AUSCHWITZ

It was a lovely sunny morning in Auschwitz and you told me “I can’t believe I’m here with the boy of my dreams, pinch me so I know it’s true, yes do it, love.”

One could see the crematorium with its enormous chimney and I answered you, “it’s our last minutes” and you said “it’s so beautiful to die with the one you love, oh yes it is, love.”

Further on the station had a funereal air and at the information booth they told me we could pay the entry by credit card.

Damned economy—I said to my girl I’m broke.

The wind began to rage with our ashes and we floated over a red brick house. We were born in America.

Invisible cordilleras now covered the final sunrise.
The train to the camps swayed a lot
and through the cracks in the wagon you could make out
burned landscapes and ash clouds moving further away
in the wind.
I asked my girl if she didn’t find it a familiar
air and she answered “oh yes, our
ashes will mix together like in the bridges of
Madison, and it’ll be so beautiful love.”
The porter told me: you’re in trouble. So I
turned to those in the wagon and asked ’em:
I’m in trouble? I’ve got, maybe, the
face—of a guy with troubles?
We stopped in front of an old power plant and took off our
clothes. Later with our bodies we covered a razed city.
The train arrived at Auschwitz at dawn. A river of ash now crossed the
bridges.

You win or you lose, I told my girl, those are the
rules here in America.
AUSCHWITZ

Auschwitz, the inspector shouted pulling the whistle. Outside it was skin-peeling cold and my girl was asking around for me.
At the exit there was a hot dog stand called “Jew Dog,” soap shops and long lines waiting their turn.
The gas chamber was a house with showers and raspberry-color painted walls. Love, exclaimed my girl looking at it: But yes it’s mama’s room!
The bed was already unmade and we made love before the angels of death with speed and fury.
Afterwards we entered the “Crematoria” section.
Still you managed to say to me

“Love is a many splendored thing.”

--The translation that appears above is indebted to the rendering into English of Raúl Zurita’s triptych-poem “Auschwitz” in Raúl Zurita, Sky Below: Selected Works (Curbstone Books/Northwestern University Press [2016], at pp. 228-233), translated and with an introduction by Anna Deeny Morales. (The original Spanish-language text can be found in Zurita’s volume titled Zurita: see publication information further below). The somewhat different translation that appears above is by Francine Masiello and Robert Kaufman.
For original Spanish-language text of “Auschwitz,” see, at pp. 605-607:

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