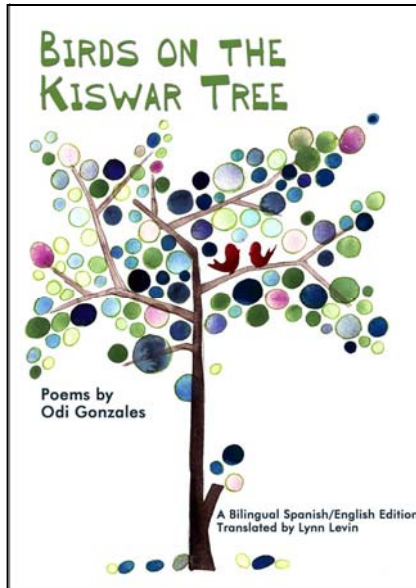


## Birds on the Kiswar Tree

by Odi Gonzales

A Bilingual Spanish/English Edition Translated by Lynn Levin  
2LP TRANSLATIONS



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Odi Gonzales  
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BIRDS ON THE KISWAR TREE by Peruvian Andean poet Odi Gonzales presents poems that sing in the voices of native birds and speak through the devout, but subversive, Quechua artists of Peru's colonial era. Their religious art provides the imagery for these astounding poems. In the Eden painted by one anonymous artist, Andean kiswar trees grow, native ñukchu flowers bloom, llamas graze, and parrots perch in the trees, and in out-of-the-way nooks of Andean churches, rebel angels hide, armed with harquebuses. Canvas by canvas, poem by poem, Gonzales gives us a poetry collection as a living and talking museum in which the Quechua artists of Peru's past demonstrate both their sincere Christian faith and their opposition to the Spanish destruction of the Inca empire. Originally published in Peru in 2005 as *La Escuela de Cusco (The School of Cusco)*, BIRDS ON THE KISWAR TREE stands as an elegant and richly imagined tribute to these indigenous and mestizo artists. By extension, it shows how artists may put forth their views when prevailing circumstances make outward protest a perilous option.

A haunting gallery of indigenous painters from colonial Peru, most anonymous, is mapped out by Quechua poet Odi Gonzales in this admirable collection. Through Lynn Levin's lucid renditions, the painters' eyes become ours, and so does Cusco, the heart of the Inca Empire, which, under the Spaniards, became one of Dante's circles of hell. Among these artists, dignity and resistance were synonymous. Poetry, Gonzales persuades us, is a tool to unveil the past, to come face to face with history.

—Ilan Stavans, editor of *The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Latin American Poetry*

Powerful, stunningly beautiful, teeming with indigenous life like the paintings of the seventeenth-century Quechua artists who appropriated and transformed the art and religion of their colonizers, Odi Gonzales' poetry celebrates the culture of his native Peru. Lynn Levin's translation captures the power and nuanced registers of Odi Gonzales' *tour de force*: a gift to Anglophone readers!

—Thalia Pandiri, Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature, Smith College  
Editor-in-Chief, *Metamorphoses*

In the nativist spirit of César Vallejo and the Cusqueño School of resistance painting, Odi Gonzales' poems articulate and negotiate the harrowing terrain of Peruvian cultural identity. Woven of Spanish Catholic and indigenous Quechua colors, these pages shimmer like angels in an Andean Eden!

—Chad Sweeney, author of *Parable of Hide and Seek*

### About the Author

ODI GONZALES, a native speaker of both Spanish and Quechua, was born in Cusco, Peru and is one of the most important Peruvian poets of his generation. The author of seven collections of poems, his work appears in a number of key anthologies published in Latin America, Britain, and the United States. He teaches courses in Quechua language and culture and prehispanic literature of the Andean region at New York University. BIRDS ON THE KISWAR TREE is his first collection in English translation.

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