

Arborescence (or how rock becomes plant)



Old Berta says that Osain, God of the woodlands, can hear the rumor of the earth as it rotates and the flow of the sap coursing through the trees. And sometimes you have the impression that, during nights of great silence, you can hear how the roots of the plants penetrate the rock: it is a deaf and very deep rustle similar to that of a rock being softly rubbed against another, a very low noise, so low that the entire city rises above it; so deep that it courses through, even until the last rock of the last house.

And you run away from the forest, but the forest pursues you and catches you, and still you flee because you fear that a part of you is lost in this city full of a thousand forested ways. You find Osain in every street, lame, one eyed or one armed and with his great ear that hears even the opening of a flower in your dream.

It is noon, you look around: the leaves and the filaments want to be more numerous than the bricks and the stones in the walls and the tiles on the roofs. Sometimes there is no barrier that can stop the advance of the vegetal invasion, which in a way is the invasion of another world.

In the beginning, founding a city was almost always violently imposing the rock over the extent of vegetation: cutting, razing, poisoning, burning, uprooting, and then containing its return, pruning its growth, limiting its excesses in the gardens.



Sometimes you feel as if the wind was all full of invisible seeds that cling together like grains of sand on the beach, that only need a small crack, a tiny fissure in the wall where they can sprout and raise their light green hands to trap the light and continue growing. It's the humble forest, the unstoppable and blind and silent forest that makes no amends for finding ways to reach its purpose, that doesn't see the city, that doesn't see us, that doesn't even see its own arborescence, that sees nothing except the path to the sun and that won't stop as long as it sees a higher point, a new step, a new way to climb another inch.

The cities run from the forest and the forest slowly traps them. Tikal ran from the forest and the forest trapped her, and the extraordinary Angkor ran and the jungle devoured her, and Palenque and Coba raised rocky structures and the forest submerged them under its branches in the end.

And a thousand cities more rose and fell and at the end the forest always covered the rock, like seaweed upon the remains of a shipwreck. With the red of his blood man waters the green arborescence that grows like a dream very slowly born in the very heart of the rock, like a living tattoo on its dead skin.

You remember a tree house, it's not that strange. Stranger is a tree in a house, in the middle of a house: Berta calls it Yuli, no one knows why, and, although of course it is blind, it seems to listen and talk, and the dogs will not urinate on its trunk. He forgives everything, even old Berta who drives nails into it to hang her pitchers and pots. It's a good tree, flamboyant, that in winter remains leafless, skeletal looking, twisted, somber, like Osain, but in May it bursts with flowers the color of fire and lights all its surrounding with its inextinguishable beauty.



Maybe that's why you dreamed last night that the wind made the branches rub against each other – still naked and dry – and that a small flame had emerged, which then lit up other dry branches and set fire to the old house, a fire that spread quickly and that, in the end, sunk the entire neighborhood in a horrible fire.