

FIRESTICKS

for José Guerrero

Conjugations of the verb “to be”
asleep since Adam’s fall
wake from bad phosphor dreams
heavy with mineral desire.
Earthstruck they leave
their ferny prints of spines
in beds of stone
and carry private moons
down history’s long roads,
gaudy with flags.
The one they walk behind
who’s named “I AM”
they chose with spurts of flame
to guide them
like the pillar of a cloud
into the mind’s white exile.

“EVERYTHING IS PLUNDERED . . .”

from Anna Akhmatova

Everything is plundered, betrayed, sold,
Death’s great black wing scrapes the air,
Misery gnaws to the bone.
Why then do we not despair?

By day, from the surrounding woods,
cherries blow summer into town;
at night the deep transparent skies
glitter with new galaxies.

And the miraculous comes so close
to the ruined, dirty houses—
something not known to any one at all,
but wild in our breast for centuries.

1921