



# Bruixa de dol

Maria-Mercè Marçal

«Ivy, martial victory, sister...»

*Car si près que tu sois l'air circule entre nous.*

M. Desbordes-Valmore

Ivy, martial victory, sister,  
stranger, all at once become a presence:  
How can I decipher your barbaric,  
violent language forcing my frontiers  
and drawing blood, a challenge I cannot  
even use my legs to escape from!  
What eyes, what hands - surely not mine - would be  
capable of seeing you as only touch,  
as beauty made flesh, disclosed upon my belly,  
no questions asked? I cannot stop myself  
longing for the ears that strained to catch  
your voice, when you were nothing but the shadow  
of a murmur of high leaves inside my body,  
desire, smoke signals that traversed the wood  
from one side to the other, sound of drums,  
open, far off, a dove with a white beak  
where I inscribed, using an alphabet  
of plants, your message, living poem that  
did not demand an answer like the one  
I now know I don't have. And, nonetheless,  
victory is the name that I bestow  
upon you, martial ivy, sister, stranger.

Translated by Christopher Whyte