

Megan Hodge / 2006 American Co-winner

Preguntas Sobre Amar

Querida Profesora ~

You asked us to translate,
a mandate to eliminate past errors,
to conjugate the verb *amar*--
to love—
in twenty tenses for tomorrow. Now,
bear with me *aquí*, my proficiency
in the language of Latin lovers is sufficient.
But even after endless semesters of *estudiando español*,
I'm unable to understand the ubiquity of that word.

I'm still trying to find
the best way *to love* in English;
figuring a form for such a fickle phrase,
counting the ways you continue to amaze me
and never finding the right words.
Add the element of a foreign tongue
and I'm lost.

It's just a word, just a verb,
try to curb my confusion with a quick conjugation:
first person indicative
imperfect, like me, not unlike you, *amaba*—
meaning *I used to love*.
Next step—second person *you*,
Spanish *tú*, write the new subject,
add the pronoun and it becomes too personal
me amabas—
you used to love me.

I'm sorry, profesora
yo sé no es la hora para alas preguntas,
but I don't understand
mixed up in verb commands, my hands are tied
with the knowledge that *amar* is a word
not often used in the indicative, where I live,
but in the subjunctive
indicative being the tense used to express reality,
actual, tangible occurrences and observations
while the subjunctive is saved
for the imaginary, the temporary.

So, *Señora*, what I'm saying is
when a language I have grown to *love* so much
can't even begin to touch the certainty
I thought I felt, describe the way we used to melt
restrains the meaning of what only I can know
was absolute truth,
then I'm truly stumped
because while my mind can conclude that *amar*
is a verb best used in the subjunctive,
my heart still believes that love can be a reality.

