STONE

FRUIT

**M o n i k a N e u l a n d T h o m a s**

**Die Hellen Steine**

*Die hellen  
Steine gehn durch die Luft, die hell-  
weißen, die Licht-  
bringer.*

*Sie wollen  
nicht niedergehen, nicht stürzen,  
nicht treffen. Sie gehen  
auf,  
wie die geringen  
Heckenrosen, so tun sie sich auf,  
sie schweben  
dir zu, du meine Leise,  
du meine Wahre—:*

*ich seh dich, du pflückst sie mit meinen  
neuen, meinen  
Jedermannshänden, du tust sie  
ins Abermals-Helle, das niemand  
zu weinen braucht noch zu nennen.*

Paul Celan

**PROEM**

Full

and orotund,

we are swell.

The angels

commanded us

not to sit here!

You are in

the red robe,

upon this tumulus,

[earth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soil) and [stones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_(geology))

raised

over a [grav](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grave)e.

We bulge

in *tomb, tumor*,

*tumescent,*

*thumb*,

*and thigh*:

in thousands

**Siblings in Grace**

The mountains, the tolerant ones,

accepted everything.

Yielding to wind and time, to water,

endlessly licking their details.

Elephants of forbearance,

from crest to foundation.

They wait quietly still,

Not gloating,

holding their breath,

their empty caves and bones,

holding all of their stone

asking no one to quarry,

holding infant lake waters

in higher altitudes cradled.

They grant ice passage

into cracks, becoming waterfalls.

Refusing anyone’s taunt,

the ones who point

and remark

about their size.

The greatest graces,

so large as to be unscalable,

conceal themselves above clouds,

not rooting for anyone.

.

The miles we tread looking for paths

through their faces.

Altitude

steals oxygen

On twisted passages of stone,

you saw a flower.

Your footfalls sent dust,

and smaller stones

tumbling

down.

The travails they give

are their kindnesses.

They listen when there is nothing

but a ledge to stand on.

When that ledge

vanishes:

sheer

drops.

If you survive them,

you will know.

You walked a subtle,

different configuration

created

by your passing.

**Negotiating Irregularity as a Pure Form of Presence**

A circle of stones

and a lizard.

Do they require another set

of eyes?

Does a mind contribute anything

here?

Wander the desert where everything is a form

of not waiting.

The doves report that they have voices

and each other,

that their wings whir and that they have places

to touch down.

**Bardo**

I

*They put up a tent*

*in a place where no soft ground could be found;*

*no amount of carpet or blanket beneath them could make a flat place*

*for sitting or sleeping.*

**II**

*Their ankles and the ankles*

*of the beasts of burden*

*were weary from stepping carefully over so much*

*stone underfoot.*

Then, they knew *there was no way forward,*

*and returning the way they had come*

*all was sameness,*

*stepping over rock.*

**Muted Bronze Bell**

Oracle placed the bottom

of her narrow foot between my bare breasts.

She asked me this:

*“Is this your quest, or is this my prophecy?”*

*“Are you renewed,*

*or are you weighed down?”*

*“We do not decide,” she said.*

*Ours is a spiritual flight of forbearance.*

*A decision performed or interpreted,*

*not chosen.*

*A bird flies above*

*the nose of the highest mountain,*

*neither*

*are sky.”*

*“I am not an oracle. I do not trade visions;*

*visions have their way with me.*

*Visions will have more of us:*

*internal cosmic flight…*

*a flood, a volcanic island,*

*an insistent wind,*

*a stone*

*in your shoe.*

**These are the Doorways, and We, the Midwives of Nonsense,**

**Birth What Will Become**

Our gentle hearts are not the point.

Among us are endless births.

Had we known, we would have chosen another profession.

We are, by right of our training, rapt

with attention upon the place between,

where the newborn will emerge.

It is not so easy as to know what should emerge

and who will bear down.

We have sworn oaths to greet mortal folly on the threshold.

We reach our hands

toward their crown or toes

as they are pushed into this world from another.

The infants,

what of them?

They want something for their mouths again.

They will be lonely,

like us,

the wise ones, never confident.

They are

potent and ever-

hungry.

We catch them and pass them

into this world:

fruiting bodies.

**Milk Lines**

**I**

Child carries

a pebble in her pocket

for the private pleasure

of fingering something

while in full view

of others.

Later she withdraws

the grey nugget

showing herself,

the stone

upon the stage

of her palm.

**II**

*A moth lands upon the gleaming*

*light of her hair,*

*looking over her shoulder.*

*“You cannot eat that stone*

*and neither can I,”*

says the mouth of the moth.

*“You cannot weave that stone.*

*You should not throw that stone.”*

*“What is it to you, child?”*

**III**

*“Pebble is for play.*

*Pebble will be*

*my small pleasure.*

*A gift for my thumb and first finger.*

*My small rebellion.”*

**Our Re-Education**

*(sotto voce)*

I squatted down, reached beneath,

and lifted a formidable boulder.

I felt the muscles in my arms

thicken.

To move in the direction of doing,

I repositioned the world.

I could lift, did lift, move stone

somewhere else.

In this way, I gathered

all the rocks from the field,

moving granite until I built a wall

to separate here from there.

The view of the distance,

was obscured by my own hands.

I was a human

and a fool.

In my sweat and fortitude,

I had built a prison.

Build it, and the prisoners will come.

I am the first.

**Short Poem for a Village**

*Before it was tilled,*

*the field was cleared of stones.*

As of

yet unplanted

the soil is ready,

enriched with effort,

in this

rainy season,

we believe.

We did the work.

Storms came

and drove out

the lizards and scorpions

to celebrate.

**Courtyard**

**I**

The place for ablutions

is out front,

a place

for washing.

II

Stones and water

in a courtyard.

A stone chapel

with its bell mostly still.

**In Macuilxochitl**

In the empty house,

occluded half-light

absorbs soundlessness

in the

small

arcade.

Within,

the dark mud walls

a small bed: plain.

You, still and naked,

what are you bringing

to this new day?

Think of the color

of the dry beans

in the clay crock.

Stones sit

in the golden suede

of dust.

The yellow-brown earthwall

shoulders

sanctuary.

**The New Dispensation of Grace**

It cannot be said stones feel joy.

It cannot be said they have

no knowledge.

In the small orchard, the stones in the soil,

were constellated about the roots

of the stone fruit trees.

The plum tree had small, green efforts

that disappeared

early on.

Of the peach sapling,

overmuch could not be said.

She faltered.

The cherry approached her ripe moment,

which two deep red fruits accomplished

in proper shine and hue.

At the end of summer,

some trees strain

under the weight of their

fruit;

These did not,

but held their names

proudly.

**Tongues**

**I**

A world talking

in endless voices.

By creating everything,

this lonely planet gave herself sickness.

A leper wishes she had fingers

to tie the animals

to herself at night

with lengths of stolen rope.

**II**

The woman from the other

village

kept certain stones

as favorites,

arranged on the backs

of even larger stones.

She placed stones in her mouth.

sang, danced,

and sewed patches.

She was shunned,

and later mistaken

for a leopard.

**Highland**

*“Build the mouth of*

*your mine*

*elsewhere,”*

I replied.

The sun rises before and sets

behind me.

*“They told me it was foolishness*

*to call myself a hill.”*

I wear an apron.

Here it is.

I tie it

behind my back.

I wipe my hands

here.

*“No one will believe you*

*because you are rounded.*

*Who are you to rise up*

*out of this landscape?”*

*“We will sit on you and roll over you,”*

they said.

They stood

with pickaxes and shovels.

**Her Name Means Watchtower**

**I**

With crushing:

resin is released,

and fragrance surrounds her.

The plants ground

to a preparation

attend,

and are bound

into

pitch.

II

Who will allow

the *no sense* of her;

the senselessness of her grief?

She thinks

she will not be

pursued.

She believes

she discovers

the way,

occluded from gatherings

and invitations

by shroud.

By her melancholy,

they will tire

of her.

**III**

When she arrives,

she sits for a time

before

the threshold.

She wonders who might give

her two hands

to push a great stone aside

*or pull it closed*

*after herself.*

IV

She, stands

with two hands holding

an apothecary jar.

There is nothing

to heal,

yet she holds

a vessel

full

of the preparation.

**Untitled**

Bloodless beings,

stones, black crickets, and musical notes

live without

red within.

They

need no home,

utility,

declare no final resting place.

A field unmown, unplanted,

unfenced,

tall grasses here;

porous chorus,

particular sound,

rippling gesture.

In autumn

seed heads scatter.

Grain, notes, pebbles

without anticipation

falling, leaping, stemming

ensouled.

**Where?**

In the sky,

in a tower

behind a moat

spinning flax…

**Salsal and Shahmama**

**Mohammad and Mohammad**

Backs merged

into a sandstone cliff.

Details once modeled

in mud mixed

with straw,

coated in plaster.

Circumambulate absence

with presence.

Undifferentiated

from rockface,

in shaded alcoves

hearts unseen.

Two figures stood,

contemplating a valley.

Niches, now empty,

untenanted,

released

in dust.

**The Power of Soft Metal**

Tender bird chatter

drifts fine:

gold dust

among tombs.

Hear

the

finest

article.

The chatter of small birds

drifts like a gold dust

among tombstones.

Here, the finest particle

evanesces to a winking,

then imperceptible.

**Quarry**

*“My stone,*” they say,

“*My basin, my stair,*

*my marble slab*

*upon which I lay*

*this body.”*

One

temple

upon

the grave

of another.

**Can We Call Stone A Broken Mountain?**

My brother told me of limestone cliffs on either side of a river.

He spoke of them so fondly and with wonder.

*He is a broken man but speaks of the landscape with great respect.*

**Silvagenitus**

The nuns, high on a cold mountain,

sit in the cloud forest,

rearranging pine needles into poems,

each word erased by wind

before its characters are completed.