

THE SCATTERER OF ASHES

what does it mean
to be born of a cataclysm
there was one world
and then there was another
there is no known number
for five centuries of death

we are children of ash
children of fire
children of corpses
children of blood soaked earth
mourning all these centuries
because we cannot
lay all their spirits to rest

mourning because new blood
revives the cries of old blood
because new tears fall everyday
to join the rivers of old tears
flowing inside the earth

mourning because we have seen
too many of our own die
and the dying has not ended
we mourn the nameless future dead
as we mourn the nameless past dead

what offerings can we make to
Nextepuah
the scatterer of ashes
when so much
has already been sacrificed
been lost been taken

scatter the ashes
Nextepuah
and let them rest

what does it mean
to be born knowing
we are destined for ash

lay them to rest
Nextepuah
and in return we offer this
when it is time
to scatter our ashes
you will find only
flames flickering
over our stubborn hearts

because we are not ash
we are neither dead
nor dying
not today
for all our dead
we will live
incandescent

we are children of survive
children of struggle
children of sing
children of pray
children of resist
five centuries of dying
has also been five centuries
of living of remembering
of gathering of building
of stories of birthing

Nextepuah
we may weep but
even our ashes will sing

—Ire'ne Silva

Artist: Juana Alicia, section of a mural at El Centro Chican@, Stanford CA

