

The Desert of My Love

I did not build the universe.
The face of the world has changed, mute and white.
My future will not copy my past.
Let me hear my heart fashion visions into speech.

The face of the world has changed, mute and white.
All is said without a word.
Let me hear my heart fashion visions into speech.
What can I give back? The desert of my love.

All is said without a word.
My future will not copy my past.
What can I give back? The desert of my love.
I did not build the universe.

ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

“The Desert of My Love” was created from Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). About the poem and the process of composing it, Shloka Shankar writes:

I enjoy found poetry since it opens up opportunities for playing with language and experimenting with various techniques. One such pet process of mine is the cut-up or remixing, where I freely excerpt phrases and words to form a new whole. For “The Desert of My Love,” I was excited to try out an interesting prompt I came across in the Poets & Writers weekly newsletter. The prompt suggested “translating” a sonnet into a pantoum, and when I saw that sonnets were listed as possible source texts in *Heron Tree*’s guidelines for this volume, I knew I had to give it a go. While I could have taken the cento approach by opting to use the first full lines of each of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, I gave myself a constraint and composed this poem from only the words found in the index of first lines. I mixed and matched within the limited word bank and paid attention to context and repetition, as is common with the pantoum form.

Shloka Shankar is the founder and editor-in-chief of the journal *Sonic Boom* and its imprint, Yavanika Press. She edited *The 2020 Poetry Marathon Anthology* (Authors Publish Press 2020) and *What I Hear When Not Listening* (Yavanika Press 2020), and with Kala Ramesh and Sanjukta Asopa she co-edited *naad anunaad: an anthology of world haiku* (Vishwakarma Publications 2016). Her work has appeared in *Rigorous*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Vox Viola Literary Magazine*, *Brittle Star*, *FERAL*, and elsewhere. She lives in Bangalore, India, and can be found online at shlokashankar.com.

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