

Ode to Thanks

By: Pablo Neruda—*translated by Ken Krabbenhoft*

Thanks to the word
that says *thanks!*
Thanks to *thanks*,
word
that melts
iron and snow!
The world is a threatening place
until
thanks
makes the rounds
from one pair of lips to another,
soft as a bright
feather
and sweet as a petal of sugar,
filling the mouth with its sound
or else a mumbled
whisper.
Life becomes human again:
it's no longer an open window.
A bit of brightness
strikes into the forest,
and we can sing again beneath the leaves.
Thanks, you're the medicine we take
to save us from
the bite of scorn.
Your light brightens the altar of harshness.
Or maybe
a tapestry
known
to far distant peoples.
Travelers
fan out
into the wilds,
and in the jungle
of strangers,
merci
rings out
while the hustling train
changes countries,
sweeping away borders,
then *spasibo*
clinging to pointy
volcanoes, to fire and freezing cold,

or *danke*, yes! and *gracias*, and
the world turns into a table:
a single word has wiped it clean,
plates and glasses gleam,
silverware tinkles,
and the tablecloth is as broad as a plain.
Thank you, *thanks*,
for going out and returning,
for rising up
and settling down.
We know, *thanks*,
that you don't fill every space-
you're only a word-
but
where your little petal
appears
the daggers of pride take cover,
and there's a penny's worth of smiles.