

## THE BONES OF THE EARTH

Surprised by the weight and opacity of the world, trapped by gravity despite our constant defiance, everything ends up revealing its inescapable weight and yet everything solid melts in the air.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing exists separate or in isolation; the great reality of life embraces everything without exclusion, free in its movement yet totally interdependent.

A world made up of diversity emerges in this scenario, in which each stone, each plant, each animal and each person are but forms of a common substance that, stirred by emotion, is susceptible of turning into something different; all we have to do is dissolve the compactness that things seem to possess.

Ovid (43 AC- AD 17), who in his day was concerned with the human soul, seemed to have a fair idea of how to dissolve this weight and opacity of the world. *The Bones of the Earth* is inspired by a chapter in Book I of the *Metamorphoses* in which Deucalion and Pyrrha, the only two survivors of the chaos and the devastation caused by the Great Flood, turn distressed to the oracle in search of mercy for a world that had been submerged. The goddess Themis asked them to toss the bones of the great mother behind their backs: 'in a short time, through the will of the gods, the stones hurled by the hands of the man assumed the appearance of men, and those cast by the woman were converted into women.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, section 1, paragraph 18, lines 12-14: 'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober sense, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.'

<sup>2</sup> Ovid, quoted in Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, Part One, The Myths of Creation: The Gods, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1999, p. 68.

There can be no meaningful change or transformation without a previous catharsis, and in this decisive moment the solid and concrete is supported by the insubstantial and weightless. In our case, solids in the shape of stones rise with the strength of tornados, and in their ascent, all that which is heavy and concrete becomes light and weightless, adopting the form of a bird.

To return to Ovid, I could say that we've followed the example of Perseus defeating the stone concretion embodied in the threatening Medusa's head. Thanks to the delicacy of gestures and movements, in each stone, in each bird and in the threads that underpin each of the elements, supported by the wind and the clouds, as described by Italo Calvino in his *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*,<sup>3</sup> we manage to free ourselves of the burden and each stone seems to transform into its contrary.

The feeling of the ponderous attracts its opposite, the lightweight, just as the feeling of the temporal attracts its opposite, permanence. Hence, full awareness of the ephemeral is the best expression of eternity.

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15 October 2017

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<sup>3</sup> Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1985-86)*, Vintage Books, Random House, New York, 1993, p. 4: 'turned to stone, Perseus supports himself on the very lightest of things, the winds and the clouds'.