

THIS THIRSTING EARTH

Clouds and more clouds. All these I see
laid out, barely moving, flat-grey all of them,
quickly darkening,
and soon enough everything is ominous in slow flight.
They ebb and flow,
 stream along and swirl as well,
gathering up like flocks of sheep around the sun,
barely letting happiness shine through.

Then came today when clouds took up every bit of sky —
all of it one vast extension of the single color grey
like the surf rolled in,
hanging there on nothing, wanting to drop rain.

Here on Ithaca, alas, we had no favoring rain today,
no sun.
And I, who am Penelope, living mother of a living son,
neither got Odysseus back,
husband whose love I miss on awakening,
nor chose to take a suitor as my man.

O may Rain-God Zeus send rain when the thirsting earth
feels deprived.
Make it a cloudburst, Almighty Zeus,
a downpour with lightning strokes if you choose,
and a rumble of thunder
 to make me feel alive.

- Tino Villanueva

From an published MS, *So Spoke Penelope*,
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