARANHÃO'S *STONE OF ENCHANTMENT*

translated by

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Still

Savannah Grill 1

Savannah Grill 2

Stone Song V

Stone Song VII

Poetry XXXII

These six poems are drawn from Salgado's most recent book *Pedra de Encantaria*. These poems continue his stark appraisal of historical and personal suffering, but always with the suggestion that language, speech, song, can provide some solace or even salvation, that somehow "... day begins anew/touched lightly by the word."

Still

I'm paying payments
on my mother's years.

The houses that I dreamed
are words like udders
growing from the grasslands. Flocks
advancing with my ankle bones.

Here, verbal nuptials arose,
dancing the rain. I am part
of this ritual and this forgetting.

Here, a knife
on the table and certainty
slicing the dead.

 In the relicts
the sun leaves to the eyes.

I will wait for you, unnamed star,
leaning on the procession
of the world (and the majesty of its wounds);
I will free myself of all the blood and must
flooding from your breasts.

You who teach me to die from myself,
to go beyond my own tenantry.

Savannah Grill

"Ah, but I didn't let myself fall sleep"
Noémia de Sousa

1.

Listen, traveler on the storm.
Look closely at the seed
the sea has injured (and those hidden raids;
that festive pillaging).

Accept your brief oasis
which isn't even a pregnant
peace.

It is only this now
reduced to metonymies.

You are nailed to centuries
of scars (and tears of
Chantilly cream).

Great grassy plains don't grow
beneath your feet: once again
those weeds and
their allegories. Once again

a liturgy of spines.

Remember the camel
that drank sand; remember
the cactus on the rock.

2.

There is no limit
to your patience, stretched. Already
all's a trail of losses (arms
with serial numbers rubbed out), where
God has wiped away your Cronus.

They've already taken from you everything: tiles
of memory in collapse. And even

this shelter

rustling within your breast
as if your heart were not your own.

Reclaim your flesh
leant to others (and your skin
they grill,
unbattered). Everything
returns to the catalogue of dew
where day begins anew--:
touched lightly by the word.

Stone Song V

It isn't the raging of sensuous waters
that reaches my inner depths,
my forking veins.

Nor whirlwinds in their lunar cycles.

It is the grain that dawns in me. In the time
of grapevines and inebriation,
vertiginous.

In me,
ethnicities torn apart: each
slice of an impossible star...

Can one call it a petal,
that spasm that speaks

to the blood?

Can one unravel this bush
in a miracle blossoming from poison?

I know the valor
of a fertile death (and its swarming
flame); I know
the nimbus of the word in the temple
where what is spoken is sweet.

Stone Song VII

Ah, that garden
on the edge of words! That expanse of
nothingness that is a mystery
and a bird of pulsing blood (or an overflowing
ghost being only
what it will not become.)

Being just a sculpture of lightning bolts
in the forest of the eyes (those embers
that turn to stone
in their metric of mirrors); that is

the insatiable semen itself kissing the earth
and the compulsion of nakedness
defeating ancient death.

However,
there is no open door
for the wandering gaze; nor a lap to welcome us.

Just a sea of language, clamoring.

Poetry XXXII

Because time frustrates all that
you would be, words are born to you
already marred.

I do not arrogate to you the innocence
of daggers or the maternal
smell of snakes. I am referring
to the sermon that calms
the storm.

I have come subjugating
this raw land, marked
by fire. I have come enduring
like Achilles' steeds.

How to staunch these seas
without geometry?

I come to ripen strategies
slithering beyond the page;

I do not know if this is gain or pain.