

SONG OF THE CITIZEN FROM A PRIOR CENTURY ●

Rebecca Givens Rolland

In our castle garden, a vagrant gust over ground
winds our ears like analog clocks. You stand your ground,

alongside a sundial. Our gazebo gleams
where I left you, camellias wracked. Digging ground,

I find bulbs yet to bloom. Children long gone. Empty
yard beckons us to plant. We refuse. Lost, you ground

all our plans for now. Where was our treasure? Our
marked X? This map's useless, shows blank ground,

ghosts of women pinioned by hand-spinning
wheels for eternity. In memory's moat, I ground

heels, tell toes to flex, limbs to flutter. Yet, face
to face with you, I'm paralyzed. No king's ground,

this restrictive charter, more like a closed mouth,
wishing to open. Beg pardon? I demand red ground.

Come back, it begs. You'll freeze, find your feet. I
ask what other women want: guards to keep ground

from burning them whole, and no white fences? No.
How many years till tomorrow? Uncharted ground

from tick to tock, from snore to snore, from towel
to washcloth, souring with age: not the ground

I once said I'd give my life for. Not the countryside
I wanted to see. Will the two of us be ground

down together? Grow mad? Make symphonies?
Don't tell me I've loved you into the ground,

or haven't loved well. The ghost of an old regime
rises in me. I tap a new melody, gain ground.