

poetry

Quando sono nata

By Stefania Marchese '11

Translated by Stefania Marchese with the help of Bill Carpenter, faculty member in literature and writing.

Quando sono nata

Quando sono nata
mia madre non c'era.

Era andata al mercato
a comprare gli oli speziati
e i fiori bianchi di cannella.

Quando sono nata
mia madre non c'era.

Era andata al mercato
quello lontano, oltre al bosco di cipressi
e poi non è tornata.

Si è persa per la strada dei lupi e della luna
sui ciottoli freddi di ortica pungente
dove il muschio cresce a sud
ed il sole sorge a ponente.

Mia madre non c'era quando sono nata.
Doveva comprare gli oli e le spezie.
È ovvio che mi sia mancata
ma niente può nascere senza profumo.

Si è persa per la strada del rumore.
Hai sentito le sue grida
quando il salice piangente
la frustava ridendo?

Si è persa per la strada del ritorno.
Quella dell'andata non esisteva più.

Quando mia madre non c'era
sono nata io.

È dolce esistere
quando intorno è il nulla.

When I was born

When I was born
my mother wasn't there.

She had gone to the market
to buy the spicy oils
and white cinnamon flowers.

When I was born
my mother wasn't there.

She had gone to the market
the one that is far away, behind the cypresses
and she never came back.

She got lost on the road of the wolves and the moon
on the cold stones of stinging nettle
where moss grows on the south-facing bark
and the sun rises from the west.

My mother wasn't there when I was born.
She had to buy the oils and the spices.
Of course I missed her
but nothing can be born without its scent.

She got lost on the road of noise.
Did you hear her screaming
when the crying willow
was whipping her, laughing?

She got lost on the way home.
The road leading away from me had disappeared.

It was when my mother wasn't there
that I was born.

It is sweet to exist
when around there is nothing.

This winter, while Stefania Marchese was working at the Commission on Human Rights in the Mexican state of Yucatan, she heard that she had won the Fifth Edition of the International Poetry Competition Castello di Duino-Solidarietà: Poetry and Solidarity, Language of the Peoples. Marchese, who is from Monfalcone, Italy, is a Davis United World College scholar.