

DARIO GUCCIO

URNAS PLEBEYAS, TÚMULOS REALES

December 14, 2018 - January 25, 2019

The fragments below are all that remain from the manuscript *The History of the Seasons*, found in the ashes of Alexandria, in the ruins of the Temple of Serapis.

[. . .]

An obscure puddle of ancient oil – of primordial and other beneficent promises – encircled by arabesque embroideries, unwillingly rises into a constituted body. Strictly has the pool remained motionless, since the days of Anapa, dense and silent, in eternal expectation of an astral signal.

Waiting for the daughter of gods from other galaxies, blind with love.

Waiting to return from hovel to sky, to revert from muddy pool or putrid pond back into endless sidereal space.

An ink-gate father, a mother of the black night.

Waiting for the radiant emptiness that distant prophecies foretold. It would manifest in December of that year in the form of a stellar body, luminous and pale like your cheeks in winter, ecstatic, seminal: a splendid comet.

The course of that asteroid through the black heavens, so far overhead, glimmering across the dim surface of the puddle, would excite the divine ascent.

Like a cloudy pupil abruptly granted sight,

a fiery torch sailing through the dead of night,

dropping pitch in steamy tar pools along its flight.

[. . .]

Far away from the city, the snow-covered valley cradles the macabre choir:

*Sister Moribund,
Toad-turner,
with hairless sigh:
We invoke
your dark heart.
The time has come,
for hunting season*

At the center, an urn spits greenish vapors and acid fumes. The flaming embers blacken its glossy surface with smoke.

*Walk again,
Creature of the wind*

[...]

She wandered through the hills and their caves in the evenings at twilight, as the sun began to set, collecting fallen twigs, fossils of oyster shells, strands of lichen, feathers, and shards of rock sparkling with quartz. These treasures she piled into the folds of her skirts, later to be studied, shined, and delicately ordered into rows in the north-facing window, until the maid inevitably swept them up, not understanding the specimens held incredible powers.

The maid developed a strange twitch in her left eye, which worsened through the autumn.

The mother, too, discouraged the girl's wanderlust, demanding that she turn out her pockets and relinquish all her riches, which the girl refused. And the mother became fearful as the winter nights edged sooner and sooner into the day.

The mother spoke about the cleverness of wolves, about steep chasms that gape suddenly in the dark, and roaming packs of wild boar with sharp fangs.

But the girl only laughed: she had never seen such things, and was sure to avoid the poisonous berries that grew along the ravines.

' Take care not to return after dark or you'll fall behind, like Echo. '

Still she set off in the afternoon. Dry leaves and seed casings crunched underfoot. The girl traced the path that led through a rocky expanse to the highest point overlooking the valley, gathering obsidian shards and jagged stones as she went. The sky glowed sapphire over the distant peaks as she returned to her mother's lament,

' Take care at dark. Remember Echo! '

Her skirts heavy, the girl paid the warning little heed, cherishing her minerals all the more.

[...]

At once she noticed the moon high over the valley and dropped the last, glassy green pebble deep into her pocket, where it rustled against the nest, dried thistle, and the soft woolen curls. A crow, wailing, alighted on the naked branch of a slender tree nearby.

' Remember Echo ! '

As the girl's thoughts flew homeward, the long skirt of her starched dress petrified into rock, trapping her in the shadow of the mountain forever.