

Erbgħin Jum

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Excerpt in Maltese

I

IMMIDDU l-ewwel pass f 'dil-penitenza,
jien u dan ġismi jfur bi htijiet qodma.
Erbgħin jum, għaxart elef pass kull għodwa
sa tmiem is-sena, jew sakemm ninfena.

L-ewwel pass, it-tieni pass — kull pass qabza
tiskansa l-waqgħa bla tarf li hemm tissajja
f 'kull ħofra tiddieħaq b'nejbiet imġewħa
skjerati tul il-mogħdijiet imserrpa
tal-mappa mgħaffġa kobba tal-passat.
It-tielet pass, ir-raba' — kull pass eħfef
minn ta' qablu, jistieden ta' warajh,
il-pali ta' saqajja jħossu l-qiegħa,
jinsew li mixjin fuq ħabel stirat.
Il-ħames, is-sitt, is-seba' — sa nitlef
l-għadd tal-iħirsa li tbiegħdu warajja,
sa sidri jibqa' għaddej ħafif daqs l-arja.

II

Irrid l-irxiex fil-fdalijiet ta' xagħri,
irrid l-għaraq niezlel m'għonqi u spallejja,

magħmudija tlaħlaħli l-ittri t'ismi.
Irrid is-sħana tal-barżakka f 'dahri,
irrid id-demm ibaqqbaq tul riġlejja,
ħuġġieġa ssaffili d-dnubiet ta' ġismi.

Erbgħin jum, għaxart elef pass kull għodwa,
lejn ebda par dirgħajn għajr dawk tax-xefaġ,
lejn ebda par xufftejn għajr dawk taż-żiffa,
lejn ebda sider sħun għajr dak tax-xemx.

Erbgħin għodwa mil-lum sa tmiem is-sena,
ħa nindem minn kull għelt, niskongra l-biża',
nerġa' nifrex il-mappa, inġibha f 'postha,
f'tarf il-ħabel nerġa' niddritta l-boxxla
'mbagħad jew inkompli għal triqti, jew ninfena.

II

JIEN MA NISTAX inġiegħlek tgħożż il-baħar.
Stennejt sentejn biex għidt li ma tħobbux.
Stennejt sentejn biex għidt li l-arja mielħa
ttik li tqaqqaħ u kważi taqla' msarneġ.
Tant qlub fir-ramel biex imbagħad tqerr miegħi
li ilek tistmerr mill-bidu x-xewqa tiegħi
li nnizzlu nofs għeruqna f 'din il-gżira.
U tant versi nqabbel nifsek mal-mewġ
jofroġħ u jimla, u xfar għajnejk mal-mewġ
tiela' u nieżel, u n-nokkli twal mal-mewġ
fejn kont inbaħħar sa nittrakka f 'sidrek.

Illum ma nafx kontx ngħanni ismek bil-baħar
jonkella ngħanni l-baħar bl-ittri t'ismek.

Jien ma nistax ingieghlek tgħożż il-baħar.
Stennejt sentejn biex għidt li ma tħobbux.
Dak il-ħin tkaxkret l-art minn taħt saqajja,
ħallejtni hawn b'għeruqi mperrċa fil-baħħ
ta' xatt bla baħar, ta' plajja bla ramel,
ta' gżira bla ħamrija tgħum f 'swidija
fejn l-ittri t'ismek iduru durella
u fuqhom u ġo fihom jġu jbejtu
daħkana u għalenija eluf t'uħux.

III

IL-MIXI s-salmura tal-qalb. Mel'imxi.
Jekk tibki baħar, laħlaħ saqajk fih.
Jekk jaħarqu għajnejk, għaddashom fir-riħ.
Ħallik minn min iċekknek biex jitkabbar.
Ħallik minn min ikexkxek biex jistabar.
Ħallik minn dellek ġej bil-minġel l-aħmar.
Jekk xejn, dan l-uġigħ imexxik fi triqtek.
Mel'ibki. Kun qattus tiegħek innifsek.
Imxi. Kun it-trejqa li tilqa' sieqek.
Ikteb. Kun il-kelma li tfisser skietek
u itlaqha f 'fomm ir-riħ. Dan huwa dmirek.

English translation by Antoine Cassar

I

LET US TREAD the first step of this penance,
I and this body spilling ancient guilt.
Forty days, ten thousand steps each morning
till the end of the year, or until I wilt.

The first step. The second step. Each step a leap
over an endless fall, a lurking pit
that cackles and chatters with starving fangs;
pits stationed along the serpentine paths
of the crumpled map of the past.

The third step. The fourth. Each step lighter
than the one before it, begetting the next;
the soles of my feet fathom the ground,
forgetting that they tread a tightrope.

The fifth, the sixth, the seventh — till I lose count
of the ghosts that shrink away behind me,
until my chest advances light as air.

II

I want the drizzle in the ruins of my hair,
I want the flow of sweat along my shoulders,
a baptism rinsing the letters of my name.
I want the rucksack warm against my back,
I want the boil of blood along my legs,
a fire purging my body of its shame.

Forty days, ten thousand steps each morning,
toward no arms but those of the earth's curve,
toward no lips but those of the breeze,
toward no warm bosom but that of the sun.

Forty mornings from today till the end of the year,
to atone for every fault, dispel all fear,
to roll out the map once more, restore its place,
and at the tightrope's end reset the compass,
then either I go on walking, or I wilt.

III

I CANNOT force you to cherish the sea.
You waited two years to tell me you despise it.
Two years to tell me that the salted air
makes you want to cough out your entrails.
All those hearts traced in the sand to later confess
that, from the start, you've resented my wish
for us to plant our roots on this island.
And all the verses in which I rhymed your breath
with the ebb and flow of the waves, your lashes
with the rise and fall of the waves, your tresses
with the waves I plied to dock at your chest.
Today I can't tell if I sang your name with the sea
or if I sang the sea with the letters of your name.

I cannot force you to cherish the sea.
You waited two years to tell me you despise it.
Right then, the earth slid from beneath my feet,
you left me here with my roots exposed

to a sealess coast, a sandless beach,
a soilless island swimming in darkness
where the letters of your name swirl and spiral
and on them and inside them come to nest
a thousand sneering spirits, hand in hand.