

STONE SONGS

Salgado Maranhão

translated by Alexis Levitin

Stone Song I

We fall before demented pearls
obscuring the spark
that sets ash aflame.

We fall, strangers to
ourselves, our proteins
expired,
our certainties
provisorial.

Who sprinkled out the flourishing
of daggers—
is it the ape who missed
the entranceway to God?

Here,
on this island of auguries,
the stones as well
are being reinvented.

Here, in this blue
stumbling amongst the birds,
I type my soul in 3-D,
locked within the verbal cortex
where I resonate:
going on while waiting still.

Stone Song II

I speak what awakens
the vehemence of fruit (and

the bloody plenitude
of a kingdom growing
into rubble).

To whom shall I sell my nerves
and my prismatic wings?

I live by the obscure craft
of inventing stars--:

my head germinates
a tranquil blue.

I am that web of enigmas
that gather in homeless
memories.

Before brutish hordes
and boiling nights,
weeds are growing
over the innocent.

Stone Song III

To sing so as to weave a seamless
plot (to conjure
serpents from
a bloodied lexicon).

To sing to redeem
the exaltation of bread
burning verse (with
the principle of a passion
borrowed from nowhere).

I need that lava
that floods mysteries
and a highway of symbols.

I need that chord
that brings to life dried fruit (and

the gift of being like love,
that does not seek a throne
or a heroic death).

Just a moment ago, suffering
renewed its passport.
The glory of that moment is imprecise,
a constellation of daggers and shadows.

Stone Song IV

I will speak of useless firewood and inaudible
cries: that allotment
that brings us back to never.

I will speak of lilies and scimitars (and
of the sting that pollinates
the tormented night).

I will speak of the seasons
that madness creates

disinheriting our companion
death.

I will be the hand that ripens
the crack in the clay
that sweats.

What is written cries out
to the depths of black flesh.

When they batter my skull
with the night, when
they bring jackals to the table,
my poetry will sing with its teeth.

Stone Song V

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

incensed?

I will call forth from photosynthesis
a silence that howls.

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.

Stone Song VIII

Things wither without a siren's warning: without
a window for pleading. Things
covered with desire (in the cocoon
of a quarry.)

What are atoms conjuring forth
in this season of mornings,
in this metaphysical dew?

Only the seamless sun
remains to the planting, the plowing
without end (grass

growing beyond the dead); this sun

perpendicular:
a toreador who kills
the very shadows.

Rebellious seeds
will persevere
 and the dense tide
that the gold of morning defies.

As if dreaming were a path
through the wind without tracks.

Stone Song IX

Behold the rain that unsettles
our will. A rain
of fundamental words: my
weapons gleaming with

reconstructed legends.

Behold me, before the Fiat Lux,
condemned to fog
and to a thaw that creeps beyond
the genitals.

Must I burst forth in the infinity
of this implanted passion?

All I have are the broken stones
of blind valor (and cactuses
of a haunted night.)

What gods do the orphans
of this altar serve without praise?

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