

Formes de l'ombra. Poesia 1966 - 2002

November Meditation

Each year, when November comes, and all
the air is so thick with chrysanthemums,
I love to think of all the things that have
passed by already. Time, the maniac,
leads them to us from its antique refuge
so they can support us in the future.

The mournful days return when, infants, we
found ourselves encircled in the dark
hours by nocturnal demons. What a weight
of tears we sullenly hid beneath
the sheets of self-esteem, so the grown-ups
would think we saw no ghosts and were courageous...

And, later still, the time when the whole world,
it seemed, revolved around an unaccomplished
act, or round a thought. The hours then
were populated with an imprecise
waiting, with languid suffering, with words,
with an obscure and tender trembling.

How much pointless struggling it takes
gradually to give shape to a new man,
how many secret journeys into dark,
impenetrable regions, down the ways
that offer us a ransom from the instincts
races and past years have heaped on us!

Yes, we think, we're young, alive, and every-
thing sings the triumph of strength: a perfect body,
the flame of a desire, the transient smile
in certain eyes, a slender gesture, while
the foreboding that's lain in wait since those
far off beginnings already devours us.

Oh death, oh death, encircling all our steps!
We're born with you, we come to your sweet call
even at the distant start when we are only
a seed seeking a place it can take root.
Woods and seas, birds, different animals,
all await the day of our appearance.

Don't take fright reflecting that the time
you have is counted: the whole world's for you.
You have to energetically dig
your claws into the bit of time that's yours.
Let the pain that fills so many moments
serve to make your muscles' anger harder.

Gentlest November, keep me company,
don't allow me to forget these things.
You move onwards, I know, nothing prevents you
living intensely through each single hour.
I, too, want to escape from unshaped fears,
I've placed a bet on life and I must win.

Translated by Christopher Whyte