

Canciones de Exilio (2010)
Jeff Smallman (1965-)
Text by Julia Esquivel (1930-2019)

Salario
(Salary)

So close to you my Guatemala, and yet so far away.
So near and yet so distanced, fused and embedded in me.
Like my heart or my tears, or my eyes,
impregnated with your beautiful unmatched scenery.
And yet so far...
Because if I took advantage of this moment
I would place myself inside your unmistakable landscape,
And I would be distancing myself, like I have never before,
from your open future to real freedom.
Because if I grant myself to what my eyes,
hands, and deepest roots have been longing for,
I would be trapped by your current appearance
and I would lose you forever.
So close to you my Guatemala, and yet so far away.

Suspiro
(Sigh)

When we must drink so much pain.
When a river gives us anguish, drowns our breath.
When we have cried a lot
and tears are flowing like rivers from our sad eyes.
Only then the hidden sigh of our neighbour
is our own sigh.

Elección
(Choice)

I stay with my people
the stripped off, the deceived ones,
the persecuted, the traded in ones,
the ones that have never been considered human
but yet, always stand up and survive and start again.
I stay with those that were three times stripped and kicked off their land.
The ones chased like deer through mountains and jungles.

I stay with the noiseless people
that keep in the deepest their last word.
I stay with the elderly, the widows and the orphans.
In the broken heart of the weak
God finds his strength, indeed!
I stay with my people!

Certeza
(Certainty)

“They may cut all the flowers
but spring will always return”
You will blossom, Guatemala.
Each drop of blood, each tear,
each sobbing subdued by the bullets,
each cry of horror, each slice of skin ripped off by hate
will blossom again.
The sweat that flowed from our anguish
fleeing the police,
and our sigh hidden in the most secret part of our fear
will blossom again.
We have lived a thousand years of death,
in a homeland that will become “An Eternal Spring”.

Decisión
(Choice)

If when you have uncovered trickery they hurt you,
Agonize! You will not die!
If when you speak the truth they kill you,
Die! You will resurrect!
If when you fall they step on you, and they crush you.
Rise again! You will walk!
If everything is over now and you feel out of breath,
Start again!

Translations by Margie Bernal.