

Ricardo Pau-Llosa

YEARS OF EXILE

After the paintings of Humberto Calzada

The water enters the old ballroom
and the once bedroom, seeps across
the erstwhile chessboard floor
where rumors made their way.
The squares once mapped
the tinted flights of sun
that stained-glass half-wheels wrote,
pages in the metronome diary of an age.
These testaments only seemed random,
stretched lights falling like
premeditated leaves
against the staring wall
or upon the lurid waist of the piano.

And then the water came.
The first arrival left
a pale ghost on the tiles.
Later more water came and more
so that no one could show
the uninvited flood the door,
which was half drowned.
The glass wheels turned
their voices on the murk.

And we waited for the new day
when losses would turn to stories.
We would laugh, we knew it, about
the swallowed rooms, the stabbed
recollections where gilded curtains
and danzones swayed.

But the years knew better.
We have learned to love
the cracks on the ceiling,
a nose away. We stare into them now
that we have learned to float and have become
the Sistine chroniclers of our shrinkings.
We create, we are free
now that we have lost count of everything.