



VERSE IN PLACE

CAROLYN FORCHÉ

Museum of Stones

These are your stones, assembled in matchbox and tin,
collected from roadside, culvert, and viaduct,
battlefield, threshing floor, basilica, abattoir —
stones, loosened by tanks in the streets,
from a city whose earliest map was drawn in ink on linen,
schoolyard stones in the hand of a corpse,
pebble from Baudelaire's *oui*,
stone of the mind within us
carried from one silence to another,
stone of cromlech and cairn, schist and shale, hornblende,
agate, marble, millstones, ruins of choirs and shipyards,
chalk, marl, mudstone from temples and tombs,
stone from the tunnel lined with bones,
lava of a city's entombment, stones
chipped from lighthouse, cell wall, scriptorium,
paving stones from the hands of those who rose against the army,
stones where the bells had fallen, where the bridges were blown,
those that had flown through windows, weighted petitions,
feldspar, rose quartz, blue schist, gneiss, and chert,
fragments of an abbey at dusk, sandstone toe
of a Buddha mortared at Bamian,
stone from the hill of three crosses and a crypt,
from a chimney where storks cried like human children,
stones newly fallen from stars, a stillness of stones, a heart,
altar and boundary stone, marker and vessel, first cast, lode and hail,
bridge stones and others to pave and shut up with,
stone apple, stone basil, beech, berry, stone brake,
concretion of the body, as blind as cold as deaf,
all earth a quarry, all life a labor, stone-faced, stone-drunk
with hope that this assemblage of rubble, taken together, would become
a shrine or holy place, an ossuary, immovable and sacred
like the stone that marked the path of the sun as it entered the human dawn.

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CAROLYN FORCHÉ is the author of five books of poetry: *Gathering The Tribes*, which received the Yale Younger Poets Award; *The Country Between Us*, chosen as the Lamont Selection of the Academy of American Poets; *The Angel of History*, which won the Los Angeles Times Book Award; *Blue Hour*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; and *In the Lateness of the World*, which was a finalist for the Nuestadt International Prize for Literature. She has translated *Flowers from the Volcano* and *Sorrow* by Claribel Alegría, *The Selected Poems of Robert Desnos* (with William Kulik), and Mahmoud Darwish's *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* (with Munir Akash and Amira El-Zein). She compiled and edited *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness* (W.W. Norton & Co., 1993), and co-edited, with Duncan Wu, *Poetry of Witness: The Tradition in English, 1500–2000* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2014). She has been a human rights activist for thirty years, and in 1998, was presented the Edita and Ira Morris Hiroshima Foundation Award for Peace and Culture in Stockholm for her work on behalf of human rights and the preservation of memory and culture. In 2004 she became a trustee of the Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry, Canada's premier poetry award. Her recent books include *What You Have Heard Is True: A Memoir of Witness and Resistance* (2019, Penguin Press), which won the 2019 Juan E. Méndez Book Award for Human Rights in Latin America. She received the Academy of American Poets' Fellowship in 2013, the Windham Campbell Prize in 2017, and the Lannan Poetry Award in 2020. She is University Professor at Georgetown University.



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